CHAPTER - III

THE RATIONALISTIC OUTPOURINGS OF 'PERIYAR' E.V.R.'S THOUGHTS
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The preceding chapter is a study on how the rationalistic ideas of 'Periyar' were forged into a powerful force to awaken the sleeping Tamils. The present chapter brings out the various stands that went into the making of 'Periyar's ideology. A keen observer of life and people, 'Periyar' took in every experience big and small, and analysed it in the right perspective. The degradation of a vast majority of the people made him deliver deep into the origin. The more he pondered, the more he was convinced, the iniquity had been engineered by the so called upper castes for selfish reasons. Marginalised by the aggressive discrimination in the name of religion, the lower caste accepted their fate submissively. 'Periyar's fury at this iniquity, pity for the downtrodden and anger at the meekness of society, turned into raging thoughts. These in turn were moulded by universal ideologies and philosophies aimed at uplifting and redefining humanity.

It was not in him to fume and fret over injustice. He must act, and act decisively; nothing would should hamper him. He must go hammer and tongs against the caste structure. He was not indulging in blind opposition, but his ideas were considered, relevant thought provoking and meant to inspire the oppressed. 'Periyar's rationalistic ideas were critical, emphatic and fearless. When he said something or wrote something he did so based on irrefutable evidence. Therefore, no one could take umbrage against his vituperative, pungent, sarcasms, scathing attacks. 'Periyar's rationalistic outpourings contain his tenets of radical humanism, secularism, scientific and universal appeal.

1. Personal Interview with Sudhakar. G.J. Head of the Department of History, Archaeology and Culture Dravidian University, Kuppam on October 3, 2008.
Humanism

Humanism is a rational philosophy inspired by science and art and aims at compassion for all. It calls for love for fellow humans and its hallmarks are sympathy and respect for others. 'Periyar' was the greatest humanist of the twentieth century. In his view, humanists have confidence in themselves and are willing to share the material goods of life with others. They do not look upward to heaven for a promise of divine deliverance. They have the ability to employ art, science and reason, and the sympathy to create a better world for themselves and their fellow human beings. They can also face sorrow, adversity and death with courage.

Humanism became the key element of 'Periyar's rationalistic thoughts. He wanted to develop Tamil Society into a civilized and intellectual one and this reveals his deep concern for humanity. He emphasised the principle 'be a man and live like a man'. He dedicated his life to transforming the unjust and unequal social order and creating a new society characterised by liberty, equality, fraternity and human dignity. He poured out his ideas through his pen, speeches and agitations for social progress of the Tamils. The various phases of his struggles and campaigns for more than half a century were related to equality and human dignity leading to the spread of radical humanism.

The fight began in 1886, when his abhorrence of castes became evident. He questioned religious discriminations, superstitions and stood

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2. Veeramani, K., Humanism, Chennai 1998, P.5;
4. Veeramani, K., Periyar and His Idealogies, Chennai, 1998, P.2;
for equality of all people. Since 1900, he had stood for a society without any caste discrimination. Even during his school days, he mingled with the low castes and inter-dined with them. In those days, child marriage was prevalent in the Hindu society. There were numberless widows aged from one year to twenty years for whom he had much concern. For instance, in 1909, his own niece, aged nine lost her husband of thirteen years after sixty days of her marriage. The great humanist 'Periyar' made arrangements for her remarriage secretly at Chidambaram. 'Periyar' had deep love, sympathy, and concern for the downtrodden. When plague struck at Erode in 1917, he stayed there and helped the affected people. He not only gave relief to them, but also carried the dead bodies on his shoulders as a pallbearer. During his Chairmanship of Erode Municipality (1917-1919), he carried out constructive public works meant for the welfare of the people. While he was the Secretary of Mahajana School at Erode, he carried out a lot of welfare measures for the non-Brahmins.

'Periyar' joined the Tamil Nadu Congress in 1919 hoping to be of service to people. While he was in the Congress, he showed his concern for the non-Brahmins, who were oppressed and suppressed in many ways. By bringing proposals for communal reservation, he wanted to achieve equality for the non-Brahmins. Unfortunately, his proposal for communal reservation were always rejected. He was also insulted on these occasions. His last and futile attempt was made in the Congress Conference at Kanchipuram in

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14. G.O.No. 73, Public Department, Madras, January 8, 1958, P.16.
November 1925. Now, he realised that the Congress would not do anything to help the non-Brahmins and so he severed his ties with the Congress. However, while he was in the Congress, he had established his credentials as a **Champion of Low Castes**.

Following this, he launched a crusade for equality and progress of the downtrodden. He led the struggles for human rights and equality at Vaikom (1924), Cheranmahadevi (1925) and Suchindrum (1926). The Vaikom Satyagraha spearheaded by 'Periyar' was to restore the rights of the untouchables, unseeables and unapproachables to pass through the streets and roads adjoining the Vaikom temple. To him, "none should be superior or inferior and each should live with freedom and equality in public life". He wondered why human beings were not allowed to walk in the streets along which the dogs and pigs were roaming freely. No wonder, his battle cry against the age-old inhuman bigotry led to the protection of the human rights of the untouchables.

Another episode for attaining equality took place at the Cheranmahadevi Gurukulam in 1925. Here, the Brahmin and non-Brahmin students were discriminated in boarding and lodging. It is said that there were plantain leaves for the Brahmin students and only plates for the non-Brahmins at lunch. Moreover, two water pots were kept separately for both the sections. The caste fanaticism and caste oriented approach of the Brahmin president of the Gurukulam, V.V.S. Iyer, greatly...

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pained and infuriated, 'Periyar'. 23 and argued that all students must be treated equally and they should enjoy fraternity and humanity according to the change and progress of times. 24 In the course of the agitation, he was able to understand the under hand dealings of the leaders in the Congress men. His fight against the caste-based discrimination in the Gurukulam testifies to his pro-human attitude which, finally paved the way for his anti-Brahmin revolt. 25 This event forced him to resign from the post of Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. 26

'Periya'r realised that he would neglect the chance to do social service for the welfare of humanity if he remained in the Congress. 27 According, to him, 'whether a person be rich or poor, educated or uneducated, high or low, his self-respect should not be wounded'. 28 In his words, 'self-respect is the basic right of human being and it has greater consequence to the nation than political freedom'. 29 He also quoted the words of Rousseau "man was born free but found everywhere in chains". 30 It could not be denied that his honesty, integrity self-respect and deep sympathy for the backward-non-Brahmin Community made him quit the Congress. In order to liberate and safeguard the people, he started the the humanistic Self-Respect Movement in December 1925. 32 It was a humanistic and scientific movement which was meant to liberate the ignorant masses from the social degradation and

26. Ibid., November 22, 1925, PP.4-5.
32. G.O.No. 73, Public Department, Madras, January 8, 1952, P.2.
provide them knowledge, equality and independence.\textsuperscript{33} It was launched to restore the honour the self-respect of each and every person in society.\textsuperscript{34}

