CHAPTER - I

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ON MARIA LOURDHAMMAL SIMON

Women are considered as the embodiment of God. While in the young age, “she was under parents’ protection, as adult under husband’s protection and in old age, under her son’s protection.” This was the status of women in ancient India. Historically, they achieved a lot from time immemorial to the present day, women occupies a penultimate chapter in history.¹ There is no world without women, They only decided the destiny of mankind right from the days of its genesis. Thereafter “Man for the world and woman for man became the popular dictum.”²

Mahatma Gandhi rightly observed that when a woman enjoys the freedom of liberty and equality in practice, real freedom of a country is realised. In the past, Indian women suffered under various disabilities and their life was questioned from several angles.³ But surprisingly an emancipation movement took place only in the last quarter of 18th century. The social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Karve, Malabari, Sankaran Nair, Mahatma Gandhi, Saraladevi Chaudhurani and others promoted the cause of women. Saraladevi Chaudhurani, a remarkable personality, was both feminist and a nationalist who played a crucial role in both the social reform and nationalist movement. Further, she was one of the first women to see the need for an association for women.

Political participation by women in the massive popular struggles opened up new vistas of possibilities for their empowerment. The status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in sharing of power and in the value given by society to the role of women. Women’s political background shows that they

¹ Sharma and Usha, Women Education in Ancient and Medieval India, New Delhi, 1995, p. 70
are far away from the equal status along with men. Equal status is not enjoyed by women and men anywhere in this world and there is difference in the opportunities available for them. In the power hierarchy, women remain at the lowest level and are powerless which is due to their illiteracy, lack of awareness, lack of information and knowledge about markets and skills. Without women’s political empowerment and active political participation in decision making processes, women’s life-situation cannot be altered. The two major forces which acted as catalysts in the achievements of political equality of women were the national movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

History is a witness to the subjugation and sufferings of women since the inception of civilizations. With her gentle manners and natural tenderness or lack of physical hardness she has always found herself hidden behind a mist of illusions. While the male dominated society enjoys all freedoms, women community suffers from lack of awareness to utilize the opportunities envisaged. However, the womenfolk over the period played a vital role on various issues pertaining to nation building. But their participation in freedom struggle or public affairs has not enhanced their position since the nature of family commitments inhabited their entry into public space.

During the early period of Indian History, most of the women kept away from politics. Yet a few made marks in war, diplomacy and administration. However, the medieval period produced some prominent women administrators and rulers. During the First War of Independence of 1857 Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi emerged as a great

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6 Raj Pruthi and Bela Rani Sharma, op.cit., p.170.
8 Kothai Pillai, J., Women and Empowerment, New Delhi, 1995, p. 177.
heroine. Except Rani Lakshmi Bai, the other prominent women were Rani Trace Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Lalita Bakshi Talkari, Kasibai, Motizal and Rani of Tulsipur. Their extraordinary courage, integrity, self-respect, combined with the spirit of sacrifice, dedication and devotion to motherland, made them the champions of freedom movement. They symbolized the spirit and qualities of Indian womanhood. They also surpassed them all by jumping quickly into politics in large number and demanded political rights equal to those of men. Thus for the womenfolk, the struggle for independence was not a mere struggle to attain freedom from the bondage of British rule, it was a crusade to liberate themselves from the social evils and the socio-economic inequalities and discriminations.

Women played a significant role in politics in India. Besides, Indian women, European women also entered into the Indian political scene and started a number of organizations and volunteered their services. For instance, on behalf of overall Indian Women, Annie Besant played a prominent role for the awakening of Indian women in politics. She proclaimed that self government was not as a reward but as a right. To achieve the goal with law abiding and constitutional methods, she founded the Home Rule League in September 1916. Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur worked along with her in the freedom movement. The impact was reflected in Tamilnadu also. The other remarkable women freedom fighters in Tamilnadu were Rukmini Lakshmipathi, Ambujammal, Janammal, Vai.Mu.Kothainayagiammal, Padmavathi Asher and Padmasini Ammal participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. They actively participated in the hartals, students strikes and other demonstrations. They went to jail, faced lathis teargas and bullets. The work of women's

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9 Pratima Asthana, *Women’s movement in India*, Delhi, 1974, p. 65.
movement greatly awakened the women of Tamilnadu which later on helped India to get independence.

During the early Vedic period women were educated, civilized, enjoyed equal rights to men and they had high status in the society. They were not secluded from men and freely participated in public life. They studied Vedas and composed hymns. They had attended the clan based Assemblies like the sabha and functioned as decision making bodies in the early Vedic period. In the later Vedic times they lost their high status and they were no longer permitted to sit in the sabha which was dominated by nobles and Brahmins.  

During the Sangam age, the women of Tamilnadu were treated well and they enjoyed high status in the society. Sangam literature refers to many educated and earned women who immensely contributed to the betterment of the society. Female education was popular among all classes of people which gave them self confidence and dignity. Tolkappiyam clearly tells the status of women during the Sangam period. The status of women under the Pallavas, imperial Cholas and Pandyas was high but the education imparted to women was different when it is compared to men.

During the Vijayanagar period, the position of women was good and they occupied an honourable place in the society. Some women under Vijayanagar Empire were highly educated and were good poets. During the modern period, the national movement gave an opportunity for women to participate in the political activities of the country. During this period both the men and women participated in the national movement and their unity and sacrifice paved way for the success of national movement.

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10 Sharma R.S., Ancient India, New Delhi, 1990, pp.61-67.
12 Premalatha, Nationalism and Women’s Movement in South India 1917-1947, New Delhi, 2003, p.17.
13 Venkata Ramanappa, Outlines of South Indian History with Special Reference to Karnataka, New Delhi, 1975, p.186.
and success of women in political movement. This laid the foundation for the political awareness among women and this served as a natural cause for women to start women’s movement which aimed at equal rights for both men and women. Political participation is closely related to the women’s franchise and the right to vote enjoyed by the women helps in determining the degree of women’s political participation as well as in decision-making.  

Women had participated in all streams of the national movement including Gandhian, Socialist, Communist and Revolutionary Terrorist. They began to show keen interest in voting elections to the legislatives and even stood as candidates.

In the year 1801 Madras Presidency was formed and the English East India Company started to rule over Tamilnadu. The rule of East India Company came to end in the year 1858 by the Government of India Act. The various revolutions and wars which took place in the different parts of the world like the French revolution, the Russo-Japanese war, the socialist preaching of the Marxists and its impacts helped the Tamil people to protest against the British domination in Tamilnadu. The period from 1857-1947 was called as the era of empowerment of women. During this period many women forgot their homes and worked for national struggle. This experience helped the Tamil women to enter in to the political field and gave them more confidence and strength.

