THE EMERGENCE OF S.V. RAMASAMY AS THE FOUNDER OF THE SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT
In India almost all popular leaders were either hailing from well-to-do or elite families. None of them seemed to have suffered in poverty and in distress. E.V. Ramaswamy, a notable social reformer of the twentieth century was born to a rich and prosperous parents by name Venkatappa Naicker and Chinnathayammal in a Kannadiga Balija Naicker community in Brode on 17th September 1860. According to E.V. Ramaswamy, he had seen his father as a Councillor in the Brode Municipality and as a prosperous businessman who paid around Rupees Hundred to Rupees hundred and Fifty per annum as income-tax to the Government.¹ The Maharaja of Travancore used to stay at E.V. Ramaswamy’s palace like house with his convoy on his way to attend the official duties.² His family continued rich even after he took up the business from his father’s responsibility. At the time of joining the Congress Party in 1919, E.V. Ramaswamy was paying income-tax to the tune of Rupees Nine Hundred and house-tax Rupees two thousand five hundred per annum. In addition to that he was

2. Visuthalei, B, 9-1-1959. PRLRC.
holding nearly twenty-nine honorary positions in his native town as an highly respected social worker. When he was in Congress and was actively working for its programmes, he did not bother to loose or sacrifice anything personal for national cause.*

Among non-Brahmins, E.V.Ramaswamy’s family had the reputation of being the most orthodox and conservative, which could be compared with the Brahmin families of Erode in those days. His parents had earned sufficient money to lead a honourable life along with their four children and could afford to spend some money on the attainment of spiritual way of life. Regular or periodical religious functions were held in his house, Sanvasis or Sadhus and other religious heads were encouraged by his parents to conduct meetings, discourses and similar discussions in the house. Pious people and devotees of God were entertained with food and shelter. A large amount of money was donated to renovate temples and to conduct several festivals in Erode. These acts

3. Kudi Arasu, 19-12-1937, PRLRC.
These particulars largely gathered from E.V.Ramaswamy’s own speeches delivered on various occasions clearly show the wealthy background of a family which would help him carry on his social reform work for a period of more than sixty years without any family encumbrance
of reverence bestowed on E.V.Ramaswamy's parents, a status and name as patrons of Hindu religion and devotees of God. It is natural to expect that the parents of this heritage, would have aspired to bring up their children along the same lines. But in the case of E.V.Ramaswamy, to their disappointment, right from his boyhood days, they could see a sense of protest violently growing up in him against the acts of social discrimination and all irrational religious practices.

As a school boy, E.V.Ramaswamy was naughty and was not interested in studies. Against the wishes of his parents and the teachers he moved with all the low caste students and drank water and ate food with them freely. His educational career undertaken in two stages had ended at the age of twelve. The barest minimum education he had received seemed sufficient to run his father's lucrative business at Erode. Following the footsteps of his father and surpassing him in some respects by his initiative and drive, he had expanded

4. Kudi Aramu. 19-7-1937. PRLRC.
the prospects of the business. During this period, the religious atmosphere that prevailed in his house had enabled him to take lessons in logic and reason. His business and bachelor's status gave him enough freedom to enlarge his contact with the people in and around Erode.

With the reluctant approval of his rich parents, he married Nagammai, a relative of his, at the age of nineteen. Even at this age he was sure of his selection and determined to marry her despite her poor background. The marriage meant to bring some diversion in him as desired by his parents, but it proved of no avail, and thereafter E.V. Ramaswamy seemed more irreligious. He dissuaded his wife from going to temples and removed the thali (the saffron coloured sacred thread tied around the bride's neck) from her neck, as a protest against an enslaving tradition and custom. This personal disapproval to his wife being bound and enslaved by irrational practices, had forced him to disapprove anything that stands in the way of women's emancipation in society in his later days.

The indifference, uncompromising attitude and behaviour in his day-to-day life even after marriage
considered by his parents as acts that would tarnish the image of their family as patrons of Brahmins and other religious heads in Erode. As a result of this E.V.R. soon earned the wrath of his parents. He found it impossible to lead a life without freedom and to hold any opinion or to convey it to others. One day, at the age of twenty-five, he left his family on an aimless tour to Benares (now Varanasi). There he happened to be a witness to the immoral acts of the Brahmin priests who were considered to be the saviours of Hindu religion and to their inhuman treatment of the hapless non-Brahmins there. Being already aware of the Hindu puranic and sastric inadequacies and fallacies to some extent, he was able to confirm them with the help of his personal association or observance of some mendicants' and Brahmins' hypocritical life-style as evidenced at Benares. These early and other similar happenings in his life had formed a basis for his self-Respect philosophy, meant to free the Tamil society from the clutches of Brahmins and Brahminism.

