CHAPTER II

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During the twentieth century a mushroom of religious, social and political movements and communal organisations have appeared to blunt the sharp edges of Brahmanism which flourished in the past on the strength of priest-craft, temple-craft, sanctity of the caste system - (Chaturvarna), idolatry and the adulterated scriptures concocted by the priests. Besides the supreme position in religious and social field, they grabbed all the key posts from the British in the early part of the century in Tamil Nadu.

The advent of the Non-Brahmin party has been an event of great significance in the history of India. The fundamental basis of the Non-Brahmin party was not the communal aspect. The party was nothing but an intermediate class between the Brahmans at one end and the untouchables at the other. The party could be nothing if it were not a party committed to democracy.
Even in the twentieth century, the minimum human rights were denied to untouchables. Ninety-seven percent of our population is dubbed as 'Sudras' — the slaves under the obnoxious caste system. The history of mankind, doubtless, is a long record of the tyranny, cruelty, massacre and suffering inflicted by individual maglo-maniacs or groups of barbarous people, on their fellow beings. But in the name of caste and religion, a subtler variety of human torture and misery was successfully inflicted on untouchables and Sudras for over centuries. Almost one fifth of our teeming millions are condemned from their birth to a life of seclusion, starvation, serfdom and poverty. Even cattle get a better treatment and live in a more spacious surroundings than the untouchables in Tamil Nadu. Neither the foreign rulers, the British, who chose to eat from their hands, nor the Swadeshi counterparts who did not hesitate to grease the palms of the so-called Harijans during the elections, to snatch away their votes, came forward to wage a real battle to eradicate untouchability and to create a society of equals. The British took shelter under the 'Queen's Proclamation of neutrality' in religious
affairs and excused themselves from their obligations to fellow human beings. The Swadeshi rulers belong mostly to the so-called higher castes and as such have a vested interest in protecting their hegemony. "Though they shed repeatedly copious crocodile tears at the plight of downtrodden people, nothing effective has been achieved towards the abolition of casteism..."2

In Tamil Nadu, G. Ayothiadas Pandit was the first rationalist. With his simple but powerful personality and mass appeal he brought about a widespread awakening through his journal 'Tamizhan' and in this he was greatly assisted by Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan and later by N. Sivaraaj, the then Professor of Law College, Madras."3

The orthodox and rich non-Brahmins served as the entrepreneurs and traders when the British founded the East India Company. "These uneducated but rich non-Brahmins helped the Brahmins (English-knowing) younger generation in getting responsible and coveted administrative posts"4 to make use of them for their commercial purposes. When the Madras Presidency College was founded, the Brahmins alone dominated the
the institution because of this facility. To safeguard their vested interests and to protect their tribe, they established their own press. Sir Alexander Cardew, as an observer in Public Service Commission in 1916 said "that only this minority block alone will have sizeable share in the examination and the ICS cadre in future would be Brahminic." Out of the 16 ICS candidates selected, 15 were Brahmins, during the examinations held between 1892 and 1904. In the case of Engineers, out of 27 there were 21 Brahmins. In regard to Dy. Collectors' posts, they were 77 out of 140 and the remaining posts were given to non-Brahmins, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and Muslims together.

The Brahmins were not satisfied with occupying exalted chairs in administrative wings. They also entered politics, not to protect those who are in high positions, but to get more posts for their own sect through agitation. Thus the entire Congress party became Brahmin-dominated. "From the Congress platform they would declare that the 'Satanic' British government should be swept off at once. People would
also appalaud them. But their sons, brothers and relations would be earning Rs.500 to Rs.3,000 a month as Munsiffs and Judges under the same government. The heroic declarations would but serve to strengthen the positions of their relations in the various professions and yet they will be masquerading in the name of the country. After the advent of the Congress, the Brahmins managed to enter almost all branches of government service. And so it is proof positive that the national organisation, the Congress, could help the Brahmins in getting about 97% of the appointments even though they were but 3% of the entire population.

Before 1920, the Congress party in South India was chiefly concerned with the securing of big jobs for Indians, most of which were in the hands of the British. This resulted in almost all the key posts being filled by the privileged few i.e., Brahmins. With a view, therefore, to securing equal rights and opportunities for the rest of the communities of South India, and securing political, educational and economic equality for the non-Brahmin community, a separate
social cum political organisation was to be founded. In those days even ten per-cent of the Non-Brahmins were not educated, of whom not even 5% either in government or other public services. In the domain of politics their influence was almost nil. In the legislatures, in the local bodies and in almost all spheres of life, the Non-Brahmins were completely neglected.

