

Vol 5 Issue 11 August 2016

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IDEAS OF M.G. RAMACHANDRAN

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ABSTRACT

For communicating the ideological symbol of Annaism, MGR has taken many pains. He has resorted to all known forms of mass communication efforts. In fact there are two effective audio techniques, monitored by him: (i) In all the public meetings, electioneering attempts, radio talks and television appearances. In the early years of the party, Annaism has strengthened it slowly, yet steadily and strongly. With the cherished goals of bringing in a clean administration and the unseating of the DMK Government, Annaism has taken up the following stages of action, to educate its own followers and common masses: (i) The first step was a process of creating consciousness among the masses to make them aware of the real defects in the organisation and administration of the DMK regime; (ii) The second step was the renunciation of the benefits of office among the followers of Anna, (iii) The third step was to restore a sense of confidence in the people, so that they can think, unite and move to make a new history for themselves; (iv) The fourth step was to explain to the people about their glorious past achieved by CNA; and (v) the fifth step was to create among the masses a desire for clean administration and sustain that desire by investing it for a political change. After obtaining power, Annaism has served the party in three important areas, viz., society, party and Government. Annaism reminds the leader and the party constantly about the milestones to be reached. It has made them conduct periodical elections within the party to maintain inner party democracy. The very same ideology has been the root for the various policies of day-to-day administration.

KEYWORDS :Socio-Political , ideological symbol , public meetings.



INTRODUCTION

M.G. Ramachandran began to interest himself in politics after he started acting films in 1934, because the film world was a major instrument by which the national spirit was made to reach the masses by the Indian National Congress. He began to study the current social and political problems and found himself irresistibly drawn towards the Gandhian movement. MGR was a Congress man till 1953.¹

Annadurai and Ramachandran had become great friends. Karunanidhi was Assistant dialogue writer for the very first film 'Rajakumari' in which MGR played the leading role. The two grew together in the film world offering mutual help. It was at the instance of MGR that Karunanidhi was made a full-fledged dialogue writer for the picture - "Marudhanattu Ilavarasi" (The Princess of Marudha country), which was

produced in 1950. Because of these influences MGR joined the DMK in 1953.²

At that time Annadurai and Karunanidhi had planned to propagate the goals of the DMK through films instead of depending only on the conventional media like the platforms, press and dramas. They felt that cinema could reach the masses more easily than the conventional media. According to this decision MGR began to act in movies which depicted the foolishness of superstitions, caste system, ritualism etc. Social reforms were the theme of most of these films. Eradication of illiteracy, removal of social evils, fighting against alcoholism have been recurrent themes. In the films MGR proclaimed himself the champion of Dravidian culture and Tamil Language.³ Also most of the films portrayed the sufferings of the poor. Thus, from 1953 onwards MGR and the DMK had become mutual beneficiaries.

In the succession struggle that erupted after Annadurai's demise in February 1969, MGR played an instrumental role in depositing power in the hands of Karunanidhi. MGR convinced Mathiasagan about the latter's inability to become the Chief Minister.

As the treasurer of the DMK, MGR had striven to perform his duties without being a 'yes' man to the 'dictates' of the party. He wanted proper accounting of the huge income of the party and wanted also to know for his personal knowledge, the sources of such income. He did not want to make disbursements in the name of the party without proper entries in income and expenditure.⁴ He had known, said MGR, instances of payments made to party men during the 1971 elections without any guidelines and proper authorisation. What MGR asked for was the removal of certain money-bag's influence over the party and for the proper maintenance of party finances which had grown enormously and had been invested in the purchase of huge real estates. Because of his insistence so on accounts, MGR was kept in the dark about the amount collected at the Madurai party conference in 1972. MGR felt that the amount would be around Rs.5 lakhs but Karunanidhi said that the collection was just rupees one lakh. Feeling negligence, MGR had called for the arrest of dictatorial trends and personality cults in the party in his Pongal Message on January 14, 1972.⁵

It is true that factions disrupt ideological, organizational, leadership and programmatic energies of a party. But when the factions stabilize themselves (either in the parent party or outside) they begin to create new and spirited energy for fresh ideologies, organization, leadership and programmes. The AIADMK under the leadership of M. G. Ramachandran had also done likewise and began to formulate tenets of 'Annaism.'⁶

But that does not mean that MGR simply espoused the bride kept ready by Anna. He also brought to bear some of his own ideas into Anna convictions. What was appreciable was the felicity and ease with which MGR had accomplished the blending of his own predilections with the thought of Anna.⁶

However, an estimate of Annaism poses unexpected problems. Careful comparison between volumes of writings, speeches and other modes of communication must be done to understand EVR and Anna. That is not possible in the case of MGR, for he has not attempted, barring an auto-biographical sketch, any appreciable work, as an author, journalist, or dramatist. His ideas have to be sieved through his various electioneering speeches, Legislative Assembly debates and film dialogues and lyrics.⁷ Till date, even the number of biographical accounts of and achievements by MGR remains meagre.

