# Periyar E. V. Ramasamy – Self-Respect Movement, Vaikom Satyagraha, Justice Party & Dravidar Kazhagam | TNPSC Notes

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**E. V. Ramasamy (1879–1973)**, known as **Thanthai Periyar**, was a social reformer and political leader from Erode who founded the **Self-Respect Movement** (1925) and the **Dravidar Kazhagam** (1944). For his part in the Vaikom Satyagraha he is called **Vaikom Veerar**, and the title **Periyar** was conferred on him by a women's conference in Madras in 1938.

தமிழில் படிக்க

These notes are written for TNPSC Group 1, 2/2A and 4 aspirants and are meant to be complete on this topic. Periyar is a core topic in the unit **History, Culture, Heritage and Socio-Political Movements of Tamil Nadu** (Self-Respect Movement, Justice Party, Dravidar Kazhagam, social reform) and in **History, Culture of India and Indian National Movement** (Congress years, Non-Cooperation, Vaikom Satyagraha). His role in social justice and reservation also links to **Indian Economy and Development Administration in Tamil Nadu**, and his titles and Tamil script reform are asked in **General Tamil**. Read each section, then use the tables, quick revision timeline and key points at the end.

## Periyar at a Glance

| Item | Fact |
|---|---|
| Full name | Erode Venkata Ramasamy (E. V. Ramasamy; E.V.R.) |
| Born | 17 September 1879, Erode (then in Coimbatore district, Madras Presidency) |
| Parents | Venkata (Venkatappa) Naicker and Chinnathayammal |
| Brother / sister | E. V. Krishnasamy (elder brother); Kannammal (sister) |
| Wives | Nagammai (died 1933); Maniammai (married 1949) |
| Titles | Periyar / Thanthai Periyar (1938); Vaikom Veerar |
| Founded | Self-Respect Movement (1925); Dravidar Kazhagam (1944) |
| Main journals | Kudi Arasu (1925), Revolt (1928), Puratchi (1933), Paguthariyu (1934), Viduthalai (1935) |
| Famous book | Pen Yen Adimaiyanal? (Why Were Women Enslaved?), 1942 |
| Died | 24 December 1973, Vellore, aged 94 |
| Day observed | 17 September – Social Justice Day in Tamil Nadu (from 2021) |

## Early Life, Family and Education

- **Full name:** Erode Venkata Ramasamy – usually written **E. V. Ramasamy** or **E.V.R.**

- **Born: 17 September 1879** at **Erode**, then part of Coimbatore district in the Madras Presidency.
- **Parents:** Venkata (Venkatappa) Naicker, a merchant, and Chinnathayammal.
- **Siblings:** elder brother **E. V. Krishnasamy** and sister **Kannammal**, both of whom later helped him in public work.
- **Schooling:** he had only a few years of formal schooling and joined his father's trade at about the age of 12.
- **First marriage:** at 19 he married **Nagammai**, then 13. Nagammai later took an active part in his agitations; she died in **1933**.

**Exam tip:** his birth date (17 September), birthplace (Erode), parents' names and first wife Nagammai are often asked in match-the-following questions. Since 17 September is now also Social Justice Day, remember this date well.

## Kasi Pilgrimage (1904) and Early Public Life

In **1904** he went on a pilgrimage to **Kasi (Varanasi)**. Biographers treat this journey as a turning point: his experiences there sharpened his questioning of caste discrimination and religious practice. Back in Erode he became a successful businessman and held several public offices, including that of **Chairman of the Erode Municipality**.

## Congress Years (1919–1925)

- **Joining the Congress (1919):** attracted by Gandhi's programme, he joined the Indian National Congress in 1919, gave up his business and resigned his public posts, including the Erode municipal chairmanship.
- **Non-Cooperation and temperance:** he took part in the campaign against liquor. In **1921** he was jailed for **picketing toddy shops in Erode**; his wife Nagammai and sister Kannammal joined and carried on the picketing.
- **Congress leadership:** in **1922** he was elected **President of the Tamil Nadu (Madras Presidency) Congress Committee**.
- **Communal representation:** inside the Congress he repeatedly moved resolutions for **communal representation** – reserved places for non-Brahmins in education, government jobs and legislatures – but these were defeated or not allowed.