Subsequently, he participated in another struggle for human rights at Suchindrum in January 1926 in Kanyakumari, inorder to eradicate human discrimination. The Satyagraha came to an end with the formation of other roads for the low castes.\textsuperscript{35} He started a number of Self-Respect Leagues all over Tamil Nadu in 1926, to protect human rights. He also took steps to eradicate discrimination in the railway canteens.\textsuperscript{36}

As a great humanist, 'Periyar' introduced Self-Respect Marriage of a revolutionary character, to dispense with elaborate rites, and prohibitive castes.\textsuperscript{37} He defined \textit{Self-Respect Marriage} as a contract between a man and a woman to live together, share equally and mutually the joys and sorrows of married life.\textsuperscript{38} The two basic principles of Self-Respect Marriage are humanism and caste eradication.\textsuperscript{39} It is very simple, time-saving, less expensive and against meaningless traditions and discriminations.\textsuperscript{40} The main goal of this marriage is to put an end to slavery of women and to redeem them from abuse.\textsuperscript{41}

'Periyar's' visits to the Asian, African and European countries in between 1929 and 1932 were meant for public welfare.\textsuperscript{42} He undertook foreign

\textsuperscript{33} Kudi Arasu, Erode, September 20, 1931. P.7.
\textsuperscript{34} Suchindrum near Nagercoil is noted for famous Thanumalaiya Swami temple has been for a long time managed by the orthodox Malayalee Brahmins and the Tamil Pillaimar. They were so casteistic that they did not allow the low castes including the Nadars from entering the temple street, much less a chance to the temple itself. It necessitated another agitation to open the streets to the lower castes. 
\textsuperscript{35} Kudi Arasu., February 14, 1926, P.8,
\textit{Kudi Arasu.}, September 4, 1927, P.7.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}, December 19, 1926, P.7.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}, January 17, 1926, P.11.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Purattchi}, June 17, 1934, P.7.
\textsuperscript{39} Kudi Arasu., Erode, July 13, 1930, P.13.
\textsuperscript{40} Viduthalai, Madras, December 16, 1970, P.1.
\textsuperscript{41} Revolt, Erode, February 20, 1929, P.121, \textit{Ibid.}, Erode, March 1929, P.135.
\textsuperscript{42} Kudi Arasu, Erode, November 26, 1938, P.1.
tours and travels to awaken humanity and annihilate their ignorance, blind beliefs and superstitions.\textsuperscript{43} 'Periyar' had great concern for the Tamil language and wanted to develop it on par with the other languages of the world. 'Periyar's' journals in Tamil and English also aimed at obliterating superstitions, blind beliefs, orthodox traditions, and creating awareness for the intellectual and rationalistic well being of the people. His journal Kudi Arasu was started to develop people all round.\textsuperscript{44} His reform of the Tamil script was aimed to reducing the number of Tamil letters. Infact, his reforms in Tamil letters and attachment to the Tamil language were based on his self-respect and humanism.\textsuperscript{45} 'Periyar' thought that the introduction of Hindi would mean the suppression of the non-Brahmins, make them fools and destroy their culture and humanism.\textsuperscript{46} He wanted to protect the non-Brahmins against the hegemony of Hindi. In his words, the Anti-Hindi Agitations were neither political nor linguistic, but an Aryan-Dravidian struggle.\textsuperscript{47} It was meant for regaining the honour and morality of a suppressed people.\textsuperscript{48} During the Anti-Hindi Agitations, he earned the support of many people including the Brahmins and the Muslims.

'Periyar' spent all his resources, material, mental and moral in the service of the under-privileged, socially and educationally deprived sections of humanity especially women.\textsuperscript{49} He expounded a number of rights such as property right, right to divorce and right to remarriage.\textsuperscript{50} He severely

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{Viduthalai}, Erode, November 29, 1954, P.1.
\item \textsuperscript{44} \textit{Kudi Arasu}, January 26, 1946, PP. 1-2.
\item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Hundred and Twenty Seventh Birth Day Souvenir}, \textit{Viduthalai}, Chennai, 2005, PP. 257-259.
\item \textsuperscript{46} \textit{Viduthalai}, Madras, January 1, 1968, P.1.
\item \textsuperscript{48} \textit{Personal Interview with Verramani, K., President of Dravida Kazhagam}, Chennai, February 16, 2002.
\item \textsuperscript{49} \textit{Kudi Arasu}, Erode, August 17, 1930, P.10.
\item \textsuperscript{50} \textit{Pahuttarivu}, Erode, October 14, 1934, P.9.
\end{itemize}
condemned ill-treatment of women. He fought for the abolition of widowhood on the ground that it was more cruel than untouchability. He fought for the removal of maladies affecting women. He prescribed family planning for population control and suggested the novel idea of a 'test-tube baby' for women. He emphasised women's education and fifty percentage reservation of seats in education and employment to women. His principle of 'gender - equality' was also based on humanism. No wonder, 'Periyar' was the champion of women's liberation. He deserves the title 'Periyar' that was conferred on him by women themselves.

'Periyar' revealed his humanism by raising his voice for the creation of Tamil Nadu out of the Madras Presidency to establish political, economic and scientific development. Again in 1940, he fought to remove the caste discrimination in the railway canteens. He even requested the masses to remove the stigma 'Sudra' attached to them. His aim was not for power but service and this is evident from his refusal to accept the leadership of Madaras in 1940's. He founded Dravida Kazhagam in 1944, to infuse rationalism, self-respect, and restore peoples rights and save them from exploitation. He also wanted purge the society of its evils of subservience. For that he started the Black Shirts on October 10, 1945.

Before independence, he declared that true freedom lies in the emancipation of the masses from caste discrimination and untouchability.

53. Revolt, Erode, February 20, 1929, P.128.
54. Viduthalai, Madras, April 20, 1972, P.1.
57. G.O.No. 2959, Public Department, Madras, October 21, 1957, P.119.
He condemned freedom as it only meant slavery and economic exploitation were likely to continue when the British left. So he called on his people to observe August 15, 1947, as a Day of Mourning. He stated that India should be a socialist country to protect the interest of all its citizens. When Gandhiji, was shot dead on 30 January 1948, 'Periyar's' showed how much he valued human lives by broadcasting the truth about his assassination by which he prevented unnecessary bloodshed in India. Inspite of his differences of opinion with Gandhiji, he sent recommendations to the government to honour Gandhiji with memorials.

Like that, when India became a Republic on January 26, 1950, 'Periyar' called it a Day of Mourning because the new Constitution could enslave the people for ever. He was much concerned with the uplift and welfare of the Dravidians. It was his great concern that made him fight for a separate Dravida Nadu, where there would be no poverty, exploitation, disgrace and North Indian domination. The flourishing of Dravidian culture was uppermost in his mind.

