Chapter Five

Contesting Nationalism, Fashioning a "Dravidian" Constituency: The Non-Brahmin Journal

If it is true that India became a nation because of Hinduism, if one were to accept that religion is of prime importance to a nation, then would India be a nation for Muslims, Christians and Parsis? On what basis should they consider India a nation? (Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal Volume 2, 1974: 651)

What is the basis for the statement that India is a nation? When was this country named India? What are its borders? Burma became a separate country last year. Sri Lanka became separate before that. Malaya was born before Sri Lanka. And before Malaya, Nepal and Bhutan were formed. Gandharam and Kabul (Afghanistan) preceded these two countries. How many countries have been joined together; how many partitioned! Given such a situation, what constitutes a motherland? ... I fail to understand why the Dravidian people of the Tamil country should consider India their motherland. Why should we desire to place all of India under the same umbrella? (Paautharivu Volume 3, Issue 6; Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal Volume 2, 1974: 650)

Even as Kalki was being praised and canonized by upper caste critics and audiences for his passionately nationalist writings, complex and fascinating alternate theories of the nation were beginning to emerge in the first half of the twentieth century in Tamilnadu with the non-Brahmin movement or the Dravidian movement. As a radical counter to the dominant ideologies set in place by nationalism, this movement, particularly in its early Self-Respect phase, questioned the ways in which the lower castes (the Dravidians, in the context of Tamilnadu) were systematically excluded from the Indian nation and constructed as the others of
the normative Indian self, the upper-caste Aryan. A "Dravidian" nation and a Dravidian cultural identity were imagined as points of emotional and political identification for all non-Aryans, that is, non-Brahmins, the lower castes and non-Hindu religious minorities. The influential founder-leader of the self-respect movement, EV Ramasami Naicker (popularly known as Periyar), lays out the term "Dravidian" in clear terms:

...Muslims, Christians, the depressed classes of people, those non-Brahmin Hindus who do not call themselves Aryans can all be classified as Dravidians. (Kudi Arasu 26-11 1939; Periyar E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal Volume 2, 1974; 655).

One of the most significant thrusts of the Dravidian movement, especially in its Self-Respect phase, was the creation of a specifically Dravidian press as a counter to the upper-caste nationalist "mainstream" press represented by newspapers such as Sudesanmitran and The Hindu and magazines such as Kalki (see Appendix 1 a & b). It would be instructive therefore to look at the actual processes by which this specifically non-Brahmin press is fashioned. To do this however, it becomes necessary to locate this press in relation to what was perceived as the "Brahmin press" and its nationalist agenda. The creation of a non-Brahmin press was part of a much larger political process by which a non-Brahmin "Tamil" identity was fashioned. Tied to this new identity were issues of language, culture, religion and even indigenous medicine. In order to understand better the processes by which such an identity formation took place, it becomes necessary to
lay out at some length both the history as well as the ideological necessity for the Dravidian movement.

Historians and political theorists such as Eugene Irschick, E.Sa Viswanathan, P.Rajaraman, Nambi Arooran, Nicholas Dirks, C.J Baker and M.R Barnett have dealt extensively with various aspects of the Dravidian movement. The Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution has published biographies of Periyar by Sami Chidambaram (1939), K.M Balasubramaniam (1947) and by "an admirer" in 1962. While these are very useful in terms of the detailed information they provide about Periyar's life and political career, they tend to read like hagiographies and fail to provide an analytical framework for the ideology of the Self-Respect movement. Recent times have been witness to a resurgence of scholarly interest both in the Dravidian movement and specifically in Periyar and the Self-Respect movement. Such interest has often been directed at reading the regressive political climate of the day against the radical political promise of the Dravidian movement. The destruction of the Babri Masjid justified by the exponents of Hindutva under the name of true nationalism, a growing Hindu fundamentalism in Tamilnadu especially after the Jayalalitha government came to power in 1991 and the agitation by upper-caste youth across the country against the Mandal commission's recommendations account for many of these recent re-readings of the Dravidian movement. Critics such as M.s.s Pandian, V.Geetha and S.V Rajadurai have, in different ways, not only contributed to a richer understanding of the radical potential of the Dravidian movement, they have also highlighted its impor-
tance and relevance for the present.² Most of the scholarship on
the Dravidian movement in its Self-Respect phase has tended to
centre around the crucial role that Periyar played both as the
founding leader and ideologue of the Self-Respect movement as
well as his more overtly "political" connections, initially with
the Indian National Congress and later with the Justice Party
which represented the interests of the non-Brahmins in South
India. S.V Rajadurai and V.Geetha's book Perivar: Suyamariyadai
samadham (Perivar: Self-respect Socialism) published in 1996,
is the most recent instance of "Periyar Studies" which, in many
ways, has come to constitute an important area of research, a
discipline almost. In their introduction to this meticulously
researched book which runs to over 800 pages, the authors argue
that it is important to assess the contribution of Periyar and
the Self-Respect movement launched by him and to locate it within
the larger political matrix of his times (1996: iv). They draw
extensively on some of Periyar's writings published in the Self-
Respect movement journals such as Kudi Arasu in order to document
its political and ideological history. Focussing on Periyar's
political career, they skillfully situate the Self-Respect move-
ment in relation to a Congress-led nationalism.

In many of the studies on the Dravidian movement, Periyar is
represented and lionised as the chief ideologue and moving force
behind the Self-Respect movement. Given the extent of his in-
fluence and the originality and breadth of his vision, this is
not very surprising. To anticipate the thrust of my own argu-
ments in this chapter, Periyar does seem larger than life given
the various ways in which he energized the Self-Respect movement.
Arguably, he did more for the shaping of a radical non-Brahmin identity than any other figure in Tamil history. Looking at his political career and at the movement that he shaped, and the non-Brahmin public sphere which he helped fashion through his journals becomes especially crucial in a political climate created by the anti-Mandal agitation and Hindutva, the Dravidian movement is either misrepresented or, simply, made invisible.

The Dravidian Movement in Upper-Caste Representations

Any history of the Dravidian movement would be incomplete without a reference to its reception within an upper-caste nationalist matrix, a matrix which the political energies of the movement disturbed profoundly. Upper-caste re-tellings of the Dravidian movement almost invariably centre around its promotion of atheism and its anti-Hindi stance, depending on literal readings of these positions. In these dominant upper-caste narratives, the people involved in this particular agitation and, by extension, in the Dravidian movement, emerge as lumpens, virulent atheists, misguided linguistic chauvinists or as anti-nationalists. As C.S Lakshmi has pointed out, in at least two novels, Padaniali and Pudumai Koil, Vai.Mu Kodainayaki ammal attacks the Self-Respect movement by critiquing the atheism of her characters (1984: 192-193).

Interestingly, an anti-Dravidian movement narrative circulates even in that supposedly apolitical and insular disciplinary space, English literary criticism! In this case, the narrative which originates from a position of cultural indigenism reduces
the Dravidian movement to an anti-Hindi agitation. This position of cultural indigenism, an influential position within New Delhi academic circuits best represented by Harish Trivedi and Badri Raina, is tied to dominant narratives of nationhood. Trivedi claims that at least the academic answer to the problem of an alien language and literature lies in replacing the canon of Western literary texts with the work of Hindi writers who have 'made the most searching, fertile, and creative use of English literature and then in due course gone on to liberate themselves from this historically necessary but now also historically exhausted stimulus'(1991, 202-203). Raina is less subtle:

It is just as well to recognize that ultimately the best (if also the only) argument on behalf of Hindi is that half the country's population is already functional in it. Despite the fact that politics in the southern states has so often organized itself as an opposition to Hindi, there is evidence that owing to the fall-out from a largely self-propelled dynamics (and to such market phenomena as the Hindi cinema), the younger generations among southern populations have not only acquired some Hindi but a conviction about its inevitability. (Raina 1991: 294)

My response to Raina is, "These "younger generations among southern populations' clearly know to whom the Indian nation belongs"! By attempting to establish that Hindi is a language acceptable to the younger generation, if not to its elders, Raina codes it as a contemporary modern language. Hindi, though for different reasons and to a different degree from English, has also been accorded the status of the "modern" even as it retains its status of "national" language. What is
also interesting in Raina's text is a certain upper-caste, modern re-telling of Dravidian politics manifested in his trivialization of the anti-Hindi agitation which he locates firmly in the past. For Raina, the present modern generation has acquired a "conviction" about the "inevitability" of Hindi and so all is well. He thus sets up a historical model which works to legitimize a certain hierarchy of languages, with South Indian languages at the lower end and Hindi at the top.

