

CHAPTER III

Anna: The Realm of Tamil Subjectivity

Millions that mourn for Anna, actually mourn for their own selves that their lives are lost with Anna. The depth of their agony and annoyance is the measure of their feelings of despair and desolation that without Anna there is no happiness and peace for them.

- V. Radhakrishnan, “Anna the Great” in *Arignar Anna Ninavu Malar*, 80

3.1. Introduction

Anna died on February 3rd 1969 – one and a half years after he became the chief minister of Tamil Nadu by a historic victory of DMK in the 1967 state elections. His funeral was attended by 1.5 million people to become the Guinness World records. Thirty people died struck by an iron bridge while travelling towards Chennai on a train’s top to see his dead body. Despite the fact that the driver had promised that he would stop for them for sure after crossing the iron bridge, they refused to get down fearing that they might lose the chance of seeing their ‘Anna’²⁰ for the last time. Lakhs and lakhs gathered before the Rajaji Bhavan, the state building in which Anna’s body was kept for public homage, that the building seemed to fall down unable to consist the crowd gathered. And it is claimed that, one person from the crowd on nearing the dead body screamed “Anna!” and died at the very same place (750 *Nenjukku Neethi* Vol.1). As the quote above describes, millions of Tamil people have considered that their lives have come to an end with the death of Anna. What constituted such a passionate attachment of the masses with a political leader? Why do they think that their

²⁰ Annadurai is called by everyone as ‘anna’ meaning the elder brother. And he used to address, especially since the 40s, his followers as ‘thambis’ i.e. younger brothers. In this way there constituted an emotional bond between the addresser and the addressee.

lives are lost with Anna? How their *selves* are merged with him? In short, what does “Anna” stand for them?

Anna came from a poor, undistinguished, non-Brahmin weaver family from Conjeevaram, a town situated in North Tamil Nadu known for the weaving of silk sarees. His only claim to respect, as observed by A.R. Venkatachalapathy, in the Tamil political sphere crowded predominantly by the royals, upper caste elites and landlords, was his M.A. degree. He entered the political sphere in a context which already realized the need of an expertise in vernacular languages to sustain in it. It is his bilingualism – his mastery in translating the English speeches of the leaders of the Justice Party into Tamil on public stages – which enabled his first step into the political sphere. Though he was just a college student during that time he did not fail to inspire the masses and surprise the wealthy leaders by delivering the latter’s English speeches in an enchanting Tamil. However, his journey in the political sphere did not stop there. He grew to an extent where it has become impossible to write the history of modern Tamil Nadu without devoting him a considerable place. As A. R. Venkatachalapathy rightly observes, it is “in the rise of this barely five and a quarter feet man with a balding pate, tobacco-stained teeth, stubbed chin and captivating husky voice to prominence lies the story of modern Tamil Nadu” (A. R. Venkatachalapathy on Anna).

It has become possible for a man from a very poor social and economic background to become a determining factor in the history of Tamil Nadu only by the passionate attachment of the masses with him. What created such a strong attachment? What was so alluring or desirable for the Tamil mass cutting across different sections of the Non-Brahmin population like middle and lower castes and classes, literate and non-literate, urban and rural, students, teachers, government employees, writers, drama and cinema artists, small scale business men,

farmers and the downtrodden sections of the society like barbers, dhobis, rickshaw pullers, house-workers, agricultural labourers, industrial workers, daily wagers and so on²¹ in him?

This chapter attempts to study the different ways in which the Tamil populace related with Anna. However as it has been noted in the previous chapter, it approaches Anna not as an individual but as a discursive body. By that it means a body constructed in the discourses of and on Anna. It takes up writings and speeches of Anna, *Anna Malar* – a special issue of a magazine about C.N. Annadurai brought out by different journals²², *Anna Ninaivu Malar* (Anna memorial issue published by a college magazine) published by college students just after the death of Anna. In addition to these it uses experiences with and memories about Anna shared by his contemporaries in various books. The body “Anna” constructed by these discourses is basically a field of relation which constitutes the realm of Tamil subjectivity.

3.2. Multiple Associations of the Tamil Populace with Anna

As we noted above, people from diverse socio-political backgrounds were associated with Anna. This makes their nature of association with him and the spaces in which he functioned as heterogeneous and resists easy classification. Here are the few ways in which they associate with Anna: a) An admiration for his political astuteness and intellectual caliber; b) A desirability for his aesthetically appealing and entertaining rhetoric c) An emotional and sentimental attachment that characterize him as their lovable elder brother d) A regard for his simplicity, easy accessibility and cultured political conduct e) A respect for his commitment for the public cause f) A sense of loyalty for his benevolence and generosity;

²¹ The Communist Party’s report about the foundations for the electoral victory of the DMK observes the DMK’s popularity and fast growing influence among: 1) sons of rich farmers (landlords) in villages, 2) youngsters in villages who have finished their schooling 3) some middle class farmers 4) small businessmen 5) students 6) urban workers who are not grouped on organization basis 7) majority of the government employees 8) a part of school teachers 9) in some places harijans” as the important reason for its electoral victory. (quoted in Arunan pg. 199)

²² Anna Malars are bumper issue published by journals like *Murasoli* and *Thiruvilakku* run by the DMK leaders like M. Karunanithi and Ka. Rajaram on the occasion of Annadurai’s birthday since the 1950s. At times some of these were guest edited by leaders like MGR and others. They used a lot of photos of Anna and carried many articles written on Annadurai by academicians, reformists, significant leaders of DMK and ordinary DMK cadres.

g) A respect for his democratic and power-sharing nature which leads to personal and country's development and h) They see him as a force of progress and a figure for future and are proud of him for revealing the best of Tamil (language, culture and civilization) to the world and regaining the self-esteem of Tamil Nadu and Tamilians. The list grows on. This heterogeneity of the subjects' association with Anna resists an easy analytical categorization. However, it can be broadly divided into three. They are, Anna as:

1. A field of taste, desire and pleasure
2. A symbol of progress and empowerment and a key to the promising future
3. A body of domestic love

These, undoubtedly, are not three different realms. They overlap with each other and at times even define, justify and constitute each other. However, it is for our analytical convenience that we categorize them as different realms. In the following section, we would discuss these three realms of relation in detail and try to map the constitutive field of the Tamil subjectivity.

3.3. Anna and the Tamil Subjectivity

Kalpanadasan, in the preface to his book *Sila Theevira Idhazhgal* [*Some Radical magazines*] (2008) shares that:

In my memory 1950s and 60s appear like a kind of ideal period. The reason for that might be the magical appearance of the feelings that emerged in me during those times. In those days crowd would truly gather for political meetings. Unlike today people would gather voluntarily like a flood without the help of the hooligans. "The leader is coming, here he has come, he woke up just now and brushes his teeth, in another ten seconds he would appear before you after finishing his morning routines

in the evening” so would scream the audio speakers. It was a time! Similarly, readers would wait in front of shops for the arrival of magazines (mostly weekly and monthlies) till their legs ache. Those days are not going to come back.

It was during that time when ideal/ambitious cadres felt exalted spending their own money, and wasting their golden times and got drenched themselves in the leaders’ and writer-orator heroes’ verbal-downpour that my reader-self and aesthetic sensibility/connoisseur disposition got shaped. (16)

This quote reveals the kind of passion that the Tamils, especially youngsters, had for print and public oration during the 50s-60s. One who is exposed to the Tamil sphere would know for sure that it refers to DMK. It also indicates us of the orchestra of voices which quenched such a zealous thirst and by that played a significant role in the construction of the “aesthetic sensibility” or “taste” of that generation. Anna, unquestionably, plays a very significant role in this. Gnanalaya P.Krishmurthy, in his interview says that there used to be nearly 33 magazines (each belonging to a leader) in the DMK reading halls during the 50s-60s. In addition to DMK’s party magazine *Nam Nadu* many were run by the party leaders like Anna’s *Dravida Nadu* (later *Kanchi*), Nedunchezian’s *Manram*, Karunanithi’s *Murasoli*, Kannadasan’s *Thenral*, AVP Asaithambi’s *Taniyarasu*, Pa.Pugazhendi’s *Kathir*, P. Ramasamy’s *Naathigam*, Ka. Anbazhagan’s *Puthuvaazhvu*, C.P. Sitrarasu’s *Theepori* and *Inamuzhakkam*, Ku.Mu. Annal Thango’s *Thamizh Nilam* and the list goes on. This informs us of the vibrant journalistic and literary print culture developed by the DMK. Anna’s *Dravida Nadu* (and later *Kanchi*) occupies a special place in it.

L. Ganesan, significant among the people who organized the 1965 Anti-Hindi Students’ struggle, in his book *Thi.Mu.Ka. Latchiya Varalaaru* (1983) recalls how his elder brother preserved all the issues of Anna’s *Dravida Nadu* bound in volumes and how passionately the former borrowed and read them even during his school days. He also shares

how he would go and listen to public oration of Anna and other significant DMK personalities by cycling for many miles and even by travelling in train (4). Many other student leaders and participants of the 1965 anti-Hindi agitations like Pa. Jayaprakasam and A. Ramasamy share similar experiences (in his interview in Kalachuvadu).

