

PEASANT'S MOVEMENT - NETAJI, PASUMPON THEVAR AND PROBLEMS FACING TAMIL NADU FARMERS

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Let us salute to the Agriculture, dishonour the persons who are wasting their life in eating and luxurious living. Agriculturists are the principal persons who are principally living: the others are only living because of him.

In Tamil Nadu, 70% of the population are farmers. But the landless farmers are 55%. Farmers are nowadays becoming daily agricultural coolies. During the reign of Naick period, Tamil Nadu was divided into 500 divisions called palayams. In the south Tamil Nadu, there were 72 palayams. This does not include Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai and Pudukkottai areas. They were ruled by separate kingdoms. Rajah of Ramanathapuram gave to Pasumpon Thevar's ancestors to the extent 32 ½ villages. Though the father of Pasumpon Thevar is a Zamindar, Pasumpon Thevar fought for the abolition of zamindari system and for the welfare of the farmers. Pasumpon Thevar usually mentions his occupation as Farmer or as agriculturist in all his applications like Passport, MLA, MP nomination forms etc. Not only in papers, but in real life he did and knew agricultural work.

In olden days, the lands mostly belonged to the kings or the temples. In later days, the lands were distributed to the persons, who were contracted to send a certain number of persons in the event of war, in return for the allotted lands. The people who worked as agriculturists for Zamindars were turned into soldiers in the event of war.

In 1765 East India Company got the right to collect land tax from farmers. In 1803 Zamindari system was introduced in Ramanathapuram district. This district included 17 Divisions, 2162 Villages and 574 small villages. Those who collected land taxes, concentrated only on the collection of taxes and not interested in the welfare of farmers. The irrigation facilities were not provided. Payment of tax was made compulsory even though there was no cultivation. Agriculturists had to pay dual taxes, one to East India Company another to Zamindar.

In Tamil Nadu, the tribal communities resisted the foreign rule. They fought against the foreign rule. To suppress the agricultural tribal communities, the British rule enforced Criminal Tribes Act (known as CT Act) in 1911. This Act not only regulated Thevar Community, but included 89 communities. This torture by the foreign rulers towards the agricultural tribal communities continued for many years. From 1920 in Tamil Nadu the Justice Party came into power. The persons who were in the Justice Party were mostly zamindars and Land Lords. The torture given by the foreign rulers continued during the Justice Party rule also.

In 1927 in Madras, now Chennai, All India Congress Conference was held. This conference was held under the supervision of Srinivasa Iyengar. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose took part in the conference. Pasumpon Thevar was introduced to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose by Srinivasa Iyengar. Pasumpon Thevar accepted Netaji as his leader from that moment upto the date of his death. The two leaders discussed many issues.

On return to his native, Pasumpon Thevar continued his service as full time full pledged Congress man. He tried to create freedom movement awareness among the poor, illiterate farmers. British Imperialist continued to abolish the self reliance attitude of Tamil people.

Pasumpon Thevar went to all the villages nearby, identified their problems and solved their problems then and there. He conducted "No Tax" agitation by collecting the working mass of the people. He gradually grew into a Selfless Leader among the people. On 23rd day of June 1933, he gave his maiden public speech in the opening ceremony of Vivekananda Library in Sayalkudi. Many important leaders of Congress Party took part in this function. Thiru Kamaraj, Thiru Sasi Varna Thevar have also attended the function.

The CT Act was also introduced in Ramanathapuram District. Pasumpon Thevar conducted conference demonstrating against this CT Act at Abiramam on 13th May 1934. The CT Act visualized farmers into criminals. Pasumpon conducted agitations against this Act at Usilampatti and Sivakasi.

The Liquor Shops were established to divert the minds of the public from freedom movement towards illicit actions. Pasumpon Thevar conducted agitations against the opening of liquor shops.

He conducted agitations against money lenders who took all the possessions of the agriculture farmers, who borrowed from them.

One Senkulam Village Ramu borrowed loans from one Ayyarappan. Ayyarappan was a money lender, who usually lend money to the farmers, levied heavy interests and often seized their lands for the money borrowed by them. Ramu went to Pasumpon Thevar's residence and gave complaint about Ayyarappan. Pasumpon Thevar called Ayyarappan and advised him not to harass the farmers. But Ayyaran refused. Then Pasumpon Thevar gave a call to the farmers not to work in Ayyarappan's land, house. The farmers obeyed to Pasumpon Thevar's call. Nobody went to work in Ayyarappan's land. Nobody was there to drive the cattle that grazed the paddy, cotton, banana fields. Then Ayyarappan surrendered to Pasumpon Thevar. This incident took place in 1935.

