



SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT – HISTORY

NEWS: The Social Justice Movement in Tamil Nadu began about 100 years ago and has transformed the political and social landscape of the state.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

About Social Justice Movement in Tamil Nadu

1. The roots of the movement can be traced back to the formation of the **South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF), commonly known as the Justice Party in 1916**. This was the first organized political effort to challenge the Brahmins' monopoly over power in the Madras Presidency.
2. The Justice Party was led by well-known personalities such as **Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, T. M. Nair, P. Theagaraya Chetty, and Alamelu Mangai Thayarammal**.

Key Reforms

1. The **Communal Government Order (GO) of 1921 ensured proportional representation for all communities in government employment and education**, this order was finally passed in 1928 and remained in effect until the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950.
2. The **Self-Respect Movement was founded by E.V. Ramasamy, popularly known as Periyar in 1925**, the Movement aimed to **promote rationalism, self-respect, and the eradication of caste discrimination**. It highlighted the need for social reforms and women's rights, challenging traditional hierarchies and religious practices.

The movement significantly reshaped Tamil Nadu's political and social landscape:

1. **Caste-Based Oppression;** The movement fought against the dominance of Brahmins in administrative and educational sectors, advocating for equal opportunities for non-Brahmins and marginalized communities.
2. **Women's Rights;** It advocated women's rights, including reproductive rights, long before such issues gained prominence in the West.
3. **Secularism;** Unlike many social reform movements in northern India, which were often religious in nature, Tamil Nadu's movement was largely secular, focusing on practical reforms and power-sharing among all sections of society.

About Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy

1. Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, or Periyar, was born in September 1879 in Erode, Tamil Nadu. He came from a wealthy family, but **he saw a lot of unfairness around him**, especially against non-Brahmins and women.
2. Periyar joined the Indian National Congress in 1919 but left the party in 1925.



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3. In 1925, Periyar started the **Self-Respect Movement** to promote self-respect among all people, especially those from lower castes. It **encouraged people to question and reject the caste system and other social injustices**.
4. Periyar became famous for leading the **Vaikom Satyagraha in 1924** against the ban on lower-caste people entering temples in Vaikom, Kerala. His efforts helped to end this unfair practice, and he **earned the title "Vaikom Hero"**.
5. In 1944, Periyar transformed the **Justice Party into the Dravidar Kazhagam**. This party focused on fighting for the rights of Dravidians (people from South India) and against the dominance of North Indian culture and politics.



Key Beliefs

- a. Rationalism;** Periyar believed in rational thinking and encouraged people to question superstitions and religious practices.
- b. Equality;** He fought for equal rights for all, regardless of caste, religion, or gender.
- c. Women's Rights;** Periyar was a strong advocate for women's rights. He supported women's education, employment, and reproductive rights.

Legacy

The social justice movement has left an indelible mark on Tamil Nadu's political and social fabric. It continues to be a foundation of the state's politics, influencing contemporary policies and social attitudes. The movement's emphasis on equality, human dignity, and rationalism remains relevant, inspiring new generations to challenge social injustices and strive for a more equitable society.



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Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/100-years-of-social-justice-movement-why-it-remains-unique-and-why-it-transformed-tamil-nadu-9607792/>



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