

Contributions of Perarignar Anna

Perarignar Anna

- Conjeevaram Natarajan Annadurai (15 September 1909 – 3 February 1969), popularly known as Anna, also known as Perarignar Anna, was an Indian politician who served as the fourth and last Chief Minister of Madras State from 1967 until 1969 and first Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for 20 days (after Madras State was renamed Tamil Nadu) before his death.
- He was the first member of a Dravidian party to hold either post.
- He was well known for his oratorical skills and was an acclaimed writer in the Tamil language.
- He scripted and acted in several plays. Some of his plays were later made into movies.
- He was the first politician from the Dravidian parties to use Tamil cinema extensively for political propaganda.
- Born in a middle-class family, he first worked as a school teacher, then moved into the political scene of the Madras Presidency as a journalist.
- He edited several political journals and enrolled as a member of the Dravidar Kazhagam. As an ardent follower of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, he rose in stature as a prominent member of the party.
- Due to differences looming with Periyar, on issues of separate independent state of Dravida Nadu and union with India, he crossed swords with his political mentor.
- The friction between the two finally erupted when Periyar married Maniammai, who was much younger than him. Angered by this action of Periyar.
- Annadurai with his supporters parted from Dravidar Kazhagam and launched his own party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).
- The DMK initially followed the same ideologies as its parent, Dravidar Kazhagam.
- But with the evolution of national politics and the constitution of India after the Sino-Indian War in 1962, Annadurai dropped the claim for an independent Dravida Nadu.

- Various protests against the ruling Congress government took him to prison on several occasions; the last of which was during the Madras anti-Hindi agitation of 1965.
- The agitation itself helped Annadurai to gain popular support for his party.
- His party won a landslide victory in the 1967 state elections.
- His cabinet was the youngest at that time in India.
- He legalised Self-Respect marriages, enforced a two-language policy (in preference to the three-language formula in other southern states), implemented subsidies for rice, and renamed Madras State to Tamil Nadu.

Early life

- His father Natarajan Mudaliar was a weaver and his mother was Bangaru Ammal.
- He was raised by her sister Rajamani Ammal.
- At the age of 21, he married Rani while he was still a student.
- The couple had no children of their own, so they later adopted and raised Rajamani's grandchildren.
- He attended Pachaiyappa's High School, but left school to work as a clerk in the town's Municipal office to assist with the family finances.
- In 1934, he graduated with a B.A. degree from Pachaiyappa's College in Chennai.
- He then earned an MA degree in economics and politics from the same college.
- He worked as an English teacher in Pachaiyappa High School.
- Later he quit the teaching job and began involving himself in journalism and he served as an editor in few weekly magazine and then he indulged into politics.

Religion views

- Though Annadurai was an atheist in his personal life as he took oath as the Chief Minister of the state in the 'name of conscience' rather than in the 'name of god', he proclaimed as "Only one race, Only one God" (Ondre

Kulam Oruvanae Devan) from tamil work Thirumanthiram penned by Thirumoolar in order to unify the people of Tamil Nadu.

- Though secular to the core, he later described himself as a Hindu sans the sacred ash, a Christian minus the holy cross, and a Muslim without the prayer cap
- Annadurai would attack superstitions and religious exploitation but would never fight against the spiritual values of society.
- He once explained his stance towards God and religion as "I do not break coconuts for Pillaiyar, (a form of worship) neither do I break his idols." (Nan Thengayum udaipathillai; Pillaiyarum Udaipathillai)

Entry into politics

- Annadurai's interest in politics made him join the Justice party in 1935.
- The Justice party was formed by non-Brahmin peoples in 1917.
- The Justice party originated with the Madras United League which was initially started as a work group that helped non-Brahmin students in Madras with accommodation and later grew into a political party under the efforts of leaders like C. Natesa Mudaliar, Sir Pitti Theagaroya Chetty and Dr. T. M. Nair.
- The party was named South Indian Liberal Federation (S. I. L. F.) – popularly known as Justice party. The party had been in power in Madras Presidency since self-governance was introduced in 1920, until it was defeated by the Indian National Congress in 1937.
- By the time Annadurai joined the Justice party, Periyar E. V. Ramasami was the party president.
- Annadurai served as the sub-editor of the Justice magazine.
- He later became the editor for Viduthalai (Freedom in English) and was also associated with the Tamil weekly paper, Kudi Arasu.
- He started his own journal Dravida Nadu (named after the Dravida Nadu – an independent state that the party called for).
- In 1944, Periyar renamed the Justice party to Dravidar Kazhagam and gave up contesting in the elections.

