

ARUTCHELVAR DR.N.MAHALINGAM - A MULTI FACETED PERSONALITY

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Introduction

"A College is a temple of wisdom, seedbed of character, Model of discipline, training ground of democracy and a Nursery of great hearts, strong mind, true faith and Willing hands. Hence, education has a pivotal role in harvesting the available resources to contribute to the prosperity of the nation"

-Arutchelvar Dr.N.Mahalingam

Arutchelvar Dr.N.Mahalingam, an eminent legend is popularly known as Pollachi Dr. N. Mahalingam. Once Pollachi was known for its weekly market which was held for -3- days in a week. But now Pollachi is remembered for its industrial personality Arutchelvar N.Mahalingam. Though Dr.N. Mahalingam had an agrarian background, he was a multifaceted personality. Arutchelvar was an agriculturalist, politician, industrialist, philosopher, social reformer, educationalist, writer and a far-sighted genius. The dreams and views of Dr.N.Mahalingam for the welfare of our nation are being realized and fulfilled nowadays. He is a farsighted planner and an industrialist and he promoted industrial clusters as early as 1960 to promote the economy of the region.

Charity begins at home. Even before the free lunch scheme of Chief Minister Sri Kamaraj in 1954 and midday meal scheme of Chief Minister MGR in 1982 NM's father offered free lunch to the poor students by arranging packed lunch packets from the near by Railway Restaurant in 1943.

Dr. N.Mahalingam had the Grace of Mahatma Gandhi twice. Imbibed by Gandhian ideals, Dr.N. Mahalingam had given up taking non - vegetarian foods from his childhood and started wearing Kadhar.

Dr. N. Mahalingam was an agriculturist by birth, engineer and technologist by education; genius in planning and execution, industrialist by profession, pioneer in modern sugar industry, philanthropist by nature, literary giant and scholar by involvement. Dr. N. Mahalingam was a graduate from Loyola College, Chennai and a student of the College of Engineering. Dr. N. Mahalingam had been in politics, built a family business, moved around with saints and sages, studied ancient civilizations and had travelled widely.

Political Career

Dr. N. Mahalingam represented the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly as an Indian National Congress candidate for the Pollachi Constituency for three successive terms i.e.15 years from 1952 to 1967. As a true Gandian, Rural development was dearer to Dr. N. Mahalingam. He was mainly responsible for implementing "Parambikulam Aliyar Project " during 1950 which helped to irrigate the dry lands in the region of Pollachi, Udumalpet, Kangayam, and Dharapuram taluks.

A Model Entrepreneur

Dr. N. Mahalingam ran an industrial empire. He had promoted over 20 industrial and business conglomerates covering Sugar, Textiles, Automobile Castings, Passenger Transport, Goods Transport, Synthetic Gem, Financial Service, Industrial Alcohol, Soya Products, Milk Products. Over one million have gained opportunities for sustained employment.

Dr. N. Mahalingam had been a source of inspiration for a number of entrepreneurs. Great emphasis is being laid for hands - on training in all the educational programmes of the institutions promoted and nourished by him. A number of graduates passing out of MCET, NGM College, Nachimuthu Polytechnic College, Sakthi institute of technology, Kumaraguru college of Technology, Coimbatore, and Sakthi institute of Information and Management Studies, have emerged as successful entrepreneurs in various sectors, Viz., automobile, transport, finance, textiles, machine tools, manufacturing, electronics, agricultural engineering, civil construction, nursing homes, etc.

The Gounder & Co., nourished by him supply trucks, tractors, lorries to the farmers with financial assistance through banks and as a result, a number of farmers have become transport operators.

Pioneer Industrialist

Sakthi co-operative Industrial Estates

With a view to motivating and helping the people with entrepreneurial spirit, Dr.N.Mahalingam had promoted "Sakthi Co- operative Industrial Estates Ltd.," at Pollachi as early as 1961, one at Mackinampatti near Pollachi and another at Udumalpet. Hundreds of new entrepreneurs emerged successfully and started promoting the projects covering spinning mills, plastic products, foam rubber products pesticides, printed circuit boards, electronic control systems, tricycles, furniture , coir products etc.

A number of units have been awarded "Rajiv Gandhi National Quality award' and "the arch of Europe International Award. Dr.N.Mahalingam had been mainly responsible for the promotion of the Industrial Estates at Kurichi near Coimbatore. Dr.N.Mahalingam had been instrumental in establishing SIDCO Industrial estate at Kurichi near Coimbatore.

Dr. N.Mahalingam established an agro industry viz. sugar factory at Sakthinagar in Erode District after which a transformation took place. Township was well planned, a number of Departmental stores, Matriculation School, Higher Secondary School, Polytechnic college , nursing homes, Multi Specialty Hospital, college of nursing, Kalyana Mandapam (marriage halls) Nationalized Bank Branch, a Sub Post office came into existence after the sugar factory was established.

