

International Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

Golden Research
Thoughts

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2231-5063

Golden Research Thoughts Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial board. Readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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THE ROLE OF PRESS IN SOCIAL AWAKENING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PANDIT C. AIYOTHEE THASS'S TAMIZHAN IN SOUTH INDIA.



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ABSTRACT

In this article, the role of the press in the socio religious reform movements in India is discussed and special attention is given to Pandit C. Aiyothee thass's weekly journal oru paisa Tamizhan and its social reformation ideas. It was continuously published every Wednesday from 1907 to 1914 by him. The social reformer got the freedom of expression from the British government because patriotic press had the difficulties to publish all those ideas of national leaders against British. But these type of obstacles were not faced by the social reformers the only thing they faced was opposition from the caste Hindus. The hegemony of upper caste pleaded for national freedom not about the social freedom or rights of depressed class only after the depressed class leader's continuous struggle made think about not only British but also the native brotherhood. During the 19th century every movement had its own press to carry out their ideas to the public. The influence of predominant made others unknown or diminished. Some of the press overcome these difficulties. In southern India pandit C. Aiyothee thass's oru paisa Tamizhan done commendable work and it carried out number of reformation ideas and made tremendous impact on the socio religious condition of downtrodden section of the Indian society in southern India particularly in the madras presidency.

KEYWORDS : *Social Awakening , Roman Catholic Church , promote freedom .*



INTRODUCTION :

The invention of the art of printing in the sixteenth century was in many respects much more important than other inventions of the world. The press helped to liberate the human mind by awakening up and widening its horizons as never before. The advent of the printing press meant that the brain was to rule the world- revolutionary change in the fortunes of mankind. The free propagation of the printed word not only helped to lift the

clouds of ignorance, but also acted as a catalytic agent to promote freedom of inquiry and debate on an unprecedented scale.

Perhaps the first revolution brought about by this new power was the reformation which shook the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century later throughout the world against the

orthodoxy.

The 20th century witnessed upheaval of many new world order nation, ideology etc., by the efforts of the press that is why press censorship has been brought out by the governments in various countries.

As a result the news paper is considered fourth pillar of democracy, which means that the three pillar of democracy i.e., executive, legislative, judiciary, if failed to do their duty, the press will publicised their inefficiency and make them do their duty in correct manner. The impact of press and its usage was deserved in Indian social and political History. The social reformation gained support of the people by the help of the press.

It was used to disseminate the ideals of reform leaders of North and South India. In this article an attempt is made to explore the idea of Pandit C. Aiyothee Thass on Tamizhan weekly about social awakening.

The Press and its affiliation with social reform movement in India

The rise of various socio religious movement in the 19th century such as the Brahma samaj, the Arya samaj, the Prarthana samaj, the Theosophical society, Dravida mahajana sabha etc., with their focus on the irrational nature of Indian society such as caste, sati, child marriage, created conditions favourable in some extent for the decline of the system. Their leaders strongly spoke about the observance of the system. The impact of western education and its idea as well as the internal bitterness faced by the people made to reform the Indian society. The aberration of the society was opposed by the reform leaders. Rajaram mohan Roy was championed in the case of women emancipation and wanted rational approach in religion and imbibed by the liberal and rational doctrines of the west. He launched a Bengali weekly *sabadkaumudi* in 1821 to propagate his ideas. His follower Devendranath Tagore started *Thattvabodhini* sabha and published a monthly journal *Tattvabodhini patrika* to propagate its social welfare programme. Then Sadharna Brahmo samaj started with its *Tattava kaumudi*. A powerful Non Brahmin movement was started by Jyotiba phule which was called as Satya shodhak samaj and the movement started its own news paper in Marathi namely the *Din mitra* in 1910 to propagate its ideology.¹

Legacy of the Depressed people Establishing Press

The history of press started with the establishment of portuguese settlement in tamilnadu. In Tranqubar (now Tharangampadi in nagapattinam district) portuguese established their fort and printed in tamil a book 'Thambiran vanakkam (1578)' it is considered first book in Indian languages. Tamil magazine' in 1831 is considered as first tamil journal in tamilnadu². Many journals in early 19th century were published and circulated for the purpose of spread the gospel of Jesus by Christian Missionaries. The counter journals were established by caste hindus. Dinavarhamani (1855), Thathuvabodhini (1864), Amirthavasani (1831-1841), Desaubakari, Gnavinodhini (1870), Salem Swadesabimani (1877), these were some of the important journals in the ninteens of madras presidency. The Madras secular society (1878-1888) worked more than ten years in madras and published The Thinker was a journal from the Madras secular society disseminated the rational idea in the presidency.