A 1995 news item in the *Hindu* once again draws our attention to the dominant academic construction of Hindi as the appropriate national language:

The former Vice-chancellor of Ujjain University, Dr. Shivamangal Singh "Suman" expressed concern over the "growing dominance" of English in the country, affecting the interests of other languages.

He regretted that even after 50 years of independence, the country did not have a national language. The "undue importance" attached to English created a situation wherein the number of convent schools in the country was much more than what it was in England...

Dr. Singh was addressing the 59th annual convocation of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha here.

Hindi, being simple and easy to learn, deserved to be declared the national language, he said. Many eminent people had said that the language could be used to popularize Vedic thoughts among vast sections of people.

("Concern over growing 'dominance' of English" *The Hindu* May 15, 1995.)

The Dravidian movement which sought, among other things, to question the upper-caste interests at work behind the construction of Hindi as a national language, has been described repeatedly as "anti-national" and expressive of a narrow linguis-
tic chauvinism. As M.S.S Pandian has argued, within the framework of nationalist politics, what is perceived as the "linguistic insubordination" of Tamilnadu "gets written as 'chauvinistic', 'fissiparous' and 'divisive'" ("Towards National-Popular: Notes on Self-Respecters' Tamil": 1996, 3323). Pandian contends here that Tamil 'emerged within the discursive field of the early Dravidian movement as a site for a 'national-popular' project by encompassing a range of democratic concerns connected with caste, gender and region, and involving different subaltern groups" (1996:3323). Elsewhere, Pandian cites the ex-Chief Election Commissioner T.N Seshan's characterization of the anti-Hindi agitation as anti-national, as "a fissiparous agitation in the name of language", supported by the CIA, in which "unruly mobs" of "illiterate and semi-literate Tamil people" participated (Seshan; An Intimate Story. cited by Pandian 1994, 6). Tamil "mobs", Seshan declares, could be "particularly irascible" and their slogans "rabid" (Pandian 1994, 6). He defends and celebrates police violence against agitators in Kamban town with great glee:

[The armed policemen] were to storm into every house and drive out all the women into the nearby paddy fields. A secure police ring was welded around them when their menfolk screamed from a distance. Not one was spared. Every able-bodied adult was thrashed, leaving in his memory the scar of a scourge of which he was as much a part as were others. (Pandian 1994: 6)

Pandian argues that the anti-Hindi protesters were both "democratic" and "inclusive" in their demands for a multi-lingual
movement and therefore ill-deserve their dismissal by T.N Seshan as "unruly mobs". The protesters sought to get the status of official language not only for Tamil but also for the other languages of the Indian union. They drew support therefore from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore as well. To quote Pandian again:

[Their] demand, though confined to the issue of the official language of the Indian Union, involved an alternative way of imagining the nation. They desired a nation which would not erase the cultural particularities of different people who constitute the nation, but would accommodate and foster such differences. (Pandian 1994, 6)

For the Dravidian movement, Tamil was an important bearer of a non-Brahmin/Dravidian identity. It would be simplistic to read the upholding of a Tamil identity over and above every other identity as "Tamil-centrism" or as an instance of linguistic chauvinism. This is true especially of the Self-Respect phase, wherein "Dravidian-ness" was constructed as a political identity meant to include all the non-Brahmins, the Muslims and the Christians of South India. It was not merely an "ethnic" or linguistic identity. There is more to agitations "in the name of language" than just language. The Dravidian movement's anchoring of its anti-Aryan, anti-upper-caste politics around the question of Tamil is an important case in point. The recovery and a constructive re-reading of the Dravidian movement would have important resonances for our present context, faced as we are with Hindu majoritarianism (of which Hindi is often a symbol) and the increasing hegemony of the English-educated Indian middle class.
The Justice Party and the Birth of the Non-Brahmin Movement

A deepening disillusionment on the part of a large and articulate section of non-Brahmins in South India, primarily the land-owning Vellalas and the Chetti merchant elite, with what they could not but recognize as the pro-brahmin politics of the Congress and Gandhi's own complicity with it, led to the birth of the Justice Party in 1916 and to the launching of the Self-Respect movement a decade later. The Self-Respect movement cannot be understood in isolation from the other major phases of the Dravidian movement, particularly the Justice Party phase which preceded it. As we shall soon see, despite his differences with the Justice Party, Periyar continued to support it politically. In order to understand the ideological underpinnings of the journals which appeared in the wake of the Self-Respect movement, it becomes necessary to explore the political and ideological contexts of the Dravidian movement as a whole.

The early phase of the Dravidian movement which sought to challenge and critique Aryan-Brahmin supremacy was marked by the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) or the Justice Party (as it later came to be known) in 1916. The formation of the Justice Party signals the genesis of the Dravidian movement in South India. In his work on the Justice Party, the historian P.Rajaraman describes the various factors responsible for the birth of the Justice Party (1988). As he has argued, the superior position accorded to the Brahmans in the Hindu ritual hierarchy which meant that they could treat the non-Brahmins as
their social inferiors, the preponderance of Brahmins in the civil services, in the Legislative Council, in Annie Beasant's Home Rule League as well as in the Madras Provincial Congress Committee, the dominance of the politically influential Brahmins of the Mylapore clique, the Brahmin monopoly of the press, the manner in which all the non-Brahmin castes in South India were automatically classified as Sudras, the defeat of the non-Brahmin leaders in the 1916 elections to the Imperial Legislative Council as well as a resurgence of interest in Tamil language and literature, all these acted as triggers for the formation of the Justice Party.

The party had as its aim the protection of the socio-political interests of the non-Brahmin community. The non-Brahmin castes who amounted to nearly 97% of the total population of Madras Presidency were educationally and often financially backward when compared with the Brahmins who dominated the spheres of education and government service. The Brahmins monopolized more than 50 percent of the places in public services. P.Rajaraman has shown that while the leading non-Brahmins, the Chettis, Balija Naidus, Nairs and Nadars attained a noticeable degree of progress in education, they were far behind the Brahmins where English education was concerned (1988: 50). A knowledge of English was considered absolutely necessary for government service, teaching and politics. In 1921, most banks employed Telugu or Tamil Brahmins. Public administration and law was also dominated by Tamil Brahmins, followed by the Vellalas and Telugu Brahmins.

Where the political sphere was concerned, the Brahmins
continued to exercise great influence. In Madras city, a group of politicians known as the Mylapore clique and led by V.Krishnasmami Iyer were extremely powerful, as was another group called the Egmore group of which C.Sankaran Nair, T.Rangachari, Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar and T.M Nair were prominent members. Both these groups were affluent and educated. At the turn of the century, the influence of the Mylapore group was on the ascendant. Some of the members of this group had become judges in the Madras High Court, some were honorary members of the Legislative Council. They were often part of commissions appointed by the government and were a powerful voice in the Senate of the University of Madras. The Mylapore group also replaced some of the local merchants and contractors. They formed a society for temple reform and influenced the courts to appoint them as members of the managing committee of some of the richest temples in the province.