**Exam tip:** questions on the Congress years usually turn on three years – 1919 (joined Congress), 1921 (toddy-shop picketing and jail) and 1922 (TNCC President). The demand for communal representation later became the main reason for his exit.

## Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–1925)

Vaikom, in the princely state of **Travancore** (now Kottayam district, Kerala), has a Shiva (Mahadeva) temple. The public roads around it were closed to people of the so-called lower castes.

- **Background:** T. K. Madhavan had raised the demand for temple entry in his paper Deshabhimani from 1917 and met Gandhi at Tirunelveli in September 1921; the Kakinada session of the Congress (1923) passed a resolution against untouchability, and the Kerala Congress took up the Vaikom issue.
- **Start:** the satyagraha began on **30 March 1924**, led by Kerala Congress leaders **T. K. Madhavan, K. P. Kesava Menon and K. Kelappan**. Most local leaders were arrested within days.
- **Periyar's entry:** Periyar reached Vaikom with his wife Nagammai in **April 1924** and took up the leadership of the struggle.
- **Imprisonment:** he was arrested and lodged in **Arukutti (Aruvikutti) jail**. After his release he continued the agitation and was **imprisoned a second time**.

- **Women's role:** Nagammai organised women volunteers and kept the agitation going while he was in jail.
- **Gandhi's visit:** Gandhi visited Vaikom in **March 1925** to negotiate a settlement.
- **End:** the satyagraha ended on **23 November 1925** in a compromise under which public roads near the temple (except the eastern road) were opened to all castes; full access and temple entry came only after the **Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936**.
- **Title:** his role earned him the name **Vaikom Veerar** (Hero of Vaikom), generally credited to **Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaranar**.
- **Centenary:** Tamil Nadu and Kerala jointly marked the Vaikom centenary from 2023. On **12 December 2024** Chief Ministers M. K. Stalin and Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the renovated **Thanthai Periyar Memorial and Library at Vaikom**, restored at a cost of ₹8.14 crore.

## Cheranmadevi Gurukulam Controversy

A Gurukulam (residential school) at **Cheranmadevi** in Tirunelveli district was run by the nationalist **V. V. S. Aiyar** with financial support from the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. It came to light that Brahmin and non-Brahmin students were served food separately. Periyar objected strongly to a Congress-funded institution practising caste distinction. The controversy increased his distance from the Congress leadership.

## Leaving the Congress – Kanchipuram, 1925

At the **Tamil Nadu Congress conference at Kanchipuram in November 1925**, Periyar again sought to move a resolution on communal representation. When it was not allowed, he walked out and left the Congress, stating that it would not address the concerns of non-Brahmins. He then devoted himself fully to the Self-Respect Movement.

**Exam tip:** for 'Why did Periyar leave the Congress?', write two reasons – (1) the Cheranmadevi Gurukulam caste-dining issue and (2) the refusal to allow his communal representation resolution at Kanchipuram (November 1925).

## Self-Respect Movement (Suyamariyathai Iyakkam), 1925

The Self-Respect Movement was launched in **1925**. It kept away from electoral politics and concentrated on social reform. According to Tamil Nadu school textbooks, its main aims were:

- Abolition of the caste system and of untouchability and caste-based disabilities.
- Equal rights, status and opportunities for women, and removal of restrictions placed on them.
- Rejection of hereditary priesthood and of rituals that required priests; promotion of rational thinking against superstition.
- Restoring pride in Tamil (Dravidian) history and culture.

**Practices:** members gave up caste surnames (Periyar himself dropped the caste title "Naicker"), and the movement popularised **self-respect marriages** – marriages conducted without priests or religious rites.

**Legal recognition:** self-respect marriages were given legal validity by the **Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act, 1967**, passed by the C. N. Annadurai government. It inserted **Section 7-A** into the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; the Act received the President's assent on 17 January 1968. Under Section 7-A, a marriage between two Hindus is valid if, in the presence of relatives, friends or other persons, each party declares in a language they understand that they take the other as spouse, or they exchange garlands or rings, or a thali is tied. No priest and no saptapadi (seven steps around fire) are needed.