Rama Arangannal records how he was swept over heels while listening to Anna's "sweet Tamil and a resonating voice" his "jaws dropped hearing his [Anna's] speech" (46 Kannan). The fact that Anna's public meetings were advertised in peculiar ways such as: "Annadurai will speak, he will speak for more than three hours, He will speak like a heavy rain, Come with your food packed" (Krishnamoorthy in his interview with the researcher), that there were many instances in which even during hours of heavy thunderous rain the crowd with an unswerving passion stayed for Anna's oration, that on occasions even tickets were sold for his speeches, that his speeches were among the first in India to be published in the form of booklets (44 Kannan), that his oration had a power to attract people beyond ideological leanings²³ and such a power had been continuously boasted in the public sphere testify the eccentric passion attached to his oration.

What induces such a passion towards Anna's writings and speeches? What was so enchanting and bewitching for a generation of upcoming non-Brahmin youth in Anna's rhetoric? What are all the ways in which they related themselves with it? We shall begin our enquiry with these questions.

²³ One such experience was shared by a member of the socialist party named Erode Chinnasamy. He recalls that: "I got the opportunity to listen to Anna's speech in the Thirukkural conference held in Coimbatore in 1948. From that day even without knowing me there emerged a love and respect [for him]." (Thiru Vilakku Anna Malar 1964). And he goes on to say how later even after he had become a member of the socialist party he continued to maintain a friendly relationship with Anna.

3.3.1. Taste and Pleasure: Anna as the Field of Aesthetics

In the Tamil sphere Anna's name is inseparable from the aesthetics of his language. It had a magnetic power of pulling masses towards him. His recent biographer Kannan calls him a "Pied Piper of Hamelin" hinting at the magicality of his rhetoric to pull and mesmerize the crowd (44). Many, including Pa. Jayaprakasam, who was one of student leaders of the 1965 Anti-Hindi agitations, acknowledge that it is the aesthetics of Anna's language that attracted them first towards him (Interview with the researcher). In his book *Naan Paartha Arasiyal* (1999) Kannadasan records the material function of this rhetoric as: "It is said that as soon as it rains the eggs of fish would hatch into fingerlings. (Likewise) As soon as a meeting/talk is conducted in an area (village or town) at least 25 youngsters would come to/join the DMK" (40). When this credit was applicable for the leading DMK orators of that period, Anna undoubtedly enjoys a very significant position within that frame of aesthetics.

To understand what constitutes Anna's aesthetics, it is necessary to know the new style of Tamil prose that characterized his rhetoric. Anna had access to two different spheres of Tamil. First, his school and college education opened to him the discourses of 'pure Tamil' removed of Sanskrit 'adulterations' instigated by Saivite movements and the Tamil academia which attempted to create a self-sufficient intellectual sphere. Second, his proximity with the political sphere exposed him to discourses of democratization prompted by socio-political climate of the Self-Respect movement. It underlined the need for making Tamil mass-accessible through reformation and standardization of its script. The first one aimed at de-sanskritising Tamil by a) creating new Tamil equivalents for Sanskrit words and b) coining new 'pure Tamil' words for modern scientific and academic usages and terminologies²⁴. The second one aimed at creating it accessible for a wider mass. Anna's conception of language is

²⁴ Such equivalents and coinages, it has to be noted, at times were very complicated and thus were far removed from their contemporary 'Sanskritized' usages. This demanded a strenuous labour even to get accustomed with it which removes it from the reach of ordinary public.

to a large extent shaped by both these spheres and their logics. His style showed a specific combination of both these imaginations. His rhetoric is known for its refined Tamil, often deemed as ‘Thooyatamil’ (Pure Tamil) or ‘Sentamil’(classical Tamil) and for its simplicity and accessibility. Though Anna publicized the usage of pure Tamil words, he also gave equal priority for its easy accessibility²⁵. However, his uniqueness lies in adding an aesthetic tint for it and making Tamil prose rhetoric a plane of taste, desire and pleasure.

The aesthetics of Anna’s rhetoric has five significant factors. First is its alliterative, rhythmic, and semi-poetic quality. In the Tamil popular imagination the image of Anna cannot be evoked without his alliterative style of Tamil prose. Kannan records how Anna was welcomed with cloth banners inscribed with words “Alliteration Anna welcome” (45 Kannan) which in English means ‘alliterative Anna’. This alliterative style along with the unorthodox syntax – reversing and shuffling the subject-verb-object order of sentences – added a semi-poetic quality to his prose. This form of rhythmic and poetic Tamil prose figured not just in his writings but also in his speeches. In other words, Anna and his followers wrote and spoke in the same style of modern prose. This style of Tamil prose continues to define and qualify public speech and political exchanges in Tamil Nadu even today.

Secondly, frequent use of small anecdotes and stories, and sparkling similes and comparisons added aroma to his rhetoric. Anna quite often uses simple and homey anecdotes, stories, metaphors and comparisons to explain complex political issues. These brought in a radical transformation not just in the style of Tamil prose but also in its content. That is why while talking about how the new style of language that Anna created magnetized the audience, Kannan observes that, “Anna’s speeches dazzled listeners as much for their

²⁵ His retaining of some amount of Sanskrit words was done only on making it mass-accessible as it has already been a part of a common man’s vocabulary.

kaleidoscopic alliterations, metaphors and unorthodox use of syntax as for their content. New ideas flowed briskly with homey analogies and stories amplifying his message” (44 Kannan). Such anecdotes or analogies drawn from a wide range of sources like mundane Tamil socio-cultural context to that of world histories or revolutions, one can see a paragraph explaining the reason for using it there in a simple and comprehensible way which enables its accessibility.

Thirdly, Anna’s rhetoric is noted for its overt sensuality. Even his ‘*Thambikku Kadidhangal*’ (*Letters to Younger Brother*), a significant genre of Anna’s political writings also contains them in abundance. In these letters the younger brother is often imagined as a young man in a conjugal or love relationship – that is as a young lover. He is either is in love with a girl, or someone who is newly married or has just begotten a child. The conjugal values, desires and pleasures invoked in relation to this younger brother are very modern and mostly related to the nuclear family. Focusing on the kinds of desires and pleasures in the lives of this young man Anna frequently enters into detailed descriptions of the kind of amorous and sensual pleasures which he should naturally enjoy at this age but is sacrificing for the sake of his political commitment and aspiration. The anecdotes and stories about the revolutionaries that added aroma to his writings and speeches also contain a substantial amount of sensuous descriptions. In them, Anna also describes the sensual pleasures like kissing, embracing and love-making that the revolutionaries forsook for attaining their political goals.

Even his reformist writings criticizing Hindu religion, gods and sacred puranic texts like *Kambaramayanam*, semi-fictional essays on world histories, and his own creative writings also contain a substantial amount of sensuousness. Significant among them are a series of essays he wrote on the immorality of the Hindu gods (which were later published in book form entitled as *Thevaleelaigal* [The Amorousness of the Gods]), *Kambarasam* (The

Aesthetics of Kamban) – essays on the obscenity of the epic *Kambaramayanam*, *Romapuri Ranigal* (Queens of Rome Empire) – essays on the immorality of the queens (a few on kings) which caused the downfall of the Roman kingdom, *Maaji Kadavulgal* (The Bygone Gods) – essays that display the strength of rationality over irrationality. This was substantiated with the example of the tough battle of Greek philosophers against the irrationality of people who believed in immoral and obscene gods. It also figured in many of his fictional writings like *Kumarikottam*, a novella, which criticizes the feudal and caste system.

Fourthly, Anna's rhetoric also encompasses a liberal use of sensationalism and theatricality. One could see this mainly in his write-ups and speeches on intense political issues affecting one's rights and duties. His write-up on the red street riots in Punjab and Periyar's second wedding can be cited as examples. In these, one could see that the way of reporting itself is overtly characterized by sensationalism and theatricality. For instance, in the write-up titled as "*Sentheru Sambavam*" [The Red-Street Happening] appeared on 8.7.1956 in *Dravida Nadu* which describes the atrocities committed by the Indian police against the people of Punjab for demanding a separate state (18). It gives descriptions of how people were brutally beaten to death, their houses looted, women raped, children orphaned and so on. These descriptions that foreground the pathetic condition of the people of Punjab who are devoid of their basic citizenship rights are characterized by melodrama and theatricality. Similarly the write-up on the dishonoured condition of the members of the Dravida Khazhagam after Periyar's second marriage with Manniammai also contains such elements.

Fifthly and most significantly, the exceptionality of Anna's rhetoric can be found in its subtle satire and sarcasm. His astute handling of criticisms and the subtlety and ingeniousness of his attack on others were repeatedly cited as reasons for the Tamil populace's craze and admiration for Anna's rhetoric. For instance, Kannadasan notes how

Va. Raa jealously admired Anna's speech as "This Annadurai is a *Sandaalan*²⁶ man! In every line he literally killed people [with his subtle satires]" (13 Kannappan). This highlights that the skilled, indirect and subtle ways of satire was something that evoked such an admiration for him even among the significant writers of different ideological backgrounds.

