CHAPTER 7

THE NON-BRAHMIN, THE JUSTICE AND

THE SATYA SHODHAK MOVEMENTS (1916-1937) -

A COMPARATIVE STUDY
The socio-political thought of the Non-Brahmin Movement of Madras, today known as the D.K. or D.M.K. (the party in power now in Tamil Nadu) has passed through various stages. Every new movement in the world, however progressive it may be, passes through several stages. The Non-Brahmin movement has had to pass through the classical experiences known to history. The genesis of the movement, lies in the historical and ethnical aspects of mutual relations that subsisted between the Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. The disruptive caste system has not gone unchallenged. Several worthy sons of India have made from generation to generation vigorous attempts to free Hindu society from this evil which degraded, segregated and devitalised the society. "Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Kingly, Mighty and rational Buddha rocked this system to its foundations. In the eleventh century Ramanuja, who had an untouchable disciple, threw upon the untouchables the monasteries temples which he had founded and built. Basava who was a minister of a Karnataka King, tried in his own way to pull down this system. Following this in the succeeding centuries saints like Kabir, Eknath, Tukaram, Ramadas succeeded to a great extent in establishing equality through the Bhakti cult. Then followed waves of socio-religious revival led by
Ram Mohan Roy. But the most vital role was played by Mahatma Phule who started in Poona in 1848, the first school in India for the untouchables.\(^1\) Jotiba Phule represented a very different set of interests and a very different outlook on India from all the upper caste elite of the so-called Indian Renaissance, who have dominated the awareness of both Indian and foreign intellectuals. The elite expressed an ideology of what may be described as the 'national revolution'; it was the nationalism of a class combining bourgeois and high caste traditions. Phule represented the ideology of the social revolution in its earliest form, with a peasant and anti-caste outlook. Phule's thought represented the fulfilment of the renaissance desire for social transformation along revolutionary lines. He, and not the later elite thinkers, from Ranade through Tilak, should be seen as the primary renaissance figure.\(^2\) After his death in 1890, his reforms were later carried by Shri Shahu. It was under these influences that


there came up a body of the country's population, if not homogeneous and perfectly organised, but certainly united - Justice and the Satya Shodhak. The relations between the two have already been examined in chapter VI. These two forces were united by a common grievance and inspired by a common ambition. The inauguration of the Indian Home Rule Movement in 1916 ushered in attempts by Non-Brahmins to secure a more influential and assured place in public life under the leadership of Shri Shahu, Dr. T. M. Nair and Sir P. T. Chettiar. The Home Rule agitation ushered into existence the 'Justice' and the 'Non-Brahmin Movement.' "Friends of social reform all over the country realized that the great conflict between the Home Rulers and the anti-Home Rulers was nothing more than a loud call for social reform once more and will rejoice over it that this conflict meant that we are on the eve of a great Social Reconstruction."  

Eugene Irschick has examined elaborately the Non-Brahmin sentiments and concludes as follows: "When the Justice Party was formed in the late 1916, anti-Brahmin sentiments were expressed through the "Justice" party. The party was formed to uphold the rights of the non-Brahmin community and to fight against the discrimination and oppression faced by them. The party was led by prominent leaders such as Shri Shahu, Dr. T. M. Nair, and Sir P. T. Chettiar.

sentiment was not a new phenomenon in Madras, and this was not confined simply to the Tamil areas, it appeared also in the Malayalam speaking Malbar district, in Mysore, and in the Telugu districts." Further, he states that the anti-Brahmin sentiment was heard loudly only in 1916 and asks why did it not originate twenty years earlier? "A complete answer to this question must await further research in late nineteenth century Madras politics."4 He further states that in 1916-17, the Justice Party was able to develop a leadership and a following that would have been impossible twenty years earlier.5

Eugene Irschick, whose contribution can be considered as most recent in the study of the Madras Non-Brahminism, taking note of the opinions of various scholars has very aptly raised this doubt, and this very doubt of his points to the popularity, and influence of Shri Shahu, who had reached the peak of popularity by 1916, in spreading the movement beyond his native state. Further, it can also be pointed out that the anti-Brahmin sentiment in Maharashtra was also not a new phase and was developed right since the