## Self-Respect Conferences and Key Meetings

| Year | Conference / meeting | Key point |
|---|---|---|
| 1925 (Nov) | Tamil Nadu Congress conference, Kanchipuram | Communal representation resolution not allowed; Periyar leaves Congress |
| 1929 (Feb) | First Provincial Self-Respect Conference, Chengalpattu | Presided over by W. P. A. Soundarapandian; resolutions against caste distinctions and for women's rights |
| 1930 | Second Self-Respect Conference, Erode | – |
| 1931 | Third Self-Respect Conference, Virudhunagar | – |
| 1932 (Dec) | Self-Respect workers' meeting, Erode | 'Erode Plan/Programme' adopted with M. Singaravelar – socialist economic programme |
| 1938 (13 Nov) | Tamil Nadu Women's Conference, Madras | Title 'Periyar' conferred; presided over by Neelambikai Ammaiyar |
| 1944 (27 Aug) | Justice Party conference, Salem | Justice Party renamed Dravidar Kazhagam (Annadurai Resolution) |

The **first Provincial Self-Respect Conference at Chengalpattu (February 1929)** is the most frequently asked. It was presided over by **W. P. A. Soundarapandian** and passed resolutions calling for an end to caste distinctions (including giving up caste titles) and for equal rights for women. The **Erode meeting of December 1932**, held after Periyar's foreign tour, adopted the **Erode Plan** with the communist leader **M. Singaravelar**, combining social reform with socialist economic demands.

## Journals and Writings

| Journal | Year | Language / note |
|---|---|---|
| Kudi Arasu | 1925 (2 May, Erode) | Tamil weekly; first editor K. M. Thangaperumal Pillai; became the voice of the Self-Respect Movement |
| Revolt | 1928 | English weekly, to reach readers outside the Tamil-speaking public |
| Puratchi | 1933 | Tamil weekly |
| Paguthariyu | 1934 | Tamil; the name means 'rationalism' |
| Viduthalai | 1935 | Tamil; later a daily of the movement; still published |
| Unmai | 1970 | Tamil rationalist magazine |
| The Modern Rationalist | 1971 | English monthly |

His best-known book is **Pen Yen Adimaiyanal?** (*Why Were Women Enslaved?*, 1942), in which he argued against double standards of chastity imposed only on women and advocated women's property rights, divorce and widow remarriage.

**Exam tip:** learn the journals by language – the English ones are Revolt (1928) and The Modern Rationalist (1971); the rest are Tamil. That the first issue of Kudi Arasu came out from Erode is also asked.

## Foreign Tour (1931–1932)

Periyar left Madras in **December 1931** with **S. Ramanathan** and a young relative, Ramu, and toured Europe, including the **Soviet Union**. He returned to India in **November 1932**. After his return he wrote about socialism and the Soviet experience, and the Erode Plan followed.

## Anti-Hindi Agitation (1937–1940)

- **Cause:** the Congress ministry headed by **C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji)**, which took office in 1937, made Hindi a compulsory subject in secondary schools (government order of April 1938).
- **Periyar's role:** with the Self-Respect Movement and the Justice Party he led the agitation – picketing, processions and public meetings. He argued that compulsory Hindi was an imposition on Tamil language and culture.
- **Arrests:** more than a thousand people were jailed, including Periyar (1938) and C. N. Annadurai.
- **Martyrs:** two agitators, **Natarasan** and **Thalamuthu**, died in prison in 1939.
- **Women's conference:** on **13 November 1938** the **Tamil Nadu Women's Conference** in Madras, presided over by **Neelambikai Ammaiyar** (daughter of Maraimalai Adigal) and organised by women activists such as Meenambal Sivaraj, Dr S. Dharmambal and Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar, resolved to call him **"Periyar"**. Soon afterwards he was arrested and imprisoned for his part in the agitation.
- **Women's picketing:** soon after the conference women activists, including Dr S. Dharmambal, picketed the Hindu Theological School in Madras and were arrested.
- **End:** after the Congress ministry resigned in 1939, Governor Erskine withdrew compulsory Hindi in **February 1940**.

