

Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin - An Exhibitor of Congenital Political Wisdom, Strategies and Gusto (1953-2021)

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Introduction

Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin, the present leader of the DMK party proves himself a perpetual fountain exuding political wisdom, strategies and unceasing enthusiasm to sustain the tenor of the party and further generate it to dizzy heights. His stern resolve on this line was realized in the undreamt but affirmed stunning victory the party could achieve in the state assembly elections a year ago. Stalin in Russian language means ‘Man of Steel’ and M.K Stalin has since been living up to his name, earning yet another title- The Lieutenant (Thalapathi) of the Dravidian Movement. At the Tirunelveli Conference, M.K.Stalin was conferred on a new title Ilaya Kalaigarnar (Young Artist).

மலர்: 10

சிறப்பிதழ்: 1

மாதம்: ஜூலை

வருடம்: 2022

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v10iS1-Jul.5060>

M.K. Stalin's Early Life

Stalin was born on 01-03-1953 to Kalaigarnar M.Karunanidhi and Dhayalu Ammayar. The leader of the Dravidian Movement, Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy was greatly fascinated by the communist ideals after his visit to the Soviet Union. It soon caught on in Tamil Nadu and people started naming their children after the great leaders of the Soviet Union. The most popular were Lenin and Stalin and the communism -wave even led to children, being named after Moscow and Russia. Consequently, the leader of the DMK party, Kalaigarnar M.Karunanidhi bestowed the name Stalin to his son oblivious of the possibility that this political connotation would also ultimately lead to his son's political career.

The name ‘Stalin’ with its semanticity (steel) to which the bearer should stick in all his decision making, actions and other proceeds, has not always been easy for him. While seeking admission in a reputed institution on Annasalai, Chennai and the authorities shuddered at the name of the revolutionary and insisted that the

name of the boy be changed in order to be admitted to the school. Undeterred by this, his father Kalaingar M.Karunanidhi simply stated he'll rather change the school than his son's name. Eventually M.K. Stalin got admitted in Madras Christian College School, Chetpet. M.K. Stalin did his graduation in Bachelor of Arts with Political Science as major subject from Presidency College, Chennai.

His wedding ceremony with Durgavathy Alias Santha took place in Chennai on 20th August, 1975 when his father Kalaingar M.Karunanidhi was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. The 'self-respect' marriage, introduced in Tamil Nadu by Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy presided over by Navalar V.R. Nedunchezian in the presence of the General Secretary of the DMK, Perasiriyar K. Anbazhagan. The occasion, among others, was also graced by former Chief Minister Perunthalaivar

K. Kamaraj, the then President of India V.V. Giri and the then Union Minister, Babu Jagajeevan Ram. M.K. Stalin and Durgavathy's family includes son M.K.S. Udayanidhi, daughter Senthamarai, their son in law Sabarish, daughter in law Kiruthiga and grandson Inban.

DMK Youth Wing – Early Phase

His father Kalaingar M.Karunanidhi carried the flag of Tamil through the streets of Tiruvarur, raising slogans against Hindi inception and this provided M.K. Stalin with an opportunity to step into public life at the age of 13. The legacy continued when M.K. Stalin at the age of 15, while still in school, organized political events in Gopalapuram and formed the youth wing with like-minded students. On 30th September, 1968

he organized a public meeting felicitating Annadurai's birthday, which was also a platform, where he was recognized as a DMK Youth- Wing Forerunner.

Kalaingar M.Karunanidhi inaugurated the youth wing DMK office at Gopalapuram on 12th January, 1973 in the presence of Perasiriyar K. Anbazhalagan. Election work constitutes an important part of any political party. M.K. Stalin's earliest election work was noticed during the Madras Corporation elections held in 1968. He organized the election campaigns to propagate DMK candidates T.K. Kabali (ward 99) and R. Sadagopan (ward 109) representing Gopalapuram youth wing of DMK, on 20th January, 1968.

On 3rd January, 1969, he addressed a DMK Party meeting for the first time, held at Kodambakkam-Mambalam High Road. When leaders like Kalaingar M.Karunanidhi, Murasoli Maran, Aringnar Annadurai and Perasiriyar K. Anbazhagan influenced and captured the hearts of many in the state and it was even more so with M.K. Stalin who grew up with them. The principles of the movement and its powerful leaders struck a chord deep within him. To know one's surprise, he became a member of the party and took part in the organizational works in his residential area, Gopalapuram, Chennai. After completing his graduation, he was elected a local functionary under the rules and regulations that everyone abided by.

Ups and Downs in the Public Life of M.K. Stalin

M.K. Stalin became the City's first directly elected Mayor in 1996. M.K. Stalin was re-elected Mayor in 2001. However,

the then Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa enacted the Tamil Nadu Municipal Laws Amendment Act, 2002, a law that prevents a person from holding two elected posts in the Government. This law was applied retrospectively to M.K. Stalin's case (he was both an elected MLA and Mayor) in a move widely seen as aimed at removing M.K.Stalin as Chennai's Mayor.

However, the Madras High Court struck down the law stating that legislative bodies were not "prevented" from making laws affecting the "substantive" rights of persons retrospectively. However, the court held under Madras (now Chennai) City Municipal Corporation Act, 1919, a person cannot be Mayor for two consecutive terms though unlike M.K. Stalin the earlier mayors were not directly elected. M.K. Stalin did not appeal in the Supreme Court. M.K.Stalin was arrested several times on various public issues since he was first arrested in 1975 under the MISA.