4 Irschick Eugene, Politics and Social Conflict in South India, p.357.
5 Ibid., p.352.
Jotiba Phule era which later became popular in the Madras presidency. In this connection it is worthwhile to state that "in 1875 - the Maratha peasant risings of Poona and Ahmadnagar broke heads and contracts in a series of free for all. But these were peasant risings of the traditional type, the reaching for sticks and stones as the only way of protesting against distress of specific political content they show little sign. Faced with mounting debts and shrinking fields, they marched, not against the foreigner, but against the land-owner and the money lender."6 These 'Deccan Riots' actually gave rise to the Non-Brahmin struggle, from which emerged Jotiba Phule who constructed a platform for the Non-Brahmins. "Phule, it is true, failed to provide economic analysis or political organisation appropriate for this struggle. But he had a clear vision of the need for and the basis of a liberation movement,"7 which was further provided by Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. The Brahmin dominance in these two Presidencies was more or less of the same type. In 1881 the percentage

6 Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, pp. 12-13.
of the Brahmins of the total population was 3.9 in Madras compared with 4.8 in Bombay, and the role of the Maratha Brahmin in the early politics of South is important. In the Bombay Presidency the dominance of the Brahmin in Education had been felt. The question was viewed in the light of the possible encouragement for private enterprise in the field. It was felt that indigenous schools, if provided with liberal facility would definitely help in improving the situation.

The extent to which the children of various races or castes attended the schools as a part of the educational development scheme can be assessed from the following chart:

The percentage of the Hindu children at school to the total male population was 2.55 in 1880-81 and 2.84 in 1881-82. The corresponding percentages for the Muhammadan children was 1.70 and 2.02 respectively. In 1880-81, the number of Brahmin children at the primary

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>No. of schools in 1880-81</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of schools in 1881-82</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1,521</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>58,175</td>
<td>21.37</td>
<td>63,071</td>
<td>20.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hindus</td>
<td>174,072</td>
<td>63.94</td>
<td>202,345</td>
<td>64.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammadans</td>
<td>33,033</td>
<td>12.13</td>
<td>39,231</td>
<td>12.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsis</td>
<td>3,109</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3,517</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Hill Tribes</td>
<td>2,135</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2,713</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews &amp; others</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table showing caste-wise distribution of attendance in schools in 1881-82.)

schools was 7,600, greater than in the year 1879-80. In 1881-82, the number showed a further increase of 4,800 or 8.59 per cent." This points to the dominance of Brahmins, in social and educational spheres which was not only unique to Madras Presidency but also to Bombay Presidency. This contributed to the development of a sense of dissatisfaction among the Non-Brahmins in both the

Presidencies, and this had already become a part of the popular movement under the impact of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'.

In 1916, the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin conflict, under the impact of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' had resulted in "every now and then, into caste controversy, regarding the undue predominance the Brahmin community was possessing in the official life of the country. This conflict was having a great impact on the press of Madras from elsewhere and was given prominence everywhere." 11 This obscure 'elsewhere' is obviously a reference to the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and its influence in Bombay Presidency. This Non-Brahmin movement came in direct conflict with the Home Rule Movement, and had also been "subjected to many abuses, misunderstandings and misrepresentation, when the Non-Brahmin Movement in 1916, at last was recognised because of its aims and demands." 12 "The Non-Brahmin had, owing to a concatenation of conditions, fallen behind in the race for English education and had therefore suffered in influence under the British Government. What was wanting is the

12 New India, August 31, 1917.
veneer of western education, and with it perhaps a knowledge of political life and ideals of the western countries." The Brahmin community, especially in South India, exercised a predominant influence which was not altogether the result of intellect or education, because many of the Non-Brahmin castes were also as well educated and were as much intellectuals as the Brahmins. The pre-dominance was perhaps due to the persistence of those caste distinctions by virtue of which alone the Brahmin had occupied a position superior to those of the lesser castes. "Education lines at first had the effect of accentuating this superiority, because by birth, training and intellect, the Brahmins were predisposed to take advantage of the opportunities offered. Some of these barriers, still existed not because of the fault of education, but it was due to the persistence of other influences, which were more or less tacitly admitted, while their results were resented, by those who had not the good fortune to be among the twice "born". Non-Brahmin Movement came as an opportunity to the country's population to expound their

13 Ibid.
principles, to give expression to the faith in them, to place their ideal before the country. Side by side the movement took up the cause of expansion of education—elementary, secondary and higher education. The Home Rule Movement brought the Non-Brahmins into direct conflict, because "Mrs. Besant was associated with almost all Brahmins, and many of the assumptions that she articulated about Indian culture were based on the Puranas, Manu and the epics," and the Non-Brahmin Movement both in Bombay and Madras Presidencies attacked the very basis of the Vedas; because of which "the Brahman-Non-Brahmana conflict was found supreme in every Taluk." Lord Sydenham, as a close friend of the Non-Brahmin cause, pointed out that "India's most pressing need is the abolition of the caste system and here lies a magnificent field to work for real Indian patriots. Such patriots exist but not in the small body of political agitators who are demanding power for their needs." Lord Sydenham also referred to the various

15 Irshick Eugene, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 44.
leaders like Shri Shahn Maharaj, Dr. T. M. Nair, Sir P. T. Chettiar and others.

