

தாய தமிழ்க் காவளி
சு. ச. அண்ணாத்தம்பி
புலவர்

Review Of Life & Achievements

OF

Dr. T. M. Nair

AND

DEWAN BAHADUR

O. Thanikachallam Chettiar



BY

Mr. S. G. Rangaramanujam, B.A., B.L.,

BAR AT LAW

President, The Youth League, Madras.

REVIEW OF LIFE & ACHIEVEMENTS

OF

DR. T. M. NAIR

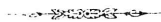
AND

O. THANIKACHALLAM CHETTIAR



SPEECH OF

Mr. S. G. Rangaramanuja Mudaliar Bar-at-law



President, The Youth League, Madras



Under the auspices of the Youth League, Madras, a largely-attended public meeting was held on 21-7-40 at the Gokhale Hall to celebrate the anniversary of Dr. T. M. Nair and Mr. O. Thanikachallam Chettiar, late leaders of the Justice party. Mr. S. G. Rangaramanujam, Bar-at-law, presided and made the following speech :—

Friends, I was considerably surprised when the demand was made on me to preside over this meeting. The chair is by right our leader Periyar's. If I have taken the place which is his by right, it is merely by his license and I shall do my best to deserve that confidence in me.

The Youth League has been keeping the memory of our departed leaders alive by meetings like these. But for its vigilance, I am afraid the memory of leaders like Dr. Natesa Mudaliar, Dr. Nair, Sir P. T. Chettiar, the Raja of Panagal, Dewan Bahadur O. Thanikachallam Chettiar and others would have long ago faded beyond recognition. Our thanks are due to them for their timely reminders.

Dr. Nair and Mr. O. T. as Dewan Bahadur O. Thanikachallam Chettiar was popularly known, were men of intellect who were bold enough to act up to the dictates of conscience, who spurned cheap popularity and disdained to play to the gallery, who were opposed heart and soul to any claim for monopoly, who were anxious to build up a united nation of diverse communities by means of justice and equal opportunities i. e., by a process of conscious evolution, instead of perpetuating distinctions and differences by shrouding them all by a sugar-coat of nationalism.

Their services to the people of this Presidency were varied and disinterested. Brahmins and Dravidians alike had respect and regard for them. Both were popular and efficient in their respective professions and rose to eminence. Both were authorities on corporation affairs. Both died in the fullness of their glory before they were old and without completing the mission they set for themselves.

O. THANIKACHALLAM CHETTIAR

Dewan Bahadur O. Thanikachallam Chettiar was a distinguished lawyer, was the brother of a distinguished pioneer of Social Reform and of the Dravidian movement. I refer to Rao Bahadur O. Kandaswami Chettiar whose labour of love in the cause of the upliftment of the masses of this Presidency I do wish to place on record with a note of sincere appreciation. Mr. O. T. Chettiar was the President of the Madras Corporation and was the President of the Tanjore District 5th Non-brahmin Conference held at Tanjore in 1925. Sir P. T. Chettiar and Mr. O. Thanikachallam Chettiar had the unique fortune of being returned to the 1st Legislative Council under the Montford Reforms, Mr. Thirumalai Pillai and Dr. Natesa Mudaliar being unsuccessful. Both in the Corporation and the Legislative Council Mr. O. T.'s stalwart figure and his robust faith in the cause of justice soon attracted attention and he attained in a comparatively short time the rank of the foremost men of the time. The Government of

the day very soon learnt to respect him. He changed his status from an Attorney instructing Counsels, to an Advocate. He very soon became a recognised leader of the Original side of the Madras High Court. He was appointed Chief Judge of the Court of Small Causes and he died while he held that office. May his name live long in our memory! He has left behind him a son, a young man of promise whose name adorns the walls of the Muthialpet High School Hall.

DR. NAIR

When we come to the name of Dr. Nair, we come to a name to conjure with. For a long time he was merely a Doctor, expert in his own line, unrivalled in his time, interested in music, author of a medical book on "Diabetes", regularly visiting England and other western countries periodically; had for his hobby the civic welfare of his city of adoption. In municipal matters he was an authority, a terror to the executive. He was the originator of the election campaign in the City on the eve of Municipal elections. Rao Bahadur P. T. Chettiar was also in the Municipal Council. Both were at logger-heads over the question of the sewage disposal in Tondiarpet. Just about that time Dr. Natesa Mudaliar was busy laying the seeds of the Dravidian movement by means of the Madras Dravidian Association. To him belongs the glory and credit of bringing these two contending heroes together on a common platform for the furtherance of the cause of the Dravidians upon which he had set his heart and dedicated his life.

