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Deciphering Media Text on Jallikattu Movement: A Critical Discourse

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Abstract. This study employs the critical discourse analysis to analyse the various media texts of the Jallikattu movement during 2017. In this discourse, the authors attempt to identify the mechanics of deconstructing a media text in the context of a social movement like Jallikattu. Further, a socio- political and cultural context is traced to bring about the nuances of the discourse pattern in defence of the social context of the Jallikattu movement. The analysis was made with the basic premises connected to the cultural context. More specifically, religion, social and political. The findings suggest that any contemporary movement does not happen in isolation and the present study found that socio-political organisational intervention was there throughout the course of events. Overall, 'Jallikattu' movement is an historical example of a contemporary social movement that rejuvenated the Indian (Tamil) pride for their culture and heritage.

Keywords. *Jallikattu movement, discourse analysis, social movement, cultural identity, media text*

Introduction

The 'Jallikattu' ritual of the Tamils has created a wide debate in recent times especially with reference to its ban in 2014 and revocation in 2017. The episode has been the focal point of sharp contradictions in conceptualisations of socio-political theory and practice. Many major issues have been subjected to historical contextualisation and relevance. The protection of animals, organising performance with animals, the banning of certain performances, the religio-cultural and agrarian backdrop, elite and popular cultures, the globalisation prerogatives, the political movements and their scope, social media intervention and conscientisation have been some of the major issues debated in all the media. In this context, all the reports, discussions, narratives, write-ups, visuals, government orders, court rulings, online communications, interviews and cited documents have to be treated as the texts of discourse and deciphered of their real meaning.

The various crucial aspects of this critique have to be critically understood before studying the phenomenon like the 'Jallikattu'. Barbero ¹ has observed in *Communication, Culture and Hegemony* that "placing the terms of a debate in historical context is a way to approach the conflicts and struggles running through most discourses and objects".

Delegitimising the Tamil cause

The 'Jallikattu' debate has raised a serious discussion mostly degrading the Tamils as if they entertained a barbaric cultural practice devoid of human values and that the enlightened people and the celebrities were destined to set things right. Certain concepts put forth in the debate seem to distort the historic culture and civilisation of the Tamils and teach them the

basics of human interactional principles towards men and animals. One has to resist to accept this misconceived identity directed at oneself by the self-styled social activists and intelligentsia. Presenting the counter has become vital.

Long before the 'Jallikattu' movement could bring to focus the social contradictions and the dialectic between the popular and elite conceptualisations, certain episodes in literary or puranic Tamil history of the classical part and early medieval periods respectively ventilated the varying social discourses and conceptual vantage points in striking comparison. The first was the Nakkrian episode. Nakkiran ² was the chief of the assembly of poets at Madurai Tamil Sangam. He objected to an unscientific or irrational conception in a poem presented by Iraiyanar who was Lord Siva himself.

Irritated by the objection, Lord Siva showed him the third eye, the fault was a fault. Infuriated Lord Siva then asked whether a person who cut the shell with a 'Kir... Kir' sound for making bangles was competent to find fault with his composition. Nakkiran firmly retorted that it was true that he cut the shells because he had a 'kula' or clan behind him, while Lord Shankara had no kula or kith and kin. Also, he would work and earn his food unlike Lord Shankara who lived by begging for alms. The single piece of Puranic discourse could thus expose the dialectic between social status, cultural fete, occupational pattern and ideological orientation. It bore evidence to the fact that when arguments failed, the polimic was continued otherwise with contempt or violence or both.

Manimegalai ³, the Buddhist Tamil epic of the third century A.D. has depicted the plight of Saali and her son. Saali was subjected to sexual violence during the galore of the Indra festival by a sky traveller and she had to give birth to a child. The child was left at a bush and it was milked and brought up by a cow. Saali's son was named 'Aaputhiran' or son of a cow by the superior orthodoxy of the village in contempt. As a young boy he could not tolerate cows being prepared for killing at the 'Yaagna' and hence he allowed them to flee.