**Exam tip:** 1938 holds three key events – the title 'Periyar' (13 November), Periyar's imprisonment in the anti-Hindi agitation (late 1938) and the Justice Party presidency (29 December), to which he was elected while in prison.

## President of the Justice Party (1938)

The Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation) was founded in 1916. While still in prison, Periyar was elected its **President on 29 December 1938**, succeeding the Raja of Bobbili. From then on the Justice Party and the Self-Respect Movement worked together under his leadership.

## Dravidar Kazhagam – Salem Conference, 1944

- **Date and place: 27 August 1944**, at the Justice Party's conference at **Salem**.
- **Decision:** the Justice Party was renamed **Dravidar Kazhagam (DK)**. The resolution moved by **C. N. Annadurai** is known as the **Annadurai Resolution**.
- **Black shirts:** in the mid-1940s Periyar asked DK members to wear **black shirts**.
- **15 August 1947:** Periyar called for Independence Day to be observed as a day of mourning, arguing that political freedom without social freedom was incomplete.

**Exam tip:** for 'At which conference did the Justice Party become the Dravidar Kazhagam?' the answer is the Salem conference, 1944. Because Annadurai moved the resolution it is called the Annadurai Resolution; do not confuse it with the Chengalpattu conference (1929).

## Marriage to Maniammai and the DMK Split (1949)

In **1949**, when he was nearly 70, Periyar married **Maniammai**, a DK worker, describing it as an arrangement to safeguard the movement and its properties. Many members, including Annadurai, disagreed with the marriage and with the movement's strategy. On **17 September 1949** – Periyar's 70th birthday – **C. N. Annadurai** announced the formation of the **Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)** in Madras.

**Exam tip:** the DMK was launched on Periyar's own birthday, 17 September (1949); the same date was later declared Social Justice Day (2021). Link the two in memory.

## Later Years: Communal G.O. and the First Amendment

When the courts struck down the Madras Communal G.O. on reservation in admissions (the **Champakam Dorairajan** case), the DK under Periyar held protests across the state in 1950–51 demanding its restoration. The **Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951**, which added **Article 15(4)** enabling special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, followed.

## Tamil Script Reform

Periyar proposed simplifying certain Tamil letter forms to make printing and learning easier, and used the reformed letters in his own journals such as Viduthalai. In **1978**, his birth-centenary year, the **Tamil Nadu government** adopted part of this reform – for example the new forms of letters such as ணா, றா, னா and லை, ளை, னை, ணை that are used today. The proposed forms அய் (for ஐ) and அவ் (for ஔ) were not adopted in general use.

## Women in Periyar's Movement

Women played a visible part in the movements Periyar led, and TNPSC often asks about them:

- **Nagammai** – his first wife; picketed toddy shops in Erode (1921), organised women at Vaikom (1924) and served as publisher of Kudi Arasu for periods when he was touring or in prison.
- **Kannammal** – his sister; joined Nagammai in the toddy-shop picketing at Erode (1921).
- **Neelambikai Ammaiyar** – daughter of Maraimalai Adigal (founder of the Pure Tamil Movement); presided over the 1938 Women's Conference that gave the title Periyar.
- **Meenambal Sivaraj, Dr S. Dharmambal, Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar, Pandithai A. Narayani** – among the organisers of the 1938 conference and leaders of women's participation in the anti-Hindi agitation.
- **Maniammai** – his second wife (1949); led the Dravidar Kazhagam from 1973 to 1978.

**Exam tip:** General Tamil papers ask questions such as 'Who carried out Tamil script reform?', 'Who wrote Pen Yen Adimaiyanal?' and 'Who is called Vaikom Veerar?' – the answer to all three is Periyar.

## His Views (as presented in Tamil Nadu textbooks)

- **Caste:** he argued for the complete abolition of caste and untouchability and for proportional (communal) representation of non-Brahmins.
- **Religion and rationalism:** he advocated rational thinking (*pagutharivu*) and questioned religious beliefs and rituals that, in his view, justified inequality.
- **Women:** he advocated women's education, employment, property rights, the right to divorce and widow remarriage, and criticised double standards of chastity.
- **Language:** he opposed compulsory Hindi and promoted Tamil identity and script reform.