Women’s political demonstrations in Tamilnadu were less dramatic than those in either Bombay or Bengal. Women picketed and marched in processions but it was always difficult to mobilize large number of women for action. Support for the swadeshi pledge and for spinning, wearing, and selling khaddar gathered momentum throughout India mainly with the active support of women. They were dared to participate in revolutionary terrorist activities. The Chittagong armoury raid and the martyrdom of

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16 Subramanian, N., *Social and Cultural History of Tamilnadu*, Madurai, 1999, p.188.
17 Hajira Kumar and Jaimon Varghese, *op.cit.*, p.49.
Preetilata wodedar and the heroism of Kalpana Dutt inspired the womenfolk. The epic examples of Hemalata Shinolikar, Asaf Ali and others made the womenfolk of India to liberate themselves from the feudal restrictions and play a vital role in the making of modern India. It enabled them to reflect their aspirations and ambitions and at the same time lends legitimacy to the system which is the hallmark of democracy.  

Before Independence, there were few women rulers, administrators and warriors. Occasionally, women were appointed regents when the ruler was a minor. The advent of Gandhi gave a boost to the life of women which was awakened by foreign administration and socio-political situations. He encouraged women to take part in the national, political and social movements of the nation. According to him, “freedom struggle was a struggle for the country’s freedom as well as the freedom of women” and he worked for both. From the beginning of his political activities, he associated himself with women’s cause and sought their help when necessary. He said to Mridula Sarabai, “I have brought the indian women out of the kitchen, it is up to you to see that they do not go back.”

The early twentieth century saw the birth of women’s organizations and the beginnings of the demand for political rights. The women’s Indian Association was started in Madras in 1917. The main motive of this association was the uplift of women and the achievement of social equality. Women were glad since the association gave them the opportunity of meeting together in their free afternoon hours for mutual help. In 1917, a deputation of Indian women led by Sarojini Naidu presented to the British Parliament a demand for the enfranchisement of women on the basis of equality with

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The women in Madras presidency organized the young people which were named the Vaanar Sena. This organization sowed the seeds of patriotism in the minds of girls and boys.

Margaret Cousins, an Irish lady took important steps towards the upliftment of women in Madras Presidency. She wrote to Prof. D.K. Karve at Poona enquiring about the possibility of a deputation to wait upon the Secretary of State and Viceroy. Accordingly, a deputation under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu met E.S. Montague, the Secretary of State of India and Lord. Chelmsford, the Governor General and Viceroy of India in Madras on 18 December 1917. The main demand was the right of women for vote.

The Congress supported their demand by passing a resolution at the Calcutta session under the presidency of Annie Besant. The Bombay special Session of the Congress and the Delhi Session of the National Congress supported the cause. The Muslim League also supported Women’s enfranchisement in September 1918. The Thirty-Third Session of the Indian National Congress met in Delhi in December of 1918. Saraladevi Chaudhurani presented the resolution supporting the vote for women. She also told her audience that women had as much right to chart their own destinies as men for this was the age of human rights, justice, freedom and self-determination.

**EARLY LIFE**

In such a situation Maria Lourdhammal was born on September 26, 1911 in a hamlet named Melamanakudi which is situated in Kanyakumari District. Her father

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23 *Annual Report of Women’s Indian Association*, Madras, 1956, p.3.
26 Melamanakudi is a coastal village of Kanyakumari District.
Michael Alexander was an accountant. Her mother was Parbarammal from Vavuthurai in Kanyakumari District. Parbarammal died when Lourdhammal was a small child. Hence, his father Michael Alexander married a woman named Annammal. Lourdhammal had three younger brothers named A.M.Alexander alias Pitchaiyan, Felix Alexander alias Thangaiya and Maria John. Afterwards, her first younger brother A.M.Alexander worked as an Air-Force Officer, her second brother Felix Alexander engaged in textile business and the third brother Maria John was a Municipal Commissioner.

Michael Alexander was a tradesman of Dried-Fish in Srilanka’s harbour (Columbu) and also he exported salt. During that period, Srilanka fully depended on India’s goods. There was a peaceful trade between the two countries. Because of this reason, he seemed to be a luxurious and respectful person among the people. Being a rich man and also he had more love and affection to his daughter, they used to celebrate Lourdhammal’s birthday in a grand manner. He had given lots of sweets and gifts to all the children who had his daughter Lourdhammal’s name. Thus, she had been brought up luxuriously.

**EDUCATION**

Education is most important among all of us. Education plays a very important role in deciding the destiny of our life. For living a luxurious life or for living a better life, one should be educated. Education is that which transforms a person to lead a better life and even for a social well being. It is the one that doing something constructive in human life. The education helps a person to show their best by their mind and spirit. It gives a person a lot of knowledge in whatever aspects. Education plays a vital role in a

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27 Vavuthurai is a small coastal village near to Kanyakumari. It is closely related to Kumari Bagavathi Amman Temple in Kanyakumari.
28 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
human being’s success in their personal growth. Education is also a process for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits.

Maria Lourdhammal completed her school education at St. Joseph’s Convent, Nagercoil. She studied in English Medium upto 10th standard. Subsequently, she worked as a teacher in the same school for few years without any remuneration. During the period of her study at St. Joseph’s convent, she had a very good rapport with everyone. She had loved every one and also well behaved with them. She never indulged in any kind of tussle with anyone. She had worked very enthusiastically and with much interest her colleagues had reported that, she was a lady of calmness and meekness. She had kept good respect for her superiors, teachers and elders. She also earned very good name and fame among them. Though she studied only up to the 10th standard she possessed the necessary command over Tamils, Malayalam and English.

MARRIED LIFE

Later on, Lourdhammal’s parents arranged marriage for her with a person named Alexander Manuel Simon from the village Colachel. After their marriage, for the sake of her husband’s profession they both lived in Persia for some years. Their first child Alex Ralph Simon was born on September 1, 1933 and the second child John Edmund Simon was born on December 18, 1934. After her second delivery they returned to India in the year 1936.

After getting into India she gave birth to three children. They are Justin Oscar Simon (April 18, 1938), Hubert Dominic Simon (August 10, 1941) and Peter Wilbert Simon (October 12, 1946). Unfortunately, Lourdhammal Simon did not have a female

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child, so they adopted Simon’s younger brother John’s daughter Philomina who was born on 4th August 1947. They brought up Philomina as their own daughter.  