After returning from Benares in 1904, till 1920 when he became a fulfledged member of the Indian
National Congress, he was not associated with any big organisation. This period had witnessed a series of his public activities bringing him name, fame and recognition as a sincere social worker, a honest administrator and an able organiser. A broad-minded businessman, as the people of Erode thought of E.V. Ramaswamy, was invited to settle the disputes between families and between individuals in Erode with a feeling of being one amongst them. When Erode had to succumb to the agonies of plague, the deadly disease in 1915 and when the distress-ridden people were either dying or leaving the town for want of food and medicine and out of fear, E.V. Ramaswamy along with a band of selected followers, daemingly came to their rescue and rendered whatever help they needed. Impressed by this and other acts of self-less service, the people of Erode reposed confidence in him and made him serve in municipalities, temples, taluk and district boards and in other public bodies as an honorary representative. As a chairman of the Erode Municipality for the period 1917-1919, he took efforts to provide protected drinking water to the suffering people from the river, Cauvery. Against the displeasure of a handful of rich people and
with a view to facilitate the free flow of business and trade and to provide easy access of the people to the markets of the town, he endeavoured to widen the roads with success. These are two of several major works undertaken by E.V. Ramaswamy during the period. About the same time he came in contact with C. Rajagopalachari, the Chairman of the Salem Municipality. Over the years, both of them became the popular leaders of Tamil Nadu.

In the beginning of 1920, E.V. Ramaswamy enrolled himself as one of the members of the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu. His joining the Congress at this time did not occur either accidentally or suddenly. Right from his early days he was aware of the Congress' work and the nationalist feeling it engendered among the people against the British colonialism. From 1914, it seems he conducted, participated and spoke at several of the Congress meetings in Brode and in Madras. His sympathy towards Home Rule Movement and subsequent enrolment of his as member of the Madras Presidency Association in 1917 marks the beginning of his political activism in the Indian National Congress.
The Madras Presidency Association was founded on the 20th of September, 1917. It was headed by P.Kesava Pillai. V.C.Chidambaram Pillai, Dr.P.Varadarajulu Naidu and E.V.Ramaswamy were the leading members of the Association. This Association, a part of the Provincial Congress, was intended to secure communal representation for non-Brahmins in the Madras Legislative Council. It was considered to be the outcome of the Congress effort, hence the mouth-piece of the Congress, meant to challenge the Justice Party's claim as the true representative of the non-Brahmins' cause. E.V.Ramaswamy as donor, later as Vice-President of the Association, had involved himself actively in the work and activities of it by convening meetings and by propagating its ideals. The Congress Brahmins also encouraged its presence as long as it did not stand in the way of maintaining better relationship among the party cadres, belonging to different communities in general. While he was in the Madras Presidency Association, the Rowlatt Act was passed by the British Government in March 1919, to curb the press and to ban the public meetings all over the country. It was an act aimed to put an end to the Congress activities. Reacting to it sharply, Mahatma Gandhi asked the
people to take up the pledge of Civil Disobedience\(^5\) against the British imperialism. E.V. Ramaswamy inspired by his self-less service and by his call, joined the cause of Gandhi and ultimately the cause of national independence. Through his speeches mixed with emotion and maturity (the language bearing the mark of rustic slang) at several meetings convened specially for the purpose he was able to rouse the political consciousness of the illiterate masses in Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, the Madras Presidency Association became non-existent after 1920, because of the Rastown Award came into force in 1920 and had fulfilled its demands for non-Brahmin representation in the Madras Legislative Council. The front-rank leaders of the Association, except P.Karava Pillai who had joined hands with the Justice Party had come back to their parent Congress organisation, including E.V. Ramaswamy, to work for its cause. By this time, the Nationalist Association which was formed to undertake anti-British

