

Vol 5 Issue 6 July 2015

ISSN No : 2230-7850

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International Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal

*Indian Streams  
Research Journal*

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## Welcome to ISRJ

**RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595**

**ISSN No.2230-7850**

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## POSUMPON THEVAR ACHIEVEMENT OF CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT



P. Ganesan

### INTRODUCTION

The British administration in India witnessed the introduction and implementation of stringent measures against those nations which opposed their rule. Whenever they found any anti British activities, they took measures to suppress them for safeguarding their power in India. Accordingly the British suppressed the Poligari instructions ending with Kattabomman(1799). South Indian Rebellion (1800-1801). Vellore Mutiny (1806). Travancore Rebellion (1809). Sepoy Mutiny (1857) so on. Though, the British army had dealt the rebellions with Iron hand they could not put an end to the aspirations of the people.<sup>3</sup> Among the measures of the Government the Criminal Tribes Act as

### ABSTRACT

*India's long freedom struggle spread over centuries, had to pass through various critical stages, before nation won freedom, each patriot contributed to the best of his capacity and spared neither energy nor wisdom to see the mother land free. A grateful nation-india as she is shall ever been in the memory of those who sacrificed their comforts and laid their lives for the noble cause of liberating mother India from a foreign yoke. People belonging to different shades and political ideologies contributed much in their great struggle in an attempt to portray it an image of an united and politically advanced India.<sup>1</sup> Modern India political philosophy covers a very vast field. Most of our freedom fighters were not political philosophers but tried to mould their ideas. There, were liberals, the moderates and the extremists who gave their political ideas during their struggle against British imperialism. Then, were the literacy giants, and the spiritualizer who directly or indirectly expounded some political ideas to prepare the nation for the struggle. And then came the non – violent freedom fighters and believers in the existing India political philosophy.<sup>2</sup>*

**KEYWORDS** :Posumpon Thevar Achievement , Criminal Tribes Act , Modern India political philosophy.

### Short Profile

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1871 came to occupy a predo- minant role in bringing down anti British activities. This, act was introduced with the object of controlling the activities of individual offenders. On the recommendations of Mr. Loveluck the District Superintend of Police Officer to wean the Kallars from their lawless habits and Criminal Propensities. It was believed that the Kallars were then as communities were living on the crimes most of the crimes in the district were believed to have been committed by them. They ,stole cattle and returned them to their owners t h r o u g h intermediaries, on payment of half of their value called Tuppucoolie and levied fees for Kaval.<sup>4</sup> In the

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Madras Presidency, the Piramalai Kallars, Maravas, Ahamudayars and Koravars raised the banner of revolt against the British during the 19th century. In order to bring these sects of people under the Central Government and Madras Government implemented the Denotified Tribes Act, which created untold miseries and hard ships to these peoples. The commission declared that the Police should have more powers of control over the Criminal Tribes with this object in view. It recommended certain amendments to the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.<sup>5</sup> The Criminal Tribes Act had its origin in the report of the Indian Police Commission of 1902 - 1903. The Commission laid down the Principle that it should be the aim of every police station to obtain knowledge and secret supervision over all the persons addicted to crime to control this cattle breeding system (1909) was introduced but it was found in unsuccessful. One of the ugly overtones of imperialism was its inhuman approach to the subject races, which manifested in such the Criminal Tribes Act. In 1911 the Madras Presidency of Mukkolattors.<sup>6</sup>

#### REGISTRATION OF CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT

The registration of Kallars was initiated by Mr. Knapp the district magistrate of Madurai. He proposed this Criminal Tribes Act, be imposed on one section namely the Kilagudi Kallars. He also referred to the difficulty of the cause since it cannot be said that every Kallar, in a criminal or a prospective criminal as they did not work in recognized gangs. Besides the recommended to deal separately with in the habitants of each of the notoriously Criminal Villages and so to exempt those residents, who were leading honest lives. In due course under section 10.1a and 10.1b of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911 the government accepted Mr. Knapp's recommendation and issued a notification declaring the Kilagudi Kallars of the Madurai district as Criminal Tribes.<sup>7</sup> In 1915 a similar notification was issued in regard to Sorikkampatti, Melaurappanur and Pusalapuram Kallars. In September 1915 Mr. Paddison, the