**HER FAMILY**

Lourdhammal Simon’s first son Alex Ralph Simon was a Major in the Indian Army. On 22nd January 1958, he got married with Helen from Villukuri village, the daughter of Soosai Micheal Fernando. This matrimonial ceremony was conducted in a church which was built and offered by the bride’s father Soosai Michael. The cine actor and comedian Chandirababu was present at the wedding ceremony at Villukuri.  

Their marriage reception was held in Chennai and all cabinet ministers attended the function. Then, Alex Ralph Simon’s daughter Cycily Simon married a person called Victor, an engineer from Chennai and they settled in America. They had a girl child. At present she is a Professor of English in Singapore. On 24th July 1977 Alex Ralph Simon died.  

Lourdhammal Simon’s second son John Edmund Simon was an Engineer who married Norah Berairah from Kerala in 1965. Norah was the daughter of Dr. Berairah a retired Health Director. John Edmund Simon’s son Deepak lives in Pudhuchery and his daughter Nirmala lives in Bangalore. Both got married. John Edmund Simon died on 29th July 1976.  

Lourdhammal Simon’s third son Justin Oscar Simon was a doctor. He married Maragatham on 2nd May 1966. Maragatham worked at State Bank of India and after their marriage, they settled at Bangalore. Their children are Monika, Veronica, Justina, Laurinda and all of them got married. Bhuvana and Reena are living in England, Deena in Dubai and Glorinda in Bangalore. Justin Oscar Simon died on 2015.
Lourdhammal Simon’s fourth son Hubert Dominic Simon who completed PUC and assisted her father in M.S.M Press till 1982. He married Gajalakshmi. Later on her name was changed as Gajalakshmi Barbara and she was converted as a Christian. Their marriage was held at Chennai Mylapore Luz Church on 6th September 1961. They have three daughters named Rachel Simon, Teresa Simon and Anne Simon and only one son named Alexander Manual Simon. Their three daughters are doctors and Alex is a Dentist.  

Lourdhammal Simon’s last son Peter Wilbert Simon got Post Graduate Degree in Economics and Political Science. His marriage took place in 1981. His wife is Helen and her father name is Antony. She is from Thiruvananthapuram. They live in Ramanputhoor and their daughter Jacquelin also got married. Her husband Bharath is a Hindu, son of Perumal from Nagercoil. Jacquelin Simon was also converted as Hindu and her marriage also happened according to Hindu religious customs. Peter Wilbert Simon died on 14th December 2011.

LURDHAMMAL’S HUSBAND (Alexander Manual Simon)

Alexandar Manual Simon was born on June 20, 1899 at Colachel in Kanyakumari District then formed on integral part of the erstwhile Travancore kingdom. After his return from foreign country to his home town, he had started a press in a leased building of Ramasamy at Veppamoodu junction, Nagercoil in the year 1937. It was named M.S.M press. This press was not only functioning as a printing press but also it functioned as a social club. Most of the social activists and thinkers used to gather there and discuss about social and political issues. It was also the common meeting place

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34 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
35 An Interview with Jacquelin Simon, granddaughter of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 30.01.2016.
36 Colachel is a coastal village in Kanyakumari District. It is popularly called as Natural Harbour.
37 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 18.01.2016.
of people belonged to different communities. Simon himself had a curiosity in political and social matters and he liked the discussions of the companions. As he had been keen interest in these kinds of issues, he could easily mingle with the people who assembled in his press. Among them Sanmugam Pillai, Pandaram Pillai and Vellamadam Raja Pillai were some of the best companions of Alexander Manual Simon.38

Following the formation of the Indian National Congress Alexander Manual Simon evinced deep interest in its working. Later he became an important member in Tamilnadu Travancore Congress. Hence, he had an intimate friendship with A.J. John, Nesamani, Chidhambaranathan Nadar, Ponnappa Nadar, Rasaaq and Noor Mohammed. Being one of the members in Tamilnadu Travancore Congress, he got a chance to contest in the election to the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly. During the election campaign his companions like Shuanmugam Pillai, Pandaram Pillai and Vellamadam Raja Pillai were so helpful.

He was a shrewd politician who played a decisive role in the contemporary politics. He was elected to the Travancore Cochin assembly as Tamilnadu Congress candidate from Vilavancode39 constituency in Kanyakumari district in 1952 election. This was the first election from this constituency and it happened before Kanyakumari district merged with Tamilnadu.40 He was elected again from Kollencode constituency as a Tamilnadu Congress candidate in 1954 interim election.41 He remained a perpetual source of inspiration to his beloved wife Maria Lourdhammal throughout his life. But unfortunately he died on 10th December 1982.42

39 Vilavancode is a Legislative Assembly Constituency in the Indian state of Tamilnadu.
40 Report of Elections, Election Commission of India, Legislative Assembly of Kerala, Elections to the Travancore Cochin Legislative assembly, 1951.
41 Ibid., Travancore Cochin interim election, 1954.
42 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 18.01.2016.
AS A MOTHER

It's a fascinating and beautiful journey that every mother takes to parenthood, and along the way they learn so much, not just about their kids, but themselves. Lourdhammal Simon was always offering her love and hugs to her children. She used to see things from her kid's point of view and sought their opinion whenever it became possible or appropriate. She used to be patient and to shower unconditional love upon them. She imposed learning that discipline is a good thing - gentle non violent discipline. It's a great way to raise up a strong, self-assured and confident citizens. She used to have a sense of humour.

She treated her children as individuals. She understood that each child is an “individual in their own right.” She helped her children to set out on their own path. Yet at the same time being there for the child to fall back on when that path seemed too hard to follow. As a good mother, she was the one who was willing to listen and consider their whims and fancies of her children. She used to show disapproval then and there when she felt that her child had done something wrong, even though by doing so she might risk rejection from her child. Hearing a child say, “I hate you,” is very difficult. But it is also important that children learn to follow the rules. Lourdhammal did so. She used to stand up for her own beliefs. In doing so, she could earn the right to have and keep her child’s respect.

As a good mother she had set a good example. She wanted to be a positive and moral role model. She had spent quality time with her children. She had seen every child as special, no matter whether young or old, healthy or unwell, troublesome or obedient.\textsuperscript{43} She provided a stable and strong foundation for her children to grow and develop as responsible individuals. She encouraged children according to their potential and tried to

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.,
bring out the best in each child. Lourdhammal had made her children develop his/her skills in whatever area he was good at, as well as remedies the weakness in each child. She had made sure that the requirements of her children were met, and provided them with encouragement and tokens of love. She remembered her children's special days, such as birthdays, and made them feel special by giving gifts and celebrating. Many times, she had to give up a personal deal for the sake of the child as well as her time, her sleep, pleasures, to ensure that the children were all right. She was committed and dedicated. She used to be consistent and was in consistent routines, consistent disciplines, consistent punctuality to develop trust between she and her children. She used to be flexible and patience. Despite meticulous planning things can crop up at the last minute—sickness, flat tire. Using patience helps to suppress anger and keep children calm. She used to be their good and loving teacher and had imparted her knowledge to her children—knowledge about life skills, current events, and home and cooking skills to prepare them for when they leave home. She used to practice what she preached. She would apologize when it was necessary. She taught her children the moral values of life. She wanted her children to be compassionate and affectionate to the poor and elders.