Dr. N. Mahalingam was indirectly responsible for the rapid growth of the Sugar industry in Tamil Nadu. Therefore he was called "the Sugar King". In order to promote rural areas and give employment to rural people, Dr. N.Mahalingam started the following industrial units.

Sakthi Finance Limited, Sri Sakthi Textiles Limited, SakthiCo- operative Industrial Estate Limited, The Indo- Swiss Synthetic Gem Manufacturing Co. Ltd., ABT Parcel Service Ltd., Sri Chamundeeswari Sugars Ltd., Sri Bhagavathi Textiles Ltd., Sakthi Soft Drinks Ltd., Sakthi Beverages Ltd., The Anamallais Retreading Company, N.Mahalingam and company , Nachimuthu Industrial Association, Sakthi Automobiles, Anamallais Engineering, and Sakthi Coffee Estates.

As an Educationist

Dr. N. Mahalingam was not a man of words. He was a man of action. His universal outlook and his concern for every citizen of the world made him great. Dr. N. Mahalingam founded the Nachimuthu Polytechnic in 1957, in memory of his late father, Sri Nachimuthu Gounder.

Dr. N. Mahalingam had established more than 20 educational institutions covering Colleges of Engineering, Arts and Science College, Management schools, Polytechnics, Schools of Nursing, and Higher Secondary Schools etc., to provide opportunities for skill based quality education for over 20,000 students. In an innovative system introduced at Palani Gounder Higher Secondary School, Pollachi the students have opportunities for hands on training at shop floor for 24 hours in a week in the business establishments in Pollachi. It is only the Palani Gounder Higher Secondary School that has facilitated both studies as well as job opportunities. That is, earn while you learn scheme. The Industries offer opportunities for hands on training with a stipend of Rs. 300 per month which will be sufficient to meet the educational expenses of the student. With such training and work culture, the students who pass out of plus two course are offered employment in industrial establishments viz., TVS Motors, LGB, Premier Industries, Roots, etc. Quality education with hands on training has become the 'Hallmark' in all his institutions.

Dr. N. Mahalingam formed The Mahalingam - Mariammal Manivizha Charitable Trust to serve the down-trodden, destitute women, children and socially neglected people.

Dr. N. Mahalingam was the President of the All India Chess Federation from 1985 to 1989 and Tamil Nadu Chess Association from 1975 to 1984 and 1999 to 2002. It was his desire that traditional games like Kabaddi, Kalari, Skipping and practices like Kollatam, Kummi, Varmakalai, Silambam, Puliattam, and Maankombu-attam, Weight-Lifting, Gittipul, Chess, Jallikkattu, Uriyadi, and Vazhukkumaram be preserved and protected.

Visionary of Inter-Linking of Rivers and Navigation

Dr. N. Mahalingam had been advocating interlinking national rivers to transfer the surplus flood water getting drained into the sea to create irrigation potentials for millions of hectares of dry land. He had also been advocating the introduction of micro irrigation systems viz., sprinkler irrigation, drip irrigation to economise usage of water and improve productivity of the crops.

As early as 1961, Dr. N. Mahalingam had proposed a scheme to make the river Cauvery navigable by deepening the middle portion of the river and providing locks in several places between Tiruchirappalli and Mettur. The transportation of coal to the Thermal Station at Mettur and finished products from the industries could have been cheaper and thousands of enterprises could have sprung up on both sides of the river.

As a Foresight thinker and doer, Dr. N. Mahalingam expressed his views in connection with the following issues:-

Election reforms, incoming of foreign trading companies against retail market, new system of education (samacheer education), conducting elections in a single day, giving freebies to people, necessity of forming river transports, foreign investments, appointing village doctors, solution to traffic congestion, and three language formula.

Dr. N. Mahalingam had been advocating the introduction of ethanol as fuel for automobiles on Brazil lines to bring down the import of petroleum products. Thinking that the country had been spending crores of amount on Petroleum products, Dr. N. Mahalingam had identified that the country had the potentials to produce over 300 billion liters of ethanol which can substitute 180

million tones of petroleum products. Had this scheme been implemented, the rural sector would have got more than Rs. 3,00,000 crores as wages for agricultural labour.

Had the dreams and suggestions of Dr. N. Mahalingam been fulfilled, poverty in India would have been eliminated and India would have become a powerful country in the world.

The three periodicals run by Dr. N. Mahalingam, *Seithi Madal*, *Om Sakthi* in Tamil and *Kisan World* in English created awareness among the agriculturists about high yielding varieties, modernizing their farms, marketing techniques etc. *Kisan World* is a magazine devoted to agriculture, agro- industries, culture and rural development. Its contributors are people of eminence in their fields of study. It is a valuable source of information to farmers as well as to the public with its emphasis on interviews, signed articles, expert opinions and information on agricultural techniques and technology.