The Home Rule agitation and the famous Memorandum of the Nineteen on the eve of Montford Reforms brought him to the forefront of Indian politics. His criticism of the Memorandum of the Nineteen was a masterpiece, on which he brought to bear all his political wisdom and experience and statesmanship. His criticisms tore the Memorandum to pieces and Dr. Nair became at once a hero. Dr. Nair was then in need of a platform and he got it in the Dravidian

movement. Dr. Nair was in need of a Press and he got it in "Justice."

Dr. Nair was both a writer and a speaker. He could wield his pen as effectively as his tongue. His pen was as mighty as a sword, sharp, keen and incisive, if need be. Normally it was smooth, facile and witty. His editorials in "Justice" were eagerly sought after. He gave no shelter to broken reeds. His eloquence was of a very high order. His gift of oratory could keep his enemies spell-bound for hours and while he spoke, one could hear a pin drop in an overcrowded hall. India knew no better orator in those days. English statesmen found in him an equal, if not their superior. His analytical skill was superb and his diction and style and the flow marvellous.

THE S. I. L. F.

The South Indian Liberal Federation and the "Justice" paper were his creations. Confederations were organised. He soon became the leader of his troupe and he gave them the necessary training and equipment. He decided that propaganda in England was essential and journeyed to and from England on that mission. The reception given to him when he returned to India on the first occasion was a right royal one. He led the deputation to give evidence before the joint Parliamentary Committee. While in London busy with gathering data, developing materials for his case and soon after the arrival of the members of the Deputation, Rao Bahadur K. V. Reddy, Mr. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Raja Ramarayananar, Mr. L. K. Thulasiram and others, with the words 'Non-brahmin' on his lips, he breathed his last to their utter dismay and bewilderment as that of a crew that lost their captain suddenly at midsea.

Such was in brief the career of one, who if he had been spared would have easily become the leader among men, would have changed the destinies of the country.

In this connection and at this stage I feel it my duty to refer to the unselfish and unstinted services of the late

Mr. P. N. Raman Pillai, the first Editor of "Justice." He was a man of indomitable energy, unrivalled knowledge of world politics and journalism, unbounded faith in the cause of justice and in the justice of his cause.

VALUE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Dr. Nair, unlike modern politicians, set a very high value upon elementary education. He pleaded that it should be a first charge on Indian Revenues and that it should be an all-India subject dealt with by the Central Government. To-day it is regarded as an evil of necessity, not as the very basis of a sound, steady and intelligent Government. Far from being liberal in this all important question, it is on this subject that authorities first lay their hands for effecting retrenchment. This penny-wise pound-foolish policy is somehow, as the irony of fate would have it, domineering present-day Governments.

Dr. Nair said so long ago as 1917 "Neither the Government nor the educated people in this country seem to realise that unless education penetrates the masses of the country there can be no political, social or educational progress. The Government are profuse in their sympathy and have inaugurated a policy of extending primary education, but the pace at which they are progressing will take several centuries before illiteracy can be abolished from this land. The educated people on the other hand, clamour for the extension of education, even primary education and regularly recite from political platforms the parrot cry for free and compulsory education; but in practical policy they take good care that the demands of higher and university education are first satisfied before the claims of elementary education are considered. The Government authorities too, kick about elementary education from pillar to post." I am ashamed to say that the position after 20 years and more is in no way better and his observations hold good substantially even to-day.

DR. NAIR'S HELP TO LABOUR

Labourers and Trade Union members perhaps may not realise at this distance of time the single-handed fight which Dr. Nair put up for the relief of employees in factories; he dared the bureaucrats of the time who were not favourably inclined towards any factory legislation, so much so he had to press his case before the Secretary of State in England. He did not succumb to the wails, curses and threats of the capitalist against any legislation for the betterment of the lot of factory labourers. The Indian Factory Act was primarily the fruits of his undaunted labour and unflinching zeal.

He was equally interested in the Backward and Depressed Classes. Their case was ably put forth by Dr. Nair and the Department of labour and the granting of house-sites to the Depressed Classes was his work.

Labourers whether agricultural or industrial, have thus to regard the memory of Dr. Nair with special reverence and gratitude.

Dr. Nair in politics was a realist. He was no visionary, no dreamer; he did not mystify people with his philosophies. He was first and foremost a practical politician, subordinating ideas and ideals to the hard realities of the situation. In his masterly criticism of the Memorandum of the Nineteen Notables, he laid rightly very strong emphasis on the imperative need for making India fit to defend herself as the first step for Responsible Government, as was then the vogue; the other items he relegated to an inferior rank. "Train Indians in the army and navy as the real and first step in the progressive realisation of Responsible Government", said he. But alas, the British Government did not in that and succeeding generations pay any respect to this aspect as the sure and safe foundation for the permanence of the British Empire. Over-confidence in their own greatness and suspicion in training Indians in the art of modern warfare made them turn a deaf ear to his legitimate demands. For the Indian Notables at that time were

over-powered by the glamour of official loaves and fishes and demanded only places either at the centre or at the circumference. None had the grit or the foresight to see the real greatness in military strength.