**HER SERVICES**

Woman is primarily a member of a social community. She should not only be concerned about herself but also for the welfare and development of society as a whole. It is truly said that “Jana-Seva” is “Janardhana-Seva”. The feeling of self-satisfaction that comes when one sees the unshed tears of joy in the eyes of one whose hunger has been appeased, whose thirst has been allayed and whose needs are fulfilled is indeed heavenly. The service rendered by an individual or an institution to improve the social conditions

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44 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
of society is called ‘social service’. This service is rendered on humanitarian considerations and without any motive of profit. Only those people to whom the interests of society are more important than their personal interests come forward to render service. The life of Maria Lourdhammal became the best example for such a dedicated service to the cause of the humanity.

In the midst of child rearing Lourdhammal Simon paid much attention in school activities and she transformed herself as a person of social responsibility. She had also spent her time and energy for the uplift of women in different capacities. She was a secretary of YMCA and Executive Member of both Women’s Welfare Association and Parents Teacher’s Association at local high school. Also she worked as a secretary in Legion of Mary and active member in Kasthuri Bai Maather Sangam. She was also a member in Rotract Club at Nagercoil. She was one of the important members in Lions Club. She also started a Women’s Club at Ramanputhoor. She served as the president for Deaf & Dumb Association and worked effectively.

Lourdhammal Simon was not the lady of seeking advertisement in her public life. She never used to hide herself when the common people suffered. She used to respect every individual irrespective of his or her caste or religion. She was very punctual and systematic in her routine of life. She used to get up at 5’o clock early in the morning. After keeping the house clean she would go to take bath. She used to pray for some times

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45 YMCA denotes the Young Men’s Christian Association. It was started by Sir. George William on 6th June 1844 in London with the high ideals of stimulating the youth to improve their physical, intellectual, spiritual and social well being. The three sides of the red triangle symbolize the YMCA’s mission to "build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all". YMCA, Nagercoil was started in the year 1881 and is 127 years old. It was started even before the formation of the National Council of YMCAs of India. YMCA branch at Nagercoil was a pioneer in introducing in the town, high standard games like table tennis, chess, carom, and special sports like karate. It has a list of honorable persons as presidents and secretaries to its credit.

46 Tamilselvan.Jo., op.cit., p.21

47 The Lions club of Nagercoil was established in the year 1958 by the first Collector of Kanyakumari district, Thiru. R. Thirumalai I.A.S. with the help of the other district government officers and five founder members namely Dr. M. Mathias, Mr. Sathanantha Iyer, Mr. Mathew Abraham, Mr. M. Joseph Palakunnal and Mr. Fakrudin Adam for the promotion of the games, recreation and friendship.

48 Tamilselvan.Jo., Justin Thivagar, Jawagarji, op.cit, p.41.
and then started reading interesting books. She was an expert in the art of cooking. She was known for her hospitality. She used to receive every one irrespective of rich and poor with smile till the end of her life. Whatever the important assignments or works she had, she was ready to help the people in need.\footnote{An Interview with Kodikal Chellappa, Freedom fighter, Nagercoil, dated 23.12.2015.}

**ENTRY IN POLITICS**

Politics is the process of making uniform decisions applying to all members of a society. It also involves the use of power by one person to affect the behavior of another person. More narrowly, it refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance and organized control over a human community, particularly a state. Furthermore, politics is the study or practice of the distribution of power and resources within a given community (a usually hierarchically organized population) as well as the interrelationships between communities. A variety of methods are employed in politics, which include promoting or forcing one's own political views among people, negotiation with other political subjects, making laws, and exercising force, including warfare against adversaries. Politics is exercised on a wide range of social levels, from clans and tribes of traditional societies, through modern local governments, companies and institutions up to sovereign states, to the international level. Maria Lourdhammal Simon was intimately associated with the political activities of her husband. The political ideas of her husband moulded her life and works.

A.J. John, the Governer of Tamilnadu was one of the former ministers in Kerala Congress, A.J.John and Lourdhammal’s husband M.L.A Alexandar Manual Simon were good friends.\footnote{Tamilselvan.Jo., *op. cit.*, p.22.} Due to their cordial relationship John had visited Simon’s house twice with his family. During his visit he admired Lourdhammal’s fluency in English and her way of approach and her hospitality. In 1957, K.Kamaraj, then Chief Minister of Madras
State was searching for a woman candidate to contest the General Election from the Congress Political Party. At that time A.J. John had a thought about Lourdhammal Simon and he recommended her name. Lourdhammal Simon’s entrance into politics was happened very easily. Like a way many of the people had voted Lourdhammal Simon because during those days, Congress Party was the leading Party and she was a wife of M.L.A. Alexandar Manual Simon who had developed cordial relationship with many political leaders. He was also an intimate friend of Nesamony. Hence, it had paved an easy way for Lourdhammal Simon to get into politics.  

**GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1957**

The second general election to the legislative bodies after the establishment of the Republic of India was held in 1957. An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Elections were held to fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and for regional and local government. The universal use of elections as a tool for selecting representatives in modern representative democracies is in contrast with the practice in the democratic archetype, ancient Athens, where the elections were considered an oligarchic institution and most of the political offices were filled using sortition, also known as allotment, by which office holders were chosen by lot. Electoral reform describes the process of introducing fair electoral systems where they are not in place, or improving the fairness or effectiveness of existing systems. Psephology is the study of results and other statistics relating to elections (especially with a view to predicting future results). To elect means "to choose or make a decision",

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51 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.  
and so sometimes other forms of ballot such as referendum and plebiscite are referred to as elections. Maria Lourdhammal Simon underwent the processes of adult franchise.