Works on/about Anna record several such instances of desire, awe and admiration for his rhetoric. Anna Malars published during and after his lifetime, biographies of Anna, autobiographies of DMK personalities and anti-Hindi agitators, and works written by Anna's contemporaries on their personal experiences with and views on the former are veritable records of it. This shows us that his style of Tamil rhetoric characterized by alliterative and semi-poetic quality, simple vocabulary, homey metaphors and mundane examples, a language of sensuality and theatricality coloured by implied/subtle ways of sarcasm has played a significant role in the construction of a specific kind of relation between the Tamil subjects and Anna. What kind of a relation is it? Nedunchezian, one of the significant DMK stalwart and a close associate of Anna recalls thus about Anna's speech:

Every time those friends [who attended the conference] referred to Anna, they said, "He is short indeed; but his speech is superb. We have never heard something like this before. He is in total control of the Tamil language. The alliterations are alluring. His satire and sarcasm are so cultured and give immense pleasure to the listener. Those who had underestimated him by his appearance became speechless after his performance. (quoted in pg 44 of Kannan)

One could see here how the subject's association with Anna is characterized by "allurement" and "immense pleasure" that the latter's rhetoric could arise in the former. This pleasure, as we could see from Nedunchezian's observation, is caused by – in addition to the allurements of alliterations – Anna's indirect and subtle style of satires. One could also see

²⁶ Basically it is a word of abuse referring to the lowest in the caste hierarchy. But here it is used as a word of appreciation uttered in the peak of jealousy and exaltation.

that the subject differentiates it from the direct satirizing and legitimizes the former by labeling it as “cultured” and “refined”. Kannadasan’s write-up about the unrefined and uncultured nature of direct attacks clarifies the same. As an explanation to the readers’ letters criticizing the direct attack or satire that the second issue of his magazine *Thendral* carried, Kannadasan gives an explanation in the third issue as follows:

A friend named Narayanan from Chennai after praising or appreciating the first issue, while observing about the second says that “No need for direct attack. It is completely against the principle of Anna”. Comrade Karunanithi also said the same thing. Some others have also written (to me) pointing out the same thing. We’re really very glad to see it. We wished to know which path does people like? To what method they are tuned? We did not know whether they are interested in the cultured style or they like only uncultured style resulting from frenzy. It is not as we feared. We are truly delighted to know that people are totally cultured to the elegance of Anna. When we see whether the opposition party (Congress) which has made the public stages and journals as the shirt of a *kudukuduppai kaaran* [a fortune-teller with a drum like instrument in his hand who usually wears very loose and disproportionate dress] – has got any respect among the people, we come to know/it is clear that they definitely do not have. Attack shouldn’t be direct is what the central ideal of all the letters that we have got so far.... Even if people had liked direct attacks, we are not going to follow it. Because it would spoil the eligibility of being the thambi of Anna who taught us (the necessity of) cultured politics. To be frank/to tell the truth, the attack that appeared in the last issue is an attempt to analyse and find out to what extent the “decorum/decency” that Anna was teaching us for a long time is followed by people. *Adaiyappa!* [a word expressing surprise and appreciation] How perfectly they are following it. They have cultured to the extent of telling that we won’t “appreciate”

even if a small word falls wrongly. (Kavignar Kannadasan Nadaththiya Ilakkiya Yuththangal 9-11)

One could see here how the direct way of satire and sarcasm, noted to be practiced by Congress people, is recognized by the subject as ‘unrefined’ and ‘uncultured’. And one also could note how subtle satire and sarcasm which has been labeled as “refined” and “cultured” is directly associated with Anna. In addition, the last phrase that “They have cultured to the extent of telling that we won’t “appreciate” even if a small word falls wrongly” reveals that the political culture is situated in the realm of taste and aesthetic sensibility of the subjectivity.

The 1965 student anti-Hindi agitators like Pa. Jayaprakasam, A. Ramasamy and L. Ganesan while talking about their attraction towards Anna and the DMK frequently contrasts it with congress or communists or Periyar. It is curious to see how these comparisons are centered on their ability to satiate the subject’s aesthetic pleasure with regard to Tamil language. For them, the Congress men of that age were either incompetent to talk in Tamil or would talk only in “unrefined style”. This would become their object of sarcasm and ridicule. The communists’ Tamil, in spite of its strong ideology, was full of jargons and terminology and was not easily comprehensible. L. Ganesan shares about the communists’ writings as follows:

Socialist philosophic books were in very smooth and soft papers bound in very big volumes. (I) couldn’t precisely understand them in English. I tried to read their Tamil translations. *Appappa!* [a word expressing difficulty] English appeared easy for me while comparing to their that day’s Tamil. (5)

Periyar’s Tamil, though simple and comprehensible, is perceived as “very rugged” and not pleasurable. Many, including Anna, in their autobiographical accounts have

recollected how while first listening to Periyar they found his language raw/unrefined and thus non-appealing (38 Kannan). Whereas Anna's rhetoric marked for its semi-poetic and rhythmic quality and subtle satires was a site both of enjoyment and aspiration and has been a significant reason for the subjects choosing him. This shows to us that the Dravidian-Tamil subjectivity is basically a subject possessing taste, pleasure and aesthetic sensibility.

This aesthetic taste and pleasure cannot be divorced from the subjectivity's notion of a refined or cultured self. For instance, the aesthetics of Anna's subtle satire has been repeatedly noted as a reflection of his cultured self. For instance, Ma. Kumarasamy marks that:

Even if people with oppositional ideas attack this incomparable leader, his party or his principle in any harsh or mean language, never-ever even by mistake he had replied them in the same way. Giving very sweet replies even for those who attacked him in very rough or harsh language has been the very great quality of that very great leader. (5 Ma. Kumarasamy, Arignar Anna Ninaivu Malar 1969)

One could see here that Anna's subtle handling of harsh criticisms is seen as a quality that reveals his magnanimity and cultured self. It is this refinement and culture that constitutes the sense of taste, pleasure and aesthetics which the subject experiences in relation to Anna's rhetoric. Anna does not function merely as a field which satiates the subject's aesthetic taste and desire but also as a force that constructs this very taste and desire. Anna's rhetoric through decorating print, public stages and silver screens not only quenched the aesthetic thirst of the subjects, but in many ways constructed the subjectivity.

In Anna's writings and speeches there are references to the uncultured and unrefined abuses made by the Congress on him and the DMK. Quite often, Congress and Justice Party's unrefined and incompetent Tamil is satirized and DMK is prided for having more than 100

speakers who can talk in good Tamil. One such instance would be the public speech delivered by Anna in 1960 in Chennai. Anna, who begins his talk by pacifying the infuriated cadres who talked before him regarding the uncultured ways in which the Congress men had abused him and the party, establishes the DMK's style of attack as a contrast to the lack of political decorum in Congress (175). He also guides his followers that one should not give importance to them and continue to work with political determination and decorum. Similarly, while Periyar continued to vehemently criticize Anna and the DMK, Anna neither indulged in nor encouraged his followers to criticize Periyar. This shows that Anna has also been a constitutive field of this taste, pleasure and aesthetic sensibility and the new values that they encompass.

This aesthetic taste and pleasure constructed to a large extent in the subject's relation with Anna is very modern in nature. Ma. Kumarasamy in his essay titled "Idayangalai Venra Inaiyatra Pechchaalar" ("The Unparalleled Orator who Won the Hearts (of many)"), observes that:

Even in a meeting where many hundreds of thousands people have gathered, if Anna comes and stands in front of the mike and begins to orate addressing in his resounding musical voice "My dear Comrades!" complete silence will occupy there. Even if that affluent man of words orate for any amount of time, for all that time the hearts of those thousands of people will go only behind his oration. When he talks one after another, row after row, words will continue to fall beautifully. As a water fall that flows from a mountain, as the music that emerges from a *yaazh* (an ancient stringed instrument belonging to Tamil classical days), as the rain that falls from the sky, words that emerge from his heart will do a heroic procession. In the words that continue to fall without any breaks or blemish in beauty and aesthetics superior ideas would spread light, alliterations would do a dance of ecstasy, new metaphors would

blossom and ever-youth classical Tamil would play happily. (4-5 *Arignar Anna Ninaivu Malar*)

While revealing the passionate attachment that Tamil people shared with Anna's rhetoric, the quoted paragraph points out how it is constituted by the pleasure that they identified in it. And the remark "Even if that genius ends his speech after any number of hours the mass gathered there would only think "Why this soon this pleasant music has come to an end? Can't it continue for some more time? Can't some more pleasure gush into our hearts?" and yearn for more" (5 *Arignar Anna Ninaivu Malar*) shows that the pleasure experienced in relation to Anna's rhetoric dwells in the subject's *ullam/idayam* – the plane of *interiority* – the domain of its taste and aesthetic sensibility. Anna occupies this plane of interiority of the subject and it is thus, Ma.Kumarasamy labels Anna as the one "won the hearts" of the Tamil people.

However, this pleasure that the subject experiences in Anna's rhetoric possesses a unique characteristic which marks it as modern. The pleasure here is caused not only by the rhetoric's ability to please and delight oneself but also in its ability to enthrall thousands of people and have them under its magical control for many hours. The power of Anna's rhetoric to mesmerize a large mass occupies a significant part of the pleasure experienced by the subject. The way Kumarasamay begins by noting the capability of Anna to have a grip over the vast magnitude of the crowd clarifies this fact. One could see here the indelible role played by modern mass-based politics and mass-encompassing spaces in the construction of such an experience of pleasure.

The way Tamil subjects explain their association with the kind of Tamil passion represented by Anna can be used for further clarification. For instance, Pa. Jayaprakasam while acknowledging that Tamil teachers (school and college) and the DMK, especially

Anna, were the two forces that constructed a strong Tamil passion and anti-Hindi emotion in that generation (*Kalachuvadu*) nevertheless acknowledges that they – that is, modern educated, middle and lower class, Non-Brahmin youngsters – were attracted by the latter. He justifies this preference by discriminating the kind of Tamil passion exhibited by Anna from that of the Tamil teachers and legitimizing the former over the latter.