The Origin of The Dravidian Movement:

The Dravidian or the Non-Brahmin movement had its origin in the struggle between the Brahmins who were the first to benefit from English education in the multi-lingual Madras Presidency, and the Non-Brahmin groups, where entered the race later.

The expansion of English education in the nineteenth century was more wide-spread in the South than elsewhere possibly due to the services of Christian missionaries. The Madras Presidency was far advanced when compared to Bombay and Bengal. The
Brahmins had an edge over the Non-Brahmins within the Madras Presidency.

In 1852, Madras had 1,185 mission schools with 38,005 students. While Bombay and Bengal together had 472 mission schools with an enrolment of 26,791. Of the 62 Arts College in India, in 1882, Madras had 25, Bombay 6, Bengal 22, North-West Frontier and Oudh (present U.P.) 9 and Punjab 2. Brahmins formed the majority of students educated in the Madras Presidency. In 1890-91, of the 3,200 students in Arts College, 38 were Europeans and Anglo-Indians, 244 Christians, 46 Muslims, 658 Non-Brahmins and 2,208 Brahmins. Brahmins formed 81% of the aggregate. The Madras Brahmin was ahead of his counterpart in the Hindi areas. In the whole of India, "895 out of every 1,000 males were illiterate according to the 1891 census. Out of every 1,000 Brahmins; 317 in Central provinces; 569 in Baroda; 191 in Punjab and 180 in North West Frontier and Oudh."9

Education meant government jobs, which in turn meant political power and patronage. The battle for
government jobs was being joined by the Non-Brahmin castes in an attempt to enter a field which exclusively was that of the Brahmins.

As a political scientist has suggested, acceptance of caste and religion as a determinant in a traditional society led to "statutory recognition of communalism - in the Mont-Ford Reforms of 1919, which for the first time attempted a gradual transfer of power to Indians." Any set-up that permits communal representation in the government makes for the exercise of a political power to promote caste interests. The 1919 reforms stimulated a political combination of different caste groups in Madras Presidency to win political power. But the demand for political power to the Non-Brahmins had taken shape even before the reforms. This is the origin, a nebulous one though, of the Dravidian or Non-Brahmin movement.

As a result of the British rule over this subcontinent, the Indian people were able to educate themselves and acquaint themselves with international affairs. This enabled them to understand and analyse
political issues. Hence they desired to form political organisations which they believed, might achieve for them the due share of representation in the officialdom. In their first step they demanded that the government should re-organise the departments in such a way that the "Indians could be accommodated. Secondly, they demanded the reservation of jobs in those scheduled departments. Thirdly they began prescribing the procedure that was to be adopted in the process of recruitment." These demands were conceeded by the British and they were given an opportunity to get employed in government service. Yet they were not satisfied. So, by founding an organisation, these Non-Brahmin leaders aimed at capturing the mass support which again could be utilised for political ends.

The origin of the Non-Brahmin Movement in the South had its bearing on such a socio-political development. They proclaimed that they would be sharing all the jobs that would be made available to Indians, with all Non-Brahmin communities sharing them in proportion to their population. They also announced they would not be having any truck with Brahmins. They
also pronounced their goals as carving out a free state under the British banner. Hence that became an inevitable exercise on their part to pass in every gathering a resolution affirming their loyalty to the British Crown. This was the custom that was prevailing in all the political organisations down from the Indian National Congress. This was the first resolution to be passed and the song "God save our King" was to be sung at the conclusion of every political assembly. So the Non-Brahmin Movement also had to fall in line.

The Birth of The Dravidian Association:

The policy and principle of Non-Brahmin Movement of sharing jobs according to the numerical strength of the groups and the banning of the entry of Brahmins proved to be a major attraction and the educated Non-Brahmins and uneducated commoners began to throng and support it whole-heartedly. This new-born movement gained strength through wide propaganda.
In 1916, Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar founded the Dravidian Association which aimed at Non-Brahmin political power and the Raja of Panagal was its first President. The association declared "its goal of a Dravidian State under British Raj - of government by and for Non-Brahmins." The Non-Brahmin manifesto of 1916 was more significant than the formation of the Association. The association did not really take off and a new organisation, the 'South Indian Peoples Federation' was formed to propagate the Non-Brahmin Hindu cause. Sir P. Theyagaraya Chetty, Secretary of the new body, issued a manifesto leading to the formation of the South India Liberal Federation in 1917, or the Justice Party, as it came to be known later.