In Chola Empire, around 920 CE, in Uthiramerur (in present Chengalpat in Tamilnadu State), palm leaves were used for selecting the village committee members. The leaves, with candidate names written on them, were put inside a mud pot. To select the committee members, a young boy was asked to take out as many leaves as the number of positions available. This was known as the Kudavolai system.\(^{53}\)

The Madras State was divided into 167 territorial constituencies, of which 129 were single-member constituencies and 38 were double-member constituencies. Thirty-seven seats were reserved for the Scheduled Caste and one seat was reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. Thus, after the General Elections of 1957 when the Madras Assembly was constituted, it consisted of 205 elected members. Under Article 333 of the Constitution, the Governor had nominated a member to represent Anglo-Indian interests.

The following programme was fixed to the conduct of the elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last date for making nominations</td>
<td>29 January 1957</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scrutiny of nominations</td>
<td>1st February 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures</td>
<td>4 February 1957</td>
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<tr>
<td>The date before which the election shall be Completed.</td>
<td>31 March 1957(^ {54} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the 205 Assembly seats, 1,276 persons (1,244 men and 32 women) filed their nominations. Of these 210 were members of the Scheduled Castes while seven members of Scheduled Tribes. The nominations of 22 candidates (21 men and 1 woman) were rejected. Three hundred and sixty-seven candidates (360 men and 7 women) withdrew their nominations in time. Ninety-seven candidates, all men, retired before the polls.


\(^{54}\) *A Review of the Madras Legislative Assembly 1957-1962*, Legislative Assembly Department, Madras, 1962, p.2.
Three seats (Killiyoor, Vilavancode and Nambiyur) were uncontested and were, therefore, filled without election. In the Vilavancode constituency, all candidates except one withdrew before the last date for withdrawal of candidates and in the other two constituencies the candidates ‘retired’ that is, withdrew ten days before the poll. The elections were contested in respect of 202 seats. The number of candidates who contested finally was 787.

Out of these 787 contestants 24 were woman. Of whom, 13 were represented by the Congress Party, 2 by the Praja Socialist Party, one each by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Communist Parties, while the remaining seven were Independents. One hundred and sixty-eight of the contestants belonged to Scheduled Castes and four contestants belonged to Scheduled Tribes.\(^{55}\)

The total number of voters was 17,514,998 nearly 17.5 millions, of whom 8,665,815 (i.e.) 8.7 millions were women. The total number of voters in the contested constituencies was 17,303,784. Of these 49.05 % actually voted at the elections, 54-61 % of the male voters and 44.27 % of the women voters exercised their franchise.\(^{56}\)

The percentage of voters who participated in the poll varied from 26.00 % in Uddanapalli constituency in Salem district 76.06 % in the Nagercoil constituency in Kanyakumari district. The percentage of male voters who actually voted was lowest in the Thiyagarayanagar constituency (33.80 %), Madras district and highest in Kanyakumari constituency (82.90 %), Kanyakumari district. Among the women voters, the percentage was smallest in Hosur constituency (19.00 %) of Salem district and highest in Sattur Constituency (74.50 %) in Ramanathapuram district.\(^{57}\)


\(^{56}\) A Review of the Madras Legislative Assembly 1957-1962, Legislative Assembly Department, Madras, 1962,p.3.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p.3.
Of the 790 candidates, who contested 585 were unsuccessful and of the latter 325 forfeited their deposit. Again ninety-seven candidates forfeited their deposits as a result of retirement. Of the 205 who won, 12 were women, of whom 11 were candidates set up by the Congress Party and one set up by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Of the 205 seats, the Congress secured 151 seats, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam 13, Congress Reforms Committee 9, Communist 4, Forward Bloc 3, Praja Socialist Party 2, Socialist 1 and Independents 22.58 Two members of the Scheduled Castes were elected to the General (Unreserved) seat from Nallur and Coimbatore II. C. Natarajan (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) aged 25 was the youngest and Sri Sami Sahajananda and Sri Gomathisankara Dikshathar (both Congress) aged 66 were the oldest of the members elected.

**VICTORY**

The general elections had been held as formal in the year 1957 also. Honourable Chief Minister K.Kamaraj, by his Excellency had chosen Lourdammal Simon, a Catholic woman from a privileged fishermen community in Kanyakumari District and a prominent member of the Catholic diocese of Kottar as State Local Administration and Fisheries Minister. The then Honourable Chief Minister K.Kamaraj’s efforts won him the support of the Tamilnadu Catholic clergy. Regionally, the Congress’s promise of support for religious minorities helped to assuage the fears of a church that was watching the rise of the ‘atheistic ideologies’ of Communism and Dravidianism with alarm. In both the 1957 and 1962 general elections, Catholics were asked by the Tamilnadu Catholic Bishops’ Conference to vote for Congress - ‘the party of God.’59 This state-level clerical consensus was also reflected in Kanyakumari. Even prior to Kanyakumari’s

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58 Ibid., p.3.
merger with Tamilnadu, the groundswell of support for the Communist Party of India in Kerala had set off warning bells in Kanyakumari’s churches and consolidated clerical support for the Congress. K. Kamaraj’s selection of a Catholic minister only strengthened the Kanyakumari clergy’s political allegiance to the party. Lourdhammal Simon’s selection signalled K. Kamaraj’s acknowledgement of Catholic fishers as a politically significant population, and his respect for the church as its moral authority (Thenoli 1956). On the eve of the 1957 elections the Bishop of Kottar diocese sent out a circular requesting the faithful to exercise their right by electing candidates who would fight for freedom of religion, for educational rights of private institutions and against birth control.

She was elected to the Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly as an Indian National Congress candidate from Colachel Constituency in Kanyakumari District in 1957 election. After the election result, on April 12, 1957 K.Kamaraj had gone to meet the Governor at Raj Bhavan to submit a name enrollment list of Ministers. Governor A.J. John appointed K.Kamaraj as Chief Minister of Tamilnadu on April 13, 1957. For the second time, he had continued his office as Chief Minister. C. Subramaniam, M. Bhagtavatchalam, M.A, Manickavelar who were been ministers at K.Kamaraj’s first cabinet also continued as ministers in his second cabinet. Including them, R. Venkatraman, P. Kakkan, V. Ramaiah, Maria Lourdhammal Simon were also selected as ministers in K.Kamaraj’s second cabinet. The Chief Minister K.Kamaraj had appointed Lourdhammal Simon in his cabinet as the minister for Fisheries and Local Administration keeping four important matters in his mind. Firstly, Lourdhammal Simon was a female candidate as elected M.L.A of Colachel constituency. Secondly,

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60 Ibid., p.96.
Lourdhammal Simon belonged to the fisherman community and also hailed from an educated family. Thirdly, She had also belonged to Catholic Christian minority. And finally K.Kamaraj wanted to give importance to Kanyakumari district, which was newly emerged from the Kerala State and he had also thought there must be a woman representative for the fishermen community.\(^6\)

Chief Minister K.Kamaraj had given two respective departments Local Administration and Fisheries to Lourdhammal Simon who belonged to a backward and minority community. She had looked after her service sincerely and honestly. Her service was appreciated by many political leaders. There were no districts without her journey. And her name was almost very familiar among people of Tamilnadu State. She had also been a President of Indian Drinking Water Supply.