The nature of Tamil passion that the Tamil teachers talked of was conservative.

Talking about the glories of kings, greatness of gods and so on – but we would go beyond them... we had teachers like Avvai Thennarasu... who while teaching Bhakthi literatures like *Thiruppaavai* or *Thiruvempaavai* would submerge into the texts. At times he would stand still inside the classroom with his eyes closed, forgetting himself for even ten to fifteen minutes. But we don't relate us with that kind of Tamil passion which is more "internal". (Interview with the researcher)

In contrast to the internal 'sacred' experience that the Tamil teachers experience in long moments of silence, the Dravidian-Tamil subjectivity – constituted in relation to modern institutions and spaces like schools and colleges, print, public oratory, cinema and so on – basically takes pleasure in sharing. One could see the workings of this desire for and pleasure in public/mass sharing throughout Tamil modernity. Right from U.V. Swaminatha Iyer's laborious work for the publication of ancient Tamil texts to those who published their anti-Hindi feelings and Tamil passion via songs in Anna's *Dravida Nadu* are characterized by this pleasure in sharing and publicizing. Print has been perceived as a site of recording facts, raising questions, clarifying doubts, expressing support and opposition. It thus constitutes modern subjectivity constitution. The vibrant print and public oratory culture constructed by Anna provided chance for many to write in his journal, speak on public stages. This came to be identified as a site of nourishing this desire and pleasure (also ref section Ref. 3. in Anna the true democrat). Pa. Jayaprakasam's attack on the passion of the Tamil teachers as

‘conservative’ informs us that he, a modern subject, sees Anna and the kind of Tamil passion that he represented as modern and futuristic. *Interiority*, the modern plane constructed by new tastes, desires and pleasures and a site where discriminations and legitimizations between refinement and coarseness, elegancy and inelegancy, cultured and uncouthness take place via a new logic is the plane that Anna has “won”.

The larger transformations in the culture of patronship – a shift from individual patrons to markets or Tamil reading public – helped in establishing Tamil language as a source of survival for a larger group of people. Academic and journalistic print culture, Tamil organizations, literary associations, schools, colleges, universities, libraries and cinema and so on can be noted as few significant mediums of this survivability. These mediums by their very mass incorporative culture while establishing Tamil language as a source of survival for a larger mass, also created a possibility for Tamil being a realm of new tastes and pleasure. The Tamil subjects’ identification of Anna as a realm of taste and pleasure happens only in relation to these mass-mediums and the newer possibilities they create.

3.3.2. Progress and Empowerment: Anna as a key for Promising Future

In the *Thiruvilakku Anna Malar* of 1964 there is an interesting article on Annadurai written by a person named Anbu (34-38). The article is titled as “Kalangarai Vilakku” which in English means “The Lighthouse”. The article contains an image of lighthouse (see figure. 1 in Appendix). In the place of the light – that gives warning of shoals to passing ships – is Anna’s face. The ship is named as Anbu who is lost in the sea but is saved by the light emitted from the Anna-lighthouse (34). Such a perception of Anna as a guide to one’s life and future is abundant among the Tamil subjects. Anna had been perceived as “the key to the door of Renaissance Tamil Nadu” (21), as a force of progress that destructs unconstructive things (19), a “guide of Tamil society” (9), “an ideal role model of lakhs and lakhs of young

lions” (10) and as someone who is responsible for the growth of Tamil Nadu (12). This perception about Anna – as the domain of progress, productivity, revivalism and a force that can lead them into a promising, empowered future – especially of the upwardly mobile Non-Brahmin youngsters –emanates mainly from their recognition of Anna:

- 1) As a great intellectual who can emancipate the Tamils.
- 2) As a ‘True Democrat’ who would lead them to power.

This recognition is responsible for the subject’s reliance on Anna as a leader who would guide them to an empowered future. A close scrutiny of the foundations on which such recognition takes place reveals a significant constructional terrain of the Tamil subjectivity.

3.3.2.1. Anna as an Intellect and Scholar

In the Tamil popular imagination the image of Anna is inseparable from his scholarship and intelligence. The honorary titles prefixed to his name, ‘Arignar’ or ‘Perarignar’ – mean ‘an intellect’ or ‘a great or eminent scholar’ – has now become a part of and even substitutes his name in the Tamil common sense. Such a perception results from the associating modern ways of knowledge accumulation like the culture of voracious reading with Anna. For instance, an article that expresses the subject’s awe and admiration for Anna’s ability to talk instantly and incisively on any topic ascribes it to this culture of voracious reading.

When Anna was a college student he spent the major amount of his leisure in Chennai Connemara library in reading and getting pleasure from many good books that are available there. Even in his later days when he has become the famous “Army general” of the battle of called social (reformist) life, whenever he got some leisure time he took it as one of his primary and unfailing duties to study many books. As a result of this broad and wide acquaintance with books, his natural keen and sharp

intellect and because he had sharp memory which kindled surprise and appreciations he had the ability to talk well on any topic without any prior preparations. (5 *Arignar Anna Ninaivu Malar*)

This quote marks Anna as a voracious reader and establishes it by hinting at the pleasure and commitment that Anna possessed towards learning. Such a pleasure and commitment towards reading and learning was also associated with the subject's identification of library as a modern, secular, knowledge gaining/gathering space. Anna's photos in *Anna Malars* with a pile of books on his table or a rack full of books behind him represented Anna as a modern reservoir of knowledge (Ref. Fig nos. 2 and 3). Similarly, the learning that he represents is also characterized by modern features like an accumulation of knowledge across disciplines facilitated mainly by the modern knowledge providing apparatuses like books and spaces like universities and libraries.

Most of his [Anna's] lifetime had been spent in reading and writing books, stories and essays. When many fail even to recognize the idea of maintaining, developing and fostering libraries, he was having his own personal library, since he knew the worth of it. There were days when he used to sit in the libraries to muster and master, to cull and collate knowledge from morn till eve.... He studied more of history and books of general knowledge. Yet no book was insignificant in his eyes, whether it be *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence or the '*History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*' by Edward Gibbon. (35 *Arignar Anna Ninaivu Malar*)

The list of panegyric stories of authors that Anna has read includes Rousseau, Voltaire, Shelley, Marx, Lenin, Tolstoy, Luther, Socrates, Charles Bradley, Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Edward Gibbon and so on. The popular saying that "there are no books in the Connemara Library that was untouched by Anna" adds to this image. Labeling him as a

“walking encyclopedia” or a “walking university” by the subjects establishes him as a symbol of modern scholarship. What elements of Anna’s discourse produce such a perception of the subjects about him? We shall investigate into this question in this section. For this we would primarily focus on the epistemological ground on which Anna’s rhetoric is founded.

Let us begin with Anna’s construction of Tamil history. The history of Tamils that Anna constructs is based exclusively on a glorious royal and warrior past. A past of Tamil Nadu ruled by the Tamil kings who were brave, just, secular and egalitarian. The glory of that past is founded on the economical, social, cultural and political sophistications that Tamil Nadu enjoyed during that time.

The economical prosperity of that past relies upon its agricultural fertility and the developments in trade. Tamil Nadu was claimed to have rich water and land resources. It abounded with resources from fertile forests, mountains, fields and water. The natural resources like sandal and other valuable woods, spices, elephant trunks, pearls and other precious stones and so on constituted the sizeable economy of that past. In addition, the Tamils also indulged in overseas trade. They sailed to other countries like Greece and Rome and traded the valuables. This supported them live an affluent and sophisticated life (*Tambikku Annavin Kadidangal* Vol. 11. 1986).

Socially, Tamil Nadu of that past was superior for two reasons. Firstly, the Tamil mind and life are uninfected by Aryan superstitions. Aryanism and Brahmins did not enjoy prominence neither in the governance of Tamil land nor among Tamil people during that past. The Aryan belief system like caste division and discrimination had no mileage among Tamil people. Actually they are mocked at by them (15-16 *Arya maayai*). It is an age in which Tamil people are deeply aware that the Aryans and they belonged to different races (16 *Arya maayai*). Secondly, women are held high and respected in that past. Women embodied

supreme moral value called *karpū* – a quality of a woman based on her strong investment in the normative value of a heterosexual, monogamous relationship.

Culturally Tamil Nadu was fertile and Tamils excelled in arts and literature. Tamils excelled in music, dance, architecture and literature. They had *sangams* – a civil establishment solely devoted for the development of Tamil language, literature, music and other arts – which intensely worked for the enrichment of Tamil culture. This stands as a testimony for the fact that even during that age the Tamils had a superior intellectual culture.

Politically, it was an age in which the Tamils were brave and fearless. They excelled in the arts of warfare like weapon making and other combating skills. Thus, they were seldom conquered by others and lived a life of unrelenting honour. But this is not all. The political fertility of the Tamils was not to be judged only by their bravery and war skills. It also has to be valued by the secular, just and egalitarian nature of their society and culture. It was argued that the Tamilians fell from such a high glory to the present degradedness due to Aryan deception.