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and patriotic work more forcefully and vigourously, in contrast to the passive and government-fearing work of the Congress Party, with the efforts of C. Rajagopalachari, Salem Vijayaragavachari and E.V. Ramaswamy and other extremists, came to an end immediately after its formation. E.V. Ramaswamy’s association with the Congress Party though formally took place in 1920, in view of his earlier leaning towards it, because of its nationalistic ideal coupled with the social reform activities as against the Justice Party’s pro-British attitude, and in view of his being one of the founder members of the Madras Presidency Association (a sister organisation of the Congress), whose members were ardent Congressites, followed by his joining the Congress Party after its dissolution, and subsequent connection with the Nationalistic Association, clearly give a valid impression that, for all practical purposes, he was a Congress member from 1917, the year in which he became the member of the Madras Presidency Association. Within a short period after his formal inclusion in the Congress, he was made

6. **Viduthalai**, 26-4-1961, PRLRC.
the President of the Tamil Nadu Branch of the Congress in 1920.

From 1920 to 1925, K.V. Ramaswamy had served in the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu as a recognised member and as a devoted activist. During the short period of five years, he rose from the position of an ordinary member to one of the dynamic front-rank leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress, by sheer dint of his merit and by his significant contribution to the growth of the party. Both in 1920 and in 1924, he was elected President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and was elected as Secretary for two consecutive years, 1921 and 1922. He was the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Conference held at Thiruvannamalai in 1924. Besides, he presided over the deliberations of many district conferences. At the time of intensive Khadar propaganda his election to the post of the President of the Tamil Nadu branch of the All India Spinners Association was meant to boost the sales of Khadar and to discourage the wearing of foreign cloth by the people.

Despite the differences that occurred among the Congress members on E.V. Ramaswamy's demand for the proportional representation of the communities in the Congress organisation as well as in the Madras Legislative Council, right from his entry into Congress, he actively carried the programmes of the Congress, to the masses. He became one of the four public speakers of convincing ability* in the Congress to communicate its message in the language of the people-Tamil.

His work in the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1920-1921, Temperance Movement in 1922, Khadar Movement in 1922-1924 and Vaikom Satyagraha in 1924-1925 had not only helped the growth of the Congress party in Tamil Nadu, but also had in the process, developed his image and status in the party as an important leader. This secured him a sizeable number of admirers and followers, especially among the youth section of the non-Brahmin community, numerically enough to launch a separate Movement later to carry out his own ideals and principles to the people.

* The other three eminent public speakers in the Congress Party in those days were: (1) Thiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar (2) S. Satyamoorthy and (3) Dr. P. Varaderejulu Naidu.
The price he had to pay to acquire this popularity in the Congress seemed not too small or insignificant to be ignored.

The Non-co-operation Movement had emerged protesting against the repressive measures of the British Government. It aimed to boycott the law courts, the centres of learning and other professional services. Despite being dissuaded from doing so by his well-wishers in the Congress, in order to be practical in his personal life also, he refused to realise the money due on credit bonds worth about rupees fifty thousand in his name through law courts.\(^8\) The evils of drink had multiplied upon the poor and illiterate masses due to the anti-temperance policy of the British Government in India. Their main motive was to acquire as much revenue as possible through this evil practice. So, protesting against this, the Congress had decided to launch the Temperance Movement, all over the country in 1921. E.V. Ramaswamy

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\(^8\) Chidambaranar, Saami, *Tamizhar Thalaivar* (The Tamils' Leader), Periyar Suyamariyadai Prachara Niruvana Veliyvedu, Tiruchi (7th impression), 1975, p. 67.
with a batch of Congressmen besides delivering speeches on various Congress Party platforms, had picketed toddy and arrack shops in a peaceful manner in Koda. It cost him imprisonment for more than a month and permanent loss of income from his toddy giving five hundred and more coconut trees which he cut them as a mark of protest against the British Government's anti-people policy. He for the first time in his public career, had to witness his wife Nagammai and sister Kunnamma actively taking part in the Movement. They were honoured in those days by Mahatma Gandhi like persons, as the bold, service-minded and first women participants in such movements. This is a clear testimony to E.V.Ramaswamy's principle that women in the society should also be encouraged to take active part in the public like men. He carried this principle throughout his career as the leader of the Self-Respect Movement.