He was caught red handed, beaten and ridiculed as the son of the cow engaged in rescuing a cow and blamed that he, being the son of Saali, could not have done anything better. Aaputhiran asked them in anger what was the fault with Saali. He then listed the totemic origins of Rishis and justified his name. The epic has raised the voice of the voiceless against the cultural degradation being perpetrated on persons and animals against their differing cultural traits. It was the case of cultural hegemony of the dominant culture degrading the deviants. The 'Pathu Paattu' ⁴ or ten lyrics of the Sangam classics encapsulates five 'Aarrupadai' genre poems which guided the wayfarers to the place of the chieftain's enjoying the hospitality of the ordinary people of different ecotypes on the way. The Saivite devotees, depicted in Periya Puraanam ⁵, were mostly poor but did not fail in their duty to feed the guests. One devotee is said to have rushed to the field in the rain and collected the seeds sown during daytime back home for preparing food for the guest. The value system of the ordinary people was not mean after all; it was human and humane.

Kamban's Ramayana ⁶ bears another significant episode. Guha the ferryman of the Ganga River came to see Rama with all love and offerings of cooked fish and flesh, besides honey and millet flour. Rama could understand his unassailable love for him and the gift he brought in was anathema to his 'yrata'; yet he was not angry.

He told smilingly that whatever Guha had brought with love and affection was 'precious' and was superior to the 'Amudha' of the Devas and was 'Sacred' or 'Pavithra'. They were to be taken as accepted and eaten. Rama accepted Guha as his fifth brother. Sugriva became the Sixth and Vibhishana the Seventh, all transcending caste and creed. Kamban's message was the need for politics against the backdrop of various degrees of detribalisation at work. Accommodating the cultures of the people of all sorts. Rama made them all the co-rulers there by making it clear that equality in brotherhood must be preceded by sharing of political power. Long before Ambedkar ⁷, Kamban had focused on the unity of equality of opportunity with that of power and status.

Civilising mission for whom?

The Tamils have had a very ancient civilisation and their language, Tamizh, inheriting more than two thousand and five hundred years of literary and grammatical tradition has, befittingly been accorded the status of 'Chemmozhi' or classical language. Most of the classical languages of the world have ceased to be spoken languages or have metamorphosed over the years changing their basic nature beyond comprehension. Tamil has the unique privilege of being a living language preserving its basic structure through the literary and grammatical tradition. Even among the sister languages of the Dravidian family, Tamil has been found to have preserved most of the Proto-Dravidian characteristics.

The cultural heritage of the Tamil transcends thousands of years before the dawn of the Christian era. The cultural autonomy and sovereignty of the land has been accorded recognition in the Valmiki Ramayana ⁸ and Asokan edicts ⁹. The Indus civilisation bears attestation to ancient Tamil culture and the end of the Harappan (Ariyam) civilisation has been cited as caution in PuraNanuru, a Sangam Classical work, The Rig Veda ¹⁰ bears Tamil words. In all Probability, Sanskrit modelled its alphabet system along that of Tamils. The Tamils had close ties with Roman Empire, Jews and Arabs.

In the East, they had intimate contacts with almost all the Islands and countries like China. In many islands the Tamil settlers constituted a significant proportion of the population even during the contemporary times. The famous travellers of the ancient times had recorded the cultural fete of the Tamils.

The age-old culture and civilisation of the Tamils have been humane and human from time immemorial. They lived 'in' Nature and 'not with it'. They had brilliantly used land, water and climate to form the ethnic eco-types – 'Kurinji' the hill country, 'Mullai' the forest land, 'Marudham' the agricultural land, 'Neythal' the sea-shore land and 'Paalai' the dry land.

