



### RAMAKRISHNA PILLAI: AN ICON OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN TRAVANCORE

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#### Abstract:

*Journalism is rapidly evolving with modern technology. In other words, the Journalist's mind is clashing with the complex communication systems. A new weapon in the hands of a war hero, Ramakrishna Pillai's patriotic thunderbolts against corruption, injustice and bribery shook Travancore politics and officials were shocked by its power. The ultimate ideal of the brave patriot who turned his pen into a soldier was to infuse ideas and enthusiasm to a helpless enslaved people and mold of self-respecting and self-reliant new nation. Steadfast in his sacred journalism, he moved the blade of the sword with sharp and subtle strokes of his pen towards a new invisible ruler. Ramakrishna Pillai was the first to bring out Karl Marx's biography in Malayalam.*

**Keywords:** Patriot, Injustice, Corruption, Journalism, Politics.

#### Introduction:

Journalism was still in its infancy in Travancore during this stage K Ramakrishna Pillai, a newspaper editor entered. While studying at Thiruvananthapuram Maharaja's College, he held the editorship of the newspaper *Kerala Darpanam, Kerala, Panchika, Malayali* and *Keralan*. It was when Ramakrishna Pillai wanted him to be the editor of *Swadeshabhimani* owned by Vakkam Maulavi, a famous scholar, Wealthy and reformer of the Muslim community. Maulavi was ready to expand the newspaper by spending huge amount of money. At the same time Ramakrishna Pillai took over the editorship of *Swadeshabhimani*. Ramakrishna Pillai that he would not interfere with the freedom of the editor. It was the beginning of a new era of journalism in Travancore.

Ramakrishana Pillai was born at Neyyattinkara an ancient but small town, twelve miles south of Travancore now a part of Kerala state, on May 25 1878.<sup>1</sup> He had an active presence in the field of social work while still a student. He regularly

wrote articles of contemporary relevance and good literary criticism and had a reputation as a popular writer. Ramakrishna Pillai came to Thiruvananthapuram with the *Swadeshabhimani* paper during the reign of Sreemulam Thirunal Maharaja and Divan Madhava Rao who owned royal ambitions that even split granite. Ramakrishna Pillai was impressed by the journalistic style of Vakkam Abdul Khadar Maulavi, a royal Lover who strongly believed in independent thought after Madhav Rao had changed and Raja Ram Rao took over as Devan.<sup>2</sup>

The revolutionary ideas of Bhagat Singh and Subash Chandra Bose were more acceptable to the revolutionary Ramakrishna Pillai, who cherished the dream of democracy and freedom that the moderate path followed by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian freedom struggle. In many of the articles he wrote during that time, he gave the readers the heat of the revolutionary flame burning inside him. The period in which he lived was the last quarter of the 19th century and the first decade and a half of the 20th

century, which was not the time when political activity was taking place in Travancore or anywhere in Kerala. Although the Indian National Congress was 25 years old when Ramakrishna Pillai was exiled there were no branches of that party in Kerala. It is true that two *Malayalis* were famous as congress workers at that time. They were Sir C. Shankaran Nair from Malabar and Barrister G.P Pillai from Travancore. Shankaran Nair was elected as the president of the congress at the Amaravati conference in 1897. G P Pillai the first Malayali to graduate as a barrister, rose to prominence as a journalist and politician and became a friend of Gandhiji.<sup>3</sup> But Kerala was not the field of activity of both of them. So it can be said that Ramakrishna Pillai was the first political thinker. Perhaps G P Pillai's style of work influenced Ramakrishna Pillai.

Ramakrishna Pillai was a student with a keen interest in world affairs while he was studying B.A at Maharaja's college and his extensive extracurricular reading and familiarity with western History and philosophy made him productive.<sup>4</sup> Through his reading of the struggles of the people and parliament in England to control the power of the king and the American war of Independence, French Revolution and Paris commune. He had a broad understanding International Labour Association. It must be assumed that he read foreign newspapers and magazine to keep abreast of current incidents. During the situation of Travancore deportation.<sup>5</sup> Not only Newspapers, presses, magazines and books but also house was confiscated and sealed his collections of books was lost. So, we cannot understand the

breadth of his reading. No confiscated goods returned whether it is a speech or other articles, Ramakrishna Pillai usually describes national and international events in all his writings. Only he could write passionately in Malayalam about the revolution of 1905 by the people and the workers against the emperor, who often described the dictatorship in Russia and compared it to the rule in Travancore, we can see a democratic political thinker when he justified the revolution by presenting the facts that the emperors rule was dictatorial and corrupt and political thinker advocating for democracy.<sup>6</sup> Even in Britain, the origin of parliamentary democracy, power did not reach the people at that time. It is not trivial to have.