The manifesto of the Non-Brahmin Party voiced the demands of a small social elite among non-Brahmins for advancement in the face of the so-called Brahmin monopoly in education and professions in the government services. The manifesto also, as a first step, demanded reserved seats for non-Brahmins in the legislative council. According to an estimate, the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency (including Scheduled
Castes) were "in the ratio of 22 to 1, and the Scheduled Caste alone 5 to 1." As another study has revealed, the Brahmins were a strategic group in Madras politics of the day because they "dominated the government services and formed the largest, compact, homogeneous group in the legislative council." Giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Public Service, Sir Alexander Cardew, a top ranking civil officer, was quoted as saying that "Brahmins formed 72% of the University graduates and 97% of the civil service. Ever since 1893, Brahmin lawyers were the dominant element in the Madras Legislative Council. Between 1893 and 1909, of the six official members, four were Brahmins."

The manifesto underlined the domination of the Brahmins who constituted only 3% of the population. It said "old established traditions, the position of the Brahmins as the highest and most sacred of the Hindu castes, the nature of their ancient calling and the belief that they are divinely ordained intermediaries without whose active intervention and blessing, the soul cannot obtain salvation and their
consequent freedom from manual toil - all these helped them adapt themselves easily to the new conditions under the British rule, as under previous epochs in larger number and for more successfully than the other casts and communities." The vehement and scathing attack on Brahmins was followed by a call for a revolt against their arrogance and for a rediscovery of the non-Brahmin's self respect.

The manifesto of the non-Brahmin movement was aimed at check-mating the challenge to non-Brahmins that was implicit in the Brahmin cry for Home Rule. The non-Brahmins liberals had to turn collaborationist with the government if the Brahmins were oppositionist - "we are not in favour of any measure, which in operation, is designed or tends completely to undermine the influence of the authority of the British rulers, who alone in the present circumstances of India are able to hold the scales even between creed and class."\(^{18}\)

The South Indian Liberal Federation became the
'Justice Party' a year after this manifesto, drawing its leadership from the elite of the various linguistic regions that comprised the old Madras Presidency - the Andhra, the Karnataka, the Tamil Nadu and the Malabar area. The South Kanara district did not evince much interest in the movement. The leaders of the Justice Party were through and through devout Hindus, but were anti-Brahmin.

A delegation of the Justice Party in 1919 was sent to the London Parleys of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on constitutional Reforms for India. Taravath Madhava Nair who led the delegation died soon after he reached London. The Justice Party, at last won its demand of separate non-Brahmin representation in Madras Presidency as parts of an all-India award implemented through the Mantague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. There is an interesting difference in principle between the award of separate electorates for the non-Brahmins and the others. Muslims, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians were minorities in relation to the Hindus and were given
separate electorates to safeguard their minority interests. But among the Hindus, the non-Brahmins were a majority vis-à-vis the Brahmins. The extent of protection to the majority against minority in this context was extraordinary. Under the Mont-Ford Reforms, the first elections were held in December 6, 1920 conducted by Lord Wellington the then Governor of Madras. Since the Congress Party boycotted the election, there was a resounding victory for the Justice Party.

The Justice Party after having a walk-over in the election formed the ministry with the Raja of Panagal as the Chief Minister. Thus, the Justice Party became the first Indian Political Party or body to function as a ruling party in India because it had majority in the legislative council and enjoyed the support of the British government. Had the Congress participated in the election and won, its position would have been different from that of the Justice Party. At the second council elections in 1923, the Justice Party held its ground against the challenge of the Congress which had returned to the field. Theyagarayar formed the ministry with K.V. Reddy and Rao Bahadur
T.N. Sivagnanam. But being an elite party of princes, Zamindars and wealthy-upper caste non-Brahmins, it failed to develop a mass base and it was defeated at the 1937 election.

When the Swarajists boycotted the council scheme in 1930, the Justice Party returned to power, only to be trounced in 1934, when the Congress refused office and the Justice Party continued in power until the 1937 elections under the 1935 Act. The political fade-out of the party reflected the governing strength of the anti-British sentiment. There was a curious nemesis in the fate of the party which represented a contradiction. Its loyalty to the British was a negative reaction to the Brahmin control of the freedom movement in Madras. "British patronage put the Justice Party in power but the anti-British upsurge swamped it out of office in the end."¹⁹

Showering praises on the Brahmins, the Mahatma wrote: "The Brahmin is the finest flower of Hinduism and humanity - I would not have the non-Brahmins to
rise on the ruins of Brahmins..." Justice Party actions were no doubt clearly vindictive, and curbed the influence and power of the Brahmins.

The non-Brahmins in the Justice Party attempted to take away from Gandhiji's finest flower its fragrance and lustre. The Justice Party introduced the principle of communal rotation in the services. They also introduced reforms in Temple administration to the detriment of Brahmin interests. 'But during the two eventful decades, Justice Party restored the non-Brahmin to a sense of self respect.'

