

## THE DILEMMA IN TAMILNADU'S POLITICS

ATHUL ARAVIND<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student at Jindal Global Law School, Chennai, Tamilnadu, INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*It is impossible to travel more than a mile in Chennai, without seeing a poster that venerates Amma, often these posters do not venerate Amma for her political work, but rather show her in a light that is almost god like. There are several 'Amma' canteens, shops which sell 'Amma' salt, water, etc. which provide cheaper rates for the enjoyment of the commodity or service and through this 'brand', the word 'Amma' has now become an ideology. Though one cannot take away her efforts at moving the State forward (She has increased the GDP of Tamil Nadu to 976,000 crores, making it the second most productive state ( <http://niti.gov.in/content/gsdp-current-prices-2004-05-series-2004-05-2014-15>) One can only accuse her for the eventual chaos that may consume the state as a result of her propagating cult politics.*

**KEYWORDS:** State Politics, Tamilnadu, Jaylalita (Amma)

The death of Amma will not only be the likely decline of the AIADMK, but will also create a huge political vacuum in the state of Tamil Nadu. She has followed her predecessor MGR's footsteps in propagation of self rather than the party, but Amma has touched the hearts of the masses in a way, few politicians have, and she has not only taken MGR's ideology and made it grow by leaps and bounds. She has also developed her own ideologies.

Amma has not only taken the masses through her powerful speeches, but she has understood the psychology of rural minds. The sale of subsidized products and services in the name of Amma paired with a movie star-esque picture goes a long way. Amma canteens and even Amma water can be found in abundance in Tamil Nadu. By subsidizing the product, she is targeting the low income masses, as the middle class and higher classes, would view these, as an economist would call, an 'inferior' good. By doing this she creates a connection with the low income masses or the poor people. When a poor man buys something as basic as water for as cheap as ten rupees a litre, not only will he be impressed with the availability of such a cheap commodity, he will directly link this feat, not with the government or the party, but with the face on the bottle that is providing him as basic a commodity as water at this cheap rate, and who else to thank than the lady smiling back at you on the bottle. This ensures that a link is created between the mass and Amma, and not AIADMK. A lot of these people don't even throw away

the bottle, and preserve it because of the face on the bottle, as the masses refer to her as 'god'.

When Amma faced a brief spell in prison due to litigation, there were thousands on the street, braving the sun, praying, pleading and even losing their lives for the release of Amma. This shows the loyalty (some would say irrational) and lengths to which Amma followers would go to, even when there is solid evidence that she may be a criminal. The masses cannot believe that such a 'god' can be involved in such criminal activities. This shows the type of loyalty that Amma has built for herself, which puts her in an untouchable position within Tamil Nadu, and she can say or do anything and the public will still roar, cry and give her any sort of reaction that she needs to continue her reign.

In order to cement her position in state politics, her party is molded in such a way, that it suits her interests as well, and again is further cemented because of the power she has gained through the masses. Every MLA that is running for a constituency during an election is hand-picked by Amma. As a result, the source of the MLA's power comes, not from the direct support of the mass as it should, rather the mass supports him or brings him into power because Amma approves of the candidate. It is almost as if the masses trust Amma to keep the MLA's in check, rather than the masses who usually keep a check on the government in a democracy. This would put the MLA's in a tricky situation as they have to adhere to Amma's interest even if, according to them, it goes against

party interest, as his seat could potentially be lost if he questions the might of Amma. In fact, many of the party members also outright call her a 'god'. This is how she turned an entire party into a means to achieve an end.

Through the brand of Amma and her intelligence, there is no doubt that she has developed TN through creating various schemes, such as Farmers security scheme, baby cradle scheme, etc, all of which empower or support masses and have also been followed by other states. All of which can also make you understand why her self proclaimed position as 'mother' of the masses is validated, and why the masses go a step further to call her 'Kadavul', I.e: God. Amma has done a fantastic job in ensuring the present interests of the state, but one can say that by building a government around a brand carrying her name and picture, she has failed to consider the future of Tamil Nadu politics. By consolidating power in her party, with the support of the masses, and a brand that basically runs the state, Amma has engraved herself into Chennai. However, by failing to endorse a successor of the party, and continuing to run Chennai in her name and not the party, is where the problem of the political vacuum stems.

It is no mystery that Amma's health over the past few years haven't been the best, but even with decline of her health, she didn't change her stance in looking for the future of the party, but was still insistent that AIADMK run in her name and continue to propagate her brand. The fact that people knew AIADMK through Amma worked well, as long as Amma lived. The future of AIADMK, however goes as far as Amma, as everything the party has done is to promote the brand of Amma, due to her huge popularity with the masses. AIADMK will have to endure a severe identity crisis, before making a comeback. They will probably complete their term, with just the sheer sympathy that the masses feel towards Amma, but beyond

that is hard to foresee the future of this party, and this is because of the lack of interest that was shown in securing the future of party.

It is obvious that any successor of Amma will have huge shoes to fill, due to her astounding work. But it is impossible to fill these shoes when it is branded 'Amma' with her face on it. The lack of planning for the future, paired with an opposition riddled with family problems and corruption, will create a huge dilemma for the TN voters, and this could've been avoided with just a mere endorsement of an AIADMK worker from Amma. Amma has left an empire with no heir, so one can only wait for the political scramble to begin. She also has the most number of seats (37) from an unaligned party in the parliament, this will keep PM Modi on high alert, as these 37 seats will now be easily accessible. Although they were AIADMK seats, it can now be understood that Amma is more than the party, so maybe a AIADMK-BJP alliance will further strengthen Modi's hold in India, and can use this vacuum in Tamil Nadu to his favor.

The future of Tamil Nadu politics is uncertain due to the death of a colossus, and it will take time to recover from the loss of such a strong and charismatic personality that developed Tamil Nadu and built such a strong relationship with her people. Although, through all this uncertainty, only one thing has become certain. Amma has intelligently built an empire around her name in Tamil Nadu, and the death of Amma will not just the death of a mere politician, but the death of a 'god' who lived for the people.

## REFERENCES

<http://niti.gov.in/content/gsdp-current-prices-2004-05-series-2004-05-2014-15>