



Veeran Sundaralingam transport name problem in Sivakasi

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Introduction

Tamil society mostly based on the caste system. Most of the political system also based on the caste system. At that time, the Tamil Nadu government gave the names of the freedom fighters to the districts and bus transport corporations. For example The Kamaraj district of Virudhunagar district was also known as the Rani Mangamal Transport Corporation for Madurai Transport Corporation. Similarly, Tamilnadu government named the Transport Corporation in Virudhunagar district as Veeran Sundaralingam Transport Corporation. The upper caste thought it was too great a bounty of the Government to the *Dalits* and so they rose in revolt. So the upper caste people opposed and not go to the bus. The miscreants among them threw stones on the corporation buses. Following this incident, the *Thevar peravai* called for a total *banth*.

The problem was erupted in southern Tamil Nadu as a major struggle, with gunfire in many places. Violence, protests and shootings were also conducted in Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district.



History of Veeran Sundaralingam Transport name

Veeran Sundaralingam, who a *Dalit* who was a commander of the army of Veerapandiya Kattabomman (a local chieftain lived in the late 19th Century). The Government Order was issued by the Government of Tamil Nadu on 28.11.95¹ in the name of Sundaralingam Transport Corporation. However, it was impossible to implement for a long time. Thus the Devendra Gula Velalar Community people staged a protest in the Virudhunagar district on 16.04.97². Because of this incident, the name of the Tamil Nadu Government Sundaralingam Transport Corporation came into existence. From this on 29th April 1997³ the new Corporation commenced its operation in the name of M/s Veeran Sundaralingam Transport Corporation Ltd, (Presently TNSTC Madurai Ltd, Virudhunagar Region), having its Head Quarters at Virudhunagar with 352 buses with effect from 01.05.97⁴. Subsequently the name of Pandiyan Roadways Corporation Ltd was changed to Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (Madurai Division) LTD⁵.

History of Sivakasi

Sivakasi, also known as petty Japan of India called by Javaharlal Nehru, is in the Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu. Sivakasi is located at 9.45°N 77.8167°E and has an average elevation of 101 metres (331 feet)⁶. This town is known for its firecracker, matchbox and printing industries. The industries in Sivakasi employ over 2,50,000 people with an estimated turnover of ₹20 billion. Sivakasi was established in the 15th century during the reign of the Pandya king Harikesari Parakkirama Pandian. The town was a part of Madurai empire and has been ruled at various times by the Later Pandyas, Vijayanagar Empire, Madurai Nayaks, Chanda Sahib, Carnatic



kingdom and the British. A major riot during the British Raj took place in 1899. According to the Census of 1991, there were 1,55,282 people in the Sivakasi Panchayat Union. Of these, 29,152 are in scheduled caste people in this division⁷.

Problem of Veeran Sundaralingam Transport Corporation in Sivakasi

Devendra Kula Velalars community people welcomed Veeran Sundaralingam Transport Corporation named buses. They were thought the Government's gesture as a great honour to their caste and to express their happiness. They decorated the buses of the corporation and received the crew of the buses with shawls. But other caste people were not like the bus name of Veeran Sundaralingam Transport Corporation. They were contemptuous about climbing the bus in the name of a depressed person. Mainly Devar Caste people avoided climbing in it but also to fight against the bus coming into their villages. So when the bus arrived, they were throwing stones and blocking it. On 1st May 1997⁸, this problem was first held at Vembakottai in Virudhunagar district. Veeran Sundaralingam bus names were destroyed and bus glasses were broken. There was a huge riot in the Katamannur area in Theni district. Krishnaswamy, who was in Adipatti village, was prevented from going to Adipatti and was arrested. This incident was a major violent incident throughout Tamil Nadu⁹.

On 4th May 1997 the Paraiyar people of Sivagamippuram in Sivakasi came under the stroke of the shop, Karuppaiya were attacked by this incident. Two do this Munusamy, Muthuu, Chandrasekaran and Mariyappan were arrested¹⁰. Due to this incident, on 5th May 1997 Murugan and his TVS-50 were



attacked by Devar people¹¹. These issues were concluded after Krishna Swamy's released.

Shooting in Sivakasi

In eighteen villages surrounding of Sivakasi, there are a lot of Maravar people in other villages except Pallippatti. On May 7, Veeran Sundaralingam went on a rally to petition to the transport officer of Sivakasi division should not come into their villages and that it should be stopped entirely¹². The police immediately rushed to leave the demonstration. That was one of them agreed, so the police were returned. But the process was not as acceptable as another.