The merchants at Kamuthi took large profit by selling their essential commodities to the people. They were advised by Pasumpon Thevar not to harass the people. The merchants denied to his request. Then Pasumpon introduced a new organization by name Bharatha Matha Co-operative Store. He made the poor farmers as the share holders of Co-operative Store. People benefited by this Co-operative Store by purchasing all their needs. The selling in other shops owned by the merchants became dull. Again the merchants surrendered to Pasumpon Thevar. He in turn advised them to sell the commodities at a low margin to the public.

By these agitations, Pasumpon Thevar became known to Ramanathapuram fully. In 1936, declaration of District Board was made. Becoming afraid of Pasumpon Thevar's oratorical ability to attract the mass of the people, the British Imperialist enforced Law against Pasumpon Thevar prohibiting him to speak at Public Meetings. In spite of these atrocities, Pasumpon Thevar won.

In 1937 State Legislative Assembly election was declared. Pasumpon Thevar was nominated as Congress Candidate. His opponent candidate was Raja of Ramnad Shanmuga Rajeswara Naganatha Sethupathi. Congress gave promises to abolish Zamindari system and the C.T. Act in case they came to power. Only those who have properties or graduates can become voters. The property owners were the people who got patta from Sethupathi. In spite of this, Pasumpon Thevar won the election.

In 1938, Netaji Subas Chandra Bose was unanimously elected as Congress President in Haripura Congress Conference. His Presidential Address was a historical one. He exhibited the revolutionary resolutions of abolition of Zamindari system, making the farmer as the owner of the land.

In 1938, the entrance of Harijans and Nadars into the Temple took place. On 10th March 1938, Pasumpon Thevar was announced as the President of the Committee that led Harijans into the temple in Travancore in Kerala.

In 1938 Pasumpon Thevar was elected as the President of 23 Trade Unions at Madurai. He took active part in Mahalakshmi Mill Workers Trade Union agitation. P.Jeevanandam, famous communist leader, was Vice President and Sasivarnam was the Secretary. The ruling party was Congress then. He was a congress M.L.A. He went to prison on behalf of workers. The mill management came to peace talks and agreed for a settlement with the Union. Due to this, Pasumpon Thevar was released from prison.

In 1939 he took part in the agitation of Madurai Knitting Co. This company was owned by the families of Congress Party N.M.R. Subburaman, who was called Madurai Gandhi. 95% of the workers of this company belonged to Sourashtra Community. He was again sent to prison. The British Government held him in prison upto September of 1945.

After released from prison, he formed a Union by name Zamin Farmers Union. He stressed the importance of zamin abolition. In 1947, he conducted a conference against zamindari system at Rajapalayam. Many famous leaders like Prof.N.G. Ranga, E.M.S. Namboodripad, A.K.Gopalan, P.Jeevanandham, P. Ramamoorthy participated in this conference.

In continuation of his dedicated and continuous agitation against zamindari system, the zamindari system was abolished in 1949.

Even after the independence of India, he took part in many agitations for the welfare of farmers. He gave speeches on behalf of farmers in the Madras Legislative Assembly and the Delhi Parliament. He suggested to give lands to landless farmers. They should be given the rights to decide the price of the commodities they have produced. The government should take the responsibility to take the supply and distribution. He fought for the cause of the poor people throughout his entire life. All India Forward Bloc

continues the way of Pasumpon Thevar and continuing to serve the poor people in the way shown by Pasumpon Thevar.

The irrigation facilities are not adequate to the farmers. The prices for their commodities are not sufficient enough. The starving death continues in India. Due to non availability of sufficient and timely loans from the Banks, the farmers become easy prey to harsh money lenders.

Because of the wrong policy of Congress as LPG, the farmers encountered many problems. Because of seeds supplied by foreign companies like Mansanto Wilmart, the agriculture work failed. The farmers are subject to total loss. Because of this, many farmers committed suicide. The old traditional way of agriculture was forbidden by the wrong policy of Congress Government.

Hence, Forward Bloc will continue to fight in the way shown by Netaji, Pasumpon Thevar and Swami Sahajananda and will fight for the cause of poor farmers and agriculturists.

We will fight and get succeed. We will fight till we get succeed. JAI HIND.