As soon as Mahatma Gandhi took the reins of the Indian National Congress in his hands, particularly

during 1920's and 1930's, a series of anti-British measures were undertaken by the Congress for the attainment of Swaraj for Indians. Two among such measures were:

(i) protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales to India

(ii) Khadar Movement

E.V. Ramaswamy on the mandate of the All India Congress Committee had successfully organised a hartal at Erode in 1922 against the Prince of Wales' visit to India. This evidently proved leadership abilities could be found in abundance in his Self-Respect Movement as its founder-leader until his death. The Khadar Movement referred to the total boycott of foreign cloth and the replacement of it by indigenous Khadar cloth. It seemed to have been an economic sanction against the British Government and was meant to help the poor spinners and weavers. During the period C. Rajagopalachari, E.V. Ramaswamy, Koval Ayvmmuthu and K. Santhanam were mainly associated with the Movement. In fact, E.V. Ramaswamy was elected President of the Tamil Nadu branch of the All India Spinners Association, which post he held till 1928, to popularise Khadar and promote its sale in Tamil Nadu, along with
K. Santhanam who was the Secretary of the Association. On his return from Vaikom Satyagraha in late 1924, he was arrested by the Government of Madras for his virulent speech made against the Government during the khadar campaign in early 1924. From 1924 onwards it was due to E.V. Ramaswamy’s critical appraisal of the Brahmin Congressites in Tamil Nadu and the indifference that developed among the Brahmin Congressites about E.V. Ramaswamy’s role in the Congress, K. Santhanam, a Brahmin Secretary of the Association in his khadar campaign and in his administration began to outflank its President, E.V. Ramaswamy. E.V. Ramaswamy found in this an unwanted and unwarranted precedence arising out of the Brahmin manoeuvres to thwart his image in the Spinners Association as well. 10

E.V. Ramaswamy joined the Congress for several reasons. In 1916, on E.V. Ramaswamy’s insistence and due to the general pressure of the then political

10. Chidambaramar, Saami, Tamighar Thalaivar (Tamils’ Leader), op. cit., p. 84.
situation, the Congress accepted in principle the fifty per cent representation of the non-Brahmins in the Madras Legislative Council. This strengthened his confidence in the Congress Party which would look after the interests of the majority non-Brahmins apart from retaining its national character. Filled with patriotic fervour and endowed with an agitating temperament, to E.V. Ramaswamy, the growing Indian National Congress, a big national organisation, seemed to provide an opportunity to work for his ideals like the abolition of untouchability and other caste evils and for the effective use of Prohibition, which were the avowed policies of the Congress then. Moreover, the Congress organisation being headed and led by the elites was much pleased to utilise the services of E.V. Ramaswamy an another elite of merit and following to work in the party.

E.V. Ramaswamy as President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee was invited by the eminent leaders

11. Information collected from an interview arranged with N. B. Kaliappan, a veteran of SRM on 21st and 22nd September 1979 at Madras.
of Kerala, namely, George Joseph and Karur Neelakanta Nambudiri to lead the Satyagraha Movement at Vaikom in early 1920. Until then, indulging himself in the national freedom struggle he had to fight against the British rulers. Thenceforth owing to the attempts revived by the native orthodoxy to exercise control over and to perpetuate caste differences and untouchability, he began to protest and launch agitations against native rulers and Brahmins in the society. By then he had developed a strong idea that the society before being freed from the alien rule, should be freed from the iron clutches of these evils. His confidence in mobilising the support of the masses for this cause and his emerging popularity in and out of the Congress Party had encouraged him to merrily accept the invitation extended by the Kerala leaders and to jump into the Vaikom Satyagraha.*

E.V.Ramananwamy, Kovai Ayyamuthu, S.Ramanathan and others went to Vaikom and led the Satyagraha with the supporters


*Vaikom was a place in Travancore State, Kerala. It was under the rule of Maharaja Sri Mulas Thirunal. The orthodoxy with the help and co-operation of the ruler had been refusing, for quite some time, the
of the cause. Simultaneously along with them and separately in their absence while they were undergoing imprisonment for their participation in the Satyagraha, E.V. Ramaswamy's wife, Nagammal and his sister, Kannammal led the movement to the surprise of the authorities. Being afraid of the growing popularity the movement had secured in Kerala and elsewhere, and Mahatma Gandhi's interference in this affair for bringing out a solution, the Travancore Maharaja's family at last yielded to the pressure and revoked the prohibitory orders in 1927. Since, then, they threw open the roads to the untouchables. 13

