PREFACE

The doctoral thesis entitled “THE LIFE AND WORKS OF MARIA LOURDAMMAL SIMON” undertakes a comprehensive study to unfold the remarkable career of a woman who emerged herself from the subaltern study of the society and reached the position of a successful minister at a time when the women’s participation in politics remained very limited. As the Minister of Local Administration and Fisheries in the second Ministry of K.Kamaraj for a full term from 13th April 1957 to 1st March 1962. She had succeeded to champion the cause of the suppressed and oppressed sections of society throughout the state. She stood for the betterment and emancipation of the toiling and moiling sections of the people. Within the short span of five years she excelled herself as an efficient administration in local self government and fisheries. Her period of administration witnessed tremendous progress in both the departments which still continues as a record without any parallels.

A series a legislation like the Madras District Municipalities (Amendment) Bill, 1958, the Madras City Municipal (Amendment) Bill, 1958, the Madras District Development Councils and Panchayats Act, 1961, Extension of the Term of office of Municipal Councilors Bill, 1958, Local Authorities Financial Bill 1961 and white paper were enacted mainly through her initiative. She took meticulous care in the implementation of its provisions with a spirit of commitment to the cause of the people. In her tenure the local self government under different levels including corporation municipal, district, block and Panchayat assumed greater importance not only as cradles of democracy but as major democratic apparatus for the welfare of the common people.

During her period of service far reaching reforms were introduced in the fisheries sector. A series of innovative technologies were adopted and implemented for the betterment of the Fisheries Department. The Government concentrated its attention in all
the stages of fisheries with special importance to collection, preservation and marketing of fish products. The traditional system of catching was replaced by more scientific and innovative devices including mechanised boats, boats building yards, nylon nets and other better infra structural facilities. Advanced hydro biological and technological measures like ice plant, cold storage, fish curing yards, salt subsidy schemes etc promoted the better and durable preservation of the excess catches. Similarly due attention was given for the rapid transportation of fish products, maintenance of fish markets and their marketing facilities. She succeeded to utilise all the schemes envisaged in the Second Five Year Plan and laid the strong base for the Third Five Year Plan. She became instrumental in attaining the multi faceted progress of the fisher folk.

Besides the reforms in the administrative sector she concentrated her special attention towards the maximum utilisation of marine resources and endeavours for pearl fishery, chank fishery, shank liver oil extraction and inland fishing. Utilisation of irrigation and hydro-electric reservoirs for upbringing fisheries assumed greater dimensions. The Inland fisheries under the direct control of the Fisheries Department earned more importance in its proper management and scientific conservation.

Several welfare measures were initiated for the betterment of the fisherfolk through the formation of Fishermen Co-operative Societies and District federations both Marine and Inland. They tried to ease the financial crisis of their fellowmen through easy loans at a lower rate of interest. It paved the way for the durable socio-economic changes among the fisherfolk. She wanted to bring them into the mainstream society through the construction of a network of coastal roads, providing better housing facilities relief measures during times of calamities and community development programmes. Special importance was given for the enforcement of education among the uneducated sections of the society.
In an age of women empowerment and feminism the life and works of Maria Lourdammal Simon occupies a predominant place as a pioneer who stood for Gender equality. She became the embodiment of affection, compassion, honesty, grit and self-discipline. Guided by enlightened and sophisticated ideas she stood for optimism, positivity, piety and faith in God. Such a remarkable career is hitherto left unnoticed by the historians and scholars. So far no concrete attempt has been undertaken to portray the life and career of Maria Lourdammal Simon. The present treatise is a dispassionate and unbiased attempt to sketch the Life and Works of Maria Lourdammal Simon based on primary sources supplemented by secondary and other corroborative sources.

First of all I humbly place a record my deep sense of thanks to the Almighty God who has all along been showering the choicest blessings upon me to accomplish this great task of research.

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John Lings V