Between 1910 and 1920 the Madras Legislative Council was dominated by the Brahmins. A non-Brahmin had little chance of getting elected where the electorate was largely Brahmin. As P.Rajaraman points out, Brahmin supremacy was also visible from the composition of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee between 1914 and 1915 (1988: 54). Non-Brahmins were practically excluded from the All India Congress Committee too. The Home Rule League started by Annie Besant was dominated by Brahmins. The Mylapore clique wholeheartedly supported her and the non-Brahmins once again found themselves excluded from the League. As we shall see in the next chapter, the press too was dominated by the Brahmins.
The non-Brahmin movement was partly inspired by the work of a number of nineteenth century European and Indian scholars who argued that the non-Brahmins or "Dravidians" were the original inhabitants of the region and that they had been conquered by Brahmin/Aryan invaders from the North. These invaders had then imposed on the Dravidians a caste system by which the latter's subjugation had been naturalized. The Brahmin-Aryans were understood to be the guardians of "northern Sanskrit". As we shall see later, Hindi as a language that borrowed heavily from Sanskrit came in for sharp attacks from those protesting against Brahmin supremacy. The anti-upper-caste politics of the Dravidian movement then came to be articulated in terms of a "separate race" theory. Tied to this theory, was the necessity to recreate a "Tamil culture" distinct from the Sanskrit-Aryan culture. Efforts to fashion a "pure Tamil" got underway. The practice of replacing Sanskrit-based personal names with Tamil names dates to this period. Around this time, efforts were made by various Tamil and English scholars, some of whom were Christian missionaries, to unearth the "Tamil" past and to explicate Tamil language, literature and culture.5

English scholars and missionaries were part of a larger colonial enterprise with an interest in representing the "Orient". The colonial state attempted to categorize and hierarchize "India" and "Hinduism" and to offer a specifically evolutionary theory of Indian history. In fact, the two races theory (Aryan and Dravidian) which was used in interesting ways by the non-Brahmin movement to articulate a non-Brahmin identity
politics, was a product of these attempts. As Sumathi Ramaswamy has argued, colonial texts on "Dravidian" history often produced "Dravidian" culture and religion as "barbaric" and "superstitious", as opposed to the relatively superior "Aryan" religion which was supposed to be more "sophisticated" (1992: 64-65). With the Portuguese conquest of South West India, Jesuit missionaries who began to establish schools and make converts also began to study and explicate the Tamil language. Various Tamil literary associations succeeded in stimulating a resurgence of interest in Tamil literature, particularly in one of the major Tamil epics, the Silappadhikaram, and in a Tamil grammar, the Tolkappiyam. An Irish missionary, Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), published his Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages in 1856 in which he argued that Tamil was genetically unrelated to Sanskrit and belonged, along with Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam, to an independent family of languages which he called "Dravidian".

The Sangam literature of the pre-Christian era, which was least influenced by Sanskrit, became an important symbol of the Tani Tamizh Iyakkam or the Pure Tamil Movement spear-headed by Maraimalai Adigal in 1915. The non-Brahmins also participated in what were largely Brahmin efforts to modernize Tamil so that it could be used as a means for political and scientific communication. This move, even while it participated in Orientalist-Nationalist projects of modernizing the vernaculars, was pressed into the service of a radical lower-caste politics. The desire to recreate a "Tamil culture" was also played out in
terms of demands for the recognition of indigenous systems of religion and medicine.

The emphasis on Tamil language and culture was crucial for the emergence of a non-Brahmin identity, and the Justice Party committed itself to the encouragement of Tamil and Tamil Studies, one of its major demands being that Tamil should be placed on an equal footing with other classical languages, especially Sanskrit. The primary agenda of the Justice Party was to fight the political monopoly, social tyranny and the religious domination of the Brahmins.

The publication of "The Non-Brahmin Manifesto" marks the birth of the Justice Party. This historic document, signed by Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chettiar and addressed to the non-Brahmin community in Madras Presidency was issued by a joint-stock company started under the name of the "South Indian People's Association" in November 1916. The Manifesto which sets out the objectives and the scope of the non-Brahmin movement, emphasizes that the non-Brahmins were not interested in undermining the authority of the British who alone were able to maintain a certain degree of equality between various creeds and classes. It presented statistics to prove that the Brahmins dominated the public services, the University of Madras, the High Court and all political appointments. The Manifesto also pointed out that the Congress had become a sectarian and reactionary body and that consequently, there was a strong need for the non-Brahmins to organize themselves into associations that would further their cause.
The Justice Party formed the government in 1921 under the Montford constitution and remained in power first from 1921 to 1926 and then again from 1930 to 1937. Historians such as P.Rajaraman and Eugene Irschick have pointed out that the party was responsible for many radical legislations (Irschick 1969; Rajaraman 1988). During the period of its first ministry, it had an overwhelming majority which enabled it to pressurize the British government to issue G.Os providing non-Brahmins with the opportunity to enter government services (P.Rajaraman 1988: 269).

Under the leadership of the Raja of Panagal, the party succeeded in enacting a series of legislations such as Hindu Religious Endowments Act, the Madras University Act and the State Aid to Industries Act. The Justice Party tried to fight the monopoly of Brahmins in religious institutions and the utilization of all available funds by Brahmin-run institutions by framing a comprehensive legislation on religious endowments. A special board was constructed to supervise and control the management of religious endowments and all temples were placed under its control. The board could take over temples which were misusing funds and had the authority to inspect all temples and audit their accounts. Surplus funds were to be diverted for purposes of public utility such as education in Hindu religion, sanitation of centres of pilgrimage and so on. The bill, which dealt a blow to Hindu orthodoxy, was passed in 1925 with certain modifications despite stiff opposition. The Justice Party also launched various schemes for elementary education and the education of girls
and the depressed classes, rural development, housing, the improvement of public health and the laying of village roads.

The Madras University Act of 1923 changed the composition of a Senate hitherto dominated by Brahmins to a more representative one. It also provided for the expansion of the university with affiliated colleges attached to it. The Justice Party Ministry was also responsible for the formation of Andhra University in 1926. The State Aid to Industries Act passed by the ministry was intended to assist the establishment and development of industries which had an important bearing on the economic development of the Presidency. The Party also strove to improve the status of land-owning people and enacted a series of legislations among which the Agriculturists' Loans (Amendment) Act of 1935 was crucial. This permitted the granting of loans to agriculturists for the relief of indebtedness. The Justice government was also responsible for the Madras Cooperative Land Mortgage Banks (Amendment) Act which advanced money to landholders on easy terms repayable in twenty or twenty-five years. The Madras Estates Land (Amendment) Act of 1934 passed by the Justice Ministry under the leadership of Bobbili safeguarded the rights of cultivating tenants and prevented middlemen from appropriating the right to occupancy. A further amendment to this act known as the Inams Act which conferred the right of kudivaram, the cultivators' right to a share in the produce of the land tilled by them. The Malabar Tenancy Bill passed in 1926 with the support of the Justice Party guaranteed that the tenants in the Malabar region would not be arbitrarily evicted. Like the Self-Respecters, some Justicites boycotted Brahmin priests as a mark of their
opposition to the Brahmin domination of the religious and cultural spheres.

Most of the initiatives of the Justice Party appear to be directed at the landed elite, the zamindari class among the non-Brahmins. Even as they fought Brahmin supremacy in many spheres, the Justicites attempted to reinstate a non-Brahmin elite who would be in relationship of relative power over the lower castes. It was the Self-Respect Movement which questioned and sought to undermine the Hindu varnashrama dharma and opposed the classification of all those who were not Brahmins as sudras.