low caste people, Ezhavas and other untouchables, the right to walk on the streets leading to the Vaikom temple. The Satyagraha had stemmed from an incident, T.K. Madhavan, a Ezhava lawyer came to attend the Court, situated nearby the temple where the Maharaja's birthday was celebrated with pomp and glory, was prevented from proceeding through the temple on the pretext that his nearness would pollute the entire atmosphere. Led by the popular Congressite, George Joseph, the Ezhava community as a whole, had therefore decided to launch an agitation until their demand for the use of the roads around the temple was conceded by the orthodoxy and the Maharaja. Having obtained Mahatma Gandhi's approval, the leaders launched the Satyagraha on 31st March 1926. The authorities reacted quickly and put the agitators behind the bars with a view to suppress it. But the jailed leaders hoping that to a noble cause of this nature would be well supported and encouraged by the Tamil Nadu Congress as well, had appealed to E.V. Ramaswamy to lead the Satyagraha in the absence of leaders who were already jailed by the Travancore State.

E.V. Ramaswamy's significant role in the Vaikom Satyagraha, though played against the orthodoxy, the orthodox Congressites and others, either out of admiration or out of courtesy and the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee which met at Kancheepuram in 1925, had unanimously passed the resolution praising E.V. Ramaswamy as the one whose contribution to the success of the Satyagraha was not little. And thenceforth, he seemed to have been popularly remembered as "Vaikom Veerar" (Vaikom Hero) by the Tamil-speaking population of the Presidency.

The party which needed his service and the persons who praised him till then for his contribution to the growth of the party in Tamil Nadu, began to disown and criticise him, for his uncompromising attitude towards the Seramadavi Gurukulam episode and for his persistent demand for the communal representation—which issue he had been raising since the Tamil Nadu Annual Congress Meeting held at Tirunelveli in 1920. The annual meeting of the Tamil Nadu Congress Party held at Kancheepuram in 1925 was the last meeting he ever attended with this issue.

For the first time after joining Congress, E.V. Ramaswamy at Tirunelveli Congress Conference, had insisted on the passing of a resolution relating to the communal representation on the lines of the one he was compelling the Madras Presidency Association to accept since 1917. But the President of the Conference, S. Srinivasa Ayyangar refused permission to the resolution to get through on the grounds that it was anti-social. In 1921, when the Congress conference was held at Tanjore, C. Rajagopalachari blocked E.V. Ramaswamy's attempts to table a resolution on communal representation. He tried to convince E.V. Ramaswamy and his followers that the Congress could accept it as a principle but not in the form of a resolution. The Congress conference held at Tiruppur, in the following year, had revealed E.V. Ramaswamy's simmering state of his mind and hatred with Hindu religion and sastras. When he had to receive a similar response as it happened at Tanjore for his communal representation resolution, he sternly recommended the burning of sastras and Ramanayanas, the symbols of Brahminic dominance. In the subsequent conferences held in 1923 and 1924 at Salem and Tiruvannamalai
respectively, in the midst of opposition, E.V.Ramaswamy desperately tried to push through the resolution in question in the general body of the Congress in vain. By that time, though disappointed at his failures on one particular issue, in fact, he was on the verge of mobilising the support of the non-Brahmins in and out of the Congress Party against Brahmins on a larger scale.

While he was in the Congress Party he had to witness and to experience the cultural dualism of the several Brahmin Congressites. On one occasion, E.V.Ramaswamy and S.Srinivasa Ayyanger, during their Congress propaganda tour at Dindigul in the early 1920's, had been served their meals separately in a Brahmin's house. On another occasion, for similar purpose, he and another Congress leader, Vengiduswamy Pillai, while they were at Coimbatore, took meals in a Congress Brahmin's house. To their astonishment and disgust, they had to see and sit beside the place which was not cleaned either before taking breakfast or before taking the other two meals of the day. The family kept the place of dining uncleanced

15. Kudi Azam, 12-7-1931, PRLAC.
fearing that cleaning the place where the non-Brahmins sat would pollute them. Such situations and incidents were not new to E.V. Ramaswamy. When he had a similar experience at Benares (Varanasi) in his early days, he could despise it, criticise it and publicly ridicule it without any fear. Since this bitter experience had occurred to him, as a Congressite, he had to learn to get along with them for the sake of the party hesitantly. He considered them as personal experiences, though he was aware that such instances were in reality exposed the social practices of the age and were contrary to the ideals the Congress party stood for the overall national regeneration. But when the public institution, the gurukulam, at Saramadevi in Tirunelveli district which was started with noble ideals, whose accomplishment, the Indian National Congress aspired for, had indiscriminately entertained caste differences among the young students, could not tolerate the injustice done to the non-Brahmin students this time.