'Periyar' protested against the anti-communal representation in the government. He campaigned for reservations in educational institutions and government services for the non-Brahmins, who were kept backward socially and educationally for several centuries. Due to his persistent agitations the first Constitutional Amendment was passed in 1951. Moreover, he wanted to guard the people from centuries old
practices, which made them slaves. He broke the idols of Pillaiyar in May 1953.69
Realising the defective and destructive consequences of the Gurukukula System of Education introduced by the then Chief Minister Rajagopalachari (1952-1954) he vehemently opposed it. 70

'Periyar' carried out a number of agitations to wipe out the degradation and dishonour in social life.71 He condemned and fought against God, religion, blind beliefs and sastras which led to tyranny by the minority and fought for their eradication.72 He burnt excerpts from the Indian Constitution which contained the provision for perpetuation of caste system.73 To remove the subjugation and digrace of Dravidians, he burnt the pictures of Rama and copies of the Ramayana.74 He organised an agitation against Brahmin nameboards in the hotels which contained the words 'Brahmins only'.75 To improve the conditions of Tamilians, Periyar wanted to break shackles like God, and religion he and stood for the division of the country.76

To fight against religion and god, he developed his philosophy of atheism in 1967 which is a modified version of his earlier tenet 'Think about Man and Forget God'.77 To him, it was neither a creed nor a dogma but a humanistic movement dedicated to human happiness, social justice and welfare.78 The former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai also recognised Periyar's

70. G.O. No. 73, Public Department, Madras, February 7, 1958, P.3.
74. G.O. No. 2203, Public Department, Madras, July 19, 1957, PP. 3-3.
selfless service to humanity. He was very particular about creating an intellectual society which will not meekly submit itself to the acts of barbarism.

To achieve a casteless society he decided to enter the sanctum-sanctorum of temples violating, some prohibitory practices then prevalent. He considered this practice a sense to perpetuate abuse of the Sudras. To shatter it, he was determined to fight against it on January 26, 1970. Subsequently, at his Thinkers Forum at Trichi he declared 'that there should not be any discrimination in human society'. However, due to the agitations of Periyar, the then Chief Minister Karunanidhi (1969-1971) passed the Archaka Act on 12 January 1971, which entitled all qualified people including the Adhi Dravidians to become priests in the temples. 'Periyar' was overwhelmed by this piece of legislation to abolish casteism and establish equality of persons irrespective of caste in all places.

Now, 'Periyar' set himself the task of removing the superstitions of the people. He convened the Superstition Eradication Conference at Salem, and 'Conference for Eradication of Social Disgrace and Degradation in Madras on December 8th and 9th of 1973 respectively. In these, he exhorted the Tamilians "to strive hard for the eradication of casteism and social degradation imposed by the high castes". In his last but immortal speech at Theyagarayanagar in Madras, on December 19, 1973 he spoke passionately

82. Ibid., May 9, 1970, P.3.
83. G.O.No.5, Law Department, Madras, January 12, 1971, P.1.
for the removal of the disgrace visited on the Tamilians.** Never once did
'Periyar' look back in frustration or bother about detractions and criticisms.

This crusader for atheism was a great humanist in the sense
that he was not antagonistic to any body as a person. He used to give respect to
men of honesty, integrity and probity. He declared that Brahmins were also
human beings, and they should be treated equally well, and with respect
and this revealed his broad mind.** He was a very close friend of Brahmins
and other high caste men and religious leaders like Kuntra Kudi Adigal,
Sankarachariyar of Sringeri Mutt, Tamil scholar Thiru. V. Kalyana Sundarnar,
C. Rajagopalachari, M.N. Roy of Calcutta and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.**
His spring of love for humanity never dried up throughout his life. At the same
time, he was the enemy of Brahminism as an institution, which was detrimental
to the progress of the non-Brahmins.**

'Periyar' declared that he had no attachment to God, religion,
national language or family, but he was deeply attached to the human race.**
He believed that real and permanent social change could be brought about
only by enrichment and enlightenment of the mental outlook of the people
through education.** To carry this out, he endowed all his wealth and the
donations which he received for the welfare of humanity.** His Trust runs
hundreds of institutions such as educational institutions from primary to College
level, Universities, technical and pharmaceutical institutes, hospitals, homes and
orphanages all meant for the welfare and permanent advancement of society.

88. *Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at T. Nagar, Chennai, On December 19, 1973,
Viduthalai, Madras December 28, 1973, P.1.*
90. *Viduthalai, Madras, September 23, 1993, P.1.*
Besides this, there are a number of Free Legal Assistance Cells, Rationalist Libraries, Research Centres, and different Coaching and Training Centres. His approach to the sufferings of people was humane. As far as his humanism is concerned, he is different from Vallalar (Ramalinga Adigal) who did not revolt against caste, though he had great compassion for all. But, Periyar attacked the castles of casteism to usher a new era to humanity.

(b) Secularism

'Periyar', the rationalist was a secularist. According to him, secularism promotes equality and separates the temporal from religion. His primary aim was to weaken the traditional belief in religion as an indispensable institution with its spiritual and moral values. Further, he wanted to uproot the defensive fortifications of religion like traditions, worships, blind beliefs, God and scriptures. His instinctive rationalism found these as being irrational and irrelevant to man's life and as obstructions to social change and human progress. He wanted to make people wise, vigorous and progressive. His concept of secularism encompassed all religious ideas, beliefs, practices and organisations. But, reason has to replace religion so that men and women have complete control over themselves. Periyar had no faith in divinity but only in wisdom, knowledge and truth.

'Periyar' began to abhor religious discriminations, superstitions and rituals. He had no faith in or fear of God. The Vaishnavites and the Saivites, during their Kathakaletshebams (story-telling with music and actions)

95. Veeramani, K., Periyar Is there a God?, Chennai 1996, P. X.
100. Kudi Arasu, Erode, August 14, 1948., P.3.
at his house, gave different interpretations to his probing questions. He had lost faith in religion, God, sastras and puranas even before 1900. He had no faith in divinity, astrology, rituals, omens, soothsayings, auspicious times and other superstitions. He even stopped the observance of religious rites by his wife Nagammal. He even persuaded her to discontinue her ritualistic visit to the temples.

In 1904, he became an ascetic and practised 'sanyas'. During his wanderings in search of God at Benaras, he got no divine enlightenment but was led to the belief that God does not exist. Moreover, the disgrace inflicted by the Brahmins at Benaras, hurt him deeply and inflamed intense hatred towards them and their innumerable gods. This drove him to the conclusion that religion and god are the weapons used by the high castes to enslave the low castes. He also realised that these were the impediments in the path of progress and truth. So, he condemned all forms of asceticism and came to the conclusion that there was no virtue in renouncing the natural and legitimate pleasures of life.