As a true Gandhian, Dr. N. Mahalingam brought out 20 volumes of Mahatma Gandhi's works in Tamil which was his landmark achievement.

Dr. N. Mahalingam had sponsored many publications in a variety of fields to promote research and scholarship the first sponsored publication was *Biography of Arutprakasa Vallalar* in 1960 which was authored by Ooran Adigalar

The English book authored by Dr. N. Mahalingam was "Some Thoughts on Sugar Industry". Dr. N. Mahalingam was the first person to show that it is possible to grow sugar cane for eleven months a year and factories could be made to function all round the year. "Maladies and Remedies" was published in the year 1978 and it deals with economic maladies and remedies.

Saviour of Culture and Heritage

As a general Editor, Dr. N. Mahalingam's first book was "Gems from Pre - Historic Past" brought out in 1981 and it was released at the Sixth World Tamil Conference held at Madurai. Dr. N. Mahalingam was a great devotee of Arutprakasha Sri Ramalinga Vallalar and a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. According to Swami Vethathiri Maharishi "Dr. N. Mahalingam was a staunch religious man, yet he is not attached to any particular sect". The Temple of Consciousness which came up in the year 1991 at Aliyar, Pollachi, stands as a historical witness to his spiritual character. He donated a vast area of land of 11 acres, a few lakhs of money and all his engineering skill for the construction of the Temple of Consciousness where Kundalini Yoga is taught to the spiritual aspirants.

Dr. N. Mahalingam will be remembered forever for his monumental efforts in getting renovated a famous historic temple - The Sangameswarar Shrine and Ari Adikesava Perumal Temple at Bhavani in Erode District.

Dr. N. Mahalingam's contribution to the modern Tamil literature by his own writings and his concern to popularize the ancient Tamil classical on the International level earned him a unique place in the history of Tamil Nadu. Dr. N. Mahalingam had about fifty books and had contributed a number of articles in the field of philosophy, history, education, Tamil literature and industries. He made efforts to translate *Thirukkural* into English, Hindi. By his efforts, the Tamil ancient classic *Thirumandiram* of Thirumoolar was translated into Hindi and was released in 1998. By his efforts, *Periapuranam* of Saiva Siddhantha was translated in other languages. Dr. N. Mahalingam was an editor to a series of books on Rigvedic Studies. Dr. N. Mahalingam had been organizing several meets to popularize Dhevaram a Saivite literature which is full of devotional poems and *Dhivya Prabandham*, a Vaishnavite literature among the public, for which he was awarded "Ramanujar Award"

What the ancient kings and nobles did for the spread of the Thevaram and Prabhandam, Dr. N. Mahalingam did for the propagation of Thiruarupa, Thevaram and Thirumandram. How much he did for the spread of Gandhian thoughts and life and message of Saint Ramalinga Vallalar is legend.

Dr. N. Mahalingam had been decorated with the prestigious " Padma Bhushan" award by the Government of India during the Republic Day Celebrations in 2007 and this is in recognition of his outstanding contributions in the fields of industry, education, Tamil Literature, study of ancient history, propagation of Gandhian ideals, Politics and service to humanity. .

Conclusion

The deep knowledge earned by him in respect of astronomy, ancient glory of Kanyakumari inspired him to establish the International society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilizations for which he was the President

He was the founder cum World President of International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilization, with headquarters at California, USA. He was also founder member of the Institute of Asian Studies functioning at Chemmanancheri, Chennai.

Having interest in pre-historic studies and archaeology, Dr. N. Mahalingam conducted a study on Pallava, Chola, and Pandya cultures. and he was closely associated with Tamil Varalattu Kazhagam.

"I want to be remembered as an industrialist and a builder of institutions, someone who loves those around him and a worshipper of Jothi. All throughout my life I have aspired for peace and social justice for everyone, I know God will answer my prayers"

-Arutchelvar Dr.N.Mahalingam

Recognition & Awards

- Padma Bhushan, The third highest Civilian Award, Government of India.
- Honorary Consul, Government of Mauritius.
- Indira Gandhi National Integration Award All India National Unity Conference.
- Doctor of Science, Anna University, Madras.
- Doctor of Laws, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.
- Doctor of Science, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai.
- Doctor of Science, TamilNadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore.
- Arutchelvar, Sri Kirupananda Variyar Swamigal.
- Aram Valarkkum Annal, His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakodi Peedam.
- Gnanadhana Vallal, Sri Sundara Swamigal of Kowmara Madam, Coimbatore

It is a great coincidence that Dr. N. Mahalingam being a devotee of Vallalar, and a true Gandhian mingled with 'Jothi' and reached Heavenly Abode while attending 'Gandhi Vallalar Vizha' function on 'Gandhi Jayanthi day' on 2nd oct. 2014.

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