The Birth of the Self-Respect Movement

The suva mariathai Ivakkam or the Self-Respect Movement launched by Periyar in 1926, struck at the very heart of nationalist rhetoric which prioritized the notion of preserving "national unity" even in the face of glaring inequities such as the caste system. Periyar's vehemently anti-congress, anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindi (anti-Sanskrit) position questioned all that the upper-castes had constructed as "sacred" - the nation, the Varnashrama dharma, even the Mahatma.

Ironically, Periyar's first significant entry into state-level and national politics began when he joined the Madras Presidency Association founded by the Congress in September 1917. This was an association of nationalist leaders formed with the intention of uplifting the non-Brahmins both within and outside the Congress, working against untouchability and introducing Prohibition. Much later, Periyar clearly stated that he joined the Congress with the belief that it would fight for independence.
only after tackling the problems of untouchability and caste disparity (*Viduthalai*, 14/10/1951). The Congress pitted the Madras Presidency Association against the Justice Party. The association soon ceased to function. On the invitation of C. Rajagopalachari, Periyar formally joined the Congress in early 1920, resigning about 29 honorary posts in order to do so. Interestingly, Periyar became an ardent exponent of Gandhianism which he believed was the key to the removal of untouchability and other caste-related problems. He was also attracted by the Congress' Constructive Programme aimed at bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity, at closing down toddy shops and developing a khadi industry so as to aid the rural economy. He also took an active part in the Non-Cooperation movement in 1921. He was formally elected president of the Tamilnadu Congress in 1920, the very year he joined. As we shall see, it was only much later that he began to entertain serious reservations about Gandhian ideology. However, even as late as 1926 when his differences with the Congress became more sharply outlined, he continued to express his faith in Gandhi's Constructive Programme. In an early issue of the journal *Kudi Arasu* (The Republic) whose launching in 1925 is often taken to signal Periyar's break with the Congress, he writes:

> Only by following the Mahatma's principle of Non-Cooperation and his Constructive Programme can we attain progress. This progress will be permanent. (*Kudi Arasu*, 3/1/1926).
The Self-Respect movement was a result of an increasing disillusionment on the part of Periyar and a section of non-Brahmins in south India with what they could not but recognize as the pro-Brahmin politics of the Congress and Gandhi's own complicity in it.

Several factors acted as triggers for the deep schism between Periyar and the Congress. For Periyar, the caste question had to be resolved and the vanrashrama dharma destroyed before any other social or political changes could be contemplated. In 1924, Periyar led the Satyagraha at Vaikom in Kerala in order that the street leading to the Vaikom temple be thrown open to the Ezhavas who were regarded as untouchables. The temple street was eventually opened to the Ezhavas. The Gurukulam controversy also led to Periyar's discontent with the Congress. A Gurukulam supposedly fashioned on the lines of similar institutions of ancient India was established at Sermadevi in Tirunelveli by V.V.S Iyer in 1922. The gurukulam was funded handsomely by the Congress. It was discovered that Brahmin students were given better food and facilities as compared to non-Brahmin students. The two groups were also not permitted to eat together, and their messes were separate as were their places of rest. Popular resentment against such discriminatory practices gradually spread, and the institution came in for sharp criticism, especially from those non-Brahmins with Congress leanings who had funded it liberally. As President of the TNCC, Periyar refused to pay the balance amount of Rs.5000 promised to the Gurukulam by the Congress unless and until the common mess, as advocated by Gandhi, was introduced. However, V.V.S Iyer and his associates outwitted
periyar by getting a cheque for the balance amount from the Brahmin joint secretary of the TNCC without the former's knowledge. Periyar and his friends Dr. Varadarajulu Naidu and Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaram declared an **all-out war** on the Gurukulam and exposed the communalism inherent both in the Gurukulam's style of functioning as well as in the minds of the Brahmin Congress members who continued to support it. A lot of non-Brahmin public sympathy swung in favour of Periyar's campaign and the Gurukulam soon lost its patronage. This event only served to reinforce Periyar's growing suspicion that the Brahmin members of the Congress were communal. Gandhi's defence of the *Varnashrama dharma* came in for sharp criticism from Periyar who understood it to be a veiled **justification** for the evils of the caste system.

Once again, it is in *Kudi Arasu* that he airs this criticism:

> I think the Mahatma has not yet correctly understood the problem of untouchability. This is because he wants to use the name of religion to attract the common people. I fear that if we follow his teachings with respect to caste, we would once again find ourselves slipping into the dirt and mire of *untouchability*. We regret the fact that we are forced to confront this problem in his thinking. In the interests of our self-respect, in order to find a real solution to the problem of untouchability, we can no longer afford to be patient, we can no longer hide the flaws in Gandhi's approach.

> ...Like our Brahmins, Mahatma Gandhi has been arguing that the Varnashrama Dharma is innate to our social set-up, that it is determined at birth. Speaking at Mysore recently, Gandhi declared that the Varnashrama Dharma system is part of Hindu society, that it is essential to our society, that each person who is part of this system is allocated a particular set of duties, that if he performs these duties well he gains in stature and that if a Brahmin performs his duties he too gains in stature. It is this last statement that the Brah-
mins have interpreted to mean that they are great from birth.
(Kudi Arasu 7/8/1927) 7

Periyar also pointed out the inequality inherent in the varnashramadharma which Gandhi was refusing to recognize:

Gandhi has been saying that there is little scope for inequality in a system that very specifically allocates duties for each person. However, he has failed to clarify the necessity for such a rigid separation of duties. The Mahatma has not said a word on what possible harm might occur if someone from one caste performs the duties pertaining to another's...

If what the Mahatma says is true, he ought to have been a Sudra or a Vaishya right from birth. In that case, what right does he have to let go of the duties allocated to the Sudra or a Vaishya and perform the duties of a Brahmin, namely social service? Is there any sense in expecting others to follow a system which he himself has failed to?
(Kudi Arasu 7/8/1927) 8

Periyar's faith in Gandhian ideals was totally shattered when Gandhi continued to defend varnashrama dharma. Periyar understood this system as being at the root of the untouchability which Gandhi was attempting to fight. But Gandhi clearly did not see the links between Brahminism and untouchability, or between the varnashrama dharma and untouchability. Gandhi, it seemed to Periyar, did not believe in disturbing the existing caste equations in a way that would challenge the Brahmins. This was primarily because Gandhi equated Brahminism with Hinduism. Moreover, Periyar argued that the varnashrama dharma, when applied to Tamilnadu, would relegate all the non-Brahmins to the position of the sudras. If each caste was to follow its own dharma as Gandhi
had suggested, the non-Brahmin would be forced to serve the Brahmins. In September 1927, a year after the launching of the Self-Respect Movement, Periyar and his associate S.Ramanathan met Gandhi to convince him about the fallacy in his approach to the caste question. They pointed out to Gandhi that his position only strengthened the orthodox Hindu position on untouchability. Gandhi remained unconvinced. This reinforced Periyar's belief that ultimate freedom for India would come only once the Congress, Hinduism and Brahminism were destroyed (Kudi Arasu editorial 28 August 1927). Periyar's vehemently anti-Gandhi stance dates back to this point. The phrase Mahatma Gandhi Vazhaa (Long live Mahatma Gandhi) on the front page of Kudi Arasu was changed to Khaddar Vazhaa (Long live Khaddar) in the issue dated 20th November 1927. The picture of Gandhi in a weaving posture which also used to appear in the front page of Kudi Arasu was removed beginning with the issue dated 25th August 1927 onwards. Periyar also started referring to Gandhi as "Mr.Gandhi", dropping the title of the "Mahatma".