Differences with Thanthai Periyar

- The Indian National Congress, which had been fighting for the independence of India from colonial British rule, was dominated by Brahmins.
- Periyar assumed that independent India would bring South Indians, especially Tamils, under the dominance of Brahmins and North Indians.
- For these reasons Periyar called for 15 August 1947, the day of Indian independence, to be a day of mourning.
- Annadurai opposed this move and the schism between his supporters and Periyar widened.
- He saw the gaining of independence as an overall achievement of India rather than solely that of Aryan North
- Moreover, Periyar's decision on giving up participating in democratic elections was also opposed by Annadurai, in reaction to which he walked out of a party meeting in 1948.
- Periyar considered that candidates in elections must compromise their ideologies.
- Moreover, it was Periyar's idea that social reformation can be better achieved outside politics, through education and canvassing the masses, rather than governments.
- Eventually, when Periyar married Maniammai, who was 40 years younger than he, the personal differences between Annadurai and Periyar split their supporters.
- Annadurai launched his own party with his party fragment, along with E. V. K. Sampath (Periyar's nephew and until then considered his political heir
- The new party was named Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.
- DMK's presence was initially restricted to urban centres and its surrounding areas.
- But by appealing to the urban lower, lower middle and working classes, students, Dalits and lower castes, Annadurai was able to accelerate its growth and spread.

- He fought for the social justice of the lower castes and thus rapidly gained popular support.

Birth of DMK

- The DMK was founded on 17 September 1949 by the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu C. N. Annadurai (Anna).
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- DMK was headed by Annadurai as the general secretary from 1949 until his death on 4 February 1969.
- He also served as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu from 1967 to 1969.
- Under Annadurai, in 1967, DMK became the first party, other than the Indian National Congress, to win the state-level elections with a clear majority on its own in any state in India.

Party ideology

Dravidian nationalism

- The Anti-Hindi Imposition agitations of 1965 forced the central government to abandon its efforts to use Hindi as the only official language of the country.
- However, Hindi usage has continued as Indian government employees are asked to write as much as 65% of the letters and memoranda in Hindi.

State autonomy

- After the Emergency invoked by Indira Gandhi, more state powers like education and medical care were moved from state control to national control.

- At the state conference in Trichy after the death of C.N. Annadurai, M.Karunanidhi announced the adoption of the "state autonomy" principle to advocate for state self-governance.
- In April 1974, the DMK government brought in a resolution in the House urging the Centre to accept the Rajamannar Committee recommendations on state autonomy and amend the Constitution of India to pave the way for a truly federal system.

Social justice

- The DMK reconstituted the disabled persons welfare board to Differently Abled Persons Departments and the changed official terms for transgender individuals to more respectful terms like Thirunangai and Thirunambi.

Protests in 1953

- In 1953, Annadurai directed the DMK to undertake three protests
- Condemning Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, for describing the damaging Hindi letters in railway station boards by DK and DMK activists as "childish nonsense".
- Against C. Rajagopalachari (or Rajaji), the then chief minister of Madras State, for introducing a new educational system that indirectly encouraged traditional caste-based occupations called Kula Kalvi Thittam.
- Against renaming Kallakkudi, Dalmiyapuram as the name Dalmiyapuram symbolised north Indian domination. He was eventually sentenced to three months imprisonment in this protest.

Dravida Nadu

- During his days in Dravida Kazhagam, Annadurai had supported Periyar's call for an independent Dravida Nadu.
- The claim for such an independent state stayed alive in the initial days of DMK. E. V. K. Sampath, who had earlier forfeited his inheritance from Periyar to join DMK, saw the call for Dravida Nadu as an unrealistic goal. Responding to Sampath's concern, Annadurai said.
- We must contest more elections, win more seats and that way, win the confidence of the people; and when it is hot, we can strike and strike hard.