Later, he was appointed as the Secretary and President of the Devasthanam Board with a view to changing his irrational attitude and making him religious. It was a matter of great surprise that in the matters of disbelief, he was very honest, more careful and sincere. Realising that, religious orthodoxy was the main reason for the backwardness and disgrace of the society he began to fight against it.

Congress Conference at Tiruppur in 1922, he fought for the entry of the low castes into the temples but it was opposed by the Brahmin Congressites. Immediately he shouted, to burn the Ramayana and the Manudharmasstra.  

'Periyar's' secular movement popularly called the **Self-Respect Movement**, was started in 1925 and designed for Dravidian uplift. It was non-religious in its approach towards the social problems. Its basic object was to remove ignorance and superstitious beliefs based on religion and traditions. It severely opposed and criticised casteism, God, sastras, and rituals. Dravida Kazhagam came into existence as a rationalist movement devoted for human progress. 'Periyar' strictly instructed the followers of Self-Respect Movement not to wear caste marks on their forehead. He was very stubborn in eradicating religion, God and sastras from 1925.  

'Periyar' introduced the secular marriage called **Self-Respect Marriage**. It was revolutionary in nature and aimed at put an end to the hegemony of the high caste priests. It was against dharmasastras which gave protection to women slavery, religious rituals, ceremonies, omens, looking in for auspicious time, astrology, palmistry, and numerology. To him, marriage should be very simple and performed without any priest, chanting of mantras, puranas and superstitions. It should not involve paraphernalia, dowry and other expenses. In such, 'Self-Respect Marrages' there is no scope for religious rites, but importance has to be given to secular ideas. It is devoid of religious sanctity for a man and a woman to live together happily.

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In the first Self-Respect Conference at Chengleput in 1929, 'Periyar' passed a resolution not to follow the Vedas, sastras, puranas and construct temples. He stressed the fact that, temple wealth should be used for research, handicraft and to conduct exhibitions for intellectual growth. In order to strengthen his secular ideas, he began to organise staunch propaganda programmes from 1929. He propagated that God, religion, superstitions and puranas were imagery and they were not acceptable to rationalism.

In the third Self-Respect Conference at Virudhunagar in 1931, he passed a resolution that all religions which are against humanism be abolished. 'Periyar' spread his secular ideas among the people only to make them easily understand the Marxian Materialistic principles. He was infavour of Samadharma which was against religion, God and superstitions.

Based on secularism 'Periyar' established his non-political organisation called Dravida Kazhagam in 1944. It was against religion, God, puranas, sastras and vedas. It wanted to reclaim the society from evils and give it a free life. Even, his proposed Dravida Nadu, would have nothing to do with religions, i.e. no special concessions to religions and no wastage of money for religious purpose.

'Periyar' reasoned that religion had its origin during the barbaric and uncivilised age inorder to protect and regulate the lives of the people. It came into existence out of ignorance, fear and illiteracy. Moreover, religion was the instrument of slavery, and in it, there was no place for independent wisdom, intellectual thinking and research. It was of no use for human

123. Kudi Arasu, Erode, November 6, 1948, P.15.
124. Ibid., April 17, 1932, P.7, Ibid., October 10, 1927, PP.4-6.
progress and was an anachronism. 'Periyar' stated that the inhuman systems of sati, untouchability, child marriage, polygamy, superstitions, widowhood, women-slavery, meaningless, rites priestly hegemony were the products of Hindu religion. To him, Hinduism was created centuries back along rigid lines. It was built upon the imaginary fortress of moksha (heaven) and in its name people were cheated.

'Periyar' declared that Hinduism was the religion imposed by the Aryans over the Dravidians, So, he was anxious to renew the old Dravidian religion in which there was no varnashrama, high caste hegemony and untouchability. This religion was older than Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Aryan religion (Hinduism). Moreover, 'Periyar' was greatly influenced by the Buddhist principles. To him, Buddhism was a rationalistic religion free from the ideas of casteism, God, creed and soul. But, after the Buddhist Conference at Rangoon, he gave up his idea of embracing Buddhism because he personally witnessed the vagaries, superstitious customs and rites of the Buddhist monks and followers. He found Christianity, the most unacceptable due to its idol worship, rituals, superstitions and divisions. He was in favour of Islam and appreciated it for its reasonable nature, unity, equality, fraternity, and absence of discrimination and untouchability.

'Periyar' stated that religion was responsible for making the people stupid and superstitions. There was havoc and tyranny in the name of religion, ignorance and fear to perpetuate its influence. To inculcate unity,

127. Kudi Arasu, Erode, September 27, 1931, P.55.
133. Revolt, Erode, March 6, 1929, P.139.
peace, and to remove caste cruelties and wealthy arrogance, religion
should be abolished.\textsuperscript{134} He remarked that religion should be buried
underground and its basic sources burnt.\textsuperscript{135} In addition to that, he
emphasised that there is no need for religion, religious pictures and symbols in a
secular state.\textsuperscript{136}

To 'Periyar', the origin of the word God was obscure and it was
beyond understanding when it came into existence. It was a foolish concept
emanating barbarism. People worshipped earth, rain, rivers, mountains,
air, fire, sun, moon, stars, lightning, thunder, clouds, cruel animals, birds
and trees as gods. They accepted all these as gods, when they were unable
to understand them.\textsuperscript{137} He, declared that god was created out of man's fear,
indiscipline, dishonesty, selfishness and powerless nature. Faith in god used to
justify a lazy life. It entails loss of self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.\textsuperscript{138}
Do gods need palatial buildings and profitable endowments to lead a
luxurious life, people need the chanting of mantras to wake them up in the
mornings?\textsuperscript{139}

'Periyar' once remarked that if gods were lovable then,
why should they sport deadly weapons in their hands?,\textsuperscript{140} If they are
benign, why do they create natural calamities to add to the sufferings
of humanity.\textsuperscript{141} Belief in god is an obstacle for intellectual thinking

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., December 5, 1928, P.34.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., Madras, August 11, 1929, P.314.
\textsuperscript{136} Pahutharivu, Erode, March 1, 1937, P.36.
\textsuperscript{137} Kudi Arasu, Erode, April 15, 1928, P.7.
\textsuperscript{138} Viduthalai, Erode, March 22, 1960, P.1.
\textsuperscript{139} Pahutharivu, Erode, November 1935, P.60.
\textsuperscript{141} Kudi Arasu, Erode, May 26, 1935.

Revolt, Madras, August 4, 1929, P.315.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., Madras, March 6, 1929, P.138.
\textsuperscript{141} Viduthalai, Madras, March 3, 1970, P.3.
\textsuperscript{141} Pahutharivu, Madras, November 1, 1935, P.35.
and growth. He instructed the people to give up their blind belief in god and called upon them to beat idols of gods with chappals and broom-sticks. People should 'forget god and think about man'. This declaration became the gist of his secular humanism. It emphasised compassion and pity for fellow human beings. This would help prevent commercialisation and exploitation of people in the name of god. God is an unseeable entity and is said to have control over heaven and hell. But no body knows, where exactly they are. Some look up and say that there is heaven up above and others look down and say that hell is there. Anyhow, the world we live in is the only world, a lovable world.