MILITARY TRAINING

In the Montagu Chelmsford Report 1918, they declared as follows: "For some years, Indian politicians have been urging the right of Indians in general to bear arms in defence of their country. This demand has become much more insistent since the outbreak of war and there has been a tendency to ascribe the difficulties of the Empire to the short sightedness of the Government which had consistently refused to afford military training to the Indian people. The argument is that if the Government had only conceded this demand, it would have had by now at its disposal millions of trained men who would long ago have turned the scale in favour of the Allies."

The war was not then over, when these words were written. The Report concluded by saying: "We therefore leave this question for consideration hereafter, but with the note that it must be faced and settled."

But alas! this question after the last war was neither faced nor settled and the words ring true even today.

Today we realise the need for military training and we run about here, there and everywhere for men. Dr. Nair for one would have had no patience with those who would say to the Britons, "Wherever you are, lay down arms." He would rather have said instead, "Hitler, wherever you are, lay down arms." India has suffered enough from philosophies of one kind or another; there is no need for the philosophy of non-violence; it is neither new, nor have nations the world over ever practised such philosophy. We see the Buddhist philosophy of non-violence being demonstrated between Japan and China in the East. We see also the Christian philosophy of non-violence (i. e., show your right cheek

to keep company with your left) put to test in Europe, between Germany, France, Russia, England, Spain &c., in fact almost all the Christian nations of Europe.

Let us remember that even the Baghavat Gita was uttered by Sri-Krishna only on the war front, who exhorted Arjuna not to reason why but to fight and die; and the Great War of the Cauravas and Pandavas was fought. Even in Ramayana, Sri Rama did not lay down arms for the sake of peace, but destroyed the entire army of Ravana and brought down the whole of Lanka under flames. Let us not deceive ourselves, as even the small nations of Europe were deceived by the false sense of security under the League of Nations with its philosophy of peace and which ultimately miserably failed to fulfil its purpose.

YOUTH LEADS THE WAY

Such a philosophy, however desirable it may be, will only cover any nation that follows it with disaster and destruction if not extermination. Let us have the courage to accept the principle of Dr. Nair. Thanks to H. E. the Governor and to the British authorities who have realised at least in 1940 that Madras too can make a fine army, we shall show that we too can learn to defend our homes and our shores. The Youth League had been forwarding several resolutions to the Government impressing upon them the need for military training and equipment.

The Youth League in celebrating the memory of the late Dr. Nair is celebrating also its unfaltering faith and loyalty to the principles for which he lived, fought and died. It was the youth of this Presidency that made pilgrimages to hear him speak and to enjoy his eloquence and oratorical flights; it was the youth of this country that gathered round him and did his bidding. Was it not in this very Hall that the Madras Presidency Association, which was intended to counter-act the S. I. L. F. as a rival Non-brahmin organisation and met

to inaugurate its formation, was dissolved in utter confusion? It was the youth that volunteered in hundreds and thousands all over the Presidency and brought success and glory to their leaders in the first general election under the Montford Reforms.

Now, a splendid opportunity is offering itself to the youth of this country to fight for their land. Choose between liberty and slavery. Choose between Democracy and Dictatorship. Choose, in short, between civilization and cannibalism. I have no doubt you will choose the former and vindicate your claim for liberty, democracy and civilization. How? By each one of us contributing his little mite in the national effort so as to be fully prepared for all eventualities. Help in recruiting, contribute to the Funds if you can spare money, join the Civic Guards if you have time to spare, carry on propaganda if you can talk and in such other manner as will suit your position in life, circumstances and inclination.

(2) These are days of quick thinking and prompt decision and immediate action. Government on their part, I hope, will not be a prey to over confidence and red tapeism; will not shut out with contempt advice and suggestions from civilians; will not permit their public servants to deal with the citizens as to provoke irritation, discontent and unpopularity. Oppressive legislation made more oppressive by

stringent rules, enforced by officers in an inhuman manner without mercy or sympathy is bound to react on the Government if immediate steps are not taken to make them more human and liberal. The treatment accorded to people who have the misfortune to appear before officers under the Sales Tax Act and the heavy penalties imposed for default in payment on the due date and the hardship to which aided-school Managers and Teachers are put to, are merely instances in point which the Government will do well to mend in good time.

Thus shall we do our duty and show our gratefulness and appreciatiou of the work of our departed leaders Dr. Nair and Dewan Bahadur O. T. Chettiar and cherish their memory for years to come.

தூய தமிழ்க் காவலர்
கு. மு. அண்ணல்தங்கோ
நூலகம்