district magistrate of Madurai, had forwarded a petition from counsel Mr. George Joseph recommending the exemption from the registration of the respectable ones among them subsequently. In September 1915 section 5 of the Act exempted those Kallars who proved respectability. This, Act provided two methods to deal with the Criminal Tribes they are registration and settlement later in 1915, attempt were made to restrain the criminal activities of the Kallar by the Provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act. In August 1917 section 10 (a) of the Criminal Tribes Act was formally applied to the Kallars in general.<sup>8</sup> The Pusalapuram Kallars who had their residence in Ramanadu district were also registered under the Act. In 1918 Paddison reported to the government about the applying of section 10(a) and 10 (b) to the Pramalai Kallars in Thirumangalam Taluk. He stated that many of the villages where Pramalai Kallars lived were notified as Criminal Tribes. But, in a few villages the registration was not done because the people refused to accept the order. Subsequently temporary inspector of police was employed for the registration of Kallars in Madurai district.<sup>9</sup> Thereby, the exercising of registration had doubled in Thirumangalam Taluk, where the Pramalai Kallars were predominant, but the Kallars had joined together and resisted vigorously in many villages protesting against the imposition of the Act, which they considered highly humiliating.

#### Resistance in Perumapatti, Mettupatti and Mathipanur

As a part of registration of Pramalai Kallars under the Criminal Tribes Act the reserve police men about sixty surrounded Perumapatti Village in Thirumangalam Taluk. Then, the police entered the village and asked the Kallars to impress their thumb finger (as a mark of signature) in the registers. However, many of them were not in the village in fact they had gone out to oversee their agricultural work, subsequently before they returned to their

home the police seized the cattle and other household utensils and kept them in the Mandai in order to ensure their surroundings on hearing these the Kallars from their agricultural field rushed home to retrieve their properties utilizing this opportunity the police arrested all the men, even an old man was not spared.<sup>10</sup> Only women and children were left free in the village. Then, they marched to Mettupatti where there were about thirty houses of Piramalai Kallars. Here, too the reserve police surrounded the village and the officer went in. The above mentioned strategy was enacted nearly forty six men and boys of over ten years, were brought from the field and finally arrested. They were all hand cuffed together and held in March to the next village namely Mmathipanur. In the mean time, the women from the village brought food for the men who were in hungry were strictly prohibited by the police. Thus, the humiliating treatment was meted out to the Kallars of this village.<sup>11</sup>

The police reserve party then marched to Mathipanur, which was also surrounded by police. The police directed the Thalayiari to assemble the men at the village Mandai. Accordingly, he announced and asked every one who assembled to obey the order under Criminal Tribes Act. But, the villagers vehemently opposed it. Consequently, they were told to stand in lines and the policemen bound their hands. Two men were bound but the rest were stunned by the proceedings. All others appealed to the officer not to bind them. Later the officers relented but asked them to give assurance to the effect that the Kallars should go wherever the officers take them quietly and without offering any resistance or attempting to escape. Accordingly the Kallars assured them to obey the order. Then, the officer tied them in ropes all in row and took a march to Thirumangalam through Sindhupatti.<sup>12</sup> On account of these incidents the villages had taken a deserted look without people. There, was nobody to watch the crops and the agricultural fields were neglected for the time being. Some, of the food crops were withering for want of water. The cattle were not fed and the