She was the first woman minister of Local Administration and Fisheries from Kanyakumari District. Her tenure of office was between April 13 1957 and March 1\(^{st}\) 1962.\(^6\) She was very much dedicated to her duties. In order to bring reforms during this period she introduced City Municipal (Amendment) Bill in 1958 and 1961, Extension of the Term of Office of Municipal Councillors Bill, 1958, \(^6\) and Local Authorities Financial Bill in 1961.\(^6\)

In 1961, as the minister of local administration for the administrative purpose she divided Chennai into North Chennai and South Chennai.\(^6\) She made many efforts to improve the primary and higher secondary education. In view of the health status of primary school poor students and to the entry of children to the primary schools Honourable Chief Minister K.Kamaraj introduced “Mid Day Meal Scheme” with the

\(^6\) Madras Legislative Assembly Review, Chapter. IV, 1957-1962, p.16.
\(^6\) Ibid., Vol. XVIII, 1961, p.290.
help of the American Company “Care”. Lourdammal Simon extended this plan consequently, 14 lakh poor children were benefited.\(^{68}\) It brought socio-economic and educational changes in the life of Kanyakumari District.

During her tenure, fish was exported from Madras State to other States in India and also to foreign countries particularly Ceylon. Fisheries department’s main objectives were to enable Marine and Inland fisheries, to enable fisheries researches and also, to improve socio-economic status of fishing community.

To achieve these objectives, Lourdhammal Simon had taken sincere approaches. She made a survey of fishermen and their needs, rehabilitation work for the affected huts of the fishermen by monsoon.\(^{69}\) For the improvement of fish catching, Lourdhammal Simon started a Research Centre at Gulf of Mannar for deep sea fishing under the Indo-Norway plan in 1957. Because of this plan the fishing from deep sea catching was improved.\(^{70}\) In the same year she established marine biology centres at Krusadai, Tuticorin, Ennore and in Kanyakumari. She also established the fresh water biology centres at Chennai, Bhavanisagar, Tuticorin and in Kanyakumari.\(^{71}\) Lourdhammal Simon introduced the new type of boat for the development of fishermen in Tamilnadu. The name of this boat was called “Pablo” high speed boat. These boats helped fishermen to go to the deep sea to catch more fishes. Her works in Local Administration and Fisheries department helped Tamilnadu to reach a high position in India.\(^{72}\)

Whenever Indira Gandhi visited Tamilnadu for political purposes, Lourdhammal Simon was the only one who accompanied with her wherever she goes. After completing all of her works in South India, Lourdhammal Simon used to bring Indira Gandhi to

\(^{68}\) Ibid., p.93.
\(^{71}\) Ibid., Chapter. XV, 1972-1973, p.346.
Trivandram Airport and send off her satisfactorily. Lourdhammal Simon requested Honourable Chief Minister K.Kamaraj to visit Kanyakumari district often. He also accepted her request and whenever, he came to Kanyakumari he never returned without announcing any special schemes to the people of Kanyakumari District. He would not take a long time to fulfill it. Lourdhammal Simon as well as Chief Minister K.Kamaraj they both had competitions between themselves to help the people of Kanyakumari District. She never said ‘no’ to anyone. During her service as a Minister, she had done her duties sincerely and effectively. Without having any political party differences, she had honestly fulfilled the proposals received from all the Political Parties. This was one of her good qualities. Accordingly, she had received some proposals from M. Karunanithi, the former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu related to his Kuzhithalai constituency needs and she fulfilled all the needs of the constituency with almost care.

CHARACTER OF LOURDHAMMAL SIMON

Alexander Manual Simon husband of Lourdhammal Simon was one of the important persons in All Indian Congress Committee. So Alexander Manual Simon undertook regular trips to Delhi and whenever he goes to Delhi, Lourdhammal Simon also accompanied with him.73 Once she cut the mangoes in a gentle way this scene was liked by Jawharlal Nehru and Nehru took a mango and he showed it to everyone and he appreciated Lourdhammal Simon for her well done.74 She learnt these mature approaches from her brought up and foreign life style. She had a very good relationship with some famous personalities like former Presidents Rajendra Prasad and former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and the like.

While Lourdhammal Simon was a Minister, there was an opportunity to add fishermen as Scheduled Tribes but she was against the proposal and she talked about this

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73 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
74 Tamilselvan.Jo., Justin Thivagar, Jawagarji, op.cit., p.75.
issue on many open stages. Lourdhammal Simon never liked publicity and whenever people got suffered, she was the first person to stand for them. Whenever and wherever Lourdhammal Simon addressed a public meeting, she spoke only in her mother tongue. She never had any hesitation or shyness to speak her own native language.

Once, Lourdhammal Simon seemed to be very stylish and trendy in her suits, but after her entry into social services, she followed simplicity in her life. She used to wear hand-loom sarees as her permanent dressing style. In the periods of being a Minister as well as a common woman she extended several aids to the people. She was an altruistic woman who always helped all the people without discrimination. She did not have pride within herself. Apart from being a Minister she moved with people very genuinely and equally to everyone.

While working as a teacher in a Convent school, she was kind and lovable towards everyone, both to her colleagues and students. Even now she had been occupying a good name in the school and her name is still remembered by all the persons who knew her. Lourdhammal Simon’s hand writing was seemed to be very beautiful and stylish and also her speech was so sweet to hear. She had interested in drawing, tailoring. She was a great singer. She had lots of affection for women and children. Lourdhammal Simon had lots of affection in music and also she liked dance of Kamala Lakshman. Lourdhammal had a habit of costume designing, and used to make dresses of Tailand and Scotland. She used to draw with the use of thread and she was well expert in this type of thread drawing. She was an expert in Rangoli. She had plenty of abilities within herself.