As planned, 18 people gathered from their villages and gathered at the Boganadapuram lamp. From there, more than 6,000 people flocked to the Sivakasi Deputy Collector's office in the morning. The police who were less than a hundred could not stop them. Top police officers including Mr. P. Kalimuthu (I.G), Mr. Dharmarajan (DIG of Ramanathapuram range) Mr. Tripathi (SP), were present. But the crowd was in no mood to listen to their pleas against a procession¹³.

In began attacking police vehicles, some among the processionists attacked Mr. R. Prabhakaran (Sub – Inspector of thiruthangal) and four other policemen with deadly weapons. All the five men sustained cut injuries. Meanwhile another group entered the quarters of the armed reserve policemen, which was on the procession route and indulged in violence. The occupants of these houses ran helter skelter and some houses were heavily damaged by the processionists who were carrying crowbars, wooden logs, tub lights etc¹⁴.



Finding the situation getting out of control, Mr. Govindarajan (RDO) ordered the police to open fire. Two rounds were fired and five among the crowd were injured, one of them died on the spot and two others in the hospital here later. The other two injured were taken to the government hospital at Virudhunagar and later admitted at Madurai government Rajaji Hospital. The three killed have been identified as C. Muthuramalingam (22) of Enjaru, Krishnan (35) of S. Pudupatti and Ramar (45) of Vadapatti. The two injured person have been identified Veerapandi (30) of Namaskarithanpatti and Sivanraj (22) of Vadapatti¹⁵.

Newsmen attacked

News of police firing reached members resorted to road blockades in various parts of Sivakasi and its outskirts affecting road traffic. At Thiruthangal, a violent mob armed with deadly weapons attacked news men of a Tamil Daily who returning after gathering news from Sivakasi firing area. The windshield of the car was broken and photographer Azhagusundaram sustained head injuries and a reporter Dhanaraj was hit in the stomach with iron rods¹⁶. Police sources said that around 150 person have been arrested and added that addition police forces are being deployed in Sivakasi¹⁷.

Results of Sivakasi Shooting

After the hearing of Sivakasi guns, the struggle erupted in many places, including Sattur, Srivilliputhur, Rajapalayam, Koilavilpatti, Virudhunagar, Thoothukudi and Madurai¹⁸. The Tamil Nadu government banned the leaders of Pallar community and leaders of Maravar community to enter Sivakasi¹⁹. A total of 3 lakh militants were damaged in Sivakasi. Both community people



clashed in many places. So the police department were suppressed with lathi charch. The biggest challenge to the Tamil Nadu government was to contain this. The Tamil Nadu government gave Rs 1 lakh relief to those who died in gunshot wounds. 50 thousand rupees were paid to the victims. Judge to inquire into guns Dhanraj was appointed by the UDF²⁰.

Conclusion

Prior to the name of Sundaralingar to the transport corporation, the names of many freedom fighters were distributed to the transport Corporations and Districts. There was no struggle and violence. But Sundaralingar was a descendant of the other class because it was the other class. The disadvantaged sections of the area surrounding the Sivakasi are so much that there are a lot of struggles and violence, and damages. The inquiry commission investigating the gunfire also said that the police had been shot dead. These struggles ended after sundaralingam transport corporation name removed.

End Notes

1. *Report of Dhanaraj* Former Judge of High Court, p2
2. *Hindu*, Daily newspaper, dated 17.04.97 , p6
3. *G.O MS No.100* dated 29.04.1997.
4. *Daily thanthi (T)*, dated 01.05.1997
5. *TamilNadu State Transport Corporation Madurai)Ltd,Report*, Madurai p9
6. *Report of Sivakasi Municipality, History of Sivakasi*, 2012, p 5.
7. *Census report of Kamaraj District*, 1991, p24-27
8. Report of People's Watch, *Communal clash of Southern Tamil Nadu*, p 6
9. *Ibid*, p 7



10. *Cr.No. 200/97 Sivakasi town Police Station u/s Accidental fall 341,321 IPC*
11. *Cr.No. 284/97 Sivakasi east Police Station u/s Accidental fall 341,321 IPC.*
12. *Indian Express*, Daily Newspaper, Dated 08.05.1997.
13. *Cr.No. 203/97 Sivakasi town Police Station u/s Accidental fall 147,148,324,342& 307 IPC.*
14. *The Hindu*, Daily Newspaper, Dated 08.05.1997.
15. *Report of Dhanaraj* Former Judge of High Court, p2
16. *Thina thanthi (T)*, Daily Newspaper, Dated 08.05.1997.
17. *Thina Malar (T)*, Daily Newspaper, Dated 08.05.1997.
18. Report of People's Watch, *Communal clash of Southern Tamil Nadu*, pp 18-27
19. *The Hindu*, Daily Newspaper, Dated 08.05.1997.
20. *Thina Thanthi (T)*, Daily Newspaper, Dated 17.05.1997.