The final parting of ways between Periyar and the Congress occurred in 1925 with the Kancheepuram convention of the TNCC at which Periyar made a last attempt to get his most controversial resolution passed. This had to do with his plan of reserving seats for the non-Brahmin communities in the legislature and in the services. To the Brahmin community such a plan which promised to bring about greater social equity was unacceptable. Periyar had proposed this plan as early as 1920 at the Tirunelveli convention of the TNCC. The proposal had been badly received and the resolution rejected at the final stage by the chairman
S. Srinivasa Iyengar who had described it as detrimental to national unity' (Kudi Arasu 6/10/1925; "An Admirer" 1962, 31). Year after year Periyar tried to push this motion through but remained unsuccessful because the Brahmin members of the Congress unfailingly scuttled it in the name of national unity.

Once again at the Kancheepuram convention, his resolution demanding proportional representations for the non-Brahmins on the basis of population strength failed to gain support and was defeated. Periyar and his associates were disgusted at the outcome of the convention. They felt that it clearly reflected the fact that the Congress was the closed preserve of the Brahmins. Around this time, the Non-Cooperation movement was crumbling rapidly because of the Swarajis who were arguing for the use of constitutional rather than agitational methods in the freedom struggle. The Swarajis were pressurizing the Congress to enter the legislature and the local boards. Periyar, who had till then continued to have some faith in Gandhi, felt that council entry and the Swarajis' style of functioning was a far cry from Gandhian ideals. Although the Kancheepuram convention hastened Periyar's exit from the Congress, these other factors also played an important role in his decision to quit.

The Self-Respect movement was born almost on the heels of Periyar's departure from the Congress. In keeping with his policy of offering unstinting support to any non-Brahmin individual or organization, Periyar always backed the Justice Party, even going to the extent of urging the people to vote for the party through the columns of Kudi Arasu after he left the Congress. However, when Periyar was invited to join the Justice
party, he declined. He recognized the importance of fighting the Congress-Brahmin combine in the political sphere and that was part of the reason for his alliance with the Justice Party. However, he often emerged as its harshest critic, berating its members for leading a life of luxury and remaining untouched by the problems of the poor (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 36-37).

The Self-Respect movement was different from the Justice Party, firstly in that it saw itself as a social movement which was not a political party interested in seeking electoral power. In fact, Periyar strongly felt that politics were inherently divisive and that a social movement and a political party were mutually exclusive. He often suggested that the Justice Party be divided into two separate units, a political front and a group which would work for social welfare. (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 43-44). The support that Periyar extended to the Justice Party was entirely on his terms. He writes:

Those who are involved in social work may decide to support a politician; if they want to support and recommend his name, they should make sure that this does not in any way affect his social work. (Kudi Arasu. 31/7/1927)

An article titled "Why Should we Join the Self-Respect Movement" describes the agenda of the movement as follows:

1. The Self-Respect movement is the only movement which is fighting for socialism and equality between men.
2. As a Socialist movement, it fights for the economic equality of all human beings and for the equal distribution of all property irrespective of economic level.
3. This is the only movement which advocates gender equality in all spheres of life.
4. This is the only movement which is working
towards the destruction of caste, religion, varna, nation and God in order to ensure equality between men.

5. This is the only movement which does not discriminate between worker and master and insists on equal sharing of all work as well as profits.

6. This is the only movement which insists that no one should ever be a slave. It demands the right to live according to one's rational mind and intelligence.

(Puratchi, 17/13/1933)

The term "Self-Respect" conveyed a sense of Tamil/non-Brahmin pride, a pride based on a radical critique of Brahmin supremacy in Tamil society. It was in 1926 that Self-Respect leagues were established all over Tamilnadu and Taluk as well as district-level conventions began to be organized. The first of the provincial Self-Respect conventions was held at Chengelpet on February 17th and 18th, 1929 under the presidentship of W.P.A Soundara Pandian. The convention passed a resolution condemning the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas and religion for the legitimacy they lent to the Varnashrama dharma or the caste system. Another resolution argued for women's rights to property and work. Critical of the supremacy of the Brahmins based on their role as religious interpreters, the Self-Respecters called for a radical demystification of Puranic Hinduism. In order to challenge the religious validity of the Brahmins they resolved that Brahmin priests would not be employed at religious ceremonies such as weddings. In fact, the names of those who swore to practise this resolution such as Periyar himself, Dr.Varadarajulu Naidu, Thiru.Vi.Ka and R.K Shanmugham Chettiar were published regularly in Kudi Arasu. Self-Respect marriages were performed without the presence of priests and the use of the tali or the mangala sutra.
which the Self-Respecters regarded as a symbol of the enslavement of women. Periyar and the Self-Respecters regarded Hinduism and the caste-system that went with it as being at the root of gender inequalities. The Self-Respecters dropped caste appellations (Periyar, for instance, dropped his surname "Naicker" which denoted his caste), avoided caste symbols, advocated widow remarriage, property rights for women, birth control and divorce, and denounced the dowry system and the devadasi system. The Self-Respecters were rationalists who aimed at destroying superstitions and blind beliefs in everything including matters pertaining to religion.

As scholars such as Irschick have pointed out, unlike the Justice Party, the Self-Respect movement was popular in its appeal (Irschick: 1969, 333-334). The leadership of the Justice Party had come mainly from land-owning groups and the zamindars, and most of its members were middle and upper middle-class caste Hindus from both Tamil as well as Telugu speaking areas. The Self-Respect movement, on the other hand, was focussed mainly on the Tamil speaking districts and on the groups lowest in the caste hierarchy.

The Justice Party began to face severe setbacks mostly owing to the crisis in leadership caused by the deaths of stalwart leaders such as P.Theagaraya Chetti (in April 1925) and the Raja of Panagal (in December 1928), who succeeded Dr.T.M Nair. Munuswami Naidu who became the leader of the Justice Party after the Raja of Panagal was elected the Chief Minister of Madras after the 1930 elections. At the twelfth annual confederation of the Justice Party which was organized at Tanjore on the 10th and 11th
of October 1932 presided over by the Raja of Bobbili, a tussle ensued between the followers of Munuswami Naidu and those of the Raja, with the latter establishing his status as the leader of the party. Munuswami Naidu, who was basically an agriculturalist, was replaced by the Raja, a landed aristocrat who belonged to the Padmanayak Velama family of the northern Circars, part of present-day Andhra. Given the latter's autocratic attitude, the Justice Party was trapped in a vicious cycle of internal rivalries and wrangles. Periyar, who had all along criticized the Justice Party for its shortcomings, pointed out that it was fast becoming a party for the rich, that its ideals were lost amidst the political ambitions of its leaders and members, that it used money in order to try and win the elections and that its policy of including the Brahmins in its fold would only dilute its politics (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 259-262). In the 1934 elections to the Imperial Legislative Assembly, Justice Party stalwarts such as A.Ramaswami Mudaliar and R.K Shanmugham Chetti were defeated, partly because of the intrigues within the party. The rout of the Justice Party in the General Elections of 1937 by the Congress was something from which it never fully recovered. The party, which began to look towards Periyar and the Self-Respect movement for direction, accepted a modified version of Periyar's socialist programme, also known as the Erode Programme. Even before his formal election to the post of Justice Party president in 1938, Periyar had become its leader. This year, which marks the formal entry of the Self-Respect movement into the "political" sphere, is considered as signaling the end of the movement.
The Non-Brahmin/Self-Respect Journal: Periyar's Patronage

What the Self-Respect movement created for the first time and in a way the Justice Party had not, was a non-Brahmin public sphere indexed by the significantly large numbers of non-Brahmin and often, specifically Self-Respect journals which came up at the time. Periyar started the Tamil weekly Kudi Arasu on the 2nd of May 1925 at Erode. This weekly was specifically directed at those non-Brahmin groups which had not been reached by the Justice Party's Dravidan. Even though Kudi Arasu was primarily a journal of the Self-Respect movement, it also gave prominence to the Justice Party's news. Significantly, the release of this weekly is often taken as the date of the birth of the Self-Respect movement, despite evidence to the effect that when Kudi Arasu was started Periyar was still essentially with Gandhi and the Congress. However, by the year 1925, Periyar had begun to feel the need for a journal which would reflect the interests of the Dravidian. He writes:

Despite the fact that our land has so many great and intelligent people, they remain unknown to the public. This is because Tamilians lack a journal that is effective and truthful. Even Mahatma Gandhi has to ask a Brahmin or read a Brahmin journal if he wants to learn about the greatness of Tamilians....What can we say about a situation in which the majority community of non-Brahmins has no means by which to communicate its news and ideas?