16. Kudi Arasu, 12-7-1931. PRBRC.
V.V.S. Ayyar, a confirmed and a selfless nationalist, started a gurukulam at first at Kallidasikurichi in 1922 and later shifted it to Saramadevi. In fact both these places were noted for Brahminical culture and learning, in Tirunelveli district. The institution came into being in defiance of the foreign rule during non-co-operation and Swadeshi movements. It was aimed at imparting religious education to the youths, to inculcate patriotic fervour in them and to shape them as broad-minded useful citizens of the country. In this institution a separate dining was arranged with the permission of the President, V.V.S. Ayyar, for Brahmin and non-Brahmin students. As Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, E.V. Ramaswamy had received several complaints about this injustice and discrimination. A Committee instituted by his efforts to go into the charges against the gurukulam had confirmed the prevalence of this practice. E.V. Ramaswamy, Dr. Varadarejulu Naidu, S. Ramanathan, Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaram and other non-Brahmin leaders argued that since the institution's finance was largely augmented by the donations of the non-Brahmins patrons and the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and since it stood for noble
ideals, it was not fair to encourage such social differences which would develop inferiority complex in the minds of the non-Brahmin students studying in the institution. C. Rajagopalachari, T. S. S. Rajan, K. Santhanam, V. Vijayaraghavachariar and others, coming to the rescue of V. V. S. Ayyar who refused to revoke that practice*, countered the charge explaining that, as the total abolition of such age-old practices in the society would not be feasible within a short time and as it required drastic social reform activities which should help change the attitude of the people or the communities in question - until such time, in the best interests of the party, the non-Brahmin leaders should bear with the trouble. When attempts made by several non-Brahmin congressites like S. Ramanathan, to bring out a consensus on turning all organisations that were partaking in the national movement to be non-sectarian and non-communal were thwarted by the opposition, the compromise formulae put forth by Mahatma Gandhi and

* Even after V. V. S. Ayyar's death at Papanasam waterfalls in Thirunelveli in 1920, his successor, T. R. Mahadevan Ayyar, who headed the institution maintained the status quo by not changing the mess rules and restrictions till 1927. After 1927, it ceased to function.
Rajagopalachari to patch up the differences among the quarrelling parties failed to avoid the imminent split in the Congress. The inevitable split thus occurred over this issue among the uncompromising Brahmin and non-Brahmin Congressites had been making the way for E.V.Ramaswamy's parting from the Congress Party in the near future, a certainty.

The unresolved Gurukulam incident had represented one of the serious threats to E.V.Ramaswamy's non-Brahmin cause and self-respect. Hence he brought out a Tamil weekly, *Kudi Arasu* from 2nd May 1925 from Erode under his editorship. With an aim to instil and arouse self-respect propagate socialism and to establish a sense of brotherhood among the non-Brahmin Tamils against the Brahmins. Earlier in 1922 and 1923 E.V.Ramaswamy had plans to start a newspaper of his liking. On 19th January 1923, he even went to the extent of registering *Kudi Arasu* and *Kongu Nadu* a weekly and monthly (both of them in Tamil), respectively, but he could not bring out either of them due to some...

pressure to the contrary by his well-wishers in the Congress. The desire to run a paper arose frequently in him while he was in Congress, more because, he might have been a party or a witness to several unpleasant encounters with the Brahmin Congressites. However, and at last, when Kudi Arasu was started in 1925, though it was considered to be an individual effort and investment, this relief effort was never confined to a handful of non-Brahmin victims at the hands of an even number of Brahmins; the entire Brahmin community came in for severe criticism by the Kudi Arasu. Began at a time when the national freedom struggle was getting momentum and was improving the percentage of newspaper readership among the people, Kudi Arasu could gather support for its cause. Thus the emergence of Kudi Arasu against Brahmins, and later Brahminism, paved the way for the emergence of a Movement called the Self-Respect Movement, about the same time and its leader E.V.Ramaswamy in Tamil Nadu.

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