They could develop an aesthetic system, whereby each eco type formed the backdrop against a particular emotive theme of literary expression, the resultant genre being called 'Tinai'. They could transcend the physical barriers and arrive at the ideological synthesis that 'all places are one and the same and all are kith and kin' and "wherever the people are good, Land! You are good there!" The Tamils had classified all living organisms into six categories based on sense perception. Man was supreme but only when he could be identified as human, the historical fact was that the Tamils did not merely recognise the right of animals to live but lived with them in oneness as fellow citizens of Nature.

The ongoing Keezhadi ¹¹ excavations would soon reveal to the whole world the existence of the most ancient urban settlement in TamilNadu. To use the term 'barbaric' for any activity of Tamils would only smack of racial arrogance gone mad.

The Tamil culture and civilisation are and have been peasant based. The ancient Tamils believed that the chariot of worldly life could roll with the peasant cultivator as the bolt in the axis. The world might rotate but behind the plough of the cultivator. The indigenous festival of the Tamils, 'Tai Pongal', at times referred to as the harvest festival, to clear it off the religious link purposely, has been a judicious mix of men, cattle and solar energy. Thirst of the cattle and hunger of the mother were, for the Tamils, the intolerable and horrendous episodes of life. Jainism and Buddhism could take deep roots in the Tamil land owing to their theories of 'ahimsa' and 'jiva kaarunya' and they turned into hegemonic religions for more than three hundred years during the 'Kalabhra Interregnum' (A.D. 250-575) ¹². Later on, the Saivite-Vaishnavite Bhakti movement could consolidate their predominance only by assimilating these two concepts under 'Dhasa Marga' ¹⁸ of the tenet of service. Thiruvalluvar ¹³, the author of the Tamil ethical Thirukkural, has stated that all the world would venerate with folded hands those who avoided eating beef.

Equally venerable for Thiruvalluvar was the non-killing of these animals. Love and valour were only the cherished ideals of the ancient Tamils. A hill leader, Paari ¹⁴ was said to have left his royal chariot for a 'mullai' (jasmine like) plant and another chieftain, Pagan ¹⁵, was known to have donated his shawl to a peacock shivering in cold. The Chola King Manu ¹⁶ rolled his chariot over his own son as punishment for the act of crushing a calf under the wheels of the royal chariot. Mrs. Menaka Gandhi ¹⁷ called the 'Jallikattu; day as the day of violence and killing and stated that 'Everyone in India looks down upon it - as civilised people should'. Shyam Krishna Kumar ¹⁸ of Vision India Foundation aptly retorted that her statement typified a cosmopolitan elitism that considered itself to be modern and progressive and rural India to be backward and barbaric in need of being saved.

His final remarks were highly significant: 'There is little effort taken to understand and sincerely convey their lives and world views, there is merely the civilising mission to be force-led to everyone, for their own good of course'. From the above, one would be able to affirm with certainty that none shall have the right to brand any part or facet of Tamil culture

as barbaric or backward or sadistic and embark on a self-styled civilising mission, be it in the street or court. That would not only endanger our federal polity but invade on the cultural heritage of a people with ulterior motives. The colonisers tactic of the colonial British rulers is being restaged by the cultural colonisers in India. The Tamils have had a holistic culture. They have been practicing what they said and believed and had no hypocrisy at all. Their cultural heritage would not allow them to behave like the schizophrenics and pseudo moralists of the fragmented westernised culture of the neo-colonial epoch. As Max Weber ¹⁹ put it “Scientists without spirit and sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has achieved a civilisation never before achieved” in human history. This nullification of the West could attain a material force-like form beyond their shores with a view to aping the underdeveloped people of the world. Following Antonio Gramsci ²⁰, one could affirm that the “monkey people make news, not history”.

With this historical backdrop the text in Jallikattu discourse has to be deciphered using discourse analysis of the explicitly expressed and certain deepening frames.

Deciphering the texts: Certain basic premises

1. *Text as discourse:* People at the periphery

The documents concerning the problem of jallikattu in all their varied forms including court affidavits, judgments, press releases, media coverages, social media communications, research papers and works and reviews have to be studied with a view to deciphering the texts and enabling the necessary critique. Nothing is a monologue.