The Counterfeit Organisation:

At this juncture, the Brahmins caught hold of a few non-Brahmins to form a new non-Brahmin organisation. The victims of this Brahminical design included those who were not qualified for any job in the government service and those who were not shrewd enough to understand the net that was cast by the Brahmins. Some non-Brahmins with a vested interest also joined in this act.
of sabotage. This counterfeit organisation was called the 'Madras Presidency Citizens' Association'. "This bogus organisation also swore by communal representation in government service. Its policy also tabooed the entry of Brahmins. The only difference between the two non-Brahmins' Organisations was that the latter avoided the expression of loyalty towards the British Empire." However in due course this organisation disappeared. Nevertheless, the British found the much needed counter-poise in the Justice Party, but its elitist character was to render it obsolete amidst a rising tide of anti-imperialism.

To the extent the Justice Party helped the non-Brahmin assertion against exploitation by the Brahmin, it could have a limited appeal to the masses. But beyond that the party was an anachronism. Its leadership was the preserve of the elite collaborators of the British. The non-Brahmin masses were not only anti-Brahmin; they were basically an anti-British stream in the Justice Party, as reflected in the slogan against the "British - Bania - Brahmin triple alliance". Along
with these there was a powerful anti-Brahmin stream in the Congress Party in Madras state.

In 1920, at the Karaikudi session of the Tamil Nadu Congress, C. Rajagopalachari was said to have backed against his main factional rival, but a fellow-Brahmin, Satyamurthi, a non-Brahmin, Muthuranga Mudaliar, who belonged to Rajagopalachari's faction. The contest took on a caste complexion, resulting in the defeat of the non-Brahmin contestant. The Ramnad District Congress Committee "expressed serious concern over this trend and warned that if it continued the result would be a prolonged struggle between Brahmans and non-Brahmins in the Congress in Tamil Nadu."22

The struggle against Brahmin domination was not limited to electoral representation or a due share in government service or educational opportunities alone. It extended to the control of the Congress also. This was but a logical corollary to a situation with a multi-lingual unit and the anti-Brahmin protest was the strongest in the Tamil-speaking districts.
The Congress was dominated by South Indian Brahmins and also North Indian leaders who knew nothing about the South Indians. And naturally the Congress turned its attention to South Indian movement. As the entire press was in the hands of the Congress and the Brahmins and their sympathisers, a tearing propaganda was carried on throughout the length and breadth of the land, proclaiming that the Justice Party was anti-national and pro-British.

The main reason for such a propaganda was the agitation of the Justice Party, not without success, to capture government and secure certain high posts in government. This mischievous propaganda was readily believed by illiterate masses. In addition to this "there was a split in the Justice Party on account of scramble for ministerial jobs."23

Thus the emergence of the Swaraj Party, the subsequent defeats suffered by the Justice Party in the elections, coupled with the treachery of a few non-Brahmin leaders brought about the ruin of the
Justice Party as a political force. The achievement of the Justice Party was no doubt quite meagre. The achievements of the Justice Party during its sixteen years of rule in Madras Presidency were: the passage of the Religious Endowment Bill, Bill of Reforms in Madras University; Establishment of Andhra and Annamalai Universities; Bill of Small Scale Industries; Indigenous Systems of Medicine (Siddam and Nattu) which set up a separate college for Indigenous medicines; priority to primary education—more number of schools were founded; special privileges were given to farmers, labourers and the downtrodden and the Communal Government Order was fully implemented.

During the one and a half decades of Justice Party's rule, its Hindu orthodox but anti-Brahmin leadership failed to mobilise the masses. The upper-caste leadership of the Justice Party became a prey to the unified forces of the Brahminical press. The Hindu leadership of the Justice Party was a mixture of divine elements and was not able to win over the votes of the masses. Brahminical vested interests and the adversely
affected non-Brahmins defeated the Justice Party in 1937 in a sweep. This was a death-knell to the Justice Party in Tamil Nadu politics.

The non-Brahmins rule and its achievements can be explained in a two-fold manner. One is that the failure to enunciate the doctrine of differences between the Brahminical sections and the non-Brahmins and the other was the narrow political and economic programme of the party. The Justice Party which had been in office for nearly 15 years, totally ignored the fate of 90% of non-Brahmins living in the villages, leading an impoverished life and getting into the clutches of the money lenders. In short, the Justice Party did not have rural roots and it was an elitist organisation without a mass base.

Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy and the Congress:

Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy, the patriarch of the Dravidian movement, had innumerable conflicts with the Congress. The Congress organisation under the
militant leadership of Periyar came to be pulsating with a new vigour and new life. It came to be recognised as a progressive and dynamic body. He became the Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee during 1921-1923 and incurred the wrath of its Brahmin leadership by joining the Satyagraha movement in Vaikom of the neighbouring Travancore state in defence of the right of the backward classes and scheduled castes to enter temples, a cause promoted by Gandhiji himself.

Thus there existed a sharp line of difference between the two groups viz., the progressive and the reactionary. There was utter lack of agreement between the two groups in their approach to almost every question. The difference was all the greater on the social front. But to Periyar, on the other hand, the social question alone came first, always and every time.

The abominable nature of the social structure and the countless malpractices associated with them were the issues that right from the beginning claimed Periyar's attention. They were the very issues that
drove him into the organisation which, he believed, offered him the best arena for fighting the ills. It, therefore, behove Periyar to fight the anti-progress tendency of the Moderates, which had the fanatical support of Stalwarts like C.Vijaya Raghavachariar, S.Srinivasa Iyengar, V.V.S.Iyer and almost the entire orthodoxy. There was something else that horrified Periyar to the core.

He was able to find that quite apart from the apparently ideological differences there lay underneath a deep-rooted hatred of the non-Brahmin community and that this factor had always governed every decision of the party, and, practically, was at the very root of the conflict itself.

Every progressive move, particularly those which aimed at improving the social setup, was then and there disallowed or otherwise out-voted under some pretext or the other. Strangely enough, "Periyar himself was described as 'anti-Brahmin'" and as one bringing about communal discard.
A Congress Conference was held at Tinnelveli in 1920. S. Srinivasa Iyengar was in the Chair. In collaboration with V.O. Chidambaram Pillai a resolution demanding communal representation in the government service was proposed. Wild excitement and a state of pandemonium followed, and the motion and its sponsor were the object of some of the bitterest attacks. The Brahmin leadership began threatening the party. They made Dewan RamRao declare categorically that if that particular resolution was passed all the Brahmins would resign from the Congress party en masse, and they called it as 'detrimental to national unity'. But Periyar did not yield to this threat, and he was determined to call the Brahmin bluff. Then after prolonged deliberation they decided to table an amendment. This amendment as proposed "by Rajagopalachary replaced the words 'communal Representation' by 'Adequate Representation'. They had also manipulated in such a way that the hands of Muslim members were raised when the amendment was put to vote...." 24

Right from 1920, year after year, Periyar tried to push through the motion, and year after year with clock-
-wise precision, the same fate befell it. Every time, it was rejected or otherwise withheld under some plea or laches. S.Srinivasa Iyengar, K.Santhanam, Dr.T.S.S. Rajan, V.V.S.Iyear and N.S.Varadhachary were among the heroes who had the distinction of having smashed the motion to preserve 'national unity'! Perhaps the least vehement, and most noble, opposer in the entire band was Rajaji who went to the extent of accepting the motion in principle but, like any other of the 'national unity' school, refused to let it take a statutory shape. As 'national unity' was the watch-word of the Congress, the Brahmins in the South freely used it against the non-Brahmin leaders to achieve their object.

Periyar's Aversion Towards Brahminic Leadership in Congress:

Departing from its declared policies of promoting social justice, the Congress organisation was a tool in the hands of the communally inclined Brahmins. The great institution, which once attracted Periyar as affording the best opportunity for fighting the social
evils, sheltered and nurtured them.

Periyar's disenchantment with Gandhiji was complete over the Chemacadevi Gurukulam affair. An orphanage in Gurukulam named after Gandhiji practiced discrimination against the non-Brahmins, particularly the scheduled caste children. Periyar wrote to Gandhiji protesting at such a policy but the Mahatma refused to intervene despite the fact, that Brahmins were exploiting his name to perpetuate caste discrimination. Periyar expected - and with good reasons - the wholehearted co-operation from at least the top men of the High Command in all his efforts - especially those relating to the social problems. Gandhiji, particularly, was his greatest hope. Unfortunately, the co-operation was not forthcoming in the manner and measure expected by him.