## Death and Succession

Periyar died on **24 December 1973** at **Vellore**, aged 94. **Maniammai** led the Dravidar Kazhagam from 1973 until her death in 1978; **K. Veeramani** has led it since 1978.

## Honours and Memorials

- **Postage stamp:** issued on **17 September 1978** (birth centenary), 25 paise.
- **Periyar University, Salem:** established in 1997 by the Tamil Nadu government.
- **Social Justice Day:** announced by Chief Minister M. K. Stalin in the Assembly on 6 September 2021; Periyar's birthday, **17 September**, is observed every year with a social justice pledge in government offices.
- **Vaikom memorial:** renovated Thanthai Periyar Memorial and Library at Vaikom, Kerala, inaugurated on 12 December 2024.
- **Erode:** his house in Erode is maintained as the **Periyar Memorial House**, with photographs and personal belongings.

## Dravidian Organisations Compared

| Organisation | Founded | Founder / leader | Note |
|---|---|---|---|
| Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation) | 1916 | Periyar became President in 1938 | Non-Brahmin political party; renamed Dravidar Kazhagam in 1944 |
| Self-Respect Movement | 1925 | Periyar | Social reform movement; stayed away from elections |
| Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) | 1944 (Salem) | Periyar; later Maniammai, K. Veeramani | Social reform movement |
| Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) | 17 September 1949 | C. N. Annadurai | Broke away from DK; became an electoral party |

## Organisations and Posts – Summary

| Organisation / post | Period | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Chairman, Erode Municipality | before 1919 | Resigned his public posts on joining the Congress |
| Indian National Congress | 1919–1925 | President of the Tamil Nadu (Madras Presidency) Congress Committee in 1922 |
| Self-Respect Movement (Suyamariyathai Iyakkam) | from 1925 | Founder and leader |
| Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation) | President from 1938 | Elected while in prison during the anti-Hindi agitation |
| Dravidar Kazhagam | 1944–1973 | Founder-leader; succeeded by Maniammai (1973–78), then K. Veeramani |

## Common Confusions in the Exam

| Do not confuse | Remember |
|---|---|
| Title 'Periyar' vs 'Vaikom Veerar' | 'Periyar' – Women's Conference, Madras, 13 November 1938; 'Vaikom Veerar' – for the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25) |
| Kudi Arasu vs Viduthalai | Kudi Arasu – Tamil weekly, 1925, Erode; Viduthalai – 1935, later a daily |
| Kudi Arasu vs Revolt | Kudi Arasu – Tamil (1925); Revolt – English (1928) |
| Chengalpattu vs Salem | Chengalpattu – first Self-Respect Conference (1929); Salem – Dravidar Kazhagam (1944) |
| Kanchipuram vs Tiruppur | Kanchipuram – left Congress (1925); Tiruppur – Tamil Nadu Congress conference of 1922, the year he became TNCC President |
| Erode 1930 vs Erode 1932 | 1930 – second Self-Respect Conference; December 1932 – Erode Plan with Singaravelar |
| DK vs DMK | DK – 1944, Periyar; DMK – 1949, Annadurai |
| Anti-Hindi 1937–40 | First agitation, against Rajaji's compulsory Hindi; ended with withdrawal in February 1940 |
| Nagammai vs Maniammai | Nagammai – first wife (died 1933); Maniammai – second wife (1949), DK leader 1973–78 |
| Vaikom vs Cheranmadevi | Vaikom – road-entry satyagraha in Travancore; Cheranmadevi – Gurukulam caste-dining issue in Tirunelveli district |

