

POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF REPIEL THENNAKOON

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This study aims to identify the political attitudes of Repiel Thennakoon to ascertain whether his position would have been similar to that of the founder of the Helahawla Movement, Kumaratunga Munidasa, who rejected politics. Thennakoon is considered to be a historian with a deep knowledge of history. Thus the study further attempts to investigate his views and attitude towards the history of politics in ancient Sri Lanka. Thennakoon was branded as a socialist possibly due to society's misinterpretation of his creations. This study provides his attitudes towards the ancient kings and officers, the weaknesses of political franchisers from 1925 to 1965, Buddhist monks, socialism and capitalism. Although he is believed to be a great poet of the Helahawla Movement, his creations and political attitudes have not yet been investigated. The study in effect is a library research, and its primary sources include twenty books of poetry written by Thennakoon out of which one was an unpublished *Sandesha Kawya* that was revealed during the study. Additionally, his prose work entitled *Seyawa* and *Gemi Bana 1, 2, 3* are also crucial for understanding his political attitudes before 1948 apart from other secondary sources of significance. The political attitudes of other poets like Kumarathunga Munidasa and Sebihela were important in investigating the political background of Helahawla. The study shows that Thennakoon was an independent thinker. Political malpractices such as propagandist strategies, to win by any means, manipulation and harassment of the public, and empty words and processes that prevailed in the political arena are revealed in his poetry. It is also a resource on social injustice, unequal distribution of wealth and the class struggle. He thus longs for the past and idealizes kingship or at least the rule of the educated as a means to alleviating the suffering of the people at the hands of corrupt leaders. In conclusion, the study reveals that Thennakoon's political attitudes stand opposed to the existing political system. He identified kingship as a far more suitable political system to free the nation from western influence. According to him it is better to select rulers by traditional means than the democratic vote.

Keywords: Repiel Thennakoon, Helahawla Movement, Sri Lankan Poets