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V. K. Palanisamy Gounder (28 February 1899 – 28 July 1971) was an Indian politician, freedom fighter, and social reformer from the Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. He was a prominent member of the Indian National Congress and held several political offices, including Member of the Madras Legislative Assembly, Chairman of the Coimbatore Zilla Board, and Deputy Chairman of the Madras Legislative Council. He is particularly noted for his role in the conception and implementation of the Parambikulam–Aliyar Project (PAP), a major irrigation scheme that transformed agriculture in the region. For this contribution, he is popularly known as the "Father of the Parambikulam–Aliyar Project".^[1]

Early life and education

Palanisamy Gounder was born on 28 February 1899 in Vettaikaranpudur, Coimbatore district, to R. P. Karuppa Gounder and Vellaiammal. He had six brothers and two sisters, and received his early education in Srirangam. Following the death of his father, he returned to his hometown and took charge of the family's affairs.

Political career

Early activism and local governance

Motivated by the cause of Indian independence, Palanisamy Gounder joined the Indian National Congress in his youth. He was elected as a member of the Pollachi Taluk Board and, in 1933, founded the Pollachi Land Development Bank, serving as its chairman for 36 years until 1969. During the freedom struggle, he participated in the Individual Satyagraha of 1940, for which he was arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Legislative and Zilla Board roles

In 1937, he was elected to the Madras Provincial Legislative Assembly. Two years later, in 1939, he became Chairman of the Coimbatore Zilla Board, holding the position until 1953. At the time, the Zilla Board's jurisdiction included present-day Coimbatore, Erode, Tiruppur, Nilgiris, and Kollegal (now in Karnataka). He promoted education by establishing schools in all villages under his administration.

Post-independence career

After independence, Palanisamy Gounder was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in 1952 from the Coimbatore–Koilpalayam constituency. On 4 May 1957, he was elected to the Madras Legislative Council and served as its Deputy Chairman for about 12 years, from 1957 to 1969. In 1955, he

was appointed by the central government as a member of the National Oilseeds Committee.

Parambikulam–Aliyar Project

Palanisamy Gounder's most significant contribution was the Parambikulam–Aliyar Project.

- **Initial proposal:** In his first speech in the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1937, he highlighted drought conditions in the Pollachi region and proposed diverting waters of the west-flowing Parambikulam River to irrigate the arid areas.
- **Advocacy and feasibility:** He repeatedly raised the issue, persuading Chief Minister K. Kamaraj and Irrigation Minister Kakkan to commission a feasibility study by engineer Anand Rao. Palanisamy Gounder and Anand Rao surveyed the region and submitted a favorable report.
- **Implementation and inauguration:** Construction of the Parambikulam Dam began in 1956, and the project was inaugurated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1957, with support from C. Subramaniam and Arutselvar N. Mahalingam. The Aliyar Dam, another key component, was built between 1957 and 1962 and inaugurated by Kamaraj.
- **Impact and legacy:** The project now irrigates around 400,000 acres. Due to his role, he is honored as the "Father of the Parambikulam–Aliyar Project".

Philanthropy and religious life

In 1931, he established the Azhukku Samiyar temple in Vettaikaranpudur and built a *samadhi* (tomb) for the saint. He served as hereditary trustee for the Arulmigu Deivakulam Kalamman Temple and four other temples, donating about 42 acres of land to them.

Death

Palanisamy Gounder died on 28 July 1971.

References

1. "Projects to honour stalwarts of Parambikulam Aliyar Project" (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/projects-to-honour-stalwarts-of-parambikulam-aliyar-project/article36442924.ece>). *The Hindu*. 14 September 2021. Retrieved 13 August 2025.

See also

- Pollachi
- K. Kamaraj

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