- Sampath's opposition to using film stars made him cross swords with many other members of the party. Eventually, with looming differences with Annadurai and other leaders on Dravida Nadu, Sampath left the DMK and formed his own party, the Tamil Nationalist Party, in 1961.
- In 1962, Annadurai said in the Rajya Sabha that Dravidians want the right of self-determination. We want a separate country for southern India.
- However, the reorganisation of states in India on linguistic basis removed Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam speaking regions from the Madras Presidency leaving behind a predominantly Tamil Madras State.
- Giving in to realities, Annadurai and his DMK changed the call of independent Dravida Nadu for Dravidians to independent Tamil Nadu for Tamils.
- Annadurai felt that remaining in the Indian Union meant accepting linguistic domination and economic backwardness.
- Nevertheless, the Sino-Indian war brought about changes in the Indian constitution.
- The Sixteenth Amendment (most popularly known as the Anti-Secessionist Amendment) banned any party with sectarian principles from participating in elections.
- When this amendment was presented in the Parliament of India, Annadurai was one of its members. He vehemently debated against the amendment, but eventually could not stop it from being passed.
- Faced with the new constitutional changes, Annadurai and his DMK left the call for an independent Tamil homeland on the back burner. From then on Annadurai and his DMK aimed at achieving better co-operation between the southern states and claimed more autonomy for Tamil Nadu.
- On the party's position, Annadurai said:
 - To make the Dravidian state a separate state was our ideal. A situation has arisen where we can neither talk nor write about this ideal. Of course, we can destroy the party by undertaking to violate the prohibition.

- But once the party itself is destroyed there will not be any scope for the ideal to exist or spread. That is why we had to give up the ideal.

Anti-Hindi agitations

- Hindi was first recommended to be an apt language for official purposes in India by a committee headed by Motilal Nehru in 1928.
- This move was opposed by people and politicians of Tamil Nadu, since they considered that it would make them second class citizens when compared to that of native Hindi speaking North Indians.

Protests of 1938

- In 1938, the Congress government in Madras Presidency headed by C. Rajagopalachari (popularly known as Rajaji) proposed the use of Hindi language as a compulsory language in schools.
- This move was opposed by Tamil leaders. Annadurai, along with other Tamil scholars including the poet Bharathidasan, held demonstrations.
- Annadurai participated in the first Anti Hindi imposition conference held in Kanchipuram on 27 February 1938.
- Two members of the protest, Thalamuthu and Natarajan, died as a consequence of police beating the same year.
- With overwhelming opposition, the government of Madras Presidency finally withdrew the order in 1940.
- He stated that "you learn English for world communication and learn Hindi for communication in India, it seems like big door for big cat and small door for small cat, why not let the small cat also enter in big door"

Madras Anti Hindi agitation, 1965

- When India became a republic with its own constitution in 1950, the constitution had given special status to the Hindi language, which was to gain official status after 15 years in 1965.
- This move was regarded with anxiety by students in Tamil Nadu. Speaking of making Hindi as official language of India, Annadurai said It is claimed that Hindi should be the common language because it is spoken by the majority. Why should we then claim the tiger as our national animal instead

of the rat which is so much more numerous? Or the peacock as our national bird when the crow is ubiquitous?

- In view of continued threat to impose Hindi, the DMK held an open-air conference against Hindi imposition at Kodambakkam, Chennai in August 1960, which Annadurai presided over.
- He gave black flags to leading functionaries, to be shown to the President of India during his visit to the state. Sensing an uprising, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru assured in the Parliament that English would continue to be the official language of India, as long as non-Hindi speaking people desire.
- DMK gave up the plan of showing black flags and Annadurai appealed to the Union Government to bring about a constitutional amendment incorporating the assurance.
- With no constitutional amendment done, Annadurai declared 26 January 1965, the 15th Republic Day of India and also the day the Constitution, which in essence enshrined Hindi as the official language of India, came into practice, as a day of mourning.
- This move was opposed by the then Chief Minister of Madras State, Bhakthavatchalam, as blasphemous. Hence Annadurai, who by then had been trying to shake off the secessionist image of his party, declared 24 January as a day of mourning.
- He also replaced the slogan of the protests to Down with Hindi; Long live the Republic. Nevertheless, violence broke out on 26 January, initially in Madurai which within days spread throughout the state.
- Robert Hardgrave Jr, professor of humanities, government and Asian studies, suggests that the elements contributing to the riots were not instigated by DMK or Leftists or even the industrialists, as the Congress government of the state suggested, but were genuine frustrations and discontentment which lay beneath the surface of the people of the state.
- With violence surging, Annadurai asked the students to forfeit the protests, but some DMK leaders like Karunanidhi kept the agitations going.

- Nevertheless, Annadurai was arrested for instigating the agitation. Although the violence were not directly instigated by the DMK, the agitation itself aided DMK to win the 1967 elections and Annadurai became the new Chief Minister of Madras State.