MGR's Supplementation to the ideas of CN. Annadurai

It was essential for Anna, in his changed circumstances, to gauge the relevance of the ideas of EVR. Periyar, before he could evolve ideas of his own. On the contrary, Anna and MGR held similar

views on several issues and therefore it was easy for MGR to accept the ideas of Anna in their entirety. It was enough for him to supplement and highlight some more issues to redefine the ideology of Annaism and to refix its order of priorities. Following are some of the major issues, which MGR had supplemented to the ideas of C.N. Annadurai.⁸

(a) Casteless Society

MGR had approvingly held that humanism must be the touchstone to improve the conditions of the downtrodden masses, so that a sense of self-reliance and satisfaction may be infused among them. He is of the firm opinion that there is no other 'ism' greater than 'humanism'.⁹

In such a situation all talk of divisions and conflicts in the society, and their propagation, would only lead to breakdown in society. He wants divisions in the Tamil society to be overcome by the propagation of the principle of 'one community and one God'. For, this would eventually lead to the establishment of a casteless society.¹⁰

(b) Class Influence

The acceptance of the class question by MGR, is a continuation of the policy of the joint sector socialism of Anna. He hopes that, like a surgeon handling a deadly knife, it is possible to make some judicious levelling up and levelling down amidst the economic inequalities in social order, so that a bridging may be brought about between the haves and have nots.¹¹

(c) Parliamentary Path

MGR accepts the medium of political initiative for settling all problems of the society. He has abiding faith in democracy, parliamentary institutions, constitution, and the party system that now exists. He wants just one improvement in the institutional pattern in India, viz., the electors should have the right to recall their legislators.¹²

(d) Social Order

MGR believes that man is born unfettered but becomes a victim of the existing social conditions. Artificial distinctions in the society, which were reinforced by centuries of customs and caste tendencies, have brought about several social disabilities.¹³ To remove them, depressed classes were so far given concessions in the shape of reservations for Ideology public appointments and education. Now the AIADMK had pledged to remove all such artificial disparities by providing encouragement to all those who are economically backward irrespective of their castes.¹⁴

(e) Special Treatment to Women

MGR holds that by tradition, women are shouldering the responsibility of domestic management. They are the sentinels of our civilization and culture and also the teachers who mould the character of man. Yet they are the most suppressed section of the population. To end this suppression, MGR wants a proper planning to be brought about. As a first step, women's participation in public life should be increased; wage anomalies in factories should be ended; special educational opportunities must be provided; and at least 25% of the seats both in the state and central legislative bodies must be reserved for woman.¹⁵

(f) Clean Administration

MGR sincerely feels that there is no use in obtaining political power without the intention to

carry the reins of administration in a clean way. Corruption breeds all sorts of vices in the administration leading to nepotism, favouritism, mismanagement and malfunctioning. Slowly corruption extends to the government, the party and the society. MGR suggests that unless a party promises clean administration it should not be voted to power.¹⁶ Generally corruption arises inside the party if it has the motivation of achieving power alone. Therefore all parties should have socially benevolent motivations.

(g) Prohibition

MGR appreciates total prohibition without exemption for foreign liquors. This social idea was supported and propagated by Gandhiji and CNA.¹⁷ MGR hopes that the sooner total prohibition is introduced all over the country it is better for the common people. Lack of an All-India policy so far, had made the prohibition policies of a few states end in fiasco; and preventive measures to check illicit distillation and consumption by the dry states have resulted in wasted efforts.¹⁸

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION OF ANNAISM

For communicating the ideological symbol of Annaism, MGR has taken many pains. He has resorted to all known forms of mass communication efforts. In fact there are two effective audio techniques, monitored by him: (i) In all the public meetings, electioneering attempts, radio talks and television appearances.¹⁹

In the early years of the party, Annaism has strengthened it slowly, yet steadily and strongly. With the cherished goals of bringing in a clean administration and the unseating of the DMK Government, Annaism has taken up the following stages of action, to educate its own followers and common masses: (i) The first step was a process of creating consciousness among the masses to make them aware of the real defects in the organisation and administration of the DMK regime; (ii) The second step was the renunciation of the benefits of office among the followers of Anna, (iii) The third step was to restore a sense of confidence in the people, so that they can think, unite and move to make a new history for themselves; (iv) The fourth step was to explain to the people about their glorious past achieved by CNA; and (v) the fifth step was to create among the masses a desire for clean administration and sustain that desire by investing it for a political change.²⁰

After obtaining power, Annaism has served the party in three important areas, viz., society, party and Government. Annaism reminds the leader and the party constantly about the milestones to be reached. It has made them conduct periodical elections within the party to maintain inner party democracy.²¹ The very same ideology has been the root for the various policies of day-to-day administration.

Annaism has served him well to stabilise AIADMK and to take the reigns of power in 1977. The remarkable propensity of Annaism has been witnessed again in the 1980 and 1984 Assembly Elections. Yet, it has become difficult to measure the contours of this ideology primarily because it happens to be the most recent manifestation of Tamil nationalism.²²

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