bulls, which were of good breeds were starved because women could not feed them. The bulls trained for "Jallikattu" became restrictive and were in a mood not to allow anybody to approach them except their owner or master. In some of the homes male relatives came from neighboring villages to look after the women folk. Almost the villagers seem naturally excited.<sup>13</sup> The above villages were already notified for registration on 20th October 1919 onwards. The charge against them was that the men did not appear before the Deputy Magistrate of Usilampatti for registration on that day. Since, many of them failed to report for registration on that day. The police resorted to repressive methods. In the villages 161 Kallars were arrested and 93 under warrants for offences under section 21a and 22a of Criminal Tribes Act. These warrants had been pending for over six months. The remaining sixty eight had been charged under section 22 a. The rest were taken before the magistrate as they could not furnish securities. Among the 161 Kallars arrested and convicted seven were sentenced to pay a theft fine and other 154 to various terms of rigorous imprisonment ranging from one week to one month.<sup>14</sup> In the process of implementing Criminal Tribes Act the government had passed orders now and then. Covering one village after the other in the Kallar habitations in Thirumangalam Taluk of Madurai District. That, was the time when Jallian Wallah Bagh incident took place, so in the British wanted to keep the ferocious communities in all parts of the country under control and therefore decided to involve the Criminal Tribes Act, on these people one of the means to achieve their goal. Hence, the entire community in the village was declared as Criminal Tribes and the same was opposed by the affected Kallars<sup>15</sup>. The Criminal Tribes Act was aimed at suppressing the professional thieves, Criminals and the Wandering groups particularly the Kallars. The Kallars disliked the Criminal Tribes Act and its implementation Muthuramalinga Thevar and



other leaders in various parts of Tamil Nadu and the big land lords among the Kallars took much effort brought the people to the consideration of oneness and opposed the Criminal Tribes Act. The educated Kallars also disliked the Criminal Tribes Act. So, the people asked Thevar to oppose the Criminal Tribes Act. The war organised processions and meetings to oppose this act. The activities of Thevar were not liked by published they thought that Thevar was mainly responsible for encouraging opposition to the British rule.<sup>16</sup>

#### **MUKKULATTOR COMMUNITY UNDER THE CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT.**

Kallars were considered as trouble makers to the administration. The British government deliberately enacted the Criminal Tribes Act in order to make the Mukkulattor to be sophisticated. These people had to commit several crimes because of their poverty. Since, the Kallars were poor they could not be on par with other communities. The British also wanted to suppress them. The act was implemented and extended to Madurai Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts.<sup>17</sup> This act British government brought Mukkulattor, as per the provision of this act every police station in the concerned region had to maintain two registration records. The registers were called as 10-1-A and 10-1-B. The provisions of the act were enforced on the Piramalai Kallars of the Tirumangalam Taluk. The first register record (10-1-A) maintained a bio-datum of Piramalai Kallars and their Thumb Impressions. Then, the second register record (10-1-B) had to contain the names of the convicted Criminals and the list of those who violated the first register record. The names would be entered in a register and each name would be assigned a number. He also directed the registered members to report themselves to the local station at fixed usually at inconvenient hours such as 11pm and 3pm.<sup>18</sup> The movement of a registered members were restricted and he had to secure pass from local police station to cross the limits of his village, he

had to get permission from Panchayat president and reveal his intention of leaving that Village. He had giving full particulars about his place of destination and on reaching his destination he had to report once again to the police authorities of that place. A breach of such a restriction was considered punishable by imprisonment upto three years or fine rupees five hundred.<sup>19</sup> The life of the Kallars became miserable because of the severe enforcement of these restrictions and they had to sleep in police stations or report themselves during the night for the roll call. Rebertrom maintained, Imagine the adult population ranging from the age of 18 of a village registered and made to answer roll call at police stations three or four miles away from their residence and lie down there being exposed in the rainy days when there is no adequate shelter.<sup>20</sup>

#### **AIM OF BRITISH IMPOSED CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT:-**

The British claimed that the main aim of the Criminal Tribes Act was to reform certain Criminal Communities by keeping them under strict watch and vigilant and educating them. The Mukkulattor were branded as Criminals. Thus, British had certain inferior motives in doing so. The Mukkulattor were traditional warriors and were devoted Hindus and Patriots. They, first vehemently resisted the expending British rule in India. They, actively involved in mass movements against the British. They, also opposed the spread of Christianity in Tamil Nadu. But, there was no doubt about their economic and social backwardness. Their intention to provide them with better educational opportunities should be welcomed.<sup>21</sup> But, when they were branded and entertained as Criminals, it was a big psychological blow. This, battle called the purpose of the act itself. When, the act was implemented by local police and officers it threatened the very existence of this community. The land lords, officers and police

used this act as an instrument to suppress and exploit this depressed people. This act was vigorously enforced, which in turn, created bitterness among the people. The Piramalai Kallars never bothered to respect the law even after coercive methods and continued threats were resorted to by the authorities. The attempt of the police to subdue the Piramalai Kallars and make them register themselves under the Criminal Tribes Act ended in a clash between the Kallars and the officials at Perungamanallur.<sup>22</sup>