'Periyar' conducted the campaign of iconoclasm inorder to liberate people from superstitions. To him, the idols of gods were a mark of disgrace to the backward and low castes. He wanted people to realise the inefficacy of idol worship and the powerlessness of idols. He stated that idol worship belonged to the stone age, and it is a barbaric act in the scientific age. So, in 1953, he broke the idols of Pillaiyar (Vinayagar) in Madras with a stick. He also instructed the self-respectors to do the same. However, the iconoclasm of 'Periyar' had far reaching consequences.

Subsequently, 'Periyar' declared that temples are the instruments of exploitation. They are not built for gods but are the breeding round of casteism. They are mainly responsible for slavery and backwardness.

143. G.O.No. 73, Public Department, January 8, 1958, P.3.
The high castes were the traditional custodians of the temples and this led to their domination.\textsuperscript{150} In the name of gods, many crores of rupees running to a lot of man power, precious time, costly jewels, food items and flowers are wasted. 'Periyar' declared that the wealth of the temple should be spent for promoting public welfare.\textsuperscript{151} He condemned the practice of yagas and abishekams, because large quantities of milk, ghee, oil, honey, fruit-jam and cooked-rice are poured on the idols and sent down the drains.\textsuperscript{152} Further, the Dravidians, were not allowed to worship, do poojas and use their own language in the temples they themselves built.\textsuperscript{153} What an irony! So, 'Periyar' stated that temples should be razed to the ground for constructive thoughts, and knowledge to thrive life.\textsuperscript{154}

'Periyar' vehemently criticised the Vedas which were written with a view to enslaving, exploiting and disgracing the Dravidians.\textsuperscript{155} He declared that if there had been no vedas, then there would be no religion and god.\textsuperscript{156} The 'Code of Manu' curtailed the rights of Sudras and imposed severe disabilities on them depriving them of their honour and self-respect.\textsuperscript{157} To him, the two fairy tales - Ramayana and Mahabharata - are narratives of mere historical events and incidents.\textsuperscript{158} They are the arsenals of Aryan malvolence. He highlighted the obscenities inherent in these scriptures and declared that the characters of these two concocted stories are unfit to be worshipped as gods.\textsuperscript{159} He condemned the puranas and sastras

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{150} Sobhanan, B., \textit{Temple-Entry Movement and Sivakasi Riots}, Madurai, 1985, P.1.
  \item \textsuperscript{151} \textit{Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at Salem and Namakkal on December 12, 1937, Kudi Arasu}, Erode, December 19, 1937.
  \item \textsuperscript{153} \textit{Vaduthalai}, Erode, July 11, 1947, P.2.
  \item \textsuperscript{154} \textit{Ibid.}, March 3, 1970, P.3.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} \textit{Revolt}, Erode, March 6, 1929, P.138.
  \item \textsuperscript{156} \textit{Kudi Arasu}, Erode, April 24, 1945, P.5.
  \item \textsuperscript{158} \textit{Revolt}, Erode, December 5, 1928, P.31; \textit{The Justicite}, December 30, 1944, P.2.
  \item \textsuperscript{159} \textit{G.O.No. 2191, Public Department, Madras}, July 18, 1957, P.27.
\end{itemize}
because they made people fools. They also inhibited their thinking process.\textsuperscript{160} He ridiculed them as myths, irrational and immoral.\textsuperscript{161} because they contain 'false and incredible' stories about gods.\textsuperscript{162} He wanted all there to be wiped off so that casteism would end.\textsuperscript{163}

'Periyar' had no faith in prayer, bhakti, soul, astrology, heaven, hell, rebirth, karma, fate, rites and festivals. To him, these were imaginary legends concocted to enslave human beings.\textsuperscript{163} Due to these, people lost their self-confidence, intellectual thinking and were made to hate worldly pleasures. He stood for their destruction that enabled people to lead a respectful life.\textsuperscript{164} According to him 'astrology' is a clever means to outwit people and earn a living.\textsuperscript{165} He even contended that astrology is just humbug. For instance, if the time and date of birth of a dog is given to an astrologer he would not be able to write the horoscope of that dog.\textsuperscript{166} He declared that if people believe in astrology then there is no place for rationalism based on science.\textsuperscript{167} He detested meaningless customs, rites, traditions and blind beliefs.\textsuperscript{168} He stated that blind faith and ignorance would destroy the welfare of a nation as there would be no place for rationalism and independence.\textsuperscript{169} 'Periyar' was against the celebration of festivals and wished to protect the Tamilians from cultural invasion.\textsuperscript{170} In his opinion, festivals

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{160} \textit{GO.2959, Secret Department, Madras,} October 21, 1957, P.5.
\item \textit{Speech of E.V.R. at Chakravaranpettai, on August 11, 1942, Viduthalai, August 11, 1947, P.2.}
\item \textsuperscript{161} \textit{Kudi Arasu, Erode, June 30, 1940, P.1.}
\item \textsuperscript{162} \textit{GO.No. 448, Public Department, Madras, March 14, 1935, P.8.}
\item \textsuperscript{163} \textit{GO. No. 73, Public Department, Madras, January 8, 1958, P.3.}
\item \textsuperscript{164} \textit{GO. 2191, Public Department,} July 10, 1957, P.24.
\item \textsuperscript{165} \textit{Pahutharivu,} Erode, November 1, 1935, P.26.
\item \textsuperscript{166} \textit{Kudi Arasu,} Erode, November 25, 1932, P.6.
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{Veeramani, K., Periyariyal, Vol.II, Chennai, 1990, P.161.}
\item \textsuperscript{168} \textit{Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at Thiruvathipuran on January 19, 1948; Viduthalai, January 14, 1971, P.2.}
\item \textsuperscript{169} \textit{Viduthalai,} Madras, October 16, 1971, P.1.
\item \textsuperscript{170} \textit{G.O.No.73, Public Department, Madras, January 1958, P.109.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
should be meant for human progress and scientific development. They should not just while away their time, energy and money for meaningless purposes.\textsuperscript{171}

'Periyar' announced his atheistic philosophy on May 24, 1967 at Vidayapuram in Tanjore.\textsuperscript{172} He propagated his personal atheistic conviction to promote public good. He used hardwords only to make people think and act. Moreover, his atheist philosophy is inscribed on the pedestal of all his statues.\textsuperscript{173} He even created a movement to spread atheism. His demand for the appointment of priests irrespective of caste was also purely a secular affair. Since 1973, he had been exhorting people, not to go to the temples, or wear symbols of religion but enjoy honour.\textsuperscript{174}

However, his secularistic teachings and atheism were blacked out by the mass media. So, he toured from village to village and spread his atheistic ideas. He was rightly called the Jably of Tamil Nadu (Jabaly was the atheist minister of king Dasaratha of Ayodhya-modern Oudh). The mass media was then in the hands of the theists, who could not tolerate their castles being shaken. These orthodox men had the courage to condemn 'Periyar' as a devil. Even then, unmindful of attacks, he went on tours spreading enlightenment. He was lambasted for his ideas of iconoclasm and atheism but he never give up. He never accepted the existence of god and even in his death bed, he refused to be reconciled to the existence of god.

c. Scientific Approach

The rationalistic outpourings of 'Periyar' were born out of his analysis, experience and research. He gave much importance to reason, critical

\textsuperscript{171} Pahutharivu, Erode, November 1, 1935, P.26.