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## Quick Revision Table

| Year | Event |
|---|---|
| 1879 (17 Sep) | Born at Erode |
| c. 1891 | Joins his father's business at about 12 after a few years of schooling |
| 1904 | Pilgrimage to Kasi (Varanasi) – a turning point in his views |
| 1919 | Joins the Indian National Congress; gives up public posts including Erode municipal chairmanship |
| 1921 | Jailed for picketing toddy shops in Erode (Non-Cooperation / temperance) |
| 1922 | President, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee |
| 1924 (30 Mar) | Vaikom Satyagraha begins; Periyar joins in April 1924, jailed twice |
| 1925 (2 May) | Kudi Arasu started at Erode |
| 1925 (Nov) | Leaves Congress at Kanchipuram; Self-Respect Movement |
| 1925 (23 Nov) | Vaikom Satyagraha ends in a compromise; roads near the temple opened |
| 1928 | English weekly Revolt |
| 1929 (Feb) | First Self-Respect Conference, Chengalpattu |
| 1931 (Dec) – 1932 (Nov) | Tour of Europe and the Soviet Union |
| 1932 (Dec) | Erode Plan with Singaravelar |
| 1933 | Death of Nagammai; Puratchi started |
| 1934 / 1935 | Paguthariyu / Viduthalai |
| 1937–1940 | First anti-Hindi agitation; Periyar imprisoned (1938) |
| 1938 (13 Nov) | Title 'Periyar' by Women's Conference, Madras |
| 1938 (29 Dec) | Becomes President of the Justice Party (in prison) |
| 1942 | Book Pen Yen Adimaiyanal? |
| 1944 (27 Aug) | Salem conference – Dravidar Kazhagam |
| 1949 | Marries Maniammai; DMK formed by Annadurai (17 Sep 1949) |
| 1950–51 | Agitation for Communal G.O.; First Constitutional Amendment (1951) |
| 1967 | Self-respect marriages given legal validity (Section 7-A, Hindu Marriage Act – TN amendment) |
| 1973 (24 Dec) | Dies at Vellore, aged 94 |
| 1978 | Birth centenary: postage stamp (17 Sep); TN government adopts reformed Tamil letters |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1997 | Periyar University, Salem |
| 2021 | 17 September declared Social Justice Day |
| 2024 (12 Dec) | Renovated Periyar Memorial at Vaikom inaugurated |

## TNPSC Key Points (PYQ-style facts)

- Born 17 September 1879, Erode; died 24 December 1973, Vellore.
- Parents: Venkata Naicker and Chinnathayammal; wives: Nagammai, Maniammai.
- Titles: Periyar / Thanthai Periyar (Women's Conference, Madras, 13 November 1938); Vaikom Veerar.
- Kasi pilgrimage: 1904. Joined Congress: 1919. TNCC President: 1922.
- Toddy-shop picketing in Erode: 1921 (with Nagammai and Kannammal).
- Vaikom Satyagraha: 30 March 1924 – 23 November 1925; Travancore; Periyar jailed twice (Arukutti jail).
- Cheranmadevi Gurukulam (V. V. S. Aiyar): separate dining for Brahmin and non-Brahmin students.
- Left Congress: Kanchipuram conference, November 1925 – communal representation issue.
- Self-Respect Movement: 1925. First conference: Chengalpattu, February 1929 (president W. P. A. Soundarapandian); 2nd Erode 1930; 3rd Virudhunagar 1931.
- Journals: Kudi Arasu 1925 (Tamil), Revolt 1928 (English), Puratchi 1933, Paguthariv u 1934, Viduthalai 1935.
- Foreign tour: December 1931 – November 1932 (Europe, Soviet Union) with S. Ramanathan.
- Erode Plan: December 1932, with M. Singaravelar.
- Anti-Hindi agitation: 1937–40 against Rajaji's compulsory Hindi; martyrs Natarasan and Thalamuthu (1939).
- Justice Party President: 29 December 1938 (while in prison).
- Dravidar Kazhagam: Salem, 27 August 1944 (Annadurai Resolution).
- DMK formed by Annadurai: 17 September 1949.
- Book: Pen Yen Adimaiyanal? (1942).
- Self-respect marriages legalised: Section 7-A, Hindu Marriage (TN Amendment) Act, 1967.
- Stamp: 1978; Periyar University: 1997; Social Justice Day: from 2021.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who gave E. V. Ramasamy the title 'Periyar' and when?

The title 'Periyar' (the great one / respected elder) was conferred on him by a resolution of the Tamil Nadu Women's Conference held in Madras (Chennai) on 13 November 1938, presided over by Neelambikai Ammaiyar, daughter of Maraimalai Adigal. Soon afterwards he was imprisoned for his part in the anti-Hindi agitation.