One could see that Tamil history in Anna's discourse revolves around the past glory of the Tamils, their present degradedness and the deception of Brahmins as the reason for such a fall. Such a narrative pattern follows the similar attempts made in the Tamil cultural sphere like that of Iyothē Thos's and Marai Malai Adigal's. And Anna's account of Tamil classical past also shares the following features with them: 1) Aryan and Dravidian are two separate races and culture. They are not just distinct but also were incompatible cultures and stand in opposition to each other. Today's Brahmins are the lineage of the Aryans and the Tamil are the lineage of the Dravidians. 2) The Aryans are naturally deceptive, cunning and timid while the Tamils are just, brave and untamable. 3) Aryan race enslaved the warrior Tamils through cunningness. It is by this cunningness that they made the Tamils the carriers

of Aryan ideas and fall into their deceptive web. 4) A self-awareness about this history – the distinctness of Aryan and Dravidian culture and civilization – is fundamental today to liberate the Tamilians from this Aryan deception. But the distinctiveness of Anna lies in the method he establishes this glory of the Tamils over the Brahmins. This, to a large extent, is responsible for creating classical Tamil history as a mass-inclusive field by making it a field of a wider populace's – cutting across caste, religious, class and literacy boundaries – imagination of a common Tamil past.

Firstly, it demonstrates the claim of a non-Vedic past by focusing not on the religious or spiritual aspects like Pundit Thoss and Adigal, but the secular characteristics of the linguistic and political²⁷. In other words, the category that unifies the people was their linguistic and political identity called 'Tamilian'. People are united together as the speakers of Tamil language, rulers of Tamil land and subjects of Tamil kings. They are neither divided in terms of class and caste nor in terms of labour. In Anna's construction one sees only the 'Tamilians'.

In Thoss' and Adigal' construction the highest position was occupied by their respective communal-religious superiors called Buddhist Parayars and Saivite Vellalars. But the 'superiors' who lead the Tamils in Anna's utopia are not religious but secular Tamil kings. These Tamil kings are often called as "leaders" who lead the country rather than rule. This 'leader' is attributed certain moral and ethical values largely differing from that of Adigal and Thoss. If the moral authority of the Buddhist monks and Saivite Vellalars is constituted with a range of qualities like teetotalism, vegetarianism, cleanliness and other moral qualities that we discussed in the sections above, the authority in Anna's discourse is totally different. In Anna the leader' *tamilpattru*, the passion for Tamil (the language, culture

²⁷ Arguments such as the word 'Jathi' (caste) itself is of Sanskrit origin and there is no Tamil equivalent for it can be cited here for reference.

and land), *maanam*, the feeling of pride and honour that he feels over it and *veeram*, his untamable and ethical bravery constitute the leaders' moral authority. In other words, if a set of moral and spiritual values becomes the qualities that validate the leadership in Thoss and Adigal, the passion, pride and a feeling of self-possession towards Tamil language and land are the pre-conditions of the Tamil leaders of Anna. However, such a passion is not something that differentiates the king from his subjects and establishes his superiority. It is something which makes him the people's representative and authenticates his sovereignty. This shows the close relationship between the past with the modern nation and state formation in Anna. This was, unlike Thoss and Adigal's idea of a cultural past. In other words, his is a national past rather than a communal or religious one. It has to be noted that religion did not play any role in this construction as Tamils were regarded secular. This paves way for a wider populace, cutting across caste, communal and religious boundaries, to identify themselves as part of it and take part in its construction.

Secondly, this golden past is solely founded on a reading of certain newly discovered Tamil classical texts like *Sangam Anthologies*, *Silappathikaram* and *Thirukkural*. These texts occupy significant position in the modern Tamil literary canon²⁸. As discussed in Chapter II there were many attempts during modernity to write the history of ancient Tamil Nadu using these sources. This mode of history-writing is founded strongly on a new conception of

²⁸ Though the rediscovery of the classical Tamil texts fueled intense debates about the pure and uncorrupted past of the Dravidians/Tamils before the Aryan arrival, it has to be noted that not all the texts that were rediscovered were found useful for such a project. Among the many texts that were rediscovered only texts like *Sangam Anthologies*, *Tolkapiyam*, *Thirukkural*, *Silappathikaram* and *Manimekalai* were commonly used to sculpt the 'golden past' of the Tamils. Attempts to date the classical texts also revolved predominantly around them. Texts like *Seevakachinthamani* or *Perunkaathai* were literally nonexistent in such debates compared to the former group. Two reasons can be stated for this kind of a negation. Firstly, it was because they were comparatively less ancient and that they would not help in fixing the 'ultimate ancientness' of Tamil literature and culture and consequently the Tamils. Secondly, the latter group would not be of much help in painting a Pre-Aryan Tamil society as they exhibit much influence of the so called 'Aryan' values like caste discriminations and other superstitions. This clarifies that the sole aim of the proponents was to date the so called 'uncorrupted' Tamil texts as ancient as possible and construct a pre-Aryan socio-cultural history of the Tamils from it. However, as has been repeatedly noted by scholars even these selective 'uncorrupted', pre-Aryan, classical Tamil texts contain the so called 'Aryan/Brahminical' values like discriminations based on caste or certain ritualistic and superstitious practices. For instance, in *Silappathikaram* one sees Kannagi cursing the city of Madurai to burn to ashes by tearing off one of her breasts and throwing it on it. While this exhibit the superstitiousness and mysticality on which the texts banks on, she gives relaxation for certain group of people from becoming a prey to the fire. Brahmins are one among the group. This has kindled many debates among the scholars in ascribing the ancient Tamil society and culture as caste-free. However such instances were carefully negated and ignored especially by Anna and the DMK, as extrapolations.

literature that emerged during modernity. In contrast to the pre-modern conception of literature as an exclusive realm of aesthetics, here literature becomes a mirror of the life of the people. T. C. Sreenivasa Ayengar begins his “Preface” to Mu. Raghava Ayengar’s *Cheran Senguttuvan* by strongly establishing this belief about literature:

It doesn’t require any very detailed statement of the reasons why a very correct knowledge and appreciation of the literature of a country are needed. For, the literature of a country is a mirror which reflects the civilization and institutions of a country very vividly in all its stages of development. That a knowledge of the country’s past and of its progress or transition is essential by way of stimulus to future progress, is conceded by all. (1)

It is in such a context that the newly founded ancient Tamil texts attain a new value and function as ‘evidences’ of the history of Tamil people. Anna’s perception of literature maintains a strong bond with this modern historical logic. For him,

Art is the characteristic feature of the people’s (of an ethnicity/race) interiority. It is an example of the clarity, bravery etc that occur among that people. Thus, intelligence declares that art would transform and grew according to the growth of a race. (6 *Theeparavattum*)

It is from this same logic that he openly supported the Dravidar Khazhagam’s decision to publicly burn *Kambaramayanam* and *Periyapuranam* – significant Vaishnavite and Saivite religious texts – for their supposed representation of Dravidians in a mean light and for upholding caste²⁹. In these debates Annadurai, who supported the burning of these texts, and his dissenters represent two different positions with regard to art and literature. For

²⁹ The two ground-breaking debates took place in 1943. The first one in which Annadurai and Eezhathu Adigal debated with R.P. Sethupillai and Srinivas took place in February 1943. It was arranged by the Thamizh khazhagam (Tamil association) of the Law College, Chennai and was presided over by C.M. Ramachandra Chettiyar, Director of the Hindu Religious Paripalana Nilaiyam. The second one in which Annadurai debated with Somasundra Bharathi took place in March 1943 at Trichy. It was arranged in the Thevaanga Paadasaalai (library) hall and was presided over by (E)A. Ramasamy, the principal of Salem college.

instance, R.P. Sethupillai and Somasundara Bharathi represent a position that defends texts like *Kambaramayanam* for its aesthetic value. Conversely, Annadurai opposes them for their political and ideological value. For him the *Ramayana* is a text that propagates Aryan supremacy over the Dravidians. He argues that it is written during the period in which Aryanism gained hold in Southern India through cunning and treachery. Thus, the author Kamban, deemed as a Tamil traitor, strategically portrays the Aryan king Rama as a supreme being by making him an embodiment of all virtues and the Dravidian king Ravana as a mean, lustful and ruthless creature. Such a portrayal he argues would inculcate only inferiority in the minds of Tamil people.

Thus, for Anna the aesthetic value that these texts possess would only assist their dangerous and predatory political function – to inculcate inferiority and cowardice in the minds of Tamil people and make them feel low and subordinate. He remarks that:

For Tamils, those (texts) that give Tamil doctrines/ethics, Tamil manner/*murai*, and that provide qualities like morality, *veeram* (bravery), *karpu* (vaguely can be translated as chastity), *kaadhhal* (love) etc should remain as art. In contrast, those texts that praise other races, that give supremacy to them and make Tamils lose their self-confidence in themselves and to think low about themselves should be burnt down. (7 *Theeparavattum*)

This appraisal of a literary piece according to its contemporary political function among the masses is strongly situated in the new consciousness of a united Dravidian-Tamil identity as something different from that of or even stands in opposition to that of Aryan-Brahmin.