\textsuperscript{172} Viduthalai, Madras, March 3, 1970, P.3.


\textsuperscript{174} Viduthalai, Madras, March 15, 1973, P.1.

intelligence and wisdom. He urged people to have scientific thinking, modern outlook, human suffering could be alleviated only through research and scientific inventions. As a progressive thinker, 'Periyar' adopted the scientific approach to all social evils. He was equally convinced that his ideas should not be imposed upon an unwilling people. He was in favour of new ideas, new systems of thought and new struggles for social progress. He was quite aware and conscious of the need for such perennial changes in society.

'Periyar's' scientific outlook an underlying dictum i.e., to think is to doubt, to doubt is to explore and to explore is to find. He followed the analytical approach that was the 'Socratean approach' - doubting before accepting anything. He used to see things in their true perspective uninfluenced by the forces of environment. His masterly diagnosis of the problems of society made him a real social scientist. He tried to find out the origin or the root of the social evils, pluck it out and destroy it once for all. He analysed the problems well at first and then revealed them to the people. His critical research was free from dogmatism, subjectivism and prejudice. He strived hard for social awareness and wanted everybody to ponder further before acting.

'Periyar's' personal experiences about social problems paved the way for his spirit of inquiry. His scientific outlook was constructive. He wanted the Dravidian society to acquire awareness and dignity. He decided to act only after deep thought and conviction. He began to question the unscientific and irrational practices with his natural flair for rationalism. He analysed the reasons for untouchability and discovered that lack of

wealthe, education, ability, influence and disunity led to untouchability.\textsuperscript{182} His critical views about religion, God, scriptures, rites and rituals were confirmed by his own personal experiences in the pre-eminent holy city of pilgrimage, Benares (Varnasi). He wanted to find out some kind of spiritual illumination, but it never came.\textsuperscript{183}

'Periyar's' humanistic scientific philosophy was called Self-Respect Philosophy. He realized that the basic reason for the difficulties of the people was due to the lack of self-respect.\textsuperscript{184} His philosophy of self-respect advocated creation through destruction. It was based on reason, critical intelligence, analytical intellect, empirical evidence, statistical verification and scientific approach. It emphasised that before doing anything, one must see its causes, analyse them, do research and find out the fact and respect them.\textsuperscript{185}

'Periyar' made his overseas foreign visits between 1931 and 1932 with a scientific motive and outlook. What he witnessed and analysed made him compare places overseas with India. His made a scientific study of the political, economic and social systems of life in foreign countries.\textsuperscript{186} He realised that there are no superstitions and caste discriminations in foreign countries and this led them to their scientific and intellectual growth.\textsuperscript{187} He realised that their rationalism based on science and research made their life more comfortable and progressive and instilled hopes in their lives.\textsuperscript{188} 'Periyar' spoke to the Dravidians and asked them to consider, aspects of life, in the light of his experiences abroad.\textsuperscript{189} But it is not

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{182} The Modern Rationalist, Vol. 28, Chennai, August 2003, P.21.
\textsuperscript{184} Kudi Arasu, Erode, 28 July 1945, P.9.
\textsuperscript{185} The Modern Rationalist, Vol.25, No.5, June 2000, P.4.
\textsuperscript{186} Viduthalai, Chennai, July 9, Chennai 2000, P.23.
\textsuperscript{189} Govindarajan B.S., Op.cit., P.44.
\end{flushleft}
completely true that there are no blind faith, religious fanaticism and obscurantism in foreign countries.

'Periyar' wanted to liberate women from centuries of bondage. He realised that unless and until women were awakened from subjugation, no real change was possible in human society. He clearly demonstrated that god, religion, caste and superstitions were the instruments which kept women in perpetual subjugation. He laid stress on gender equality. So, he championed 'Self-Respect Marriage' to liberate women from the clutches of age-old customs and rites. He proposed family planning when almost everyone believed that child birth was a divinely ordained one. He analysed that due to the increasing child birth, women lost their freedom, honour, self-respect, and it became a hurdle to their progress and even dangerous to their good health. He also declared that 'woman is not a child bearing machine' and he wrote articles about it in Kudi Arasu.

He also stated that families with a large number of children have lead to a miserable life in poverty and disease. The children could not be properly fed, clothed and educated. He recommended birth control as a basic measure to have a better family life. He explained that everything done by the humans and nothing by God. He even foresaw the testube baby as a means for the creation of children with sound mind and sound body. He also revealed that chromosomes were more or less the same in nine hundred and ninety nine people out of a thousand. But, a change in one gene will distinguish a person from the others. All these matters realised were by the scientific world only in later days. His scientific

193. Revolt, Madras, July 14, 1929, P.283.
vision is found in his book, 'The World To Come'. In this, he explains his scientific vision which has now been realised in many ways.

He also declared that there was no role for fate and destiny in human life. Everything that people do is based on self-determination. Population can be controlled with the willing co-operation of the people. 'Periyar' instructed the people not to believe anything dogmatically but to probe and seek the truth with open mind. He also cautioned people not to accept anything simply and blindly because our ancestors did so.

'Periyar' thought that rationalism and atheism were the means to achieve equality and self-confidence. He investigated the emergence of the caste system. He applied his mind and heart thoroughly to it. He analysed the system thread bare and found out the insidious nature of this. He discovered that caste discrimination was responsible for all the backwardness of human society. He suggested that Islam was the best medicine to get rid of caste disgrace and degradation. His advocacy of Islam as the best religion of brotherhood is appreciable. But 'Periyar' failed to understand its cruel practises like of Jihad (holy war). Perhaps, he overlooked the fact that Islam spilt more blood than any other religion on earth.

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196. In this, he vividly explained the advent of the 'test-tube baby', globalisation of cell phones, wireless telegraphy availability of very high speed transport and easy access to modern facilities in day-to-day life. According to him, 'radio might be in the hats of everyone, and television will be available with greater techniques. He also said about the wireless telegraphy. With the help of these, anybody can contact anyone at anywhere and at any time. Moreover, he stated about the availability of nutritious food in a bottle needed for a week, long life span of human beings and education of different people at one place. He also declared the wide use of machines like fridge, washing-machine, and vacuum cleaner. All these were foretold by him long years back.