Ramakrishna Pillai's journalism during was carried out the period when the social reform movement had a strong influence and none of the social reformers criticized. The government is the foundation to view that it is a tool to maintain social order and therefore it is necessary to fight against caste discrimination and oppose the state. *Malayalee* Memorial and *Ezhava* Memorial petitions to the Maharaja demanding that educated Malayalees be given jobs in the Travancore Government without social reform movements. But realizing that limitation, it was Ramakrishna Pillai who took the right stand to criticize the memorialists and the government. He asked whether the educated *Malayalis* were eager to serve the government.

Ramakrishna Pillai was a political thinker when he published the biography of Karl Marx.<sup>7</sup> At that time he was able to write an article in Malayalam about Gandhiji's innovative methods of reconciliation in

South Africa and introduce Gandhi to the local people. It is doubtful whether the Indian political agitations which could be brought to India could be suppressed by the chain of ban on public meetings or by deportations etc.<sup>8</sup> In Ramakrishna Pillai we can see a political thinker who is advancing from democracy towards socialism. That is what Karl Marx biography has become clear. Ramakrishna Pillai's work on Karl Marx is the first in Malayalam and the second in India but the first in Indian language is an article published in the magazine "Modern Review" in March 1912.<sup>9</sup> In its Marx is described as a modern sage Hardayal says that many of Karl Marx's theories are impractical.

Ramakrishna Pillai's personal experiences must have made him sympathize with Karl Marx when his biography of Karl Marx was published in Malayalam in August 1912.<sup>10</sup> Both of them were newspaper workers and those who criticized the government and the rulers were excited from there on country. He was aware of the class that get rich by exploiting the surplus labour of the workers.<sup>11</sup>

He was furious and look at what he said: Are the peasants working in the fields increasing their income? *Channans*, Potters and such sculptors increase the country's income, and has their standard of living increased. The rich in urban areas indulge in luxury by building Bungalows. Because they exploit the labour power of the workers and pay them only meagre wages.<sup>12</sup> The result of the labour of the working people accumulates in the pockets of the rich. The evaluates that the

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> Bhaskara Pillai K, *Swadeshabhimani* (Mal.). Kottayam; 1956. P. 3.

capitalist is stealing the surplus value by exploiting the workers. It is not insignificant that the biography of Karl Marx was published in Malayalam five years before the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

But they are all the same and Karl Marx also about socialism to think and write not ready for them. We have to judge that Ramakrishna Pillai was not only a different newspaper editor but also a political thinker. He published seven consecutive articles on socialism and *Atma Poshini* magazine published from Kunnankulam.<sup>14</sup> It deals with a variety of socialism. It can be assumed from this that he was mentally adapted to the political concept of socialism. Ramakrishna Pillai was also an agitator. In October the year after his death, the soviet revolution took place and the first socialist state was born.

#### Conclusion:

*Swadeshabhimani* Ramakrishna Pillai has played a tremendous role in Malayalam journalism. He holds a prominent and equal position in the line of freedom fighters who gave shape and forms new Kerala. He fearlessly fought against *darma* and injustice in brave and fearless actions. He was the first Martyr of Malayalam Journalism. It was the faith of the *Swadeshabhimani* Newspaper owner Vakkam Abdul Khadar Maulavi and his family Ramakrishna Pillai and the acceptance of the newspaper by the public. A philosopher of intellectual development and a prophet of the times to come. He was proud to fight injustice and inequality without patriotism.

- <sup>2</sup> Dr. Jamal Muhammad T, Swadeshabhimani Vakkom Maulavi (Mal.). Trivandrum; 2010. P. 123.
- <sup>3</sup> Malayinkizhu Gopalakrishnan, GP Pillai Mahatma Gandhikku Margadarshiyaya Malayali (Mal.). Kochi; 2007. P.15.
- <sup>4</sup> Kalyani Amma, Vyazhavatta Smaranakal (Mal.). Thrissur; 1958. P. 17.
- <sup>5</sup> Swadeshabhimani, Ente Nadukadathal(Autobiography) (Mal.). Kottayam;1911. P. 40.
- <sup>6</sup> Ramakrishnan Nair R. The Political Idea of Swadeshabhimani K Ramakrishna Pillai. Trivandrum; 1875. P. 5.
- <sup>7</sup> Ramakrishna Pillai, Karl Marx (re print). Trivandrum; 2015. P. 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Nayanar EK. Ente Pathrapravarthananubhavanagal (Mal.). Trivandrum; 1975. P. 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Joshi PC and Damodaran K. Marx comes to India. New Delhi; 1975. P. 6.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Sen and Ghosh. Communist movement in India: Historical Perspective and Important Document. Vol I. Patna; 1991. P. 19.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Kizhkkemuri DC. Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai (Mal.). Trivandrum; 2000. P. 35.
- <sup>14</sup> Damodaran K. Swadeshabhimani (Mal.). Trivandrum; 1978. P. 46.