
PERIYAR'S VIEWS ABOUT WOMENS EMPOWERMENT

R.PRABHA, H.LOURDU RAJA

Abstract: Feminist theories acknowledge that the world can be understood in a variety of productive ways, and they resist the search for positive (measurable) truth. They also see the feminine as a way of knowing that is distinct from the masculine way of knowing. Carol Gilligan makes this case in her book, *In a Different Voice* (1982). Remember that feminism is not a single theory; it is not even a single system of thought. It is a movement

Keywords: Feminism, Women's Rights, Education, Equality.

Introduction: Feminism is an ideology and action paradigm for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women that women have become aware of their experience of subordination. While being conscious that they are in the sustainers of life is the starting point of feminist consciousness. I propose to examine aspect of such a history, a history that will enable us re-inscribe the context and content of independence as well as make for a different and more imaginative engagement with contemporary feminist concerns. I look here at aspects of the self-respect movement, a radical anti-caste movement, begun by Periyar in 1925, and which shakes the Tamil country into eruptions of disobedience, anger and subversion for the next two decades. Later, his movements suffered several transformations.

Periyar and Women's Emancipation: The oppression of women has been a chronic and deep-rooted malady all over the world. The condition of women has continued to be far from satisfactory in our country too. Early nineteenth century saw the emergence of various socio-religious reform movements in India. In the social sphere, there were movements of caste reform or caste abolition, equal rights for women, and a crusade, against social and legal inequalities. Interestingly, the enlightened individuals of the male section took the lead in initiating efforts to abolish laws and customs, which suppressed the women in society. If the girls today outshine the boys in Tamil Nadu, in academic excellence, the credit should go to E. V. R. Periyar and others. This chapter highlights the contribution of Periyar to women's emancipation. Periyar was aware that for ages, women in India had been confined within their homes and it was taken for granted that bringing forth children and cooking for the family were their only duties. Very few families cared to educate their girl children. The orthodox people justified their attitude towards women saying that they followed Manu dharma. Periyar said, "Any code that advised men to treat their women folk worse than animals is a barbarous code and can be respected only by barbarians." The uplift of women was one of the programs of Periyar from the

beginning of his public services. In the view of Periyar, women should give up all practices that deny their legitimate rights and makes them subservient to men. They should develop physical strength just like men. They must exercise and get trained in the use of weapons. They must acquire the ability to protect themselves when they are physically harassed. They should obtain the necessary training to enter the army and, when need arises, they must fight the enemy. Therefore, Periyar says, "The present system of education, which will be common to both men and women, which will be useful in practical life and which will enable them to free themselves from cowardice and superstitious belief should adopted." Periyar was thus emphatic that the common practice of giving a lower status to women in the Indian society should disappear.

Periyar's perspective: Periyar repeatedly and emotionally spoke about women's liberation. Periyar was born in an affluent family on 17th September 1879. His parents were deeply religious and they frequently arranged religious discourses. But Ramasamy displayed a keen rationalistic tendency and ridiculed the pundit's when he was twelve years old. His father took him to the business; he learnt techniques in a few years. His father died in 1911. In between periyar helped the congress party. He believed that all the prominent people in the organization were enlightened that they would work sincerely to get rid of untouchability and that they would help the backward and depressed class people to have proper education and to have their proper share in government appoints. Periyar was deeply disappointed, but did not lose hope he wanted to move the reduction at the next annual conference at Thanjavur in 1921. He had great dreams about society, but all in vain. He worked many field; feminism is also included in it. He succeeded in creating an awareness in the mind of non - Brahmins of the low position to which they had been pushed by the Brahmins. He named the movement, the self respect to maintain in all his dealings with his fellow being. If a man realizes that he is equal to all other men and that he has the right of quality with all other men. Then only he becomes a self respecting person. He

wanted women also to develop that kind of self respect. He emphasized that the common practice of giving a lower status to women in the Indian society should disappear. He said any code that advised men to treat their women folk as worse than animals, was a barbarous code and could be respected only by barbarians. Those who follow that will get their girls married even when they were innocent children. So their education becomes questionable. So periyar hated all these suppressions.

Periyar emphasized the education for women also. All women must be educated according to the modified employment rules. They must get Government jobs. Nowadays men marry only educated girls.

Periyar says: Despite there being a goddess of learning and a goddess of wealth in the Hindu religion, why do they not grant women their education and right to property? Among the many reasons for the subjugation of women, the most important one is that they lack the right to property. Periyar boldly speaks that the tamil people should be brought up with courage, education and good health from the childhood. If the parents give birth to many more children, they will suffer a lot in the future and the children cannot grow with proper health. It will affect the country also

The booklet "The Benefit of a Help-Mate" by Periyar, gives his views on the situations and the rights of women. He advocated civil marriages, which did not incur much expense, but were legally valid. In place of traditional marriages he advocated and even conducted self-respect marriages.. Periyar objects to terms like "giving of a maid" and "given in marriage". They are Sanskrit terms, and treat women as objects. He wants them to be substituted by *Valkkai tunai*, a word for marriage taken from the *Tirukkural*, which means a "help-mate in life." Thus he advocates self-respect marriages

Conclusion: The problem of the status of women involves equality between men and women. The women, throughout the world have been considered the second sex — the inferior sex. Equality and status are closely associated with power. Changing status involves the sharing of power on equal footing with men in decision making and its implementation at informal and formal levels. The societal value framework plays an important role in determining the changing status of power equations, and hence, the status of women involves the distribution and redistribution of power.

References:

1. Jonathan Crowther, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 1998
2. Baltazar – Empowering Women. Vairarai – 2002. P.22.
3. Veeramani. Periyar on women Right. Emerald Publications 1991.
4. E. V. Ramasamy Periyar, *Pen Yen Adimaiyaanaal?* Trans. A. S. Venu (Madras: Periyar Self- Respect Propaganda Institution, 1989),
5. Kedarnath Bishoyi – Plight of child labour Discovery Publishing house. 2003
6. Anita Diehl, *Periyar E. V. Ramasamy: A Study of the Influence of a Personality in Contemporary South India* (New Delhi: B. I. Publications, 1978), p. 55
7. Periyar, *Pen Yen Adimaiyaanaal?* p. 73
8. Dr.k.Veeramani, collected works of Periyar E.V.R THE PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT PROPAGANDA INSTITUTION Third Edition-2005,p. 10
9. Dr.k.Veeramani, periyar kalacheum jathe theindamai paagam(15),periyar suyamariyathai perasara neeruvana valededu,2006, p. 46.

R.Prabha,
Department of Computer Science,
The American College
Affiliation to Madurai Kamaraj University
prabha.pr@gmail.com

H. Lourdu Raj,
Department of Philosophy,
Arul Anandar College, Karumathur
lourdurajh@gmail.com