Besides casteism, another impediment in the path of truth is religion. To him, religion hampered the growth of rationalistic thinking and it was the first enemy of science. He critically examined religion and found out that nothing sustainable and valuable was found to remain and it was just like the peeling of the skin of onion. He had examined the matters of religion and god fibre by fibre by his attitude of a dispassionate enquirer into truth. He declared that the progress of science led to the dwindling of natural powers of god. He found out that the concept of god was the basic cause for all the sufferings of the people and applied his axe vehemently at the very root of it. He also accused god to drain away the energies of the people.

'Periyar' dealt with the problems concerning religion, morality, superstition, and soul. Everything in the scriptures is absurd, fabricated and fictitious and there was not an iota of truth in them which is agreeable to reason. Gods their idols and pictures in the temples are the most important sources of income for those in authority. The priestly class championed the institutions of religion and god with vested interest. 'Periyar' held forth firmly that belief in god dampens natural human qualities such as initiative and perseverance.

He instructed the people to adopt a scientific attitude, to give up faith in the other world and make this world a place of real happiness. He shattered the fancies like god, soul, fate, karma, heaven and hell which were not subjected to experimentation. To him, superstitions and blind

beliefs were unreal, unnatural and unscientific. He hit out all these with the cudgel of social scientific outlook.\textsuperscript{211} He stated that astrology, auspicious days and times were not acceptable to reason and rationalism.\textsuperscript{212} He conducted many events in the inauspicious days and the results were, far better than those conducted in the so-called auspicious times.\textsuperscript{213}

Atheism could no more be considered a deadly sin, but it is the natural outcome of human scientific thinking. His denial of god was not merely theoretical but mainly practicable.\textsuperscript{214} His atheistic verses of 1967 had deep scientific notes and never aimed at wounding anybody. He spoke out boldly and openly.\textsuperscript{215} His criticism, and attack on casteism, religion, God and scriptures got the scientific world interested in him. So he was honoured with the \textbf{UNESCO Award} on June 26, 1970.\textsuperscript{216}

As a staunch believer in science and scientific methods, 'Periyar's' rationalistic thoughts were the outcome of his observation of irrefutable facts which are verifiable and experimentable.\textsuperscript{217} He never gave sugar-coated pills but he was a great surgeon, who just remove the malignant growth. His rationalistic utterances are scientific ideas, meant to dispel primitive superstitions. No doubt he analysed social problems with objectivity without any fear, favour or hatred.\textsuperscript{218}

d. Universal Appeal

'Periyar's' rationalistic thoughts have universal appeal. They belong to all, are applicable to all ages and acceptable to humanity. His

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{211} Govindarajan, B.S., \textit{Op.cit.}, P.49.
\item \textsuperscript{212} \textit{Viduthalai}, Madras, January 24, 1971, P.3.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at Tiruvarur on June 5, 1930, \textit{Kudi Arasu}, Erode, June 15, 1930, P.9.
\item \textsuperscript{216} \textit{Viduthalai}, Madras, June 27, 1970. P.1.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid., Madras, June 20, 1973, P.1.
\end{itemize}
rationalistic movement embraced all classes of people, especially the lower castes who were as a result, brought into prominence, power, influence and prosperity.\textsuperscript{219} The instructed the people to think with knowledge and act accordingly to see developments and wonders.\textsuperscript{220} To him 'man should change according to changes in time and progress' and if anybody was against this then he cannot lead a life of honour.\textsuperscript{221} Of course, he stood for change, change for the better.

'Periyar' was crusader for human rights. His self-respect theory was his unique contribution to humanity. His battle for universal human rights meant for the eradication of birth-based, graded inequality and rigidity maintained under varnashrama won a resounding victory. His arduous task of freeing the ignorant and superstitious masses subjected to social and mental slavery for about two thousand years, won appreciation from all parts of the country.

'Periyar' as a humanist, was a lover of universal brotherhood. Every human being should have self-respect, without it he is a dead person.\textsuperscript{222} His Self-Respect Movement aimed at the well-being and good-honour and progress of humanity.\textsuperscript{223} His movement wanted to ensure the sudras as human beings and wanted to restore rationalism, humanism, self-respect and self-confidence to lead a happy and honourable life.\textsuperscript{224} He even claimed that the world can attain freedom and peace if his principles are adopted. His campaigns were popular not only in South India, but also in North India and East Asian Countries.\textsuperscript{225}

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\item[219.] \textit{The Modern Rationalist}, Vol.29, No.4, Chennai, April 2004, P.28.
\item[220.] Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at Kalpakkam, on October 8, 1973; \textit{Viduthalai}, October 18, 1973, P.3.
\item[221.] Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at Pachaiappa College on January 13, 1936; \textit{Kudi Arasu}, March 13, 1948, P.1.
\item[222.] \textit{Kudi Arasu}, Erode, May 1, 1932, P.1.
\item[224.] \textit{Kudi Arasu}, Erode, August 8, 1926, P.3.
\item[225.] \textit{Ibid.}, March 12, 1933, P.7.
\end{enumerate}
As a lover of universal brotherhood, he hated all human made barriers. Marriage is the coming together of a man and women. He did not encourage marriage within blood relatives but **he encouraged inter-caste - inter-communal marriage i.e - Self-Respect Marriage. It was a revolutionary concept according to the changing times.** Such marriages assured the flowering of a multi-cultural world order. It is popular not only in Tamil Nadu but also in Andhra, Bengal, Mumbai, Punjab, Kerala and Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore, Scotland and England. The Self-Respect Marriage introduced in the 1920's got legal validity only later in 1967 during the Chief Ministership of C.N. Annadurai. It was an inspiring force to create unity among the people. By his appeals and exhortations, he made the people realise that they belong to one and the same race. They are all Indians. Every one should be proud of his own language, race, unity and culture.

'Periyar's' was a feminist, that too radical feminist. He wanted true liberation and freedom for women. He was against men's domination and wanted to get equal status for women. He said, women should not be treated as slaves but as friends in family life. He declared that women should not be child-bearing machines; they should be freed from child birth. He declared that women should not be decorative dolls but must undertake all the jobs that men could do and serve the public to create a new world. He declared that if anybody wanted to lead an independent life then, all the concessions and rights enjoyed by men should be extended to

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231. *Pahutharivu,* May 1, 1938, PP. 5-6.


233.. Speech of Periyar E.V.R. at Vadugappatti in Namakkal, December 1, 1968.

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women. Women should be freed from socio-religious fetters and she must learn to boost her honour. He instructed parents not to treat their female children any different from the boys; they must have male names and must have clothes and hairstyle like men. Thus he encouraged women to lead a life of honour and wisdom. He made the ideas of feminism become popular all over the country through his speeches, writings and conferences. Of course, his ideas of feminism could attain universal appeal even in 1938.

