



Anna as a Humanist

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Abstract:

In this Article an attempt is made the writer, Orator and Statesman of C.N. Annadurai (popularly Known as Anna).Tamilnadu with a view to arriving at their common views of universal value for the progress of human society. While the earlier comparative studies by eminent scholars relate to the works of western poets and works of Tamil poets, the present Article relates to Anna's great devotion to social causes. Annadurai was a man of wide sympathies and deep humanism with an easy rapport with people. Anna's humanism is evident in his various activities like championing the cause of the down-trodden and helping the individuals who were in adversities.

Keywords: Aringer Anna, Dravida Nadu, Hindi Agitation, Humanism, E.V. Ramasamy Naicar, Social Reforms, World Tamil Conference.

Introductions:

It's hard to imagine modern Tamil Nadu without talking about C. N. Annadurai. Popularly known as 'Anna' to both his party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and the people of Tamil Nadu, he left an ineffaceable mark not only on Tamil politics and society but also countrywide politics. Social reform varies from country to country. In the west, proposals for social reform apply to the whole community in equal measure. But in our country, the measures seem to apply separately to each group or community, involving inequality both in the application and in results.

C.N. Annadurai (1909 – 1969) of Tamilnadu who was a member of the Legislative Assembly and then a member in the parliament and who later become Chief Minister of Tamilnadu and continued in office till he died in 1969, has been enjoying the unique place among writers and orators in Tamil and his English speeches and writings have also won the admiration of all, Indians as well as foreigners. His writings and speeches are studied with keen interest both by students and general readers.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS

From the days Anna entered the politics, he showed great devotion to social causes. Anna was a man of wide sympathies and deep humanism. Even during his student days, knowing the pitiable plight of the poor and innocent and down-trodden people in Tamil Nadu from the speeches and writings of periyar E.V.Ramasamy,

Anna had developed sympathy for them. He befriends the suppressed classes. He campaigned vigorously for social justice, social equality and abolition of caste. He criticised the injustice of caste divisions as well as their alleged scriptural foundation called Varnashrama Dharma. Anna addressed meetings and wrote in the party's weeklies and dailies, to enlighten the suppressed masses, so that they would liberate themselves from the suppressed state. The humanism in him made him fight against social injustice without minding physical sufferings.

Anna himself explained that he did not hate Brahmins as a community but only the Brahminical traits which he termed as Brahminism orthodoxy, which led to the discrimination of the innocent and poor people in the name of caste or religion, citing Varnashrama Dharma and keeping the people socially suppressed and down-trodden. Anna's humanitarianism which is an aspect of humanism is also evident from his help to the individuals who were in adverse circumstances. On knowing that the great Tamil poet Bharathi Dasan, who, through his poems, condemned superstitions in religion and social discrimination in the name of caste, was suffering from poverty, Anna made an appeal to the people for liberal contribution, and contributions poured in generously.

Anna did not write anything about the origin of Society or natural Law as they remained the subject of a serious discussion among the political philosophers only till the Nineteenth Century. The established opinion regarding the origin of society was that it came into existence through evolution. Anna found no reason to disagree with it. He also did not discuss natural law as the essential features of it were embodied in the fundamental principles of modern Democracy. He believed that the Varnashrama Dharma based on Manu's writings created different castes among Tamils. But the ancient Tamils, about whom Tolkapiar gives a good account in his *Tolkapiyam*, were unaware of any caste distinctions. Anna also had faith in the humanism of Thirukkural and other Sangam Literatures which do not talk about caste distinctions.

Anna a strong believer in Valluvar's philosophy,

All men that live are one in circumstances of birth:

Diversities of work give each his special worth. (41)

Anna advocated that casteism must go.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

The most important item of social reform in our country refers to the inequality based on birth which is not to be seen anywhere else in the world. The next in importance is the beliefs and practice based on superstition, which are mostly allied to ideas about God, heaven and hell. The obstructionists who still happen to benefit by the division and superstitions in our society, Anna became a schoolteacher for some time before leaving it all behind for a life of public service and social reform.

Anna's humanism was due to his inherent love for human society, whose sufferings for generations, have been pictured in history and literature. Especially

Thirukkural and Sangam literature, strengthened his faith in humanism and made him champion the causes of the doer-trodden and individuals in adversities.

Any telling of Anna's story would be hollow without talking about his integral role against the imposition of Hindi and championing the cause of federalism in India. Despite the protestations of some leaders, the Constituent Assembly in 1949 had chosen Hindi as the sole national language. When the Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950, non-Hindi speaking states were given a 15-year grace period to use English in consonance with Hindi as the means of official communication between the Central government and the States. With the grace period ending in 1965, Annadurai thought it would be an opportune time to ask both Parliament and the Centre to reconsider its position since a vast majority of southern states didn't speak the language. He wrote a letter to Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri protesting against the imposition of Hindi all over India. With New Delhi unresponsive to the claims of the Tamil people, the Madras State went into intense and violent protests.

After intense protests and pressure from fellow Congressman in the South, the Centre gave way and allowed the southern states "to transact its own business in the language of its own choice, which may be the regional language or English". This fight for the primacy of Tamil carried on into office when he steadfastly stood against the three-language policy implemented in schools.

During a brief tenure in the office before his premature death in 1969, Anna continued to espouse ideals of social justice, rationalism and regional autonomy. It was his government that had officially renamed the erstwhile Madras State to Tamil Nadu.

Anna's greatest qualities were to make the fundamental ideas of Periyar more palatable to the overall populace. "Periyar's rustic atheism became 'Onre Kulam, Oruvane Devan' (One God, One Community) in a skilful assumption of the venerated medieval Tamil saint Tirumular. Another remarkable feature of Anna's short tenure as chief minister was the promotion of Tamil culture, especially with the organising of the World Tamil Conference in 1967 backed by UNESCO. Finally, one of Anna's enduring legacy carried forward by his successor M Karunanidhi and other leaders in the state was his economic populism. One of the planks on which he rode to power in 1967 was the promise of subsidising rice at one rupee a measure of rice. It's another matter that the finances of the State they weren't capable of handling this demand. Nonetheless, the promise of subsidising the cost of rice is something that still persists in Tamil politics.

Conclusion

Appreciating the humanism found in some people, Anna said that, inspite of all round efforts in this world to kill humanism by rousing the animal spirit in the common man, some people are still there to prove themselves to be distinctive human beings, by saving the world from degenerating into the jungle. Anna is a great believers in Humanism. Anna's humanism is evident from his speeches and writings championing the cause of the people whose interests are affected. As a humanist,

Anna championed the causes of the Tamils who were suffering at the hands of the privileged class. He also extended help to the individuals who were in adversity. He never had any hatred towards any individual member of the privileged class, namely Brahmins. What he fought against was their Brahminism, that is, their orthodoxy which led to the discrimination of the down-trodden in the name of caste and the exploitation of them in the name of religion. As a humanist, he always believed in the dictum, *Yadum Ure Yavarum Kelir* (Every place is my place and everyone is my kinsman).

Move around in Chennai today, and his presence is omnipresent. The famous Anna University is named after him. There are roads (Anna Salai), residential (Anna Nagar) and commercial areas named after one of Tamil Nadu's most popular sons. Although some of what he practised and preached in public life has fallen by the wayside in Tamil politics today, his legacy lives on.

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