Similarly, the sources that Anna uses to substantiate his argument, in contrast to the dissenters, is also very modern in nature. Anna substantiates his position by quoting and drawing arguments from people like Sir. John Marshall, an European scholar who countered Maxmuller's theory of the intellectual and cultural supremacy of the Aryans, P. Sundaram

Pillai, one of the significant Tamil scholars of modernity, Maraimalai Adigal, a polyglot modern Saivite intellectual and Tamil scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru, a significant statesman of modern India. Thus one can see here how Anna's argument foreground values and beliefs that emerge in relation with modern knowledge systems. Whereas the dissenters cite Thiru Gnanasambandar, one of the four significant Saivite saints who is neither a modern nor a secular figure, and draws their evidences from the puranas like *Thevaaram* and some such sources which could generally be branded as 'religious' and 'pre-modern'.

The references regarding how the crowd clapped and jeered during Anna's speech³⁰, how these debates were published in booklet form under the name *Theeparavattum* (*Let the Fire Spread Wide*) and how his victory has been celebrated continuously reveal to us that Annadurai's argument appeased the majority. On seeing their incapability to hold a grip over the mass the dissenters could do nothing but to invent mockingly mundane excuses – like not feeling well or it's getting late for train – to leave the place before the announcement of the result. The retreat of both these scholars, the excited behaviour of the crowd during Annadurai's speech along with the modern spaces in which such discussions took place – one in a college and other in a library – account for the emergence of a generation for whom the political function of literature rather than its aesthetics seems relevant and appealing. However it is not to say that they have no aesthetic value. But the aesthetic value of a literary piece for them cannot be separated from its contemporary political function. It is on this logic that selected texts like *Sangam Anthologies*, *Silappathikaram* and *Thirukkural* become the sources of Tamil history.

Iyothee Thoss' and Maraimalai Adigal's use of these texts aimed at highlighting the mythical or religious. But Anna carefully eliminated what one would call as the 'imaginary',

³⁰ Somasundara Bharathi, one of the dissenters himself records it in his speech that the mass clapped thunderously during Anna's speech. (48 *Theeparavattum*)

‘mythical’ or ‘religious’. This places literary sources in the singular realm of history. The way Anna substantiates the bravery of the Tamils and deception of Brahmins also tells us about the epistemological foundation that ascribes a truth value to this discourse.

Anna refers to a wide range of sources: oriental missionary and scholarly writings; writings and speeches of modern native scholars; the historical, philological and anthropological works of European scholars on India, Tamil and Dravidian languages; dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps and atlases, Sangam literature, epics like *Ramayana* and *Silappathikaram*, Smiritis and Ithihasas, medieval Tamil grammar . He then substantiates these evidences with contemporary social and political condition. This fascinating mixture of sources, nevertheless were mindfully categorized into two groups: authentic/unauthentic, real/imaginary, history/story, objective/subjective, factual/non-factual, scientific/unscientific and thus legitimate/illegitimate. This categorization and labeling of sources, the way one has been privileged over the other and the yardstick used informs us the new set of beliefs and values that constitute this subjectivity.

For instance, the natural deceptive, cunning and timid nature of the Aryan/Brahmins were justified by quoting the French missionary Abbe J.A.Dubois’ work *The Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* written in 1807. Dubois’ stay in India for more than 30 years adds a factual value to his view of his first hand knowledge about the Brahmins. Then it was supplemented by bringing in present day analogies of the cunningness of Brahmins. While in the first step a kind of authenticity is gained for the Dravidianists’ charge on the Aryan/Brahmins by quoting a oriental scholarly work deemed as ‘objective and first-handed’, the contemporary analogy is drawn to show the relevance and empirical value of such a charge and the unchanging nature of the Brahmins even in the present day.

Similarly, while talking about the qualities of cunningness, duplicity/disloyalty, double or janus-faced, laughing sheepishly (an undignified act for attaining positions and to get favours) etc that Abbe notes about the Brahmins, Anna justifies it by drawing a difference between the Puranic and historical time. He argues that though it has been said that the kings of the puranic times were subservient to Brahmins and offered anything that the latter wanted including their crown, in reality the Brahmins had been subservient to the kings of historical times by working under them as their Diwans and ministers. This has been supported by drawing the list of Brahmin Diwans, ministers, and premiers in the contemporary India. The timid and cowardly nature of the Brahmins is justified with the example of how in their Puranas and Ithihasas it is described that they got victory by the help of god, or through the power of mantras rather than their own might. In contrast, the natural brave character of the Tamilians is justified by citing the futile attempts of emperors who tried to capture Tamil land. One can see how the Brahmins are branded as hypocrites by 'revealing' the fakeness of the Puranas and Ithihasas which they celebrate and ascribe a superior value. This has been done by contrasting it with the historical evidences which are labeled as 'authentic', 'objective', 'scientific' and 'empirical'. One can also see how he overturns the moral and ethical ground on which the Puranic and Ithihasa narratives sustain by challenging it with the modern conception of 'power' and 'strength' constructed out of the debates of modernity. Such a perception measures the worth of a civilization in terms of its development in fortification, planning of towns and cities, trade skills, development of arts and literature, political and personal discipline etc. He also marks that Abbe could see the Brahmins in their true colour because he was not caught in the Aryan deception. Clearly, Abbe Dubois could escape from the deceptive web of the Aryans not because of his ethnicity but because of his scholarship which is modern and scientific.

The defense of his proposition – the natural deceptive and brave nature of the Brahmins and Tamils respectively – is done through a new set of beliefs and values that emerged with the stabilization of modern knowledge systems. This new set of beliefs and values are also predominant in the pedagogical methods of Anna. His rhetoric is coloured with anecdotes and stories drawn from a wide range of subjects. They include ancient Tamil literary texts like *Sangam Anthologies*, *Silappathikaram*, *Thirukkural* and so on, literary works of national and international significance which were available in English, stories from the world histories about revolutions and freedom struggles and anecdotes from life histories of noteworthy international revolutionaries, politicians, social reformists and so on. Though common to both his writings and speeches, such details frequently appeared in his ‘Thambikku Kadithangal’ (Letters to the Younger Brother). His letters are known for their pedagogic value. Anna would give summaries and essences of the books he read in English. Books such as Rahul Sankrityayan’s *A Journey from Volga to the Ganges*, Bernard Shaw’s *The Apple Cart*, stories of the passionate and self-sacrificing freedom struggle of the people of Cyprus Island, references to French revolution, Russian revolution and Cuban revolution, anecdotes about international political scenario were frequently discussed. A skip through his journal *Dravida Nadu* would reveal to us how references and stories of Fidel Castro, Father Makarios, Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy, Kenneth Kaunda, Jean Paul Sartre, Emily Zola, Rousseau, Voltaire, Marx, Stalin and others appeared along with the Anti-Hindi poems, write-ups and the pictorial representations of the Sangam literary scenes describing the past glory of Tamil Nadu. All these aimed at inculcating a modern, scientific and an authentic knowledge in his cadres.

Similarly, in Anna’s writings and speeches one can often see his advices and suggestions to his *thambi* about how to indulge in political debates. The advertisement of

Namnadu, the party magazine of the DMK published in Anna's *Dravida Nadu* can be cited as an example here. The advertisement goes as follows:

Have this in your shirt pocket.

You go to roam around,

To market

To converse with others

To attend relatives' family functions

(There) you seek explanations about the misdeeds or harmfulness of the totalitarianism of the Congress – you give common observations – That's not enough!

You need to give evidences, statistical values, research data and so on.

“*Namnadu*” gives all these. Keep one issue of it in your shirt pocket all the time to show to those who seek explanation. Having “*Namnadu*” with you is equal to having the leaders of the party with you! Do you have *Namnadu* with you? (7 *Kanchi* 18.9. 1966)

In this one can see how Anna encourages the party members to use evidences, statistical reports, and research details while indulging in political debates in mundane public places like parks, wedding gatherings, tea shops and roads. Such an interest of Anna to politicize the public, beyond class and educational status played a significant role in shaping the subjects' perception of him as a force that can lead them to a promising future.

Anna also continuously propagated the significance of modern education and knowledge systems in the empowerment of the middle and lower class/caste Tamils. His faith in western rationalism clearly emanated in such propagations. His rhetoric shows a strong belief in the modern, secular pedagogical spaces like schools, colleges, libraries and so on in the progress of human condition. Thus, in spite of his ideological difference he appreciates

C.P. Ramaswami Iyer's attempt to found a college in Mylapore. He observes that though C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar is a Brahmin and a conservative in many things his attempts to open a college should be appreciated for it would facilitate education for youngsters (55-58 *Naam Ellaam Ore Kudumbam*). Such a belief in modern education, established by many socio-political forces of modernity was widely shared during this context. Similarly he sees library as a space of empowerment. He humorously talks about the insignificance that the Tamils show as:

In this country our people build houses. They construct many different rooms in it. Cattle shed on one side, treasure room on one side, kitchen on another. Even if they forget other rooms they won't forget to make a room for the worship of gods. But they won't even day-dream about having a study room comprised of knowledge-providing books. A study room is very important, very necessary, a thing which we can't afford to ignore. Even then it wouldn't occur in their minds. (35 *Arignar Anna Ninaivu Malar*)

In addition to it he also continuously propagated the necessity of libraries among the masses and insisted that his party cadres to open libraries and reading halls in every town and village. These reading halls and libraries opened on his advice became places for reading and indulging in political debates.

In a context that established modern knowledge systems and governmental techniques as authentic knowledge gaining sources of oneself the kind of significance that Anna attached to spaces like colleges and libraries – which are primary places where such knowledge can be obtained – situates him as symbol of progress.