Posts held

- The provincial conference of the DMK was held at Tiruchirappalli in May 1956. Annadurai stepped down from the General Secretaryship of the party, and Nedunchezian was elected to that position.
- It was at the Tiruchirappalli conference that the party decided to contest free India's second general elections which were to be held in 1957.
- The DMK secured 15 Assembly seats and two parliamentary seats. Anna was elected from his home constituency, Kanchipuram for the first time to the Madras Legislative Assembly.
- In that election, the DMK won 15 seats and Annadurai became the leader of the opposition in the state. In 1962, the DMK emerged as the major political party in the state outside the Congress, winning 50 seats in the Assembly.
- Although Annadurai himself lost the elections, he was nominated as a member of parliament to the upper house (Rajya Sabha).

Formation of state government

- In 1967, DMK came to power in the Madras State 18 years after its formation and 10 years after it had first entered electoral politics.
- This began the Dravidian era in the Madras province, which later became Tamil Nadu.
- In 1967, the Congress lost nine states to opposition parties, but it was only in Madras that a single non-Congress Party (namely, the DMK) won a majority.
- The electoral victory of 1967 is also reputed to be an electoral fusion among the non-Congress parties to avoid a split in the Opposition votes.
- Rajagopalachari, a former senior leader of the Congress Party, had by then left the Congress and launched the right-wing Swatantra Party.

- He played a vital role in bringing about the electoral fusion amongst the opposition parties to align against the Congress. At that time, his cabinet was the youngest in the country.

Achievements

- Annadurai legalized self-respect marriages for the first time the country.
- Such marriages did not involve priests presiding over the ceremonies, and thus a Brahmin was not needed to carry out the wedding.
- Self-respect marriages were a brainchild of Periyar, who regarded the then conventional marriages as mere financial arrangements which often led to great debt through dowry.
- Self-respect marriages, according to him, encouraged inter-caste marriages and caused arranged marriages to be replaced by love marriages.
- Annadurai was also the first to promise to subsidize the price of rice in order to campaign for his election
- He promised one rupee a measure of rice, which he initially implemented once in government, but had to withdraw later.
- Subsidizing rice costs are still used as an election promise in Tamil Nadu.
- It was Annadurai's government that renamed Madras State to Tamil Nadu, its present-day name. The name change itself was first presented in the upper house (Rajya Sabha) of the Parliament of India by Bhupesh Gupta, a communist MP from West Bengal, but was then defeated.
- With Annadurai as chief minister, the state assembly succeeded in passing the bill renaming the state.
- Another major achievement of Annadurai's government was to introduce a two-language policy over the then popular three language formula.
- The three-language formula, which was implemented in the neighboring states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, entitled students to study three languages: the regional language, English and Hindi.
- It was during the period of his Chief Ministership that the Second World Conference was conducted on a grand scale on 3 January 1968.

- Nevertheless, when a commemorative stamp was released to mark the Tamil conference, Annadurai expressed his dissatisfaction that the stamp contained Hindi when it was for Tamil.
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- Anna expressed his dissatisfaction that the stamp contained Hindi when it was for Tamil. Annadurai also issued an order for the removal of pictures of gods and religious symbols from public offices and buildings
- He proceeded on a world tour as an invitee of the Yale University's Chubb Fellowship Programme and was also a guest of the State Department in the US in April–May 1968.
- He was awarded the Chubb Fellowship at Yale University, being the first non-American to receive this honour.
- The same year he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Annamalai University.

Literary contributions

- Annadurai, known for his excellent oratorical skills, was fond of books. This image shows his private library.
- Annadurai was known as one of the best Tamil orators during his time.
- He developed a style in Tamil public speaking using metaphors and pleasing alliterations, both in spoken and written language. Anna was also best known for his extempore speaking ability being very well affluent on rhetoric skills.
- He has published several novels, short stories and plays which incorporate political themes.
- He himself acted in some of his plays during his time in the Dravidar Kazhagam.
- He introduced movie media as a major organ for propaganda of Dravidian politics. In total Annadurai scripted six screen plays.