### Why is Periyar called Vaikom Veerar?

He is called Vaikom Veerar (Hero of Vaikom) for his role in the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25) in Travancore, which demanded that roads around the Vaikom temple be opened to all castes. He joined the struggle in April 1924 and was imprisoned twice. The title is generally credited to Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaranar (Thiru. Vi. Ka.).

### When and why did Periyar leave the Congress?

He left the Congress in November 1925 at the Tamil Nadu Congress conference at Kanchipuram, when his resolution demanding communal representation (reservation) for non-Brahmins was not allowed. The Cheranmadevi Gurukulam controversy over separate dining for students had already widened the gap.

### When and where was the Dravidar Kazhagam formed?

At the Justice Party's conference at Salem on 27 August 1944, the party was renamed Dravidar Kazhagam. The renaming resolution, moved by C. N. Annadurai, is known as the Annadurai Resolution. Periyar led the Dravidar Kazhagam until his death in 1973.

### Why is 17 September observed as Social Justice Day in Tamil Nadu?

17 September is Periyar's birthday (born 1879, Erode). On 6 September 2021 Chief Minister M. K. Stalin announced in the Assembly that it would be observed every year as Social Justice Day (Samooga Neethi Naal), with a social justice pledge taken in government offices.

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## Practice questions

**1. When and where was Periyar born?**

A. 1879, Salem
B. 1879, Erode
C. 1882, Erode
D. 1876, Coimbatore

**2. Who were Periyar's parents?**

A. Ulaganatha Pillai – Paramayi Ammal
B. Chinnaswamy – Lakshmi Ammal
C. Natesa Mudaliar – Meenakshi
D. Venkata Naicker – Chinnathayammal

**3. In which year did Periyar make his pilgrimage to Kasi (Varanasi)?**

A. 1904
B. 1898
C. 1919
D. 1925

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**4. Which post did Periyar give up when he joined the Congress in 1919?**

A. Mayor of Madras
B. Member, Madras Legislative Council
C. Chairman, Erode Municipality
D. Collector of Coimbatore

**5. For what was Periyar jailed in 1921?**

A. Salt Satyagraha
B. Picketing toddy shops in Erode
C. Vaikom Satyagraha
D. Anti-Hindi agitation

**6. In which year was Periyar elected President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee?**

A. 1919
B. 1925
C. 1927
D. 1922

**7. On which date did the Vaikom Satyagraha begin?**

A. 30 March 1924
B. 13 November 1938
C. 23 November 1925
D. 2 May 1925

**8. Vaikom was in which princely state?**

A. Cochin
B. Mysore
C. Travancore
D. Pudukkottai

**9. In which jail was Periyar lodged during the Vaikom Satyagraha?**

A. Bellary jail
B. Arukutti jail
C. Cannanore jail
D. Cellular Jail, Andaman

**10. Who ran the Cheranmadevi Gurukulam?**

A. Subramania Siva
B. Rajaji
C. Thiru. Vi. Ka.
D. V. V. S. Aiyar

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**11. At which conference did Periyar leave the Congress in 1925?**

A. Kanchipuram
B. Tiruppur
C. Salem
D. Madurai

**12. When was Kudi Arasu started?**

A. 17 September 1925
B. 1 June 1935
C. 2 May 1925
D. 27 August 1944

**13. Which English weekly did Periyar start in 1928?**

A. Young India
B. Revolt
C. Justice
D. The Hindu

**14. Where and when was the first Provincial Self-Respect Conference held?**

A. Erode, 1930
B. Virudhunagar, 1931
C. Salem, 1944
D. Chengalpattu, 1929

**15. Who presided over the Chengalpattu Self-Respect Conference (1929)?**

A. W. P. A. Soundarapandian
B. C. N. Annadurai
C. Neelambikai Ammaiyar
D. M. Singaravelar

**16. With whom did Periyar adopt the Erode Plan in December 1932?**

A. P. Jeevanandham
B. Rajaji
C. M. Singaravelar
D. E. V. Krishnasamy

**17. When did Periyar tour Europe and the Soviet Union?**

A. January – March 1929
B. December 1931 – November 1932
C. 1937 – 1938
D. 1946 – 1947

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**18. Who presided over the 1938 women's conference that conferred the title 'Periyar'?**