The works of Foucault ²¹ and Edward Said ²² have inaugurated a broad field of study. People often miss to perceive the fact that any published matter is a dialogue or discourse interacting with the contemporaries. Following Paulo Freire ²³, one could understand that the casual utterance regarding ‘the people at the periphery’ has not been so casual after all. It is not a mere statement of fact or news but implies the movement from the centre to the periphery, the action of an agent driving them so and his motive; the critique must contribute to reinforcing them at the centre again which would mean the cultural action for freedom or emancipation. It is quite explicit that any text states something and deciphering it involves the critical re-construction of what is not stated from what is stated.

This implies the entry into the domain of semantics from that of the syntactic, from problematic to the thematic.

2. *Universal vs. native*

The problem concerning the universal vs native conceptualisations must be raised in deciphering a text. The intelligentsia belonging to the cooperative sector, for example, cling to the definition of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) regarding the principles and functions and view the supply of subsidised essential commodities and rationed articles as

alien or anathema to the ideals of ICA. They also lament the violation of cooperative democracy through the delay in or non-conduct of the elections. But for the rural masses and urban poor the functions of the Cooperatives must cover their needs. The people perturbed by the fraudulent politicians holding power at the cooperatives through elections are least bothered about the non-conduct of elections.

For them, the Special Officer administration is welcome, not the ICA definition or Cooperative democracy. The western definition of Renaissance or reformation might undermine the native conscientisation as fundamentalist or reactionary but what is needed is the decipherment of the native texts with the idioms and usage of their own communication system. The universal and native are not non-polar after all and each has its own design as opposed to the other. Missing this would lead to delusion or obfuscation.

3. *Alien and native cultural traits*

The problem of confrontation between the alien and native cultural traits causes difficulties in deciphering the Texts either by one side or both. The fastness of life of the contemporary society leads to hasty generalisations. Even in a multi-nationality, multi-linguistics and multi-religio cultural country like India, understanding is weak in cultural and sociological terms. The variants of a phenomenon are not properly understood, and opposition based mistaken identity often leads to misdirected attack. Many people, for example, do not understand that 'Jallikattu' and bull fight are qualitatively different, the former yielding only the warmth of embracing while the latter providing sadistic pleasure. By coupling both, it becomes easier to name the former and shoot it. The same is the plight of 'Jallikattu' in its comparison with the Roman gladiator sport. At the same time 'Jallikattu' has its own variants negating which the former would become the trait of a few people alone.

4. *Vantage point*

The vantage point from which an argument is put for the counts in deciphering texts. The vantage point is one which attempts to shape a discourse in its own image. The vantage points are the rural-urban disconnect, intelligentsia-popular culture disconnect, elite politics- mass culture disconnect, commerce-popular life stream disconnect and global dependence – native need disconnect. Even the social media dispensations are not devoid of a vantage point though they appear to be apolitical and disorderly. Here, the repetitive stress might serve as the key. In this context, depoliticisation, organised movement disconnect, is also a vantage point to reckon with. Yet another vantage point arises wherein environmentalism and humanity collide with each other as if in a polarity.

5. *Words and their context*

Words or terms are not mere lexical registers. They connote different meanings under different circumstances, human interactions and communication systems. Struggle for justice becomes anarchy for the powers that be, socio- linguistics comes to one's rescue in making it clear that the usages convey meanings in accordance with the purpose of the communicator. One should also reconsider Mao's dictum²⁴ that behind every word, there is a class. The term 'sport' itself has been no exception. A duel between two swordsmen would appear to be a sport for an American PETA man even though it resulted in the killing of one by the other, but at the same time harmless bull taming event will be made to be believed as animal torture. A chariot race of ancient Rome would be presented as a sport of grandeur, but the Indians are made to believe that the bullock cart or Rekla race is cruel.