The Non-Brahmin Movement came in the form of a great awakening. The Non-Brahmins were anxious to secure posts and places in public services as well as opportunities for political training commensurate with their numbers, their wealth and their importance. Under the British rule collaboration were of different types, and they varied both in their nature and in their intensity. Men who worked with the foreign regime did so from a variety of motives, and all groups may be classed as collaborators whose actions coincided with the objectives of the British. It was self-interest which brought them to the side of the Raj. Both the nationalist forces and anti-nationalist forces, as these two movements criticised each other, fell in line with the British policy, i.e., the Divide and Rule Policy. Both these forces operated simultaneously and neither held a constant position. Each had its defectors, but the very genius of the Non-Brahmin Movement points that Non-Brahmin Movement was more nationalist because it was a social reformist movement. For the Non-Brahmins, social reform was of first priority than freedom; whereas for the Home Rule Movement, freedom was first and then social reform.
The collaboration of Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant "during the middle of the war in launching a Home Rule Movement"\(^{18}\) was an important factor which brought a good deal of unity between the Justice Party and 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' to rebut the criticisms of the Home Rule Movement. As already pointed out both were collaborators as far as the British Policy went, but the "Non-Brahmin Movement was more moderate than the Congress party and it sought to attain its goal to full responsible government through constitutional methods,"\(^{19}\) and these efforts of the Non-Brahmins produced results which were of national significance, and it took the whole country by storm. But it was criticised and dubbed as anti-nationalist by the Home Rule Movement. In Madras Presidency the Non-Brahmin leaders had to face the criticism of Mrs. Besant. In Bombay Presidency, it was Tilak who carried on the propaganda of the Home Rule Movement, and was also a staunch critic of Shri Shahu of Kolhapur, who condemned Shri Shahu for airing his views on the Brahman and Non-Brahman question in Madras and elsewhere to show


\(^{19}\) Baliga B.S., Studies in Madras Administration, Government of Madras, Vol. 1.
his intense hatred towards Brahmins. Tilak was connected with Kolhapur affairs, even when "the name of Bal Gangadhar Tilak had not yet acquired the awesome prestige and the mass veneration of the future Lokamanya," and Tilak's conflict with Kolhapur perhaps might have become the principal cause to spread the Non-Brahmin Movement. "British officialdom was already beginning to be netted by his blistering attacks against their policies and performance." In both these Presidencies, the Home Rule Movement was criticised as Brahminical in its influence. The Home Rule Movement was gaining support rapidly under Mrs. Besant, its chief leader along with Tilak, who had been interned in Ootacamund in June, 1917. Mrs. Besant's Theosophical propaganda devotedly glorified traditional Hinduism, and no doubt most of her followers in Madras were Brahmins. Her newspaper 'New India' criticised strongly the Justice Party. Its spokesmen replied by calling her an "Irish Brahmani." In Bombay Presidency Tilak's

22 Ibid., p.565.
newspapers such as "Kesari", "Maharatta", "Rashtra Mat", and "Kal" from Poona. "The Brahmin hold in Maharashtra's villages was so great that at Jannar the Brahmin Talaties sold pictures of Mr. Tilak worth an anna for Rs.5/- and collected funds for him."²⁴ Besides, it does not mean that Mrs. Annie Besant did not attack the Non-Brahmin Movement in Bombay Presidency. It was right in November 1873, that she addressed the Maratha Theosophical Federation, in which she referred to the great role Maharashtra had played in the near past, and further asserted that "this district of Maharashtra had a great part to play in India, and it can only play it well, if the old fire of spiritual enthusiasm shall dominate the intellect."²⁵ Both Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant propagated Home Rule, tried to arouse the sentiments of the people with a religious base. The Brahmins in Bombay Presidency tried to move in the areas where Shri Shahu tried to encourage education for Non-Brahmins. "When the Brahmins saw that their co-religionists were trying to throw off their despotic yoke, 

²⁴ Note by H.H. The Maharaj of Kolhapur on the necessity of Separate Communal Electorate for Marathas and Others, Appendix 1.