#### **THE REVOLT AGAINST THE BRITISH IN PERUNGAMANALLUR:-**

The area around the Perungamanallur in Madurai District is called as Kallarnadu. Clans of Kallars. Most, specifically Piramalai Kallar are residing in this region. Traditionally these people were hard working and courageous never like to lower their heads in front of others. At the same time, they guilty to obey any powers, such a type of mentality that the people of this area had. As a primary step to the enactment of the act in Madurai district, the government decided to enroll all the Piramalai Kallars in the Tirumangulam Taluk.<sup>23</sup> They selected Kallappanpatti, Bottampatti, Perungamanallur, Thummakundu and Kumarnnpatti for the purposes. On hearing the worst provision of Criminal Tribes Act the Periyathanakaras of those villages, like Sindhupatti, Perungamanallur, Kallapanpatti, Pottulupatti, Bottampatti, etc., gathered at Thummakundu and had their public meeting. Here, they discussed about the difficulties imposed on them through Criminal Tribes Act. They, also decided to stop the progress of this act temporarily by producing a Mahazar to the Madurai District Collector.<sup>24</sup> Besides, they also sent this message to all Kallars of this area, the Periyavetukarrarkal and requested them to co-operate with them to protest against the implementation of the Criminal Tribes Act. Thereby, they wanted to kind the inspiration of the native people against the barbarous act. On the other hand the British government was hell-

bent on implementing this act in the Kallarnadu. As the Piramalai Kallars did not obey Criminal Tribes Act, the Government viewed the problem seriously and wanted to implement this act in this region. So, they decided at first to register the Kallars of Perungumanallur Village. To execute the order they planned to reach Perungamanallur with the reserve police force.<sup>25</sup> As per the plan, the police force had to reach Perungamanallur from Tirumangalam of 2nd April Night through Thummakundu. And on the same day Deputy Magistrate of Usilampatti was to reach the Kanniyampatti, where the police force will be waiting for him before reaching Perungamanallur. Then the Magistrate himself had led the police force to Perungamanallur Village. At Perungamanallur they planned to get the signature of the Kallars forcibly as a mark of accepting the Criminal Tribes Act on 3rd April 1920.<sup>26</sup> The people of Perungamanallur came to know of the game plan to the British Government. Immediately Vittipermathevar gathered all people of this village and held discussions with the people as how to face the critical situation. After a long consultation they came to a conclusion to launch a protest against the implementation of the Criminal Tribes Act at any cost. To active this Vittipermathevar gathered all energetic and patriotic youth and inspired them with his commanding speech regarding the coward plot of the British Government. They decided to divide people into two groups. One group consists of youngsters and the other, the elders the youngsters were advised to hide themselves inside the village with weapon to attack in case the dialogue with the officials fails. The elders were to come out of the village and were expected to have the dialogue with the Deputy Magistrate and the Police Officers.<sup>27</sup> This was the plan of the people of Perungamanallur. They also took an oath to the effect that either they should nullify the implementation of the act or to meet with death. As per the plan the British Reserve Police