Far from being helpful, they all displayed a general sense of gross callousness on their part, and in fact, none was in favour of any real change in the social set-up. So to Periyar's utter surprise and
dismay, Gandhi himself proved to be one of the staunchest protagonists of the old order. For, on more than one occasion he had expressed himself in unmistakable terms in defence of the caste system in such words as: "The Varnasharma Dharma (the caste system) was intended as the supreme custodian of the interests of the society as a whole... and the need to preserve it, therefore, can hardly be over-emphasised."25

The Schism:

In the Conjeevaram convention of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in 1925, Periyar decided to get his most-disputed resolution passed as a last attempt. The Congress leaders took up the resolution concerning communal representation as the last item on the agenda. They had set up no less a person than "V.Kalyanasundara Mudaliar to oppose the resolution on the ground that this scheme was against the common good of the society. The result was that the resolution was thrown out."26
As a result Periyar walked out with a few non-Brahmin leaders. There broke out a terrific scene of wild confusion that was unprecedented. Sticks and brickbats were seen shooting from one end to the other end of the huge hall to the perfect accompaniment of deafening cries of the hired hooligans. The magnitude of the disorder was such that no one who witnessed it could foresee how it all would end. Yet amidst that state of utter chaos and confusion was heard a lone but distinct voice, which said: "from now on it should be my sacred duty to destroy the Congress which is the close preserve of the Brahmins." Periyar and his entire team of supporters were staging a walk-out once and for all from the Congress.

**Induction of Rationalism into The Justice Party:**

Periyar then started the Self-respect Movement which was one of social protest against Brahminism. It professed a vague belief in atheistic rationalism and
therefore it did not succeed in rallying round all sections of the educated non-Brahmins who were politically behind the Justice Party. But the response it got from the lower castes, especially scheduled castes, was beyond expectation. Periyar's anti-Brahmin campaign took the form of denunciation of caste-ridden Hinduism.

The Brahmin was his main target. It was the rationalism of the Robert Ingersoll-type in the revolt against the thraldom of ritualistic religion in general and the caste system which Hinduism sanctified, in particular. Periyar who had translated, among other things, Robert Ingersoll into Tamil founded a Tamil journal Kudiarasu (Republic) in 1925 which was followed by Puratchi (Revolt) in 1933, Paguthuruvu (Commonsense or Discernment) in 1934 and Viduthalai (Liberation) in 1936.

To the Hindu leadership of the Justice Party, which belonged to the more advanced among non-Brahmin castes, an attack on caste was only a propaganda weapon in their fight for privileges from the British.
The Justice leadership was not anti-Religion or anti-Hindu. But Periyar's movement aimed at liberating the non-Brahmin masses from the cultural domination by the upper castes, both Brahmins and non-Brahmins. It was a protest against caste system and the Hindu rituals, which were a sign of submission to Brahminism. The elite non-Brahmins could not have been enthused by a movement of this kind aimed against all social exploitation.

In fact, the organised effort of the Brahmins from inside the Congress to crush his enthusiasm only strengthened his conviction and determination to fight the Brahmin menace to the last. The need to organise and protect the non-Brahmin community, he discovered, was a necessity more urgent than ever.

Periyar decided on a tour of Russia and other countries of the continent in 1931, and set out an itinerary which, apart from Russia, included Germany, England, Spain, France and many countries of the Middle East. Accompanied by Mr. S. Ramanathan, a noted
Rationalist, Periyar took one full year to complete what might be regarded as a study tour of the Western World. To Russia, he was one of the earliest visitors from India ever since that country was set on the socialistic path. He was just struck by the rapidly changing scene and the dynamic, progressive outlook of the people. On the economic side too, as in the social, and political, there was a distinct development that marked a thorough change brought about by the supreme effort of the people to change the old order to a new one.

Periyar returned from the Soviet Union in 1931, a fiery revolutionary advocating the overthrow of the old order with violence and translated the Communist Manifesto into Tamil. "His extremism landed him in jail on a sedition charge and on his release in 1934, he wanted to return to politics." Some of the big land-lords in the Justice Party had invited him to take over the party's leadership, but on the specific condition that it should be just an anti-Congress Party and nothing more nor less. Leaders of the
S.Chettiar and Sir A.Ramaswamy Mudaliar were basically
loyal servants of the British Empire."\textsuperscript{30} They were
anti-Brahmin in a limited sense, but not as Periyar
understood it.

Periyar prepared the famous 'fourteen-point plan
which had a socio-economic basis'\textsuperscript{31} and presented it to
both the Congress and the Justice Party. He was
prepared to join either of the parties if only it
accepted his programme. The Congress obviously could
not accept a programme which did not square with its
own all-India policy. But the Justice Party was quick
to respond, because it did not have much to lose
anyway. When Periyar took over as leader of the
Justice Party, things were leading to a show-down
between the social reformist and the anti-British
self-respector who was impressed by what he had seen
of Bolshevik power in the Soviet Union and 'the
glittering galaxy of British lackeys who were willing
tools in the game of 'divide et impera'.\textsuperscript{32}
In the early 1930's compulsory Hindi was advocated by the Congress as 'the most powerful weapon capable of promoting national unity'. It was Periyar's lonely voice that could stand in opposition to the suggestion from so influential a source. No other soul in India could ever see the disastrous effects that such a hasty step was bound to produce. Periyar opposed it as a dangerous move deserving an outright condemnation. Compulsory Hindi, he thundered, would prove beneficial from every point of view including that of the Congress. His stand was quite unacceptable to the high bosses of the Congress. However, Rajagopalachari's move to impose Hindi over school children in Madras Presidency provided a new opening for Periyar's campaign against the Congress Ministry's calculated affront to Tamil language and culture. Non-Brahmins saw in the Hindi move a subtle game.