(Periyar, "Sila Brahmana Pattirikaiyin Thozhil" Kudi Arasu. 2/8/1925)

Recognizing the lack of a non-Brahmin journal which would effectively voice the interests of non-Brahmins, Periyar sought
to transform the Tamil journal scene by wresting some of the control away from the upper-castes who controlled the major portion of the press in the early part of the twentieth century. Systematically then, he nurtured the Self-Respect, non-Brahmin journals, positioning them vis a vis "Brahmin" journals which he constructed as either misrepresenting or otherwise inadequate to the needs of the Dravidian people. The Dravidian movement created the necessary conditions for the creation of a non-Brahmin public sphere. Journals, films and political speeches made by leaders such as Periyar, Sivanandam Valliammal and Neelavathi, were all part of this new public sphere. Critics such as M.S.S Pandian and A.R Venkatachalamappathy have suggested that it was primarily the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which appropriated cinema as an ideological weapon. While the Self-Respect movement used the journal (alongside the speeches) as a means of propaganda, the DMK fashioned a radically different idiom through cinema in a way that appealed to a largely illiterate, lower-caste audience. The constituency addressed by the DMK films as well as the propaganda speeches of movement leaders was different from the addressee of the Self-Respect journal. The films as well as the speeches, which were clearly extremely influential, were meant for an audience that was largely illiterate. However, the Self-Respect movement journal was addressed to a constituency which was still in the making, a constituency of middle-class non-Brahmin readers and intellectuals. It was during the Self-Respect phase that a new constituency of non-Brahmin readers came into being. In this chapter, we look at the specific role that Periyar played in building a strong non-Brah-
min presence in the print media. While he was directly responsible for the launching of some major Self-Respect journals, he supported almost every new non-Brahmin journal which appeared in the wake of the Self-Respect movement.

Various factors have been responsible for the marginalization, in Tamil literary circles, of the Self-Respect, non-Brahmin journal. The genre of the journal is in itself seen as outside of respectable literary production. In the case of the non-Brahmin journal, such a perception is compounded by the notion that it is a "party" or "propaganda" journal. Also, unlike upper-caste journals like Sudesamitran or Kalki which are marked as "mainstream" and somehow "neutral", the Self-Respect journal is marked as "non-mainstream" and "political". Requesting readers to patronize the journal Vedigundu published from Madurai for its principled stand on social issues, Periyar remarks:

> It is a difficult task to run a journal that does not change colour to keep pace with the times, a journal which is not "pure" or "neutral". (Kudi Arasu: 27/8/1933; see Appendix I a)¹⁴

While most scholars writing on the Dravidian movement use Self-Respect journals like Kudi Arasu, Dravidan and Viduthalai as their primary sources, they tell us little about the conditions under which they emerged and Periyar's extremely important role in creating a space for these non-Brahmin periodicals.

The Self-respect journals are significant for more than one reason. To historians and other scholars they constitute useful documents because they vividly lay out the agendas of the Dravi-
dian movement and trace the more obviously "political" aspects of the movement. Often, these journals are treated by historians as transparent records of the movement, its history and ideological basis. Again, it is only through these journals for instance that one is able to access the political speeches as well as writings by the leaders of the movement. In this sense, they have actually captured and preserved for us what took place outside the realm of the written word and the print media. I would argue however that their presence is important for two far more important reasons. As Periyar never tired of pointing out, the journals launched during the Dravidian movement created the space for a strong non-Brahmin presence in the print media (see Appendix I a & I b). Given what leaders like Periyar clearly identified as the Brahmin monopoly of the press and the dominant role which the upper-castes played in creating news and public opinion, the Self-Respect journals assume added significance. Related to this was another important development, the constitution and the politicization of a specifically non-Brahmin readership.

Reading the section titled "Seydigal" in the third volume of V.Anaimuthu's extensive compilation of Periyar's writings titled Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintaigal published in 1974, one gets a sense of the extent of Periyar's belief in the importance of the print-media as a space that the non-Brahmins could use to their benefit. His fiercely loyal defense and patronage of all non-Brahmin journals even if they were not, strictly speaking, affiliated with the Self-Respect movement, is an evidence of this. This section carries some of Periyar's reviews, essays and speeches
about the journals of the Self-Respect movement, the Dravida Kazhagam and the Justice Party (see Appendix la for my translation of this section). In most of these essays and speeches, Periyar introduces, advertises or reviews each new non-Brahmin journal that is launched. Much of my own understanding of the Self-Respect journal and the conditions surrounding its emergence derives from a reading of this particular section of Periyar's collected writings.

Reading Periyar's essays and speeches on the non-Brahmin journal in the section titled "Seydigal" in Anaimuthu's compilation, what strikes one almost immediately is the deliberateness and the clarity with which Periyar set about the task of creating a Dravidian press. To him, this was an important political project, as important as fighting upper-caste control in the spheres of religion and politics. Expanding the constituency of a non-Brahmin reading public was a crucial issue with Periyar and he makes conscious and deliberate attempts to wean away the non-Brahmin reading public from Brahmin journals such as Sudesamitrtran. Arguing the case for Dravidan as against its rival Sudesamsitrtranhe writes:

Not only the common people, even those who think of themselves as intelligent are carried away by what these journals have to say and end up as slaves to the Brahmans.... Despite knowing that these journals are being published in order to harm us and that their objective is to propagate Brahminism, if [non-Brahmins] offer them financial support and invite our downfall by buying and reading them, will anyone think of us as a society with shame, honour, integrity, intelligence and self-respect?

The journal Sudesamitrtran is funded mostly by non-Brahmins. Its publisher and manager are Brahmans. They enjoy a monthly salary of Rs.1500, Rs.1000, Rs.800
or Rs.600. Have you ever seen them do any other work besides spreading Brahminism and destroying the non-Brahmins? Should our own money help in our ruin? ...
To patronize another journal over Dravidan is to behave like the man who ignores his own wife and favours the prostitute.  

Significantly, Periyar ends this essay by suggesting that the choice of a non-Brahmin Dravidan over the Brahmin Sudesamitran was the only way by which the non-Brahmins could retain their "self-respect" (see Appendix I b).

Along with requesting the non-Brahmin reading public to patronize the non-Brahmin journal, Periyar also argued for the spread of literacy, especially at the village level. Introducing the journal Suyamariathai Thondan, he says:

Comrades!

_Self-Respect_ journals should spread in each and every village. Otherwise, our country will not really progress. Education is necessary in order to read a journal. It is the responsibility of the leaders of the Jilla Board to provide this education. I request everyone to support Suyamariathai Thondan.