The purpose of deciphering Texts must, therefore, be to unmask the native idiom from all the aliens and make it encapsulate it, failing which the native themselves would view it with a blurred vision. Contextualisation becomes a sine qua non for deciphering the real meaning of an attributed meaning.

6. *Elitist culture vis-à-vis popular culture*

The elitist approach belongs to a class outlook in studying a performance. It seems as though a ticketed performance is a gentlemanly sport and that ticketless popular participation performance is a crude and sadistic display of mad psyche. We are also made to believe that joy of an elite performance is a cultural fete of humanity, whereas the 'mean or low pleasure' of popular performance is anathema to human cultural progress. One wonders why the performance for a wider audience and that too for no cost should be considered lower in quality compared to that of the chosen audience. Does it run parallel to the denial of mass education under the premise that quality deteriorates with quantity.

Is it not because the people are held contemptuous by these great people? What one fails to understand is the fact that the philosophy of pleasure is only the world outlook of the pleasure-privileged social classes and not that of the toiling masses. The dichotomy between elite religion granting divine pleasure and folk religion providing only the small or low pleasure in terms of salvation runs parallel to that between elite performances being ethical and folk or rural performance being unethical.

7. *Culture and hegemony*

The culture of a people is not a trivia as to be disposed of quite casually or verbally. A nationality and its culture are inseparable. When the nationality has a culture tested by time and enriched by historical process and language, uniquely glorious of its heritage, the infringement into the cultural sphere has to face the challenge to the multi-nationality peaceful coexistence itself. To say that any cultural aspect of a people contradicting

contemporary law is void only tantamount to the hushing up of a serious lacuna in the federal context. It would also mean the historical anachronism in judicial dispensation. The status of a nationality in a federal polity which is characterised by uneven economic development and consequent disproportional sharing of political power must also be raised in deciphering a Text. This extra syntactic connotation is crucial in comprehending the plight of a people in their struggle against the inimical tirades confronting their cultural life being unleashed by the powers that be at the helm of affairs in federal polity as part of their attempts to hegemonic ascendancy over the marginalised and peripheralised people. Defending the cultural invasion, therefore, transcends the cultural sphere and enters into that wherein the economic and political dominations of the hegemonists is challenged. This defence is labeled as anti-nationalism by the hegemonists, as it was the case at Marina ²⁵.

8. Religion, culture and production

The inseparable link between religion and cult practices and belief systems as well as production processes have to be addressed with a holistic perspective in deciphering texts. Unfortunately, the elite conceptualisation process misses this crucial aspect and suffers a kind of judicial blindness. For the Europeans who follow an allegedly revealed religion, the concerned book and baptisms might suffice for religious pursuits and redemption. Their cultural aspects remain institutionalised with uniformity of scriptural authority.

However, the religion in India is a human system or the compendium of the searches, conceptualisations, 'tarka' or logic, sects, tenets, forms of worship, adherence to or opposition to institutionalisation, temple and idol worship and heretic traits, folk deities, festivals, rituals, 'vratas', cult practices and belief system of magic, Astrology, palmistry, Sasthras, Puranas, doctrinaires, signs and symbols, 'Tantrism' and yogic practices.

The state of human development has had an inevitable parallel in religious development. D.P. Chattopadhyaya ²⁶ in Lokayata has traced the historical link between agricultural practices and religious observances, perceptions and rituals. Urbanisation and cosmopolitanisation have contributed significantly to obfuscating the realities of a peasant religion and prevailing upon the psyche of the intelligentsia to narrow down their perception of religious right to adhere to and follow a religion. Metaphysical perception has severed religion from all its dialectical earthly empirical links. However, the uncomprehend fact remains that in peasant religion, every act of the agricultural operation remains associated with a ritualistic religious cult practice. The agricultural religious practice begins with the invocation to Ganapathy ²⁷ with a view to giving him farewell as male god prior to ploughing operations, it proceeds with the worship of the Goddess Gowry ²⁸ during early cultivation, then prayer to Krishna²⁹ for the rains during crop raising and ends up with cheering of cattle and worship of the Sun God after harvest; the cycle then is repeated to hush up 'Jallikattu'

with the causal assertion that the reference to the harvest has nothing to do with agriculture would only smack of distorted vision.