Though by birth, he was a kannadiga, he loved Tamil language and literature. But, he could not accept the heavy load of script. He wanted Tamil to attain its classical status. He conducted anti-Hindi agitations all over Tamil Nadu to protect Tamil language. He criticised the inclusion of Sanskrit words and names in Tamil writing. For instance he gave pure Tamil names to his journals. He introduced reforms in Tamil script with a view to making it easy to learn, communicate, print and type. His demand for a reformed Tamil script got legal recognition in 1978, as published in Government publications, gazetteers and dailies. It is used not only in Tamil Nadu but other countries.

235. Pahutharivu, June 1, 1936, PP. 48-55.
237. Pahutharivu, Erode, May 1, 1938, P.5; Kudi Arasu, Erode, January 8, 1928, P.9; Ibid., September 21, 1946, P.5.
238. Viduthalai, Madras, November 15, 1938, P.1.

'Periyar' declared that he was a Dravidian. He had a high regard for Dravidian culture and civilization. But, he was pained at the poor status of the Dravidians. He wanted to free them from the hegemony of North India. Therefore, he demanded for a separate Dravidanadu. For propagating this demand, he founded the Dravida Kazhagam in 1944. Its principles like obliteration of varnashrama, communal reservation for social justice and equality are noteworthy. Almost all the principles of Dravida Kazhagam became the basic tenets of its offshoots such as, Dravida Munnetta Kazhagam (DMK), All India Anna Dravida Munnetta Kazhagam and Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetta Kazhagam (MDMK).

He wanted to create unity among the people. He believed that 'unless society remains one, no progress can be made'. In his own words, reservation is meant for the enjoyment of all things by all the people equally without any discrimination. His attempts to obtain communal justice by way of reservation in educational institutions and in government appointments met with great success. To him, socialism meant economic equality. He declared that good government, people with intelligence, good conduct and discipline were necessary for human progress.

Periyarism, a harmonious synthesis of rationality, dignity and liberty is not confined to Tamil Nadu but has universal applicability. His scientific rationalist thoughts like family planning, are meant for the well-being of the nation, where population growth has gone unchecked. His rationalistic, atheistic, and humanistic institutions have sprung up all

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246. Vernacular Newspaper Report Viduthalai, Madras, October 10 to November 9, 1931, P.1622.
over the country. The Self-Respect Propaganda Institution, Periyar Centre in Chennai, the Secularist Society of India in Mumbai, Indian Radical Humanist Movement in Dehradun, Periyar Centre in New Delhi, the Rationalist Forum in Chennai are propagating the radical humanistic, secularitic and scientific ideas of 'Periyar' within the country. In addition to these, Periyar International Union in America, and Periyar Cultural Centre at Chicago are of great importance in spreading his rationalistic thoughts outside India.249

Kansiram, a silent revolutionary leader of the Bahujan Samajvadi Party of Uttar Pradesh, made the Government of Uttar Pradesh celebrate 'Periyar' Mela in 1995.250 Moreover, the former Prime Minister Charan Singh (June 28, 1979 to January 14, 1980), and V.P. Singh (December 2, 1989 to November 7, 1990), and other political leaders like Sitaram Kesari, Mulayam Singh Yadav of Uttar Pradesh, Karpuri Takur, Lalluprasad Yadav and Ramvilaspaswan of Bihar have been drawn towards to the rationalistic ideas of 'Periyar'.251 V.P. Singh had the credit of implementing the Mandal Commission recommendation, a challenge to the casteistic edifice of power in India. To broaden Periyarism to the international horizon, the Chinese Goodwill Delegation under Lizhijian visited Periyar Tidal, Chennai, the cradle of rationalism in South Asia on November 5, 1999.252 A Christian priest by name Dr. Charles Francis Patter of America started a movement which has the same principles was the Self-Respect Movement of 'Periyar'.253 In the International Humanist Ethical Union conducted at Paris from July 4th to 7th 2005, 'Periyar's peaceful and cultural revolutionary ideas

were explained to all the participants. The treasures of his rationalism like ‘The World to Come’, and ‘Why the Woman Became a Slave?’ were translated into the French language. The Hindu, The New Indian Express, and the Tamil dailies and foreign journals such as, Truth Seeker from California and ‘The New Humanist’ from London are publishing articles about ‘Periyar’. Scholars from America are doing research on ‘Periyar’ him and his rationalistic ideas.

Realising the greatness of ‘Periyar’ as the "redeemer of the Dravidians", North Indian journals also published articles about him. ‘Periyar’s' ideas are translated into many languages like Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, French and English. In Uttar Pradesh, Kansiram’s follower Chief Minister Mayavati tohas taken ok steps to translate ‘Periyar’s' book ‘Ramayamam A True Reading' into ‘Chachay Ramayan' in Hindi inspite of vehement opposition. She even proposed to instal a statue of ‘Periyar' along with that of Kansiram. A memorial for ‘Periyar' is proposed to be established in the Lucknow University, to commemorate ‘Periyar's' visit to it earlier in 1957. His Vaikom agitation echoes in his title ‘Vaikom Veerar’- ‘Periyar’. His birthday is celebrated not only in India but also in the foreign countries like America, Canada, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore. To honour spread and universalise the achievements of ‘Periyar', a film entitled, ‘Periyar’ was released in Tamil with the support of the Goernment of Tamil Nadu. Attempts are going translate on to it into Hindi and the French language. It was released not only in Tamil Nadu but also in New York, Washington,

258 Ibid., Chennai, February 20, 2008, P.
Chicago, Boston, California and Singapore. There are 'Periyar' International Centres all over the world to spread his deep ideas of rationalism. Moreover, the eightieth anniversary of the first Self-Respect Conference at Chengalput in 1929 was celebrated on February 18, 2008 in the same place.

'Periyar' through his rational thoughts of humanistic, secular, scientific and universal nature, became a trend setter in the twentieth century. His rationalist thoughts became the pillars of today's administration. They are the basis for laws and acts for human rights, happiness and progress. His outpourings are sometimes vehement, sometimes soothing, but always exhilarating. Moreover, the Government of Tamil Nadu has established a University at Salem to commemorate his services. Many Universities in Tamil Nadu, India and abroad have Periyar Chairs to institutionalise his rationalistic thoughts. His thoughts and deeds testify to his concern for the welfare of the marginalised. Today, we are witness to the revolutionary changes that are taking place in science, medicine, longevity of human life and facilities, which were not then in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. Many of his teachings, concepts, thoughts and practical philosophies have influenced the UNO. Its various bodies are doing yeomen service for the liberation of many from centuries of slavery. The UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, ILO are some of the special International organisations which have recognised the thoughts of 'Periyar' in service of humanity.