reached Perungamanallur on 3rd April, 1920 and siege it. On that fine morning, the dead line was given through beating of drums, announcing that, the people of Kallar Community should register their thumb prints, identification signs and other details regarding them in the Criminal Tribes register earmarked for them. No one should slip away from the village without registering their names in the registers. Besides, all should reach the entrance as quickly as possible for their registration. On hearing the sound of drum and message, the people started to gather and wandering here and there, finally all people united moved towards the entrance of Perungamanallur.<sup>28</sup> On seeing the numerically superior force of the British Reserve Police the people got disappointed. Then the Deputy Magistrate Ordered the people and treating them as cattle, forced them to sign their names in the register books. But, the people refused to do so. In this point some elderly person likes chinnan. mayandi, sivanandi, and a few of others asked for the removal of the registers in vain. The people around them started scolding the reserve police and other officers using abusive language.<sup>29</sup> Simultaneously, the talks were going on between the leaders and the police and revenue officials, without any positive result which enraged the people more and more. By that time more than two hundred people gathered and they started anti - position slogans. The mob quarreled with the officers and police and told them with drawn from their land. The police constables warned them, but failed to paucity them consequently, the alteration led to frustration among the British Officers. Rajupillai, Head of the Reserve police ordered his force to control the beastly activities of the people in vain. Subsequently the Deputy Magistrate ordered firing towards the crowd. Receiving this order Rajupillai commanded his force to open fire on the indigenous people. This, made the people panicky on hearing the gun sound, the energetic and patriotic youth who were hiding rushed with tremendous energy to face the British Police

Force.<sup>30</sup> Among them some other people of Perungamanallur also joined with traditional weapons of like Knives, Bamboo sticks, Spears, Kattapulta, Boomarang. etc. Terrible clash occurred but the people could not prove to be a match for the fire spitting guns. As a result, sixteen members were shot dead and many more injured. The Desabhaktan indicate that only eleven were killed in the police reprisals. The unique feature of this insurgency was woman mayakkal lost her life. The British police force shot down mayakkal because she supported the rebels by way of providing drinking water to them. After the loss of sixteen souls the revolt of Perungumanallur came to an end. Even though the revolt was not motivated on the lines of the freedom movement. It had in fact provided an ideological background to future events that aimed to challenge the alien rule.<sup>31</sup> At the same consequence riots exploded at Mudukulathur. Thevar visited different village and pacified the people and as a result peace was restored. In 1922, under the initiative of Vallabhai Patel a war council was formed to oppose British policies it was a secret council of 5 members. Thevar was one of the members of the council. In fact he represented the southern region. In 1923 the total numbers of Kallars registered under the Criminal Tribes Act were about 27,900, a staggering figure when compared with the other castes registered in the province.<sup>32</sup>

#### **THEVAR ACHIEVEMENT OF CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT:-**

In 1932 the people suffered a lot by the Criminal Tribes Act. The suffering of the people touched the young heart of Thevar. Thevar made a violent speech against the British and demanded the repeal of the act in 1932 in a public meeting at Ramanathapuram. He argued that the police had the right to arrest those who made crimes and at the same time they had no right to arrest the whole people who belonged to particular community. By 1933 the total number of Kallars registered 38,000 which were



equal to the total number registered from all the other 250 castes together with tribes. Almost every Piramalai Kallars was registered under the Criminal Tribes Act, since as per the census returns they numbered about 15,000 to 20,000 in 1933. Criminal Tribes Act was considered to be a Kallars control act in Madurai region.<sup>33</sup> The enforcement of the Criminal Tribes Act, on this community appeared the blackest part in the history of the Mukullattor specially the Kallars. The worst part of the act was that mostly husbands both young and old, were separated from their wives and they were directed to spend their nights in the police stations. Since, husbands were not able to go to other places for employment the wives were forced to take charge of the entire house hold. Mostly, women forced to take part in the economic duties. Many women worked as coolies in different areas.<sup>34</sup> This position of women made them dominate the family, since the women are the worst suffers in the family, they don't want female babies, since the husbands were not present in the nights, women folk felt that female children cannot be protected properly. Since, the women are the prime head of the economy there are not in a position to give dowry to the female child. Then, the husband, spent part of their life in the Police stations, the primary importance to them was reduced and women thought that they can live even without their husband's support. As a result, it leads to divorce in large numbers, thus the Criminal Tribes Act, seemed to have disturbed adversely the socio-economic life of the people. In 1934 Thevar along with Sasivarna Thevar, Perumal Thevar and others decided to send a deputation to the Governor for the removal of the Criminal Tribes Act<sup>35</sup>. In order to pacify the people the British appointed a commission under Lovelock. On the recommendation of Lovelock the Kallars Reclamation was started for the benefit of Kallar. However, the British did not take only steps for the repeal of the act. Hence, people were threatened by the Criminal Tribes Act. So, a tumult took place at Kubanampatti in 1935. The