9. *Constitution vis-à-vis people*

In Studying a text, the exponents often get caught in the vicious circle of the supremacy of the law or people. While dealing with nineteenth century European thought process, G Palkhanov³⁰ in a Monist view of History has pointed out that if one clung to one pole of the polarity, the pendulum always would swing to its opposite; the people give unto themselves the Constitution, the Constitution then begins to regulate life with change in the life of people, the contradiction between a constitutional provision and popular need comes to the fore, this is resolved by amending the Constitutional provision to suit mass aspirations, the amended version becomes the law and process goes on. Hence the argument of violation of law has to be countered from the angle of dialectical interaction between law and the people.

10. *The peasant differentiation spectrum*

The paradox regarding a performance has been that a popular performance is not popular owned and conducted in contemporary times. The peasant differentiation spectrum necessarily makes the intervention with the three sectors of a) sponsors; b) owners; c) the participants. During ancient times the owners and participants in 'Jallikattu' were tied up in a mutual dependence system; the commercialised contemporary scenario has brought in the sector of sponsors. Those who finance the breeding of cattle, lend money for the conduct of agriculture and organise the sport constitute the strata of sponsors. For the peasants at large, 'Jallikattu' is a ritualistic performance related to their unalienable right, agricultural prospects, and religious faith. The defence of 'Jallikattu', however, has to be studied against the backdrop of interaction between all the three sectors, besides the government, the designs of the so-called defenders of animal protection, the ideological interventions of popular culture theorists and the strategies of politicians.

11. *Apolitical, subaltern and spontaneity theorists: A critique*

The debate regarding the apolitical nature of the pro-jallikattu movement, the no-entry board placed before the politicians and the final blame on their illegitimate entry has been going on. The basic question to be raised in this context has been whether any phenomenon could be non-political or apolitical at all. When it is common knowledge that politics is the cumulative expression of a polity being governed by a State. The answer shall have to be in the negative. If so, the why of the stance comes to focus.

Like the stream of consciousness made in novel theory, the subaltern consciousness theory prevails in sociology. That the peasants react to inimical situations with a subaltern consciousness of their being and react in their traditional way does not tally with the

modern methods of 'Satyagraha' and mass mobilisation techniques adopted for the movement; at the same time, the identification of the immediate enemy, PETA, for attack would smack of Subalternism. A Subaltern movement would be a thing-in-itself and it would have no place for the entry of aliens, the clever tactic of allowing the youth from all over the State into the movement would reveal the conscious component of organisation of the movement. The filtered entry of the celebrities also bears evidence against defining the movement as Subaltern. Any correct definition shall have to accommodate all these contradictory aspects into a dialectical totality or wholeness. Spontaneity is left to explain the state of affairs. Antonio Gramsci has been the reputed authority to explain spontaneity in social action. For Gramsci "pure spontaneity does not exist in history; it must be the same thing as pure mechanistic. In the most spontaneous moment, it is simply the case that the elements of conscious leadership cannot be checked, these have not achieved any consciousness of the class for itself. The fact that every spontaneous movement contains rudimentary elements of conscious leadership, of discipline, is indirectly demonstrated by the fact that there exist tendencies and groups who extol spontaneity as method. They are formed through everyday experience illuminated by common sense, i.e., by the traditional popular conception of the world". All the contradictions discussed above remain answered. The apolitical stance is part of the traditional way of not antagonising anybody in getting the issue clinched. The peasant nativity thus operated on the one hand. On the other hand, the shrewdness of accommodating others worked to avoid the setback due to neglect. As Gramsci has stated, spontaneity is extolled as a method and the various tactics are formed through everyday experience illuminated by common sense.

