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Dravidian Ideologue Kanimozhi and Her Language

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Signs for an Exciting Revival of the Dravidian Movement

It appears to us that there is an exciting revival waiting for us insofar as Dravidian ideology is concerned, in the writings and words of Kanimozhi. Her entry into active politics from the position of a deep thinker and writer in Tamil on social and communication issues will certainly revolutionize our own thinking, in addition to the thinking and action modes of her DMK party cadres.

DMK – A Force that Survives and Prospers Against All Odds

For all those who have some sense of history, DMK has proved itself to be a force that would survive and prosper even in times of adversity. Survival of its ideology in relation to language, social reformation, language policy, and Tamils as a distinct linguistic community (“distinct race” is the preferred form of expression in DMK) has been under question, now and then.

Every social institution, language and society, including political parties, is bound to change and we all know it. However, when change for the sake of change takes place, the institution is likely to be weakened. Change for temporary gains and for adopting fashionable trends also will certainly weaken an institution.

Changes in the Ideology and Practices of DMK

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DMK has undergone many changes since the party gave up its demand for Independent Dravidanadum many decades ago, and adopted electoral process as the main path to achieve the goals of its ideology. In all these, Kalaignar Karunanidhi's leadership kept the party intact, despite some devastating splits. Karunanidhi continues to be the chief ideologue of DMK, although DMK has time and again proved its democratic character through its regular party elections and debates on issues in its various committees, etc.

The Role of Charisma

Charisma is an essential feature of DMK and Dravidian Movement. Charisma and ideology seem to go hand in hand in this movement since its inception.

There was a time when Periyar EVR was the unquestioned leader whose pronouncements were accepted unconditionally. His metaphors, anti-Hinduism utterances, his utterances against vedic system, caste divisions, religion in general, citation of stories from mythology, powerful reasoning against superstitions, etc. were couched in very sharp and powerful (and offensive?) language.

Periyar's lieutenant C.N. Annadurai, fondly called Anna later on, had soon developed a charisma that attracted millions of Tamils around the world. His language was friendlier and his rationales more accommodative than his mentor Periyar EVR.

Anna's Unsurpassed Contributions

At the same time, Anna excelled in dealing with linguistic, literary, social, economic, educational and political issues. His Tamil was delivered with such elegance that even his political enemies could not but appreciate Anna's style. Anna became the undisputed leader not only of DMK but of entire Tamil community around the world.

His alliteration became the hallmark of all DMK workers, his examples would be further repeated with additions, etc., throughout Tamilnadu, and wherever Tamil was spoken and used as a language for public performance.

Apart from his much more pervasive charisma, Anna also used the movie medium to the advantage of DMK, a medium detested by Periyar as a social evil.

Sharpness of Wit, Political Acumen, and Indomitable Spirit – Kalaignar Karunanidhi

Kalaignar Karunanidhi continues to be a great disciple of both Periyar and Anna, although the zeal for Periyar's ideology relating to religion, especially, has been almost forgotten in DMK circles.

Kalaingar is blessed with longevity that has really helped DMK in large measure than even the work of Anna for the party.

Kalaingar Karunanidhi shared the agitational political period of DMK as one of the top leaders of DMK along with Anna. More than Anna, Karunanidhi was the field and grassroots level leader and worker for the party. His organizational skills, powerful alliteration, sarcastic descriptions, brevity of language and powerful metaphors, along with his great story telling – a feature of Anna, have kept him as a great ideologue, even when Anna was the supreme leader with unquestionable authority and all consuming charisma.

Contrasting Styles

There is more to write about the contributions of these three great ideologues of the Dravidian Movement.

Periyar shunned day to day politics. He sounded that he would rather have his freedom of thinking and expression than allow himself to be influenced by the compulsions of day to day politics. He was given to swim almost always against the current.

On the other hand, Anna demonstrated that accommodation, both at the grassroots level and at the ideology level, is necessary to take into account the changing circumstances. But his words, negotiations and actions asserted that such accommodation need not necessarily lead to giving up the basic features of the ideology cherished.

Kalaingar Karunanidhi took this stance to a greater level, especially when the very survival of the political organization was in question. And yet Karunanidhi's crusade against superstitions, as followed by Periyar and Anna, are as strong as ever. Such convictions, when stated openly, as done by Karunanidhi almost frequently, could embarrass the party cadres, who, by now, do not seem to be much concerned about such issues.

