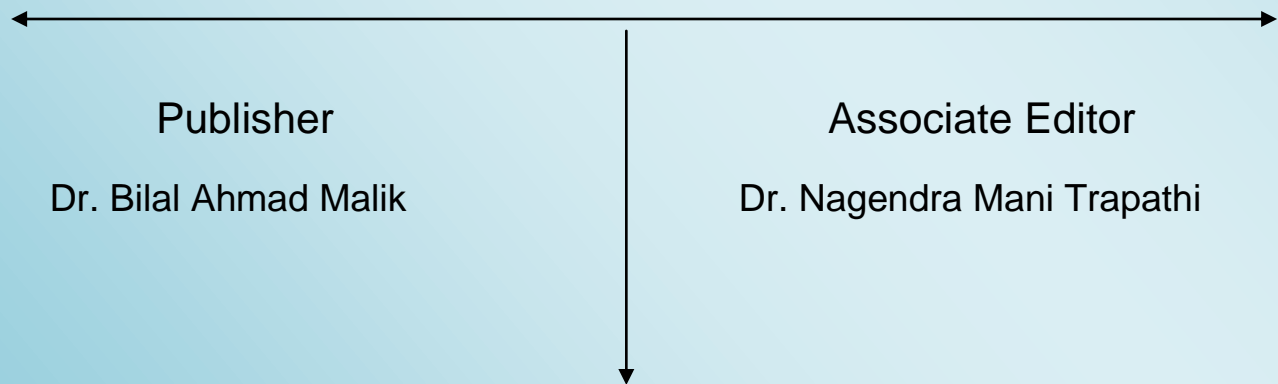


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WOMEN'S STRUGGLE IN TAMIL NADU, 1920-1940

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INTRODUCTION

In Indian women's movement started as a part of social reformation initiated by several leaders like RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY, RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA RAMALINGA ADIGAL, and E.V.R. PERIYAR etc. In North India the 19th century saw several social reformers who started movements such as Brahmoi Samaj, Arya Samaj and Parthana samaj. These movements fought for the welfare of women as well.

They secured women participation and membership. THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENTS which started in the 20th century also fought for the women's rights and privileges. It also paved the way for women education and job opportunities.ⁱ

WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

The women's movement for self determination was started by SARALA DEVI, SOUNDARANI in 1910. In 1917 women leaders from Europe such as ANNE BESANT AMMAYAR, MARK GARAT DORATHI etc started the Women's India Association. LADY ABRADAIN started the National Council of women in India. The All-India Women's conference was held in 1927, with the sincere effort of the Markgarat Cousin.

The entire above mentioned Women's consisted only Women as the members. They worked for upholding rights of the women and taking steps to rectify their problems which led to all-round development. This awareness gave birth to the All India Democratic Women's Association a social service organization in Chennai.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE

1. Educating the women folk all over India.
2. To make primary education compulsory and to make the women understand the importance of education.
3. To prevent child marriages.

4. To fight for the voting rights of women.
5. To get representation for women in the city corporation.
6. To get equal rights for women.
7. To develop children as responsible Indian citizens.
8. To develop the right attitude recording self development education and service to the community.

The British INDIA ASSOCIATION wanted to extend its branch in Madrasⁱⁱ. Rationalist social reformist SRINIVASA PILLAI started MADRAS SWADESI SANGAM, MADRAS with the following objectives.

- i. Encouraging widow remarriage
- ii. Supporting women's education
- iii. Development of downtrodden people

In 1864 the Veda Samaj started which had women's development as the main object. Following these in 1874 the Madras Widows Remarriage Sangam was started that encouraged widow remarriage. Apart from that it also gave financial resistance to the persons to marry the widowsⁱⁱⁱ. During 19th century several movements such as the Self-Respect Movement led by-EVR Periyar, VAIGUNDASWAMY movement^{iv}. Samarasa Sudra Sanmarka Sangam by Ramalinga Adigalar etc, were established with the aim of repealing the difficulties faced by the womenfolk. These women's movements struggled for various social problems to be rectified. In 1924 Nagammai, wife of PERIYAR(EVR) started the women's group of participate in the VAIKKOM struggle. She also fought against the practice of restricting women from Sudra Community from entering temples. Her part in the social development should be realized^v.

In 1938, about 1269 people were imprisoned for fighting against Hindi of which 73 people were women.

WOMEN REFORMS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The movement which were formed before 1910 concentrated on issues such as women's education, welfare scheme etc. Among the women's organization, the AIDWA and the Indian Women's Conference are the important All Indian Organisations. The Madras Theosophical Society, established in 1917 headed by Annie Besant had the following objectives:

1. Women's Education
2. Voting Rights for Women
3. Equal Rights for Women
4. Prevention of Child Marriage^{vi}

STRUGGLE AGAINST SUPPRESSION OF WOMEN BY MUTHU LAKSHMI REDDY

In the beginning of the 20th century the Indian Women suffered from a Plethora of problems caused by the society as well as by their own male counterparts.

One such struggle is against the practice and prevalence of Devadasi community. She was the first woman to get education from this community. She was determined to do away with all the shameful activities and practices of the Devadasi Community.

The Devadasi's dedicated themselves to the temple which were centers of learning, art and culture. Hence, the dignitaries of those days felt proud to be intellectually associated with Devadasi women. Later the association started to make Devadasi women prominently known only for their immoral character and not for the knowledge they possess. Dr. Muthulakshmi knew very well about the issue. It was Dr. Muthulakshmi who wrote about the suffering of the devadasi's and the practices in Tamil Nadu. She started a movement against this system in 1921. The abolition of devadasi system bill was brought out^{vii}.

Even the government framed many policies, laws and programs for the prevention of derogatory practices against women^{viii}. But, is it effectively enforced? This is a question which should be deep in the minds of the society.

Practices of female infanticide, devadasi system and other such practices against the women are deep-rooted. Though the movements which existed from the historic periods have made some effects in removing them. It has not been completed^{ix}.

Now the politicians are also making use of these issues as the tool for their election manifestoes. They promise to do away with all these practices, if they are voted to power. The people, attracted by their charismatic personalities vote for them once they come to power, all the promises are relegated to the background^x.

What is really required for the day is a complete change^{xi}. This change has to occur in the minds of the people, in the core of the society that enforce laws and politics pressures. Unless this change takes place not much development can be seen in the status of women^{xii}.

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