people were cruelly ill – treated by the police. This ill-treatment gave a shock to Thevar. This was the time that the elections to the Ramnad District Board and the Madras Legislative Assembly were to take place. As part of election propaganda the conference namely “First Village Political Conference” at Periyur on 27th October 1936, was organized by Muthuramalinga Thevar and his fellow men in the congress party many people spoke in the conference. A number of resolutions passed on that occasion. They have also decided to hold such conferences at the following places. 36 Kamudi (28.10.1936) Mandalamanickam 29.10.1936, Mudukulathur (30.10.1936) Valanadu (31.10.1936) Kadaladi (01.11.1936) Sayalkudi (02.11.1936). Sikkal (03.11.1936) Perunali (04.11.1936) and Mandalamanickam (08.11.1936) Muthuramalinga Thevar was then the president of the Mudukulathur Taluk congress committee, Sasivarna Thevar was the secretary and U.M.S. Velusamy Nadar was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Conference. The president of the congress was Somayajulu of Sankarankovil.<sup>37</sup> The officials who were connected with the case under sec. 108 Cr.P.C. against Muthuramalinga Thevar were, the sub Inspector of Police. Sub Magistrate, Mudukulattur Taluk. Joint Magistrate of Ramnad district and the District Magistrate Ramand. The Sub Magistrate of Ramnad in his letter to the Joint Magistrate, Ramnad wrote that on the motion of Sub-Inspector that he had issued order under sec 144 against the speakers of the Peraiyur Conference as those speeches were disseminating seditious views in the public which will lead to disturb the peace and order. Further it was reported that they were going to hold such meetings in various places cited above in Mudukulattur Taluk. If such conferences were allowed it would lead to disturb the peace and tranquility of people of that area and hence he justified his action of ordering 144.<sup>38</sup> However, a petition was failed by Muthuramalinga Thevar Sasivarnathevar U.M.S.

Velusamy Nadar, M.Subbiah Pillai, Murugaiah Pillai and Athisayam Pillai and others numbering 15 in total against the order of the 2nd class Magistrate of Mudukulattur district dated October 28th 1936, through their lawyer K. R. Venkatarama Ayyar before K. Rummunnimenon, District Magistrate of Ramnad. He put forth the arguments but of no use. In his letter to the chief Secretary to Govt. Public Department K. Rummunnimenon states that on the examination of the speeches delivered at Periyur Conference, he was the opinion that Muthuramalinga Thevar was responsible for several seditious utterances. He accused the British thus "That the British Government was a government by dacoits, that the government established by law in British India tyrannized over the people by giving them nothing but the Rowlatt Act and the Punjab Massacres, that the government was comprised of persons without character, etc".<sup>39</sup> District Magistrate also stated that he had gone through speeches of Muthuramalinga Thevar which was delivered on 23.10.1936 at Manamadurai and had come to the conclusion that Muthuramalinga Thevar should be put up under section 108 cr.pc. He also stated that he had given instruction to the Sub-Magistrate to serve order under section 108 cr.pc and 112 to Muthuramalinga Thevar and to rescind the order under section 144 passed by him. However, order under section 108 cr.pc. and 112 was passed and served only to Muthuramalinga Thevar and not to other 14 members on whom section 144 was passed by Sub-Magistrate at Periyur. According to Muthuramalinga Thevar, was served with an order under section 108 cr.pc passed by Joint Magistrate, Ramnad. K.G.Menon. ICS Calling upon Thevar to show cause, why he should not be bound over for one year and prohibiting him from any speeches.<sup>40</sup> In the course of the order the Joint Magistrate states, "Thevar had intentionally disseminating the seditious matter by delivering speeches on 23rd and 27th October 1936 at Manamadurai and Peraiyur respectively the substance of which is

that the government established by law in British India themselves or through their agencies like the police harass and tyrannies the subjects beating innocent men and women and children, etc. and that the government of the country is foreign in origin and the character that it is a government by dacoit that the government commits atrocities and dispense injustice and foment religious and caste troubles between sections of the Indian etc. was Punishable under section 124 (a) and 153 (a) of Indian Penal Code. Hence, the Joint Magistrate had ordered Muthuramalinga Thevar under section 108 cr.pc. to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond under section 108 cr.pc to be of good behavior during a period of one year for a sum of Rs.1000 with two sureties each for a like sum. He had also passed an interim order under section 117 (3) with a view to preventing him from committing offences under sec 124 (a) and 153(a) I.P.C. to execute a bond to be of good behaviour until the enquiry to conclude with a sum of Rs.1000 and one surety for a similar amount.<sup>42</sup>