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75 An Interview with Justin Thivagar, Nagercoil, dated 29.01.2016.
77 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
Her intimate companion was Muthammal from Nagercoil. From her school days itself they were best friends and their companionship continued after their marriage and it lasted till their last days. Whenever she had worried about both the political and personal life, Muthammal was the only one person who gave consolation. Lourdhammal Simon used to share about her political and personal problems and issues with Muthammal and sought solutions. Thus, they had intimate friendship with each other and this relationship remained throughout their life.78

Lourdhammal Simon had great very good relationship with the political leaders namely Chief Minister K.Kamaraj, P.Kakkan, C.Subramanian, Bahtavachalam, and Venkatraman. She also had remarkable relationship with other community leaders namely the Dalit leader Vivekanadhan from Karkadu, Muthukarupa Pillai from Kottar and Pandiyan Nadar from Aagestheswaram.79

She often used to say that, everyone should have affection for their own religion but should be fanatic over as it destroys the country.80 She used to say that one should be honest and not to be the cheat. The researcher identified certain salient features of her character went he when through her biographical sketches.

Lourdhammal Simon had been so humble to everyone whom she had met in her life. She was the lady of contentment, grit, determination and diligence. She had never failed to express her patience, honesty and compassion to everybody especially the needy. She used to be very flexible but at the same time self disciplined. She used to be very kind to self and others. She was developing a sense of curiosity and great wonder in all her walks of life. She had believed optimism and positivity in her life. She was the

80 Ponneelan Interview with Chezhiyan, Unpublished Document, Azhagiapandiyapuram, 23.11.2010.
personality of great gratitude. She used to be proactive in almost all issues. She was the woman of endurance, serenity and reverence.\textsuperscript{81}

**GENERAL ELECTION OF 1962**

After the five years of Lourdhammal’s political journey, once again she contested from the Colachel constituency in 1962. But, unfortunately she failed in the difference of 7779 votes to an independent candidate A.Swamydhas.\textsuperscript{82} After the election Lourdhammal Simon’s husband Alexander Manual Simon totally came out from the politics.\textsuperscript{83}

**CAUSES FOR THE FAILURE OF THE ELECTION**

They were many reasons for the defeat of Minister Lourdhammal Simon in the 1962 election held for Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly. Mainly it was due to casteism in politics. Alexander Manual Simon repeatedly advised his wife Lourdhammal not to contest for the election because he had reviewed the political scenario of Colachel constituency. But Lourdhammal Simon had great faith on the people of Colachel constituency to win over the election. But she failed in the election. Thus, it shattered her hopes.\textsuperscript{84}

Several causes led to the failure of the election. One among them was, a letter written by her to Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. In the letter Lourdhammal wrote about the dispute between the Hindu and the Christian minority with regard to the construction of Swami Vivekanandha mandapam on the rock located in the Indian ocean at Kanyakumari. She wrote this letter to Jawaharlal Nehru due to pressure imposed on her by the Rev. Bishop Agniswamy S. J., the Bishop of Kottar. This

\textsuperscript{81} An Interview with Justin Thivagar, Nagercoil, dated 29.01.2016.
\textsuperscript{82} A. Swamidhas is an Indian politician and three times Member of Legislative assembly. He was elected to Tamilnadu legislative assembly from Colachel constituency as an Independent candidate in 1962 election, Padmanabhapuram constituency in 1971 election as an Indian National Congress (Organisation) (NCO) candidate and 1977 election as a Janata Party candidate.
\textsuperscript{83} Tamilselvan, Justin Thivagar, Jawagarji, *Meenava Munnoor Lourdhammal Simon*, (Tamil), Nagercoil, 2010, pp.86-87.
\textsuperscript{84} An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
matter was broken out and created enmity in the minds of Hindus and so their votes were diverted to the Swamydhas who contested in the election.\textsuperscript{85}

Secondly, once there was a stead-fast relationship between the families of Lourdhammal Simon and Dr.Mathias but this relationship was strained for a simple reason that the construction and extension of the existing government hospital at Kottar. Lourdhammal Simon recounted the Chief Minister K.Kamaraj to speed up the works of constructing the multi-faceted government hospital at Kottar, after accepting the request of the poor and the needy. Dr.Mathias when he came to know that Lourdhammal Simon was behind the construction of the government hospital he requested her not to take any steps with regard to the construction of the hospital.\textsuperscript{86} It was because Dr.Mathias misunderstood that the construction of government hospital at Kottar would affect his income. But Lourdhammal Simon did not accept his view points though he had treated her as one of the members of his family. Consequently, Dr.Mathias supported Swamydhas to win the election of 1962.\textsuperscript{87}

Thirdly, casteism was also one of the important causes for the failure, it played a major role in the election, and the opponents of Lourdhammal Simon deliberately brought in an instrument, “Casteism” in the field of the election. But, she got only the negative response from the people.\textsuperscript{88}

Fourthly, in 1960 according to the Indo-Norway plan, mechanized boats and nylon nets were introduced among the fishermen community without giving enough awareness of the scheme. People misbelieved that only the rich people could utilize the mechanized boats to fetch lot of fishes and the poor people would be the real sufferers

\textsuperscript{85} Tamilselvan.Jo., \textit{op.cit.}, p.130.
\textsuperscript{86} An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 18.01.2016.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}, p.132.
\textsuperscript{88} Tamilselvan.Jo., Justin Thivagar, Jawagarji, \textit{op.cit.}, p.92.
for the need of fishes. An article in the pamphlets by Kottilpadu Duraisamy who once upon a time stood against in the election and was defeated by Lourdhammal Simon, mislead the coastal people that the fishers would die by sounds of mechanized boats and leakage of oil from them. He made the people believe through his article and cartoon that this mechanized boat would be helpful only for the rich people and but the poor would be the lifelong sufferers. After the introduction of mechanized boat and nylon nets poor coastal villagers were totally restless adding fuel to fire the opponents of Lourdhammal Simon fabricated lot of stories against the truth made propaganda among them the poor coastal villages had never thought that the introduction of new technology would help their life proper in the feature. When the opponents of Lourdhammal Simon created friction and fraction among the fishermen community, they did not understand the conspiracy behind it. This was also one of the reasons for the defeat of Lourdhammal Simon in the election of 1962.

Fifthly, before the introduction of nylon nets, the women of fishermen community had manufactured handmade cotton nets for fishing. After the introduction of nylon nets the extra income of the family was stopped this matter against the women in the fishermen community went against Lourdhammal Simon. This was also another reason for defeated by Lourdhammal Simon.

Sixthly, there was a split and deference of opinion between Lourdhammal Simon and the other congress leaders of Kanyakumari District with regard to many issues. Hence, they did not fulfill the wording of the Chief Minister K.Kamaraj and neglected

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90 Ibid.,
91 Tamilselvan.Jo., Justin Thivagar, Jawagarji, op.cit., p.98.
their duties expected by Chief Minister K. Kamaraj, this hostile attitude was also one of
the failure of the Lourdhammal Simon in the election 1962.\(^{92}\)

Seventhly, Lourdhammal Simon was away from casteism and religion. She
believed that only her achievements made the poor people profited. She did not go to the
voters in persons or canvass the voters door to door. This was also another reason for her
defeat.