Conclusion

It can be affirmed that any contemporary movement does not happen in isolation, mere originary theory will not suffice to explain the course of events. The socio-political organisational intervention cannot be ruled out. The question to be answered is whether the movement could accommodate, or succumb to, the forces of intervention. In this direction the "Jallikattu" movement is an historical example of a contemporary social movement that rejuvenated the Indian (Tamil) pride for their culture and heritage.

Besides, the Jallikattu movement exhibits the power of Social Media as a platform of convergence of opinions shaping an online expression into an offline Social Movement.

In the process of mobilisation, the democratic civil society demonstrated the power of peoples will in bringing about the desired social policy in upholding the social and cultural heritage and pride. An empirical investigation of the Social Movement may add more meaningful insights in understanding Social Movements.

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Notes

- 1Barbero, Jesús Martín-Barbero is a Spanish scholar who contributed immensely towards understanding culture and media. His works in Spanish were translated into other languages. His principle approach towards communication as a mediated tool in the reception process and what people do with communication shifted the understanding of the communication process.
- 2Nakeerar, The sangam Tamil poet, Nakkīraṇār, or Nakkiranar, resonates with his contributions to the Pathupaaṭu anthology, titled Tirumurukarrupadai. He was considered the head of sangam era and was associated with Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam and sangam collection Nedunelvadai.
- 3Manimekalai, is the daughter of the classical character Madhavi in the Tamil epic, Silappadikaran written by Elangovadigal. Besides, Seethalaisathanaar wrote an epic of Manimekalai which is considered as one of the Five Greatest Epics of Tamil literatures. It is a great resource to understand the life and culture of Tamil society in the early centuries.
- 4Pathupaaṭu is an anthology of poems in the Sangam literature with ten longer stances. It is said to be the earliest known Tamil literature which includes the acclaimed Nakkirar's Tirumurukarrupadai.
- 5Periya Puraanam, The Periya Puranam also called as Tiru-Thondar-Puranam, is a collection of lives and works of the sixty-three saivist sevants called Nayanars. This work was compiled by renowned 12th century Tamil poet, Sekkizhar.

- 6Kamban's Ramayana, Kambar is the author of Ramavatharam known as Kambaramayanam, Tamil version of the great Indian epic Ramayana. This work is one of the finest in Tamil literature. His works earned him the title "Kavichakaravathy" (King of Poets) and much appreciated axiom that "கம்பன் வீட்டு கட்டுத் தறியும் கவி பாடும்" (Even Kamban's household cot can compose poems)
- 7Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14 April 1891 – 6 December 1956), also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, is one of the architects of the Indian Constitution and a well-known social reformer who worked untiredly for the upliftment of under privileged communities in India. Throughout his life he fought against social discrimination and untouchability. Ambedkar was a renowned scholar with doctorates from the London school of economics and Columbia University.
- 8Vaalmiki Ramayana, Ramayana is the one of the greatest epics of ancient India, the other being the Mahabharata and it is attributed to Saint Valmiki who scripted the life and struggles of Kosala prince, Rama. This work even today inspires millions to live the life like Rama with all values and virtues.
- 9Asokan edicts, The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty stone inscriptions attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire. Ashoka who became the follower of Buddha spread Buddhism through his edicts which moral values such as good deeds, loving and respecting others, generosity and purity of thoughts.
- 10Rig Veda, The Rigveda is a part of the four vedic tradition in Sanskrit.
- 11Keezhadi is a village in the border districts of Madurai and Sivagangai in Tamilnadu. The recently carried out excavations in this site has brought out a Sangam era settlement dated to the 6th century BCE.
- 12'Kalabhra Interregnum' (A.D. 250- 575), Less is documented about the transition from the Sangam age to that of Pandyas and the Pallavas. The Kalabhras dynasty, who are originally the Tamil border soldiers who guarded the territories displaced the then existing kingdoms and ruled for around three centuries. They were later replaced by the Pallavas and the Pandyas in the sixth century AD.
- 13Thiruvalluvar, the author of Thirukkural, reading of Ethics, Politics, Economics and the contemporary life including love in couplets. This is admired and cherished worldwide as a source for governance and deliverance.
- 14Paari is a Tamil king who ruled Parambunadu during the Sangam era. He was considered a benevolent king who patronaged Arts & Literature.
- 15Pegan was a Tamil Velir king and one of the kadai ezhu vallal of Arts and Literature during the Sangam era. He ruled over the area around Palani hills.
- 16Chola King Manu belongs to the Tamil Chola dynasty, also addressed as "Manu Needhi Cholan", who upon capturing the throne became king of the Anuradhapura Kingdom, in present-day Sri Lanka.
- 17Smt. Maneka Gandhi (also spelled Menaka) is an Indian politician and a member of the Lok Sabha. She belongs to Bharatiya Janata Party. She also has keen interest in protection of animal rights. Smt. Maneka said "Customs that are retrograde and cause unnecessary cruelty to humans and animals must be avoided. There is no justification for so many poor people and animals getting injured and dying every year during events such as Jallikattu," (2017)