²⁵ Annie Besant, 'For India's Uplift' (Speeches and Writings on Indian Questions), p.316.
they at once built a fortress near Sangli, i.e., the Willingdon College. The Kesari had also written that all should join this College. Tilak often clashed with Shri Shahu Maharaj and he used his newspaper Kesari to attack Shahu, as the 'New India' did in Madras Presidency. The Kesari once wrote in condemnation of Shahu as he came to the throne on adoption saying "even one's own child has to be cut to pieces when there is a cross birth." Shri Shahu also tried to encourage "Vishwa Bandhu" (Marathi), a paper which was opposed to Tilakiate views, and because of which the paper had fallen down. The two Non-Brahmin Movements (The Justice and Satya Shodhak) worked unitedly to confront the Home Rule Movement and its tactics, and the main reason why H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj took the movement into the wide South was the historical rivalry between Poona and Kolhapur cities and under the British, the conflict was between Tilak and Shahu (coming from Poona and Kolhapur respectively). In Madras Presidency Dr. T. M. Nair,

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26 Shahu Files, K.R.O., Letter from Shahu to Curtis, Griffith, Mr. Robertson. App 10


a physician had for some years edited a medical journal called "Antiseptic". But he did not limit his writing to medical subjects. One article in fact brought him into protracted conflict with Mrs. Besant. It was called "Psychopathia Sexualis in a Mahatma" and concerned the sexual practices of Charles W. Leadbeater with his disciples in the Theosophical Society."29 Besides, that Shri Shahu was criticised in the Madras Presidency. "The Citizen" (Madras) on January 15, 1921 condemning Shri Shahu, had asked the President of the Conference of the Justice School of Politics, "to repudiate the nauseating hymn of hate which the Maharaj of Kolhapur was preaching."30 These would explain to a certain extent as to why the Anti-Brahmin sentiment did not originate twenty years earlier to 1916, as doubted by Eugene Irschick. For everything that went against a Brahmin in any part of Southern India, Shri Shahu was blamed. Hence the very formation of the Justice Party in 1916 indicates that "it was a time to define the attitude of the several important Non-Brahmin Indian communities in

29 Irschick, Eugene, op.cit., p.49.
Madras Presidency towards what was called 'The Indian Home Rule Movement' and also to indicate facts with respect to their present political position." The Non-Brahmin Manifesto of December 1916, throwing much light on the sufferings of the Non-Brahmin in Madras Presidency came as a result of Mrs. Besant's Home Rule Movement supported by Tilak and other Brahmins' participation in the Swadeshi and Terrorist agitations in Bombay and elsewhere. "It was only in 1916-17, the Justice Party was able to develop a leadership and a following that would have been impossible twenty years earlier." It was the impact of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj Movement' which contributed to the rise of the Justice Party. Shri Shahu played an important part in the destiny and the liberation of suppressed humanity in South India. The Depressed classes in India had different names in different parts of the country. They were called Pariahs, Atishudras, Panchamas, etc. They were forbidden from keeping even certain domestic animals, using certain metals for ornaments, wearing particular type of dress and having particular type of food etc. Their children were


not admitted to schools attended by the caste Hindu children. Heavily influenced by all these social conditions, Shri Shahu lost no time during his reign in improving their lot. The Justice Party, emerging from these influences, had developed the socio-political thought, not too much different from that of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. As the Home Rule Movement was gaining momentum the Non-Brahmins realised in 1917 the threat to their interest and felt that Mrs. Besant and her movement for Home Rule was meant to acquire all powers for the Brahmins. The Non-Brahmins, therefore, wanted political independence and they moved for Dominion status for India. Leaders of the Non-Brahmin Movement were not conservatives. They were perhaps the true exponents of democracy. "The movement organised in 1873 by Jotiba Phule's 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' as a cultural revolutionary movement was in fact directed against the religious and social domination of the Brahmins. Increasingly it defined itself as a movement of the Bahujan Samaj (Masses or majority community) whose primary enemies were not only 'bhatjis' or Brahmins, but also shetjis or the merchants and money-lenders who were frequently de-facto or actual land-lords."\(^\text{33}\)