M.K. Stalin urged the DMK workers not to celebrate his birthday with 'fanfare'. He told the DMK party's Youth Wing to spend the money for good cause, following the footsteps of Chief Minister Kalam M.Karunanidhi. He suggested that the cadre can give free food to students, donate blood, provide free food to orphanages, renew the DMK party flags and hoist them all over Tamil Nadu.

M.K. Stalin – The First Elected Mayor of Chennai Corporation – Later Phase

Earlier elections were held for councillors and wards and they used to elect a Mayor who will hold office for one year. After the enactment of Constitution Act, 1992, it has introduced Nagarpalika

Act, which came into force on 1st June 1993, the people directly elect Mayors and they would hold office for five years. But Corporation Elections were not conducted after 1972-1973 and the Commissioners and the Officers were running the administration. People were unable to give vent to their grievances in the absence of elected representatives. It was only after the return of DMK to power in 1996, the local body elections were ordered and 33 percent of seats were reserved for women. In the Chennai Corporation Election,

M.K. Stalin contested as DMK candidate for the post of Mayor and won the election by defeating Chandralekha. Thus, M.K.Stalin has the distinction of being first directly elected Mayor of Chennai Corporation. He had to face enormous problems which were left unattended for the past 25 years and the expectations of the citizens were high.

Storm Water Drains, Road Repairs and Brightly Lit Streets

In 1996, heavy rains lashed Chennai for two months. To rescue and provide relief to the people from the floods was indeed a great challenge to the corporation administration. In order to prevent flooding during rainy season and to protect permanently, low lying areas were identified and storm water drains were laid. Priority was given to desilting of old canals. An allocation of Rs. 16.50 crores in 1996, Rs. 10.25 crores in 2000 and Rs. 5 crores in 2001 was made for this work. During his tenure new storm water drains were properly looked after and the development works were carried out.

Despite Chennai becoming a hub for industries and becoming a place where several foreign firms had located their

branches and the consequent increase in heavy vehicle traffic, he took over the city roads and decided to bring a change in the city. Under M.K.Stalin's administration, roads with bus traffic and pavements were renewed at the cost of 137 crores. Interior roads for a length of 2030 kilometres were laid at an expense of 139.32 crores.

Street lights were provided in almost all the streets of Chennai and the city radiated even at night. All lights were changed and sodium vapour lights were installed at the cost of 9 crores. In 32 junctions of Chennai, high mass lights were provided at the cost of 2 crores and 5 lakhs. During his tenure, over 50,000 incandescent bulbs were replaced with sodium vapour lamps.

Education - Infant Schools

To improve the standard of education and also to create a good opinion about the standard of education in corporation schools, the Mayor took up some measures. To bring the poor children up on par with scientific advancements and to extend the best facilities, the Mayor provided computers and multimedia facilities in Corporation schools and also Internet classes were included as well. Internet facilities with L.C.D Projectors were provided in 19 Higher Secondary Schools. In the whole of India, in a revolutionary and innovative manner community colleges were started in Chennai. During that time nearly 600 students were trained and 200 students had employment opportunities in private institutions.

For the benefit of poor kids, 30 kindergarten classes with 102 teachers were started. Nearly 4500 kids enjoyed the fruits of the endeavour. Thus, the kindergarten

education enjoyed by the rich was made available for the poor kids also which was a first in the annals of public funded education.

Health and Sanitation

Taking into consideration, the Health and Sanitation of the people of Chennai, the Mayor paved way for providing standard medical treatment. Based on the request made by the councillors and the general public, he increased the dispensaries in the hospitals, scan centres, child centres, maternity home and constructed new buildings for healthcare. The medical records point out that during his Mayorship between 1996 and 2001, the number of patients in 76 corporation hospitals who benefited from the treatment facilities went up to 84.34 lakhs. Near the Valluvar Kottam, Saidapet and Perambur Railway Station, new hospital buildings were constructed and provided with latest equipment and scan centres at an expense of nearly 2 crores. In Chennai, at the Kodambakkam zone a dental Care Centre was started. In North and South Chennai, special medical wards were started for geriatric women. The numbers of Family Welfare Centres were increased to 93 due to the visionary stance, Mayor M.K.Stalin was exercising consistently.

M.K.Stalin in his dispensation of duty prioritised sanitary work above anything else. The Solid Waste Management Department of the corporation was undertaking this work. It has to collect solid waste disposed by the household, carry and dump them in the yards at Kodungaiyur and Perungudi. After M.K.Stalin became the Mayor he added another 203 heavy

and light vehicles, 50 auto trailers, 5 loaders, 1300 push carts, 2 bulldozers and two electronic weighing machines at the cost of 15 crores and sanitary works were expedited. Under his leadership, the Corporation Management decided to carry out the task of sanitary works adopting new methods, well-substituting the old practice.

Conclusion

Thus, with shrewd forethought, M.K.Stalin proved himself an indispensable individual force and was largely contributive to various societal activities to raise the standard of living of the people of Chennai in particular and the state of Tamil Nadu in general. His spirited move in anything he undertook stands exemplary and is a model to be emulated by the younger generation and posterity alike.

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