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## SWAMI SAHAJANANDA – FATHER FIGURE OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES IN MADRAS LEGISLATURE

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The purpose of this paper is to draw attention on the dedicated life and selfless legislative services rendered by Swami Sahajananda for the welfare and elevation of the depressed people in Tamil Nadu. Swami Sahalananda as like that of the other depressed class leaders sacrificed his entire life for the upliftment of depressed class people and for the eradication of the social evils connected with them for a long time. As a Congressman, he believed in non-violent methods to attain social liberation of his people from the age long slavery. As a legislative member, he pleaded for more educational facilities and better living conditions for the depressed class people. Irrespective caste, personally he cultivated good relation with high caste leaders like V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and Thiru. Vi.Ka. His legislative debates paved the way for the gradual liberation of the depressed people from the clutches of poverty, ignorance, age old superstitions and backward thinking.

### **Fiirnily Life**

Swami Sahajananda was born on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1890 in a family of three sisters and a brother of Melpudupakkam, a small village near Arni in the erstwhile North Arcot district, at present the Vellore district.<sup>1</sup> He belonged to a poor Adi-Dravida community and named as Munisamy by his parents, Annanialai and Alamelurnangai Ammal. He completed his elementary education in the Arcot Mission Primary School at Melpudupakkam and had his high school education at a Christian Mission School in Tindivanam in 1901. The teachers astonished over his interest in study and called him as 'Sihamani'.<sup>2</sup> They tried to convert him into Christianity but Munuswamy due to his staunch faith in Hinduism did not yield to conversion activities. In 1903 his family was forced to move from Tindivanam to Kolar in search of livelihood. His family came to his native place in 1905.

### **Saninthood**

He became an ardent follower of Neelamega Swamigal of Murugapattu village near his native place. In 1906, when he was sixteen years old, he renounced family life and became a *sadhu* and led an ascetic life. At Vyasarpadi near Madras he became the disciple of Karpathira Sivaprakasa Swamigal and the latter canonized Munusami as Sahajananda which means one who is always associated and acquainted with almighty. He became a Vaisimavite and came to be known as Swami Sahajananda.<sup>4</sup>

### **Entry Into Social Work**

After became a preacher he came to Chidambaram otherwise called Thillai in 1910 and began to live on the banks of Omakkulam tank. There he came to know the sacrosanct life of Saint Nandanar and the sanctity of Omakkulam tank. He deeply immersed in the ideas of Nandanar, an Adi-Dravida sanit He called the depressed Class people who lived around for a mass holy dip in the Omakkulam Tank as it was done by Nandanar.<sup>5</sup> He established the Nandanar mutt on the banks of the Omakkulam