- His first movie Nallathambi (Good Brother, 1948) which starred N. S. Krishnan promoted cooperative farming and abolition of zamindari system.
- His novels such as Velaikaari (Servant Maid, 1949) and Or Iravu, which were later made into movies, carried the hallmarks of propaganda for Dravidian politics.
- On Velaikari, Annadurai said that the movie made it clear that greed and avarice of the rich did not pay in the long run. Some of the elementary principles of socialism and stressed that we should depend upon our own labour for our progress and well being and not some unknown factor.
- Velaikari made direct references against the suppressive landlords who were traditionally allied with Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi.
- His movies had some elements of Dravidian political ideologies like anti-Brahminism and messages differing against Congress with detailed reasons and scenarios behind.
- Popular stage and cine actors who stood by Anna in early years were D. V. Narayanasamy, K. R. Ramasamy, N. S. Krishnan, S. S. Rajendran, Sivaji Ganesan and M. G. Ramachandran.
- Some of his books had a social approach and its content were debatable, such as "Arya Mayai" (Aryan Illusion) in which he highlighted the view point of bringing an equal living society regardless of any caste dominance and especially drawing similarities which existed by then of the upper-caste Brahmin (Aryan) people.
- He was fined INR 700 for sedition and was also sent to prison.
- Some of his well-known works are his books Annavin Sattasabai Sorpolivukal (Anna's speeches at the state legislative, 1960), Ilatchiya varalaru (History of Ideals, 1948), Valkkaip puyal (Storm of life, 1948) and Rankon rata (Radha from Rangon).
- His work Kambarasam criticises Ramayana of Kamban. His works of fiction such as Kapothipura katal (Love in the city of Blind), Parvathy B.A., Kalinga rani (Queen of Kalinga) and Pavayin payanam (Travels of a young lady) carried elements of political propaganda.

- At times when Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was extensively using movies for its propaganda, censorship crippled the process.
- To evade censorships, DMK movies used Annadurai's popular nickname Anna, which also means elder brother in Tamil, as a pun. When praises were bestowed on the Anna on screen, the crowd would break into applause.
- Kannadasan has criticised Anna's works that apart from Sivaji Kanda Hindu Rajyam and Needhi Devan Mayakkam, the rest lacked even a plot.
- Annadurai's books also touched on social issues. One such work, "Arya Mayai," challenged the idea of caste dominance and advocated for an equal living society.
- Some of his other famous works include "Annavin Sattasabai Sorpolivukal," a collection of his speeches at the state legislature, "Ilatchiya varalaru," a history of ideals, and "Rankon rata," a play about Radha from Rangon.
- Annadurai's works of fiction, such as "Kapothipura kathal," "Parvathy B.A.," "Kalinga rani," and "Pavayin payanam," carried elements of political propaganda and his work "Kambarasam" criticized the Ramayana of Kamban.

Death

- On 10 September 1968 Annadurai travelled to New York for medical treatment and he was operated for cancer in the gullet at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.
- He returned to Chennai in November and continued to address several official functions against medical advice.
- His health deteriorated further and he died on 3 February 1969.
- His cancer was attributed to his habit of chewing tobacco.
- His funeral had the highest number of attendees until then, as registered with The Guinness Book of Records.
- An estimated 15 million people attended it. His remains were buried in the northern end of Marina Beach, which is now called Anna Memorial.
- In 1969, Annadurai unexpectedly died. M kalaignar Karunanidhi was elected as his successor, defeating rival candidate V. R. Nedunchezhiyan.

- Kalaingar Karunanidhi would continue to head the DMK until his own death in 2018.

Legacy

- After his electoral success with his DMK in 1967, the Congress has not yet returned to power in Tamil Nadu.
- His government was the first in the country to be from a non-Congress party with full majority.
- When the DMK later split, with M. G. Ramachandran forming his own Dravidian party, the rebel fragment was named after Annadurai as Anna DMK. Anna Nagar, a residential neighbourhood in Chennai is named after him.
- Sri Lankan Tamil nationalist leaders and writers are considered to be influenced by Annadurai's chaste Tamil movement.
- Anna University, a premier institution in science and technology was named after him. DMK's current head office built in 1987 is named after him as Anna Arivalayam.
- One of the major roads in Chennai was named in his honour, Anna Salai—it was previously called Mount Road, and a statue of Annadurai now stands there.
- The central government issued a commemorative coin of ₹ 5 denomination to mark the centenary celebrations of him on 15 September 2009 in Chennai.
- Jawaharlal Nehru hailed him as one of the great parliamentarians for speeches in Rajya Sabha.
- Selig Harrison, a US-based analyst of South Asian and East Asian politics and journalism commented,
- A life-size statue of Annadurai was unveiled on 1 October 2002 in the Parliament House by then President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in his honour and the function was attended by notable politicians.