The leaders of the non-Brahmins thought that Hindi was Tamil Brahmin's cushion for the future. The
superior command over English the Tamil Brahmin had, given him an edge over the non-Brahmin already. But when freedom came, "if the Brahmin had to perpetuate his domination, he had to contrive some thing else in the place of English and learn it first so that he could have his lead over others..."

The Congress had accepted the principle of replacing English by Hindi as the National link language in free India. But Rajagopalachari, a leader of Hindi propagation movement in the South, tried to force Hindi in schools. In the agitation against Hindi, two agitators died as a result of police excesses. The ministry was forced to retreat on Hindi. Study of Hindi was made optional. Periyar went to jail for his role in this agitation. "Periyar thought, Hindi meant the cultural domination of the people of the Aryan North through the Brahmin. This is the point at which the Tamilians's research for his national identity began." The movement took a racist character when Periyar asserted that the non-Brahmins of the South belonged to the Dravidian stock and were ethnically different from the Aryans of the North. There lies
also the genesis of the first demand for secession in India that was to come later. A Dravidian state, separate from the rest of India, was Periyar's answer to the Hindi move. The Justice Party had become virtually a Tamil movement, having lost its multi-lingual character with the fade-out of the Andhra stalwarts and the death of its Malayali leader T.M. Nair.

During the three-day convention which met at Madras in December 1938, Periyar, who was still in prison, was unanimously elected President by the Justice Party of India. Never before had it witnessed such a tremendous appeal as evidenced in the audience which was nearly a lakh strong. The presidential address (prepared by Periyar in prison) was formally read out by Sri A.T. Pannirselvam with Periyar's portrait in the presidential chair. Heard in perfect silence, the address, which turned out to be a masterly document, evoked occasional wild cheers and tender, moving sober, as it surveyed the past and peeped into the future. Emotions ran high, and a general spirit of oneness pervaded the entire gathering.
Towards the end, a solemn oath which was taken by every one present in turn in Malayalam, Telugu and Tamil read: "Our beloved leader! Although you are bodily away in prison, we do feel your inspiring presence in our midst. And we hereby solemnly affirm that we are determined to devote ourselves to the noble cause of our party, and ultimately of our community, under your unique leadership."35

Initially, after the General Elections of 1936, particularly the blow it received was such that it gave the party a violent shakeup, and even touched the very morale of the once staunch men who directed it. The Justice Party bosses were seriously contemplating the winding up of the party once and for all, while some others who were rather more practical, saw no reason for a formal windup, since according to them, the party had already ceased to exist. It was a lingering stage in the history of the party.

In this connection Sir A.R. Mudaliar wrote one of the top leaders of the party a brief letter - the letter that was to change the entire destiny of the
fast crumbling party. "There is no denying", he wrote,

"that the Justice Party had already started losing its hold on the people. Many are the reasons.... and at this critical juncture nothing but a miracle could save it from total extinction, and ultimately restore it to its original glory... I, for my part, could see no miracle other than that of Mr. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker."

On another occasion he said,

"Mr. E.V. Ramaswamy's invaluable services at this hour of near fatal emergency has come as more than a panacea and has produced results in a medical way... The party is therefore, indebted in no mean measure, to Mr. E.V. R. Naicker - the Rousseau of this country..." (emphasis added).

The year 1938 was a turning point in the history of the Justice Party under Periyar's leadership. The hitherto inactive, dull and sometimes inconsistent policies and programmes of the party had to make way for an altogether different pattern and programme. Periyar on his taking over the leadership of the party, saw an urgent need to change it altogether and recast it on a rational basis in accordance with the needs of the times. So there was an endless list of them, all of which awaited consideration - the social ills, religious absurdities as well as the labour, economic
and political questions. The new programme of the Justice Party as recast by Periyar demanding Tamil Nad's right to a separate state 'a complete political independence from Britain,' was set by Periyar as the new political goal in place of the previous one which aimed at Dominion status - a fact which may be specially noted by those critics who love to dub him as Pro-British. The new programme had become the target of attacks of many kinds as could be imagined. "Pro-communist", "Too ambitious", "inconsistent" - these were but some of the critical epithets with which the programme was described by vested interests."³⁷

"All that the party wanted was a Tamil Nadu, not under the Viceroy in New Delhi, but directly under the Secretary of State for India in London."³⁸ The Tamils did not have any common destiny with the rest of India and even if they could not get independence immediately, they should part company with the North immediately.