Thevar accordingly, furnished the required interim bond and defended the case by giving written statement in which he denied all the allegations leveled against him under sec 108 cr.pc and also explained that such cases were failed to prevent him addressing the electors of his constituency to the Madras Legislative Assembly to which he had opposing Raja of Ramnad K.R.Venkatrama Ayyar was his advocate. However, the Joint Magistrate, Ramnad gave his verdict not in favour of Muthuramalinga Thevar and Thevar was bound over for a month.<sup>43</sup> Muthuramalinga Thevar was unique in his approach and posed a threat to the British Administration. He was a ferocious orator whose oratory skill had aroused the national feelings among the ignorant and illiterate masses in the rural areas. While all the leaders of the Indian national Congress used to convene the conferences only in the urban centers. Muthuramalinga Thevar alone for the

first time conducted a “First Village Political Conference” at Peraiyur on 27th October 1936. Throughout the history of Indian National Congress only 2 persons were prohibited from addressing the public the one was Balagangadhara Tilak during the early part of the 20th century and other one was Muthuramalinga Thevar in the south during the middle of the 20th century. Muthuramalinga Thevar was a popular leader accepted by all communities irrespective of caste creed, religion, etc. as the statement of District Magistrate to government proves that Thevar was having ardent support of illiterate Maravars, Nadars and other castes.<sup>44</sup> Finally the District Magistrate submitted his report to the government on 6.05.1937 in which he narrated the whole story from the Motion of Sub-Inspector of Periyar to the Judgment of Joint Magistrate, Ramnad. In his report he had quoted words in the statement of Sub Inspector which runs as follows. “If the persons are not prohibited from delivering speeches and holding meetings in Mudukulathur Taluk. Thevar did not bother about the introduction of this Act and he continuously criticized the diplomatic idea of the British in public meeting. In 1938 the Government of Madras, on the basis of the Police Report, branded Thevar, a rebel instigating the community against the British.<sup>45</sup> The suffering of the people increased day by day. Thevar induced the Mukullattor and specially Kallars to fight against the Criminal Tribes Act. Thevar became a leader of the Kallars. In 1939 a Drama was enacted at Chekkanurani under the Chairmanship of Thevar to depict the miserable conditions of the people under Criminal Tribes Act. The Drama explained to the audience that Kallars were like any other human beings living in the land and there was no Justification to enforce the Criminal Tribes Act against Kallars. Thevar addressed a large gathering in Madurai and surrounding places and condemned the action of the British. The British government had a problem to deal with this new situation. Thevar carried on a systematic work that induced the people to oppose the British for

not repealing the Criminal Tribes Act.<sup>46</sup>

This act was vigorously entered, which in turns created bitterness among the people. Muthuramalinga Thevar a political leader and a powerful orator attacked vehemently the Criminal Tribes Act, and asked the people to defy the Black law. He contacted the educated youth among Piramalai Kallars, of whom Mookkiah Thevar and V.K.C. Natarajan, organised a protest meeting and convention demanding the government to withdraw the implementation of the Criminal Tribes Act. His audacious encounters with the Government kindle the masses and they began to unite under his leadership to get them freed from the iron grip of this Act.<sup>47</sup> The congress leader also sympathized with the Mukkulattor community people and they took effective steps and moved this matter in the Madras Assembly. Also, due to the efforts of the Madras Government P Subbarayan Ministry a resolution to repeal this Act was moved in the council in vain. After Independence Thevar pleaded with Prakasam Ministry to repealed the Criminal Tribes Act, which the demands of Thevar along supported by congress leaders the Act was repealed in 1947. This was very important achievements made by Muthuramalinga Thevar during his life time.

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