

MAYOR S. MUTHU AND CIVIC ADMINISTRATION IN MADURAI

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Abstract

-“Subbiah Muthu” popularly known as ‘Madurai Muthu’ was born on 13th March 1916 in an ordinary peasant family. As a staunch follower of E.V.R, Muthu joined the DravidaKazhagam in 1944. Then he joined in DravidaMunnetraKazhagam in 1949. He was elected as a Member of Legislative Council (MLC) in 1966 and was also elected to Madurai Council and became the Chairman in 1969 and Mayor in 1971. Muthu as the first Mayor of Madurai Municipal Corporation has contributed a lot for the progress of this city. On 1st December 1975 Muthu announced his resignation from the D.M.K and then he joined as a member of the All India Anna DravidaMunnetraKazhagam(AIADMK). The Mayor’s election held on 8th August 1978 Muthu was again elected as Mayor by the AIADMK party which gained absolute majority and served as Mayor up to 1980. He had made several public services during his tenure as Mayor.

Keywords: Subbiah Muthu -First Mayor of Madurai Municipal Corporation -His early life -involvement in Politics -Services to Madurai Municipal Corporation.

Introduction

The institution of the local self-government has been there in Madurai since ancient times. The functioning of the local- self-government of the past was entirely different from that of the present. The British rule laid a strong foundation for the Civic administration of the present. People’s representation is a major part under this decentralized governance. On this ground, Madurai Muthu the first Mayor of Madurai Municipal Corporation has contributed a lot for the progress of this city. A brief attempt to trace the services of Muthu to the Madurai Municipal Corporation is undertaken here.

Early life

“Subbiah Muthu” popularly known as ‘Madurai Muthu’ was born on 13th March 1916 in an ordinary peasant family of Perumpacheri near Manamadurai¹. At the age of five, Muthu was admitted in the village school. He studied there up to first form (equivalent to present sixth standard) and his education came to an end at the age of eleven². He started his career as a junior accountant in a South Indian Firm in Burma for some time, then tilled the soil in his village and later worked in Madurai mills. He was courted arrest repeatedly while leading strikes, campaigning against price rise etc.³

Involvement in Politics

Being attracted by reforming zeal and ideas of E.V.Ramaswamy, Muthu joined the self-respect movement in 1937⁴. In due course he became the member of the city executive committee of the justice party, in Madurai⁵. As a staunch follower of E.V.R, Muthu joined the DravidaKazhagam in 1944 and later he became the Secretary of the Madurai City DravidaKazhagam Organization⁶. In accordance with the decision taken at the General Council of the DravidaKazhagam, the DravidaMunnetraKazhagam was founded on 17th September 1949, with the same objectives of Dravida Kazhagam⁷. Annadurai, the leader of the newly established Kazhagam indicated in his address the importance of Muthu in Madurai and his services to the party⁸. He was a dedicated worker and had been Secretary of the DravidaMunnetraKazhagam in Madurai for fifteen years. He

was elected as a Member of Legislative Council (MLC) in 1966 and was also elected to Madurai council and became the Chairman in 1969. At that time Madurai city functioned as a Municipality. Mostly the candidates were from various political parties and also a few candidates independently contested. Muthu was elected as chairman on behalf of the D.M.K party.

The Government of Tamil Nadu passed a special Act, making Madurai Municipality into a Municipal Corporation on 27th April 1971. Which was called the Madurai City Municipal Corporation Act of 1971 extending to the City of Madurai. Madurai was raised to the status of corporation mainly due to his efforts. The chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the existing Madurai Municipal Council holding office on the appointed date were to continue to hold office as Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively of the Corporation⁹. As per the Act of 1971, the Mayor was entitled to hold the office for a period of one year from the date of his election, but was eligible to contest in the next election. Muthu was unanimously elected as the Mayor of the Madurai Corporation for a period of three and half successive years till November 1974, when the council was dissolved by the then D.M.K Government of Tamil Nadu. On 1st December 1975 Muthu announced his resignation from the D.M.K and then he joined as a member of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)¹⁰.

Since December 1974, Tamil Nadu Government passed several Acts and the election was postponed. The next election of Madurai Council was held on 27th July 1978. Several Political Parties contested for the sixty five wards and also nine members were nominated. Muthu was elected as a member of the Council from ward number ten. The Mayor's election was held on 8th August 1978 and Muthu was again elected as Mayor by the AIADMK party which gained absolute majority. He served as the Mayor of Madurai up to 6th August 1980. During his second tenure as Mayor, the Municipal Act did not permit him to continue for a long time, meantime he continued as a councilor till his death in 1984¹¹.