Masterful Exploitation of the Movie Medium

Both Anna and Kalaingar masterfully exploited the newly emerging powerful medium of movies for the benefit of their ideology through dynamic script writing and great support from artistes such as MGR. They were not on the screen on a regular basis. In other words, their power rested with the words they used and the effective delivery of their words and narration in the hands of leading artistes. This was a great team work, with devotion to ideology to a large extent. However, after the untimely death of Anna, power struggle took a different route. As it is usually the case in history (the effect of internal contradictions), the much preferred medium itself gave birth to a mammoth challenge to Kalaingar Karunanidhi and the DMK. The language and content of the growing opposition to the DMK leadership, in all fairness, continued to be very strong and appealing to the masses. It became clear that script writing alone was not adequate to exercise and continue the leadership roles. However, Kalaingar Karunanidhi was also bestowed with great organizational skills and journalistic excellence, among other talents. Rationalism,

bedrock of the Dravidian Movement, had to depend now, as in its early stages, upon the word of mouth and effective, prolific and powerful writing of articles, etc. This route is rather an inherent trait and is easily used and developed by Kalaignar Karunanidhi.

Survival and further expansion and great success in the midst of adversity is now ensured.

Punch Remarks, Brevity of Expressions

During this period for survival and further progress, Kalaignar Karunanidhi's punch remarks and brevity further developed into an art that none could match. I must emphasize here that Kalaignar Karunanidhi stood firm and did not toe the line of Periyar in characterizing movies as a social evil.

In this and many other features, the ideology adopted by Anna and Karunanidhi were identical and grew stronger. At the same time, Kalaignar Karunanidhi did not abandon Periyar's and Anna's many other social reformation views.

Language Use

Language continued to move in the direction of written Tamil, spoken with clarity from the platform. Ordinary language along with alliteration, sarcasm, satire, humor, double meanings, abundant use of synonyms and antonyms, stories from mythology to explain a point, especially to degrade the opponent, and punch remarks, etc., continue to glow with unmatched delivery through Karunanidhi.

While the opposition or other cheap imitators of this style indulged in long and inelegant sentences, and while their sentences did not end with proper verbs or appropriate adjectives or adverbs, Karunanidhi continues to be the master craftsman, putting all of us into shame for our poor performance in language use!

This is a distinct contribution to Tamil from both Anna and Karunanidhi. Ordinary language is elevated to a higher pedestal.

A New Star in the Horizon – Kanimozhi, the Ideologue



DMK leadership always gave praises to women as pioneers in many fields. They always declared women's welfare as their major economic plan. However, such ideology was developed by men, perhaps in tune with the existing situation in India and Tamilnadu. However, we now have a chance that this position of a self-critiquing ideologue will soon be the privilege of a woman in DMK.

Apart from her poise and young age, Kanimozhi has demonstrated in her writings, speeches and actions that she is taking over the role of the chief custodian of Dravidian Ideology. This seems to be a silent revolution taking place within DMK.

Kanimozhi's First Book

Kanimozhi's first book is titled *paarvaikaL* "Views". This was first published in 1995. This book takes us beyond politics into human values and emphasis on and celebration of Tamil identity, in addition to a variety of other topics.

Here below is a list of short essays presented by Kanimozhi in this short monograph of essays. Note that most of these essays are just two-pages long, packed with great and thoughtful content, common to whatever political spectrum you may belong to from the Left. Actually, there is nothing specific about the Dravidian Ideology in the book, but, in sum, and in the way the notion of class struggle, etc. is conspicuous by its absence, the Dravidian identity is established. There is praise for Periyar and for his thoughts, there is praise for Anna and his leadership. And there is anguish about what the political party in power at that time was doing against common people, etc.:

1. Some angles.

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2. The flying wings of Jonathan.
3. Valleys of Pleasure.
3. Cords of Family Feelings
4. Imitation Dreams.
5. Drinking Acid?
6. Rope Elephants.
7. Worshipful Scepter Bearers.
8. Man who lived his life.
9. Lives Dispensed Cheap.
10. Those who Spread Death Trap for Others.
11. Are Human Lives That Cheap?
12. Why Celebrate Steps of Death?
13. Those Who Choose to Celebrate Garbage, Worthless Things.
14. Are Musical Instruments Obstacles to the Development of Tamil Songs?
15. Should We Tamils be a Loser Race?
16. Human Rights Trampled Under Military Powers.
17. Kinship and Friendship Relations.
18. Let Sita's Daughters Ponder.
19. Thought on Green Environment.
20. Key to Human Love.
21. Difficult to Comprehend Burdens – Tender fruits that never mature!
22. Nelson Mandela and our association
23. Words can kill, haunting.
24. A knife against sharpened intellect?
25. Won't Duty Open Our Eyes?
26. Making business by selling lives.
27. Shall we do a little searching of our souls?
28. Love for an Actor transcending generations – Sivaji Ganesan.
29. Excellence of Indian Muslims vis-à-vis Machinations of Pakistan Government.
30. The First Woman Pilot – Odds against Women in Society.
31. Don't Shut Yourself inside Your Caste Box!
32. Why These Unhygienic Conditions in Cities, breeding plague and other diseases?
33. Statements of Falsehood from Responsible Officials – Destroying our Hope for the Future
34. We get cheated by fake Swamis every day!
35. What Protection Do We Provide Domestic Help?
36. Freebees and Elections in India.
37. Soft and revolutionary Heart of a Great Creative Writer – Letters of Pudumaipithan to his wife.
38. To stop the slow death of Tamil.
39. She is still under bondage – still a bonded labourer.
40. Do not play with life-giving jobs – Give up your medical profession if you are not motivated.

We must confess that the translation of the titles in English as presented here does not reveal the intent of these essays. However, in Tamil, such intent is more or less clear and highlighted.

Love of Humanity, Fight for the Equality of Women, etc.

As we wrote earlier, this book of only 112 pages was published in 1995. There was no notice of her presence in any field at that time. The book also (the first edition that I used for writing this note on Kanimozhi) does not give any details of her background, what she was doing, whether these articles were written specifically for this short book or these were collected from different publications and put together in the form of this book. And yet one clearly feels her love for humanity, her admiration for Tamil and Tamils and their contributions throughout history, her support of Tamil music, admiration and enjoyment of Tamil creative literature, her moral indignation against caste and religious atrocities and divide, her anguish for the liberation of women and her fight against abortion and many other social issues. Issues relating to State Autonomy and social reformation are also dealt with. In other words, this short book covers a wide range of themes and topics with clarity and great insight.

Clear Development of Anger and Attack against Injustice

One thing we clearly notice is the slow growth of anger and authoritative voice through the short essays. In the beginning of the book, essays are more descriptive, with information and excellent description of issues under consideration. More often, one reads her sarcastic tone and critical utterances through choice words, metaphors and phrases. However, straightforward attack and condemnation is not noticed much. As we move from one essay to another, especially the last several essays assume a very strong tone of condemnation of people in power, machinations of authorities who rule the state and nation, and argument in favor of the people who suffer even if it is against established religious orders. We also notice several elements of her thought on the foreign policy and dangers that surround India.

Smooth and Easy Flowing Syntax!

It is, indeed, amazing that such a short book by an author who is young, who practically had not been seen in public so far (thus not subjected to scrutiny that could lead to further improvement), would contain powerful thoughts employing a smooth flowing syntax and idioms and metaphors from ordinary language.

Sentences are short, usually. However, when sentences are long, the phrases used within such sentences are well separated, and the phrasal order closely follows the spoken language word and phrasal order in sentences. This sentence simplicity, coupled with choice ordinary written and spoken language words, makes the reading and the meaning easier to comprehend and follow. Even where there is uLLuRai uvamam, metaphors and sarcasm not explicitly borne by the words and phrases, we are able to catch the intent easily.

A Prophetic Statement

There is an unusual and surprising prophetic writing in one of her essays. Essay 38 on stopping the slow death of Tamil ends with a rhetorical question as to why we should not organize festivals on a large scale every year to celebrate and encourage Tamil activities, Tamil youth, Tamils. Well, this is precisely what Kanimozhi has achieved in the last few years through *Sangamam* celebrations! Indeed, a practicing ideologue! Hopefully other ideas that embrace many other fields will one day become a reality!

Future Is Bright!

In Kanimozhi, the DMK and the Dravidian Movement among the Tamils have got a shining ideologue of clear and positive thinking with adequate force of moral anger for a continuity of their ideology. Her own style of writing and oral expression, not based on Periyar, Anna or Kalaignar Karunanidhi, may carry only subtle expressions and passions, but that is more suitable for future generations who, now with more formal education and skills in communication, may not be swayed by oratory and sharp attacks on institutions, but will be carried by calculated risk-taking in multi-polar politics and world.

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