**IMPACTS**

The impact of her failure in the election of 1962 completely changed her mode of
life. She lived at Azhvarpettai in Chennai. As it was her own house she accommodated
her third son Justin Oscar Simon along with his family. Even after her defeat in the
election she did not stop serving for the down-trodden and worked for them energetically. The poor those who had gone to her for help always received all possible
support from her. She did not neglect anyone especially the people of Kanyakumari, who
had met her for getting assistance. Of the beneficiaries from Nagercoil when the
investigator interviewed Chezhiyan, the first sentence he uttered from his mouth was that
she was his Goddess.\(^ {93}\) She had continued to serve for the poor through her life.
Whenever she was invited to attend any function she would accept the invitation with
smile and attended the function without fail. In this manner, she had developed very
good relationship with the contemporary politicians as well as the poor people.

Being a Minister and non Minister, Lourdhammal Simon had been realistic in her
behaviour. There are many examples about her realistic. One among them is, in the year
1979, once Lourdhammal Simon travelled in a train Nellai Express in second class
coach. At the time, Nasareane and his family from Kuthankuzhi in Tirunelveli district
also travelled with her. Nasareane had identified Lourdhammal and he asked, “You are

\(^{92}\) Tamilselvan.Jo., *op.cit.*, p.131.

\(^{93}\) An Interview with Chezhiyan, Nagercoil, dated 02.01.2016.
Ex-Minister of Tamilnadu, then why are you travelling in second class? You may have allotted some special quota seats in first class coach. Then why should you sit here?" For this question Lourdhammal Simon replied genuinely that, “I had worked under the minister who cares only for people’s welfare and I have learnt such principles from him. Neither first class nor second class, whatever it is everything is common to everyone”. Her reply and humbleness had made Nazareane goose-bumps.

In 1982, there was a religious clash between Hindus and Christians at Puthur, Mandaikadu among the people that had gone beyond the limit. As the result of the religious riot, nine fishermen were shot down. On hearing this heart breaking news Lourdhammal Simon came down to the spot to console the relatives of the victims. She underwent a fast for three days along with the people. Further, she had refused to wind up her fasting even after the parish priest advised her. She told in that, her people would do anything worst out of their emotion and hence she wanted to be with them till the turmoil was over. She had talked with the relative of the victims with meek heart and loving words to suppress their anger and agony. It took a few days to console their heart. During those days she did not stay any one hue, expect in the sea and shore only after that she had left for Chennai.

After few years, of living in her own house she had sold it away and shifted her family to the house of her third son who had been living at Adyar in Chennai. From there, she had accommodated herself with fourth son named Hubert Dominic Simon who lived at Nungampakkam in Chennai. While she had been living for some times (1991-1992) she had an unexpected pain in the hip bone. So, she had gone for medical treatment and undergone an operation twice. Due to the repeated surgeries

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94 An Interview with Nazareane, Kuthankuzhi, dated 29.01.2016.
95 Kadaloram (Tamil), Thimil Ezhuthalargal, Nagercoil, 2014, p.31.
96 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
Lourdhammal Simon failed to walk. Hence, she moved every were on wheel chair even after this painful situation, she never stopped serving for the people who met her.

Ponneelan, a Tamil scholar and the winner of Sahitya Akademi award, remembers his meeting with Lourdhammal Simon at Government Hospital in Madras. Lourdhammal Simon welcomed Ponneelan whole heartedly with her eyes full of tears. She had some interaction with Ponneelan with regard to his family and Kanyakumari District. Ponneelan could see a different personality aspect of Lourdhammal Simon when he met her in the hospital. She did not reflect loneliness, worries, disappointment and so on. Though she lived lonely in her old age with severe pain, it did not reflect upon her face. The sons of Lourdhammal Simon were not with her in her last days. Moreover, Lourdhammal Simon never wanted to disturb them as she lived as a free bird with responsibilities. She had told Ponneelan that her sons lead in a sophisticated life. They settled in different parts of the world. She reported to Ponneelan that her children had fulfilled all her desires with love and affection.

In 1997, while M. Karunanidhi was the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Lourdhammal Simon was invited for the celebration of Diamond Jubilee of Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly Council which was held in the University of Madras, Chennai, she came there in the wheel chair and sat at the first row. The function was presided over by the then Governor of Tamilnadu Fathima Beevi, in the presence of Chief Minister M. Karunanithi. In that function Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, came down from the stage

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97 Sahitya Akademi Award is a literary honor in India which Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, annually confers on writers of the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the major Indian languages recognised by the Sahitya Akademi. Established in 1954, the award comprises a plaque and a cash prize of Rs. 100,000. The award's purpose is to recognize and promote excellence in Indian writing and also acknowledge new trends. The annual process of selecting awardees goes on for the preceding twelve months.

98 An Interview with Ponneelan, Manikatipotal, dated 02.01.2016.

99 Ibid.,
and gave the award and honoured her. Each and every political leader had great respect on Lourdhammal Simon because she rightly deserved the award.

Due to some difference of opinion with daughter-in-law named Gajalakshmi Barbara. She left Nungampakkam. During the last days she had gone to Anna Nagar where she had lived in a house which was allocated by the Government of Tamilnadu. There she became very sick and weak. So many politicians from Congress and also from other political parties visited her and enquired about her health. But she was almost abandoned by the inmates of her family. So, Moopanar, P.Chidhambaram and other Congress stalwarts often visited Lourdhammal Simon during her illness and they used to enquire about her health. Whoever came to enquire about her health, she used to speak and feel sorry for the persons whoever passed away. Even during this worst physical condition, she never demanded rest instead, she loved the people and worked for them. She left this planet on 4th May 2002 at Anna Nagar in Chennai at the age of 91. The mortal remains of Lourdhammal Simon buried on the next day at Kilpakkam cemetery, Kilpakkam at Chennai. After Lourdhammal’s death, Tuqluk Journalist Cho, said about the leader, “Her integrity was most pure, her justice the most inflexible I have ever known.” Without this quiet and strong women hero, without her strong sense of responsibility, early history of the State of Madras would have been very different.

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101 An Interview with Chezhiyan, Nagercoil, dated 02.01.2016.
102 An Interview with Hubert Dominic Simon, son of Lourdhammal Simon, Nagercoil, dated 19.01.2016.
103 A tablet found in the burial cemetery of Lourdhammal Simon, Kilpakkam cemetery, Chennai, 04.05.2002.