His rhetoric also shows a strong belief on modern machinery in the emancipation of human condition. Throughout the 50s the major campaign against the partiality of the

Congress government at the centre as against the south is based on the funds that are allotted for the industrial developments in the North. Anna strongly believed and propagated scientific inventions, industries and machineries as essential mediums of emancipation, empowerment and development. His observation that “Pushcart/handcart makes the human an animal. Whereas [scientific inventions like] lorry makes the human, human” substantiates the subject’s perception of him. He also proclaimed that these advancements are necessary not just for the economic well-being but also for its cultural well-being. Significant of this sort is his critique of Gandhi’s anti-British propagation of handloom. It is in this regard that his criticism on the handloom propagation has to be placed. Talking against the *Khadhar* - cloth woven by handloom with hand-spun yarn, and handloom propagation of the congress and Gandhi Anna observed that using handloom in an age of technological advancement is a journey backwards into the uncivilized world. Such criticisms are strongly rooted in a new humanist logic which situates the dignity, supremacy and equality of humans as fundamental for any development. In addition to these his ability to write and talk impressively in English - which was realized as an essential skill to get national and international acclamation also helped identify him as a scholar.

These moments opened a concrete ground for the subjects to differentiate him from other leaders and establish an affinity with him. The way they were repeatedly quoted and celebrated by the subjects shows their indelible role in the construction of him as a force leading to an empowering future.

3.3.2.2. Anna as a Democrat

Anna was also frequently referred as a ‘true democrat’ by the Tamil subjects. He is perceived so in relation to his democratic tendency towards his subordinates rising up to power and position. *Anna Malars* and various books praise him as someone who does not

hesitate in recognizing and praising the skills and talents of his subordinates. He feels happy about his subordinates getting prominence and publicity among the masses. This recognition develops a contrast between Anna and other leaders, especially Periyar. Here, the democratic nature of Anna shows not just his magnanimity and generosity but his capability to lead the Tamils.

A notable example of this kind is a booklet entitled *Dravidar Kazhagam Kalainthathu En? (Why did the Dravidian Movement Disintegrated?)* published in February 1959 by a Nadunilaimai Padhippagam, meaning “Impartial/unbiased publishers” – a name surely not accidental. In the publishers note it is claimed that both the writer and publisher do not belong to any party. They praise and value the democratic ideals of Anna and the social service of Periyar. They try to declare that it is not written due to personal hatred (for anyone) or of vengeance. Such affirmations and declarations reveal an interest to frame their articulation as unprejudiced. Claiming to explore the reasons behind the disintegration of the DK, this booklet attempts to list the qualities of a good leader. It does it through a juxtaposition of Periyar and Anna. Referring to the fact that Periyar often referred to himself as a *sarvaathikaari* i.e. dictator of the party and considered it as his personal property, this booklet puns on the word *thaniperun thalaivar* (which in English means ‘a great, incomparable leader’) which if split as *thani* and *perumthalaivar* means a “single” and “supreme leader” to refer to the totalitarian nature of Periyar. This is said with reference to the expulsion of the members of the DK by labeling them as the enemies of the party just because they questioned or criticized his attitude. In contrast to it, Anna is depicted as someone who deeply believes in democracy. This comparison holds ground via the concrete difference in their attitude towards party. When 72 years old Periyar announced in his

magazine *Kudi Arasu* about his plan to marry Maniammai³¹ a 26 years old woman – daughter of a DK cadre, he explained it as nothing but an arrangement of an heir to the properties belonging to him and the party. When many, including Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammal – a significant woman activist from a Devadasi community who fought for the abolition of Devadasi system, condemned Periyar’s decision and asked him to call it back as it goes against the very ideals he was propagating throughout his life³², Anna’s opposition arose from the ground that there cannot be an heir to a modern, democratic movement. In a long, emotional and sensational article titled as “*Vetkappadukirom – Vedanaipadukirom – Illai virattapadukirom*” (We are Ashamed – Distressed – No, We are chased or driven away) published in *Dravida Nadu* on 3rd July 1949, Anna, as a collective voice of all those young members of the DK who felt hurt and ashamed by such an announcement of Periyar expressed his condemnation for such a feudal practice of appointing a heir to a movement. He exclaimed that:

We do not know why the worry that Hyderabad Nizam should have, the worry that should occur to the ascetics who head the religious establishments has occurred to the leader of a rationalist movement. Why do we need heirship? Whose arrangement is it? To which age it belongs to? Is the arrangement of an heir to a movement democratically acceptable? Can it provide us victory practically? To pass the Dravidian Movement and the properties that are said to belong to another person through heirship are they only properties of a dynastic system? (8-c)

He called it a ‘New Crowning’ and hinted at the feudal and undemocratic character of a leader who sought a successor based on his personal trust ignoring those who have served

³¹ Maniammai was the daughter of a DK cadre. After her father’s death, she left her native place, Vellore (a town situated in the Northern Tamil Nadu), to stay Periyar in Erode. She dedicated herself to the service of Periyar after that – like cooking for him, taking care of him while travelling and so on.

³² Periyar was an active champion against mismatch marriages where an wealthy old man marries a young girl from poor families for his pleasure and make the life of this young girl miserable.

the party. This was a significant issue which pulled many away from the DK towards Anna and was instrumental not just in the formation of the DMK as separate party but also in the establishment of Anna as an ardent believer in the values of democracy in the Tamil public sphere. The fact that Periyar openly announced many times that he needs people who can blindly listen and follow him. He even said that till he is heads the party others should even keep their conscience away. (122 Arunan) to his instructions and follow and Anna incorporated and valued the opinions of even the ordinary cadres in the significant decisions of the party – like conducting ballot voting among the 60000 members of the DMK to decide whether the DMK should enter into electoral politics and so on – is the foundation on which such a comparison holds ground. In addition, Anna’s rhetoric also shows certain features which attained it a status of being democratic and representative of the collective. One often comes across phrases like “you might ask me”, “I know this is what you want to say” or “your very look tells me what you are about to ask” in Anna’s letters. This style of language gives an impression that it takes into account and addresses the opinions, doubts, questions and emotions that the addressee share with regard to the issue that is addressed. The decision that emerges seems a collective opinion rather than a dogmatic one imposed on the addressee by an obstinate author or speaker. His purpose of inventing a new form called “Letters to the Younger Brother” further strengthens it. In his Pongal greetings Anna explains the function of his letters as, “Letters to the younger brother had been very useful to explain the problems, to clarify/rectify doubts, to wipe out fears, to give counter to counters, to hail even those who abuse us as “Long live the abuser” (156 Arumugam).

Explaining how this form creates a site for dialogue, he also admits his happiness in using this form. One can see here how the form is perceived not just as a means to pass on his ideas and instructions but becomes a space for discussion, conversation, clarification and explanation. In other words it emerges as a foundation for their unity, dialogue and co-action.

Besides these his propagations of democracy – like his series of letters to the younger brother “*Ellorum Innattu Mannar*” (“All are kings of this country”) also established a democratic image of Anna.

However, such a conception of a leader is constituted by the work of many forces that constitute the specific socio-political context. In India, this is the context of transition from a politics based on intellectual debates to a mass-based politics. This transition brought visibility to the middle and lower-middle classes’ – sections who so far did not have any direct role in politics. This brought along significant alterations in the conception of power in the political realm. Material properties, caste titles, family names, and so on which determined the political structure were replaced by a new power of public recognition and support³³. This new political power and the production of a new set of desires, dreams and aspirations in relation to the spaces like print, public stage, cinema and legislative assembly and parliament play a significant role in the constitution of the Dravidian/Tamil subjectivity. The Dravidian/Tamil subject’s desires, dreams and aspirations to reach these spaces creates a binary between Periyar and Anna.

Anna shares an experience he had with Periyar. Periyar had been invited to talk in a college in North India and Anna was his English translator. Anna’s able translation of Periyar impressed the students so much that they requested him to talk. When Anna conveyed this to Periyar, the latter asked him to tell the audience that he came there only to translate. The students requested thrice. But Periyar was stern in his denial. Anna in spite of his desire to

³³ This happens mostly in accordance with a shift in the economic bases or sources of their institution. When previously the intellectual debates based political system/operation mostly relied on and was largely patronized by the landlords and big merchant or business class, the transition to mass-based political system marks a gradual change in the economy of these patrons. In our case one sees the emergence of the drama troupes, drama and cinema actors as the major economical source of the DMK. These two mediums namely drama and cinema, are the products that depended on the markets. As products solely depended on the modern mass consumer markets, they relied mostly on the middle, lower-middle and lower classes for their business. In such a context it was the mass/common man who becomes the patron of the DMK. And it also has to be noted that many groups comprised of ordinary or common men have also made their monetary contributions to the DMK and such instances were repeatedly reminded, highlighted and boasted.

talk, explains how he went back to his seat with grief (47 Parimalam). It comes to show Periyar's authoritarian nature also his insensitivity towards the desires and passions of the youngsters. This is a generation which shared a strong passion towards mediums that could give them popularity and visibility among the mass. Karunanithi's account of his ardent passion with print which compelled him to send articles to Anna's *Dravida Nadu* and drove him to begin his own hand-written magazine at very young age is a significant example here (132 *Nenjukku Needhi*). These show the strong and irresistible desire created by the socio-political and cultural climate of that period towards these spaces. While the participation in these spaces becomes the subject's desire, Periyar's sheer insensitivity to them makes him an autocrat.