Services of Muthu

Muthu had played a vital role in the history of the civic administration in Madurai. As councilor in the beginning, he worked for the people of his ward. As the Mayor of Madurai he devoted himself for providing, civic amenities to the people without having any political discrimination (or) partition attitude. During his first tenure of office as Mayor, two over bridges were constructed one at Subramanyapuram and another at Andalpuram and opened for traffic¹². As a result of his constant efforts to remove water scarcity, Muthu successfully experimented with the 'collector wells' at an estimated cost of Rs.17 lakhs to augment water supply to the city's growing population of about six lakhs¹³.

During his Mayorship the Corporation employees were provided with houses on a rental basis at Gnaanolivupuram, Karumbalai, Mathichiyam, East-market Region, East Madurai and Thathaneri¹⁴. On 27 July 1971 the council decided to give these houses to Corporation Officers and employees on hire purchase system at the cost of Rs.7, 508¹⁵. Muthu also felt the need to construct a separate official buildings for the Madurai Municipal Corporation. For that he worked hard, had talks with the State government and got the permission. The entire construction was done under his direct supervision. It was constructed in the Tallakulam Lake, in an area of twenty two acres of land at a cost of Rs. 70.1 lakhs¹⁶. Thus he fulfilled the long felt need and requirement of the Madurai Corporation when the construction was completed, the corporation office was transferred on 21st December 1975 to the new building which was named 'Aringar Anna Maligai'¹⁷.

Muthu abolished the tax imposed upon the bicycles and this was implemented from 1st April 1972 onwards¹⁸. He brought resolution in the council which ordered that the name boards in the shops, business centers etc. should be written in Tamil also¹⁹. The 12th All India Mayor's Conference was held at Madurai on twelfth and thirteenth December 1973 because of the involvement of Muthu²⁰. It was inaugurated by Honorable K.K Shah the then Governor of Tamil Nadu and presided over by L.M.Patil, the then Mayor of Baroda. The conference was attended by the delegates from seventeen Corporations throughout India. Muthu in his welcome address pleaded for vesting adequate powers in Mayors to enable them to administrate the various services efficiently. This conference was important in many respects. The delegates who attended the conference prepared a uniform model Act for all the municipal corporations of India²¹. The way in which Muthu organized the All India Mayor's Conference won laurels from one and all. He was elected Vice-chairman of the All India Council of Mayors in this conference²². The first tenure of Muthu's Mayorship came to an end on 1 November 1974. In December 1975, Muthu quit the D.M.K and joined the A.I.A.D.M.K due to ideological differences with M.Karunanidhi²³.

Muthu contested the 1978 elections for Madurai Municipal Corporation held on 8 August 1978²⁴. He was elected from the 10th ward and then by his party members, he was elected as Mayor. During the second tenure of Muthu's Mayorship, in 1979 a scheme was implemented to construct a new busstand near the Collectorate, in order to reduce the hardship transportation in the city. The scheme was started with an initial allotment of Rs. 2 lakhs²⁵. In addition, under his Mayorship, Corporation gave much importance for the civic administration through providing protected drinking water supply, laying roads within the city limits, clearing slum areas, constructing and maintaining the corporation buildings, keeping the city clean and beautiful etc., are some of the basic works done by him, we could not assess the services of Muthu briefly. After his second tenure, he continued as member of the council till his death in 1984.

The Mayorship of Muthu in Madurai was a period of primary developments. Muthu as a Mayor earned name and fame through his devoted service to the People of Madurai. Hence as a counselor, Chairman and Mayor, his services to Madurai city are ever memorable. He deserved to be called "His worshipful Mayor". To remember his services, the emblem of Madurai Corporation having five Pears²⁶. Each 'PEARL' translated into Tamil means 'Muthu' which is the noble and honorable name of the first worshipful Mayor. Pearl is much sought after and treasured for its intrinsic value and first Mayor 'Muthu' is ever looked up to extolled for his inherent good nature, inborn skill, sagacity, acumen and administrative abilities. Pearl signifies wealth or value and Mayor Muthu stands for selfless service.

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