It made considerable impact on society. G. Subramaniya Iyer the founding member of the Indian national Congress started the first regular newspaper in Tamil was Swadesamitran in 1882. These were some of the important news paper of the Madras presidency. They expressed the idea of the national struggle. The vernacular press Act enacted by the Lord Lytton in 1878 to curtail the freedom of the press acting against the British policies. But not affected in Madras presidency, the journalist here raised their

opposition. The social reformer in India used the news paper as weapon against the social evils in the colonial period. During the time, mostly news papers concentrated on freedom struggle rarely a few concentrated on social issues. The problem of depressed class was continued and little care was taken by the national leaders. So it was unavoidable to the depressed class leader to take the cause of the social issues faced by their people and keep informed to the Government through the petition and news paper. The following magazines were published to convey the cause of the depressed class, Suriyothayam (1869), Panjaman (1871), Dravidamithiran (1885), Dravidathuthan (1888), Parayan (1893), Illara ozhukkam (1898), Boolagavyasan (1900), Oru paisa tamizhan (1907). The social reform movement in Tamilnadu was going on nook and corner. but there was a no correlation between them. In the south of Tamilnadu Muthukutti swami awakened the people against discrimination among the people³. The social inequality has been a danger to modern democracy⁴ is well understood by the Indian social reformer. That was why the well known spiritual as well social leader fought for this annihilation. In this fight for equity pandit C. Aiyothee thass stood on the forefront. He born in mylapore, Chennai then moved to Ootcamund where he practiced native medicine. We know the contribution of pandit through his journal in the last years of his life.

Oru paisa of Tamizhan.

The weekly news magazine oru paisa tamizhan started by pandit C. Aiyothee Thass on 19-06-1907 from Rayapettai in Chennai. It contained four pages and published to teach social justice and against caste discrimination. The name of the paper was changed after one year as "Tamizhan" in 1908. it was continued till the demise of pandit C. Aiyothee thass in 1914. Thereafter, it was under his son in some year and one periyasamy pulavar (poet) of Kolar field. Pandit Aiyothee thass work is great significance because the period in which he worked was crucial. During the time, Nationalism were being projected. His paper was carrying information about Tamil literature, culture and religion and his ideas spread to throughout in our country and abroad and provoking tamil society. He sowed the early seeds of social revolution, cultural renaissance and political movement in colonial period. His political and social ideology⁵ are well reflected and informed to the people in the weekly journal Tamizhan. In his journal regularly published research article and critics⁶. Though the main stream history of congress and G. subramaniya iyer split in hindu and starting Swaadesmitran are well documented but not in other significant events of the 19th century depressed class intellectual⁷ uprising. Pandit was very daring personality, write about daily events the journal had the readers as far as Burma, Malaysia, and South Africa. The journal was creating awareness to the people against superstition. The pure tamil movement was originally practiced in tamizhan news paper by pandit. Because he had made some modification in writing style as well as reduce the long alphapets in his weekly. We may consider it as a first indigenious initiative in letter reforms. when the industrial association of Chennai asked to collect fund for diwali, he insisted the equal representation of all community in the association body⁸. He requested the government to remove toddy shop from the vicinity of the residence of the depressed people in the journal. He sent a petition to madras mahajana sabha and cogress to establish special school and provide scholarship to the depressed people⁹. Because the government would hear the demands of congress and sabha. Therefore pandit requested the Congress. The writings of pandit clearly show that establishment of equalitarian society and opposed caste based discrimination in our country.

Finally the work of pandit C. Aiyothee thass is deserved in the socio political scenario of south india particularly in Tamil nadu. He is considered as pioneer in the reformation movement and constructing the Indian history in Buddhist basis. He has been a role model to the modern social reform

movement of Tamilnadu. He had started a number of organisation for example against conversion, Buddhist sangham to establish equalitarian society, Dravida mahajana sabha to plea the rights of depressed people and represented on behalf of the people from Nilagiri in Chennai victoria hall maha sabha meeting. He was responsible for the social awareness that prevailed among the downtrodden section of the society.

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