Dravida Nadu, A Separate State:

The following year, Periyar called a Dravida Nadu
conference to demand a separate and independent home-land for the Dravidians. 'This was reiterated the following year while pledging support to the Muslim League's support for his demand in turn."39 The demand had changed from one for a separate Tamil Nadu to that of a Dravidanadu, a home-land for the Dravidians who spoke Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada and were racially, ethnically and culturally different from the Arayans of the rest of India.

The Dravida Nadu demand was the first secessionist demand in India because it even preceded the Pakistan slogan of M.A. Jinnah while freedom movement led by the Congress considered India as one nation and tried to underline the common destiny of the Indian people, the first challenge to this assumption came from Madras. "The continuation of Madras presidency in the Indian union was more repugnant to the Justice Party than the continued colonial rule."40

Theoretically it was possible that the British might quit the rest of India but could rule the Madras presidency from London. The demand as formulated in
1938 was no doubt vague and self-contradictory. The Dravidian home-land demand of the Justice Party was geographically coterminous with the then Madras presidency, which comprised almost of the entire Tamil-speaking region, the coastal and Rayalaseema districts which now form part of Andhra Pradesh, the Malabar area of the Kerala state and the South Kanara and Bellary districts of the present Karnataka state. Thus a large section of dravidian people, those who did not live in the Madras presidency but "belonged to the native states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin were not covered by the Dravidanadu demand by the Justice Party."41

Periyar issued a 'Press note' demanding a separate state;

"The Dravidian movement does not stop with this socio-religious revolution. On the economic side, the movement wants to cut itself away from the North, I mean the central government. The South should not be exploited by the North. It should not be mortgaged to the Birlas, Goenkas, Tatas, Dalmias and Hirachands. We, who belong to the South should not rest contented with the mere change of masters... When I say that we should not allow ourselves to be dominated by the North, I do not mean that Dravidastan when it comes into being, will be a thorn in the flesh of the North. We can be even more friendly and helpful than Ceylon and Burma. A separate independent state for the South would merely mean economic self-sufficiency and independence..."
'South India had been a separate state up to the time of the British occupation. Even Akbar and Ashoka dared not interfere with the independence of the South. We have about 1,500 miles of sea cost; plenty of forest, a net work of rivers and enormous underground wealth. And our man power is incomparable in skill and efficiency. Are we not proud of having lent to the North, a Governor General, a couple of Finance Ministers and last but not least the first commander in chief?'

'The proposal of Dravidistan or Dravidanadu can in no way be worse than a Switzerland, a Ceylon or a Burma. If these small stretches of land could be separate independent countries why not we with a vast area of 1,25,0000 Sq.miles and six crores of people and plenty of natural resources?'

'The Dravidian movement is not a communal movement. It is a national movement. It is only an attempt of a great historic people to throw off their age-long social and religious bondage to cut off the two century chain put on its feet by a foreign bureaucracy.'42

Thus Periyar claimed Dravastan by pointing at the economic exploitation of the South by the North; geographical structure of the South; historical evidence till the advent of British Empire and so on. But the demand was not for a new federation of the peoples speaking the Dravidian languages, nor was it a demand based on the cultural identity of all Dravidian people. It was nebulous, imprecise and lacking in base. Either
at this stage or later, "the leaders of the separatist movement were not clear as to what 'Dravida' connoted in politics. The term was loosely used to connote anything Tamilian and assumed it to be one among the four Dravidian groups."  

The Justice Party's break-up was inevitable. At the Salem Conference in 1944 it was clear that it was largely a Tamil Party, with very little non-Tamil participation, Periyar tried to give it "a militant character and asked its members to wear black shirts to symbolise the conditions of the downtrodden Dravidians."  

The old South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as the Justice Party of which Periyar was elected leader in 1939 assumed the new historic name Self-Respect Movement or Dravida Kazhagam as result of Annadurai's resolutions (viz., renouncing honorary posts in corporates etc., ), passed at the Annual Confederation held at Salem in 1944. The movement was given a new orientation by virtue of the well known Self-Respect Movement, of which Periyar was the founder, merging in it.
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