A. Nagammai
B. Maniammai
C. Muthulakshmi Reddy
D. Neelambikai Ammaiyar

**19. Who died in prison during the 1937–40 anti-Hindi agitation?**

A. Natarasan and Thalamuthu
B. Vanchinathan and Nilakantan
C. Chinnasamy and Sivalingam
D. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev

**20. When did Periyar become President of the Justice Party?**

A. 27 August 1944
B. 20 November 1916
C. 29 December 1938
D. 17 September 1949

**21. At which conference was the Justice Party renamed Dravidar Kazhagam?**

A. Chengalpattu, 1929
B. Salem, 1944
C. Erode, 1932
D. Tiruchi, 1951

**22. On which date did C. N. Annadurai announce the formation of the DMK?**

A. 27 August 1944
B. 24 December 1973
C. 15 August 1947
D. 17 September 1949

**23. In which year was Periyar's book 'Pen Yen Adimaiyanal?' published?**

A. 1942
B. 1925
C. 1938
D. 1959

**24. Which section of the Hindu Marriage Act (TN amendment, 1967) validates self-respect marriages?**

A. Section 13-B
B. Section 5
C. Section 7-A
D. Section 15(4)

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**25. When and where did Periyar die?**

A. 24 December 1973, Chennai

B. 24 December 1973, Vellore

C. 17 September 1973, Erode

D. 3 February 1969, Chennai

## Answers with explanations

1. **B) 1879, Erode** – Periyar was born on 17 September 1879 at Erode.

2. **D) Venkata Naicker – Chinnathayammal** – His father was Venkata Naicker and his mother Chinnathayammal.

3. **A) 1904** – The 1904 Kasi pilgrimage is regarded as a turning point in his thinking.

4. **C) Chairman, Erode Municipality** – On joining the Congress in 1919 he resigned public posts including the Erode municipal chairmanship.

5. **B) Picketing toddy shops in Erode** – In 1921 he was jailed for picketing toddy shops in Erode.

6. **D) 1922** – He became President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in 1922.

7. **A) 30 March 1924** – The Vaikom Satyagraha began on 30 March 1924.

8. **C) Travancore** – Vaikom was in Travancore (now Kottayam district, Kerala).

9. **B) Arukutti jail** – Arrested at Vaikom, he was lodged in Arukutti jail.

10. **D) V. V. S. Aiyar** – V. V. S. Aiyar ran it; separate dining for students caused the controversy.

11. **A) Kanchipuram** – He left at the Kanchipuram conference (Nov 1925) over the communal representation resolution.

12. **C) 2 May 1925** – Kudi Arasu was started at Erode on 2 May 1925.

13. **B) Revolt** – He started the English weekly Revolt in 1928.

14. **D) Chengalpattu, 1929** – The first conference was held at Chengalpattu in February 1929.

15. **A) W. P. A. Soundarapandian** – W. P. A. Soundarapandian presided over the 1929 Chengalpattu conference.

16. **C) M. Singaravelar** – The Erode Plan (Dec 1932) was adopted with the communist leader M. Singaravelar.

17. **B) December 1931 – November 1932** – He left on 13 December 1931 and returned in November 1932.

18. **D) Neelambikai Ammaiyar** – Neelambikai Ammaiyar presided over the Madras women's conference of 13 November 1938.

19. **A) Natarasan and Thalamuthu** – Natarasan and Thalamuthu died in prison in 1939.

20. **C) 29 December 1938** – He became Justice Party President on 29 December 1938 while in prison.

21. **B) Salem, 1944** – It was renamed at the Salem conference on 27 August 1944 (Annadurai Resolution).

22. **D) 17 September 1949** – Annadurai announced the DMK on 17 September 1949, Periyar's 70th birthday.

23. **A) 1942** – Pen Yen Adimaiyanal? (Why Were Women Enslaved?) was published in 1942.

24. **C) Section 7-A** – The 1967 Tamil Nadu amendment inserted Section 7-A.

25. **B) 24 December 1973, Vellore** – Periyar died at Vellore on 24 December 1973, aged 94.

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