In contrast to it, Anna's journal *Dravida Nadu* was a space for young and aspiring writers and poets. Its first page carried poems of many unknown writers. Anna also welcomed new speakers to get on to the stage and openly proclaimed in his journal that the two things that he strictly does not follow from Periyar are: "1) don't admit more than ten members in the party 2) Do not allow more than four persons to get on the stage" (9 *Kanchi* 18.9.1966). He appreciated the talents of their subordinates and expressed delight and pride when they attain fame and position. For instance, when Nedunchezian was selected as the General Secretary of the party Anna invited him happily in the public meeting as: "Come forward, Thambi, Come to Lead us, Come, We are waiting to act/work as per your order". It is this sensitivity of Anna towards the desires and dreams for fame and power that make the subjects look at him as a democrat. While the insensitivity of Periyar has been interpreted as authoritarian, feudal and pre-modern, the sensitivity of Anna has been seen as modern and progressive. This also accounts for the subject's identification of Periyar as '*thanthai*' – father, an totalitarian patriarch, and Anna as elder brother – a egalitarian patriarch who is power-sharing, teaches and equips his younger ones. Thus, the praises and eulogies of the

Tamil subject on Anna is their identification of him as a channel to attain its desires, dreams and aspirations to reach spaces of new power. However, Anna is the machinery that produces these desires and aspirations.

3.3.3. Anna as a Body of Domestic Love and care

In addition to be a realm of taste and progress Anna had been continuously represented as a family man. The pages of *Anna Malar* present him as a perfect head of a happy family. This is clear from how nearly every issue carried photos of Anna with his wife Rani where they either would stand or sit close together (Ref. Fig. Nos. 4,5 & 6). These photos depict them within the boundaries of modern conjugal intimacy. Other photos include Anna carrying a small child – his grandchildren – playing with it, kissing it and so on (Ref. Fig. No. 7,8 & 9). They all represent him as a lovable head of a modern, nuclear family. Why does a magazine highlight and propagate the personal side of a political leader? Why does it demonstrate him as someone who has a strong association with family and upholds family ideal?

We also see Anna attaching significance to the domestic and it has been repeatedly praised by his subordinates. For instance, MGR in his memoirs recollects how even after Anna had become the chief minister of Tamil Nadu took care to resolve a dispute between his party man and his wife. Such reminiscences in this discourse construct the party as a family. One can note that the DMK is continuously metaphorized as a family. The kind of relation that he shared with his political followers and subordinates also is overtly characterized by rhetoric of domesticity. The diminutive of Annadurai, ‘Anna’ – as how he was addressed with love by his followers which later emerged as common way of addressing him in the Tamil sphere – means ‘elder brother’ in English. Anna also calls his supporters and subordinates as ‘thambi’ which in English means the younger brother. This shows how

domestic fraternity is something that characterizes the political relation in this discourse. The letters that Anna wrote for his followers, which occupies a significant genre of his political pedagogy, are called as ‘thambikku kadidhangaal’ – Letters to the younger brother, and he signs the letters as “Annan, Annadurai” – “Your elder brother, Annadurai”. In addition to being a place for political interactions these letters were also a place for the construction of an emotional and sentimental bondage between the writer and his readers. It is interesting to note that in these letters Anna takes the position of a matured and caring elder brother who takes pleasure in the happiness and growth of his younger brother. The thambi is portrayed as an immature but innocent, energetic and obedient younger brother who looks at his elder brother for guidance and counsels. As we already discussed in the last section, Letters to the younger Brother is a stylized genre invented by Anna to discuss, share and come to a consensus about political issues. And it is a genre significantly marked for the political pedagogical function. But this form also had an emotional function. In Anna’s own words, it is through this genre that the thambi accepted him (Anna) as his elder brother. It is this genre which fetched him a permanent place in the hearts of his thambi (155 Pa. Arumugam). Equally interesting is the way how political instructions and guidance of Anna are also overtly marked by domestic sentiments. For instance, while instructing the party members not to indulge in quarrels with the police and conduct themselves properly in the public during processions and demonstration, Anna warns them that if they misbehave he would not call a traitor but would not regard them as his thambi (220 Aarumugam).

We have already seen in the discussion on Anna’s subtle satire in 3.2.1., how Kannadasan marks that indulging in the demeaning, politically uncultured, direct ways of attack would deny them (the followers of Anna) the opportunity of being his ‘thambi’. Anna had been considered by his followers as a member of their own family and was openly proclaimed as head of both [their] families and party (9 Thiruvilakku Annamalar 1964).

However, not just the relationship between Anna and his followers, but also their relationship with Periyar is constructed in domestic terms in this discourse (174 Ma. Nadarasan, *Thambikku Annavin Kadithangal Vol.2*). Even the influential and politically significant write-up that Anna wrote on the announcement of Periyar's second marriage plan carries domestic sentiments and emotions. Since Periyar was perceived as their own father his act is said to have caused both shame and grief for the youngster of the party. Anna's speech at the Robinson park on the day of the foundation of DMK, as Arunan rightly marks, resembles that of a grown up son who splits up from his father on the issue of the latter's second marriage to start a new family (8Arunan). It is announced that the leader position in the new party DMK would be kept vacant for Periyar to come and occupy it while Anna would just be the general secretary of the party. This emotional relationship with Periyar continues to mark Anna's rhetoric in the following decades too. This shows that the politics and political relationship in this discourse is built on domestic values. In other words, domestic is the lens through which they perceive and cognize politics.

How are we to interpret this cognition? Can it be seen as a feudal outlook as it has been critiqued by scholars like V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai? Would not such a critique consider or label the strong emotional attachment that the subjects exhibit for Anna as a mere passive fall of the crowd into the well-planned traps of Anna and other DMK leaders? Does not it consider the mass associated with Anna as passive receivers and offer the latter a 'larger than life' image? Here, it seems necessary that one needs to take into account the active participation of the masses in the process of history-making.

L. Singaram in his work remarks that the domesticisation of political relations was helpful in drawing a large non-Brahmin, middle and lower middle class crowd towards politics. This necessitates one to closely study the nature of domesticity that marks Anna's discourse.

The interpretation of this domesticisation as ‘feudal’ fails to look into its modern dimension. The domestic/family that characterizes Anna’s discourse is founded on a new set of values. It is more of a nuclear family. The man and woman are not tied by the ritualistic marriage but by their mutual love. That is, domestic here does not refer to a ritualistic space but a secular plane constituted solely by love and pleasure. This is a modern imagination (For a detailed discussion on the nature of domesticity in Anna’s discourse see Section. 5.2).

As we saw in the last section, Anna’s propagation of libraries shows how he imagines domestic as inclusive of modern knowledge gaining spaces like libraries and study rooms. This shows us the presence of a new cognizance of the ‘domestic’ which resists us from terming it as feudal. It is in such a context that domestic becomes a space that encompasses new kinds of conjugal pleasures and secular pedagogy. In this newly defined space the subjects can imagine a political leader as a head both of their party and family. Similarly, the domestic fraternity that characterized the political relations in the DMK also takes the biological affiliation beyond the pre-modern boundaries of caste and religion. This domestic has played a significant role in the strengthening of the DMK in the political plane. Kannadasan’s³⁴ observation that “If the familial love that existed in the DMK had existed in the Congress, neither the khazhagam (DMK) would have grown nor the Congress would have become weak” (61 *Naan Paartha Arasiyal*) and “unlike the familial love that the DMK had, people in the Congress behaved like business men for which many disliked or hated the idea of merging the Thamizh Arasu Khahagam with the Congress” (ibid) reveals the subject’s strong approval of this domesticisation.

³⁴ a significant Tamil lyricist and writer, who was with the DMK till 1961 and split away from it with E.V.K. Sampath to form the Tamizh Thesiya Kazhagam which was later merged with the Congress,

3.4. Conclusion

The above three sections discussed in detail show Anna had been the field of various desires, passions, beliefs, aspirations, dreams and values of the modern Tamil subjectivity. Critics see these desires and values as exhibiting certain contradictions. For instance, Anna who produced a taste for political decorum has also produced a desire for double entendre observations and sensuous Tamil rhetoric. While on the one hand he critiques and dismisses the tradition that portray women as sheer sexual objects on the other hand the narrative of the same feed the desire of seeing women as sexual objects. Anna has thus been a field of values like democracy, equality and secularism and also domestic love, care, benevolence. These contradictions that characterize the subject's relation with Anna also characterize their relation with Tamil language. The discourse of *Tamilpatru* comprises the rhetoric of rights (where the fight for Tamil becomes the citizenship rights of the subjects), the rhetoric of domesticity (where it becomes the duty of a husband or the head of the family) and a rhetoric of loyalty (where protecting Tamil becomes the fidelity of the Tamil subject towards his mother).

These contradictions are seen as evidences that highlight the falsity of their claims to progress and empowerment. However, one should note that, seeing such contradictions arise out of an understanding of subjectivity as a cohesive entity constructed by consistent logical thinking. In such an understanding these contradictions are seen as evidences exhibiting the duplicity of the progressive self that this ideology claims to project. Whereas, seeing subjectivity as an effect of the power struggle among various discourses helps one to go beyond such an understanding. It helps us see how at the material level subjectivity is a field constituted by various qualities, desires, pleasures, aspirations and values that need not necessarily come under a cohesive or logical order.