- 18 Shyam Krishna Kumar is a Research Associate with Vision India Foundation and a member of Anaadi Foundation. His work focuses on civilizational studies with a special emphasis on how Indian cultural traditions influence the socio-economic fabric of the country.
- 19 Max Weber, Maximilian Karl Emil Weber is considered one of the most important modern theoreticians along with Émile Durkheim and Karl Marx. His works influence the study of social action and laid the philosophical foundations understanding human dynamics.
- 20 Antonio Gramsci, Antonio Francesco Gramsci, an Italian socialist philosopher inspired generations of researchers and theoreticians with his unorthodox critical political philosophies. He was a founding member of Italian communist party and his prison notes is considered a legendary work in the socialist and critical world.
- 21 Michel Foucault, Paul-Michel Foucault, the French philosopher is known for his outstanding contributions towards sociology and critical theories. His readings of poststructuralist and postmodernism though discarded by him are considered pathbreaking in understanding knowledge dynamics that pervaded the corridors of power and controls that it exerted on social institutions. He greatly inspired scholars from various disciplines such as communication studies, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, literary theory, feminism, and critical theory.
- 22 Edward Said was a Columbia University professor in literature. He pioneered the works on postcolonial studies. A well-known intellectual whose Magnus Opum “Orientalism” published in 1978 influenced scholars of the 20th century in the academic pursuits.
- 23 Paulo reglus neves Freire is known for his influential work, Pedagogy of the oppressed, which is the foundational text of the critical pedagogy movement.
- 24 Mao Zedong also known as Chairman Mao, was a Chinese communist revolutionary, who became the founding father of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which he ruled as the chairman of the Communist Party of China from its establishment in 1949 until his death in 1976. Ideologically, a Marxist–Leninist, his theories, military strategies, and political policies are collectively known as Maoism.
- 25 Marina Beach located in Chennai, Tamilandu is the longest natural urban beach in the India. The historical “Jallikattu movement” converged on Shores of Marina at the end of 2017.
- 26 Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya, a Padma Bhushan awardee is known for his work Lokayata: A Study in ancient Indian Materialism. A socialist who interpreted the ancient Indian philosophy with a Marxist connotation, worked enormously on the science and scientific methods in ancient India. He is one of the architects of science movements in India.
- 27 Ganapathy, Ganesha or Ganapati is the Hindu god of knowledge.
- 28 Gowry, Goddess Gauri is one of the manifestations of Goddess Parvati.
- 29 Krishna, is considered as the eighth avatar of the Lord Vishnu. Krishna is also the narrator of Bhagavad Gita.
- 30 Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov, a Russian philosopher and a Marxist theoretician. He was a founder of the social-democratic movement and his famous work is ‘The Development of the Monist View of History (1895)’.