(Speech at Pallipalazham on 9-4-1929; Kudi Arasu. 14-4-1929)

Kudi Arasu, the Tamil weekly started by Periyar and published at Erode, first appeared on the 2nd of May 1925, at a time when Periyar had not formally left the Congress. So influential was this journal, that the date of its first appearance is often taken to be the date on which the _Self-Respect_ movement was launched. Most of Periyar's political speeches and essays were published in this journal, as was news of the activities of the _Self-respecters_ and the Justicites. Though Periyar was directly associated only with _Kudi Arasu_, _Viduthalai_, the Justice Party's
Dravidan (Which he edited for a while) and the English weekly Revolt (see Appendix V, 1), he offered his unstinting support to non-Brahmin journals supportive of the Self-Respect movement which began to appear all over Tamilnadu and in places like Singapore. Since most of these journals disappeared as quickly as they appeared, we have little by way of archival evidence, making any extensive analyses impossible. From what Periyar writes in his reviews of them however, most of these journals appear to have been in the genre of the "siru patirikai" or the small (non-commercial) journal.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the popular Tamil magazines Jaganmohini and Kalki worked predominantly within a nationalist-Brahmin matrix. This was the case with many other magazines and newspapers as well. Most of them were owned as well as edited by the upper castes. The Tamil monthly Ananda Bodhini and daily Sudesamitran, the Telugu daily Andhra Patrika, the English daily The Hindu and the monthly Indian Review were all edited by the upper castes and many others such as the English dailies Madras Mail and Madras Times were edited by Europeans. The Congress and Swaraj parties had their own newspapers, Sudesamitran (started in 1900) and Swarajya. Periyar felt that upper-caste newspapers played a crucial role in ensuring that the Brahmins won the local elections and captured the local administrative bodies from the non-Brahmins. He accused these newspapers of using Brahmin reporters to publish false and mischievous reports (Rajadurai & Geetha 1996: 9). Interestingly, he also argues that Brahmin newspapers were by and large indifferent to the challenges posed by the emergence of the non-Brahmin journal:
[The Brahmins who own newspapers] look us straight in the eye and tell us to our face, "You are all stupid. You do not have shame, honour, self-respect or intelligence. Therefore, we deceive you. What is it that you can do? If some among you raise a hue and cry, let them do so. We do not care. We are not going to be scared. Neither will we change our objectives. We know how to coopt those among you who are wicked or foolish in order to stop you from your loud protests. We challenge you to fight us!

(Kudi Arasu - editorial - 30/1/1927)²⁰

It is the Brahmin-owned newspaper that is the most frequent target of Periyar's attack. As we have already seen, Self-Respect newspapers like Dravidan are counterposed against Brahmin-run newspapers such as Sudesamitran. Interestingly, there is never any mention of Brahmin magazines or fiction, partly because fiction and the magazine genre were used only to a limited extent by the Self-Respect movement. Journals like Kudi Arasu were generically closer to the newspaper than they were to the magazine. While Justice had served as the official journal of the Justice Party or the South Indian Liberal Federation since 1917, it is with the birth of the Self-Respect movement that the presence of non-Brahmins in the Tamil print media is strengthened. The journals that emerged in the wake of Periyar's Self-Respect movement proved to be an effective forum for the public articulation of the ideological differences between the Congress and the Dravidian movement. They provided readers with news about the Justice Party and the Self-Respect movement and publicized their conventions and their agendas. Most importantly, they sought to politically educate readers, teaching them to question everything that the nationalist press was constructing as "natural". This
included a range of issues which were part of a nationalist commonsense: the sacredness of Hinduism and the varnashrama dharma, an upper-caste patriarchy, the importance of national unity, the greatness of Gandhi and the role of Hindi as a "national" language. Fearless and strident, these journals consciously opted out of the neutral reporting style so common with mainstream newspapers such as The Hindu.

Time and again, Self-Respect journals faced severe financial problems or, worse, ran into trouble with the authorities, cautioning many a journal to close down. This was the case with Periyar's Kudi Arasu, the most influential Self-Respect journal of the times. Anticipating large-scale labour movements in the country, the British government had resorted to a series of repressive measures directed at left parties as well as at the Self-Respect movement. Among the first casualties was Kudi Arasu. The editorial in the October 29, 1933 issue of Kudi Arasu titled "Why the Present Government Should Go" was adjudged seditious. Along with his sister S.R Kannammal who was the publisher of Kudi Arasu, Periyar was arrested under section 124-A on the 20th of December, 1933 at Erode. Initially, Periyar was lodged at the Kovai Central Prison, having been awarded a sentence of six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs.300. Kannammal was released on bail. But Periyar refused to seek bail or appeal for his release. Due to the arrests of Periyar and Kannammal, Kudi Arasu could not be published between November 1933 and January 1935. The journal Puratchi (Revolution) edited by Periyar's brother E.V Krishnasami emerged as a kind of substitute during the interim period. The trials of Periyar and his sister
were closely followed by Puratchi (See Appendix V, 2). In a style typical of him, Periyar argued that it was ironical that he should be punished for an article far more harmless than others written by him and claimed that it was the spread of socialism which was the cause of such repressive measures by the ruling class (Peratchi. 20-5-1934; Perivar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. 1689). Periyar also suspected the Catholic priests, whom he had accused of casteism, of attempting to destroy Kudi Arasu. He writes:

Puratchi ("Revolution") was forced to appear because of the attempts to destroy Kudi Arasu. If there is no place in this world for a journal which was the voice of the oppressed peoples, a revolution is bound to occur. We have no doubt that people who are devoted to achieving a revolution will patronize Puratchi.

Since the ruling capitalist class is a slave to the Catholic priests, it has stabbed Kudi Arasu in the back. This reinforces our belief that the Catholic priests have to go before we are rid of the capitalists...

Puratchi is published in order to bring about a revolution that will ensure that all the capitalists and all religions are destroyed and social and gender equality is ensured. It will perform its duty throughout its life. (Puratchi. November 26, 1933)

Periyar also believed that along with the Catholics, the Brahmins too had a role to play in putting Kudi Arasu out of circulation. In his review of the journal Unmai, he writes of this and of the strategy by which non-Brahmin journals discontinued because of the repressive measures of the authorities, continue to appear under different names and in different forms:

In order to destroy Kudi Arasu, the Christians of this country wrote to America and got funds. The Brahmins started journals opposed to Kudi Arasu. However, the weekly Kudi Arasu became the daily
Viduthalai and continued to espouse the same cause.  
(Unmai. 14/1/1970)²³

In fact, it appears that it was mostly the need to ensure the presence of a non-Brahmin print media in the face of repressive action by the state and by the upper-castes that so many different non-Brahmin journals, all with the same agenda, were published. Often, there were times when financial losses and practical difficulties matched the antagonism of the government and the upper-castes towards the very idea of a non-Brahmin journal, resulting in its winding up. Despite the general tone of optimism in much of Periyar's writings about Self-Respect journals then, he also stresses the fact that running a journal was not an easy task. It was an enormous responsibility and it was pointless to start a journal without a sense of commitment. Often, hard decisions were called for. Arguing for the withdrawal of the Self-Respect journal Pagutharivu (see Appendix V, 3) which first appeared on the 12th of January 1934, he writes:

Anybody who dabbles in politics and is labeled a "nationalist" these days wants to make a living by starting a journal. This in itself is not bad. This is the law of nature. But some people defy this law. This is the reason why in the last ten to fifteen years thousands of journals have appeared only to disappear.

Could our Pagutharivu be one such journal? We cannot deny that this is so. Pagutharivu acquired a declaration five years ago ... Recently, due to the simmering anger of some of our youth, it has been appearing as a daily. This is in order to counter the feeling we have that the Self-Respect movement does not have a proper daily and that most other journals not only do not help the movement, they seek to harm it. I do not wish to judge such a sentiment as being right or wrong...

However, it is not possible for the Self-Respect movement to publish any more journals.
Recently, over 20 journals which we had been supporting have disappeared. We are blamed for this. In spite of realizing what the situation is, it would be a big mistake to take on the responsibility for a new journal....

It appears pointless and unnecessary to run \textit{Pagutharivu} as a daily. ("Pagutharivu", \textit{Puratchi}, May 27, 1934)\textsuperscript{24}

For Periyar, journals were an important means of intervening in and transforming civil society. Effecting changes in civil society, fighting varnashrama dharma and, in doing so, critiquing both Brahminism and patriarchy, Periyar always argued, was far more important than political reform. So important was the print media to Periyar that as late as 1970 he launched two new journals, the Tamil fortnightly, \textit{Unmai} (The Truth) and the English monthly, the \textit{Modern Rationalist}. The non-Brahmin journal is an important indication of the Dravidian movement's fashioning not only of a dramatically different public sphere, but also of a new constituency of readers.
Motes

1 See bibliography for references to their work.

2 See bibliography for references to their work.


Portrayed even by scholars such as Sumathi Ramaswamy who are sympathetic to their political position as "Tamil revivalists" who contributed to the "divinization of Tamil" as part of a "neo-Saivite religious assertion", the Saiva Vellalar, who argued for a freeing of Tamil from the influence of Sanskrit, became active in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For the first time, a monotheistic, non-ritualistic Saivism and a "pure Tamil", "non-Brahmin identity" came to be posited against an Aryan/Brahmin identity. As M.S S Pandian points out in his article "Notes on the Transformation of 'Dravidian' Ideology", this Saivite non-Brahmin identity was distanced both from the Brahmin identity as well as from lower-caste identities. In fact, lower-caste gods were de-legitimized just as "Vaishnavaite", "Aryan" gods were. Pandian points out that the Saivites constructed themselves as "superior" both to the Brahmins who were seen as trapped in a barbaric, ritualistic Hinduism as well as to the lower-castes. They held themselves responsible for the discovery of settled cultivation and tied to this was the fact that they saw themselves as having highly cultivated minds and superior moral codes and behaviour. One index of their superior morals and compassion was their vegetarianism. While Periyar initially considered the Saiva-Vellalas as his allies, he soon began to distance himself from them both on account of their "elitism" as well as on account of their belief in Hinduism. On their part, the Vellalars responded by branding Periyar a "Vaishnavaite". However, even in the case of the Pure Tamil movement, language identity and religious identity were deeply intertwined with a "non-Brahmin" identity.

Language-based agitations in the present are in fact increasingly linked to right-wing politics. They serve as a pointer to
the fact that the Right has indeed occupied the realm of culture. One instance is the communal riots that took place in response to the introduction of an Urdu newscast in Bangalore city in October 1994. These riots testify to the collaboration between Kannada linguistic chauvinism and the Hindu fascism of the Sangh Parivar. The resurgence of Kannada linguistic chauvinism in Bangalore should be read, as Janaki Nair argues, in the context of already existing anti-Muslim sentiments that were readily tapped by the Shakti Kendra, the Karnataka Yuva-jana Parishad and the Hindu Jagran Vedike (1994). Nair suggests that the Kannada movement in this new phase is restricted to directing its ire against other equally dominated cultures in Bangalore city, such as Tamil and Urdu. (Earlier, in 1990, the Cauvery river waters dispute had led to vicious attacks on the city's working class Tamil population). In the process, the pro-Kannada activists are deliberately side-stepping the fact that in a city towards which both national and international capital has been flowing (Bangalore is the techie-yuppie capital of the nation), it is English, the language of business, commerce and advertising, that is especially hegemonic. The English-speaking elites of Bangalore, as Nair shows, continue to be secure in their economic and social power, untouched by the Kannada activists' fury. Riots don't happen on their territories. This peculiar bonhomie between Hindu revivalism and English hegemony then leads us to question the very unquestionedness of the latter, though differently from either Raina or Trivedi.


6 The Secretary of State, Montagu's declaration of 20th August 1917, stated that British policy in India would have as its objective 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' (Sumit Sarkar, 1983: 163). Such a "self-government" was achieved through the granting of provincial autonomy and the device of "dyarchy", transferring certain functions of provincial governments such as education, health, agriculture, local bodies to ministers responsible to legislative assemblies while keeping other subjects reserved. The Government of India Act of 1919 set up a bicameral system at the centre, Council of State and Legislative Assembly. According to Sumit Sarkar, the system of dyarchy transferred less important departments with little funds to ministers responsible to provincial legislatures. Indian politicians were, as a consequence, often blamed for not improving areas like education, health and agriculture. Thanks to the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, communal representation and reservations were extended and the British conceded the Justice Party demands for reservations for non-Brahmins in Madras.

8 Ibid: 77.

9 See, for instance, Kudi Arasu. 26/9/1926.


11 Periyar returned from a year long continental tour in November 1932, deeply impressed with the functioning of the communist government in Russia and with the trade unions and labour movement in England. In collaboration with the labour leader M.Singaravelu, he formulated the "Self-Respect Socialist Party Employment Programme", otherwise known as the Erode Programme or the Singaraveler Programme which was presented at a convention in Erode in December 1932. The programme envisaged the formation of two wings within the Self-Respect movement, the Self-Respect League and the Self-Respect Samadharma (Self-Respect Socialist) Party of South India (Kudi Arasu 1/1/1933). The Socialist wing was envisaged as a more broad-based group than the Self-Respect League and invited non-Brahmin leaders such as Dr.Varadarajulu Naidu and Thiru.Vi.Ka to the Erode Self-Respect and Socialist Convention. However, unlike M.Singaravelu, Periyar did not believe in "purging" the Self-Respect movement of all non-socialists, declaring that the movement would not lose its purity due to the presence of either theists or non-socialists.


13 See M.S.S Pandian, "Parasakthi": Life and Times of a DMK Film," EPW. 26.(11 & 12) (March 1991): 759-770; also see, by the same author, The Image Trap: MG Ramachandran in Film and Politics (New Delhi: Sage, 1992) which argues that M.G.R's powerful screen presence and the kinds of roles he chose to enact, his filmic image was ultimately responsible for his popularity with the masses and his success in the elections. This was despite his anti-poor economic policies. A.R Venkatalachalapathy's in his paper titled "The Context of the Dravidian movement and its Cinema" was presented at a workshop on "Tamil Cinema: History, Culture, Theory" organized by the Madras Institute of Development Studies at Madras between August 15th and August 19th, 1997 also argued that it was the DMK which used the medium of cinema as an ideological weapon.


15 See editorial, Kudi Arasu. 30/1/1927; Dravidan. 7/5/1927; E.V.Ramasami Naicker, "Patirikaigal", Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal-Stl, Volume 2, comp., Ve.Anaimuthu (Trichi: Thinkers' Forum, 1974): 1284 - 1286; also see Appendix I b.

16 The Dravida Kazhagam and the DMK also popularized "Padipagams"
(reading circles) in the towns and villages of Tamilnadu.


20 Also in Dravidan. 7/5/1927; See section titled "Patirikaigal" written by Periyar in Perivar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. Volume 2, comp., Ve.Anaimuthu (Trichi: Thinkers' Forum, 1974): 1284 - 1286); also see Appendix Ib.

21 See Puratchi. 24/12/1933.

22 Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal Volume 3, 1974: 1896; See Appendix I a.

23 Ibid: 1904; see Appendix I a.

24 Ibid: 1897-1898; See Appendix I a.