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The Non-Brahmin Manifesto had the same content perhaps throwing better light on the then social position existing in Madras Presidency, but besides this, some of the thoughts expressed by leaders of the Non-Brahmin Movement at various places point out that the socio-political thought of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and Justice Party were in no way different. This also points to the unity that existed between these two movements. When the Justice Party was launched in 1916, there were a number of conferences and meetings held at various places in the Madras Presidency. Similarly, the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' had its own conferences and meetings in the Bombay Presidency. The two movements at times touched each other on more than one occasion, because of Dr.T.M.Nair, Sir P.T.Chettiar, Shri Ramswami Mudaliar, Raja of Panagal all of whom had much in common with the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' leaders of Bombay Presidency, and had personal acquaintance with Shri Shahu. It is to be noted that before the establishment of the Justice Party in 1916, the first gathering of the Non-Brahmins was held under the Dravidian Association at the Hindu High School, Triplicane, Madras on 26th November, 1916. In this meeting, Dr.T.M.Nair delivered an interesting address, which throws ample light on the influence of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' on the political thought of Madras.
He stated that "never before had Non-Brahmins come together in such large numbers for purpose of corporate action, and he felt sure that henceforth Non-Brahmins would always co-operate for the common well-being of the community and for the purpose of enabling Non-Brahmins to take their proper place in the Government of the country"... He further pointed out that "Non-Brahmins should all cling together, because in the past they had been deliberately put down... Education had been denied to the Shudras and only menial duties were assigned to them. He also stated as to how the advent of the British had emancipated them. The speaker was sure that but for the British assuming rule over India, the Non-Brahmins would have continued to remain in a state of veritable intellectual thraldom. Dr. Nair went to say that it was indeed a deep debt of gratitude which the Non-Brahmins owed to the British Raj. Further another point to be noted in this speech is Dr. Nair pointed that to improve the condition of the Non-Brahmins, the only way was to see that their landed aristocracy were given opportunities of leading them."34 In this Dr. Nair exhibited an awareness of the success achieved by the Southern Maratha Confederacy

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Dr. Nair's intention was to place the movement on the same lines as that of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' led by Shri Shahu.

It was in 1916 itself "on the request of some gentlemen from the city and the mofussil, particularly the latter, the committee of the Madras Dravidian Association, proposed to start a Hostel from the first week of July next, for Non-Brahmana youths who desire to receive their education from the schools and colleges of Madras city. This was obviously under the influence of the idea of starting hostels, the cordial principle of Shri Shahu of Kolhapur." To this end much of H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj's time was devoted. He regarded free and compulsory education of the backward classes as "the first plank upon which to build the Non-Brahman structure for their elevation. The foundation of schools and hostels was a duty which he conscientiously performed." The next speech of Dr. Nair was at the Victoria Hall under the auspices of the Muthial Pet Muslim Anjuman. He spoke here on "Our Immediate Political Outlook." In this speech he stated that within the last two

35 New India, 'A Non-Brahmana Hostel', June 1, 1916.
36 Scotsman, "An Indian Prince", May 26, 1925.
years... "A sudden change has come in the political condition of India. He felt that Home Rule is meant for the people of the country who are sufficiently advanced in education and intelligence to exercise their franchise intelligently. You know, he asserted, that an overwhelming majority of the people of this country are not so advanced and, therefore, nobody understood the conditions necessary for granting Home Rule."37 Dr.T.M.Nair spoke in the context of India as a whole and not in the Dravidian context. Here it need not be stated that 'Satya Shodhaks' wanted self-rule, provided they were capable of it. Shri Shahu had made it clear on more than one occasion that he considered social reform first and freedom next. He wanted democracy minus caste system.

Celebrating the second "Justice" Anniversary Dr.T.M. Nair in his speech pointed out that "many of the expectations had been fulfilled, but in one respect this had not been the case. Those connected with the Justice had not so far been able to convince Mr.Montagu about the need for communal representation. Montagu had not yet been made to realise that there was a case for the Non-Brahmin. It was

37 New India, March 15, 1917.
for this reason that Lord Willingdon was transferred from Bombay Presidency to Madras Presidency. Further, he pointed out that in this connection something better can be done in England than in India. (Such a thinking on his part is evident from Appendixes 21 and 22). Lord Sydenham and Lord Curzon worked for this. Dr. Nair states that already "something in this direction has been done."*

Further, Dr. Nair felt that it was a critical time for India, and if the Non-Brahmins did not rise to the occasion and made willing sacrifices, there was every possibility of their being unable to cast off their shackles for a long time to come. He also warned his listeners to be on their guard against official pressure. Both Dr. Nair and Shri Shahu were well-known leaders of the Non-Brahmin Movement of their times, and when Dr. T.M. Nair left for London he met a tragic end in July 1919. This affected to a great extent the unity of the Non-Brahmin Movement and Shri Shahu

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* Dr. Nair's statement "that something in this direction has been done" points to the united efforts of Dr. T.M. Nair, and Shri Shahu. Referring to the correspondence and the friendship which existed between Dr. Nair and Shri Shahu, it can be concluded that leaders of Satya Shodhak Samaj and the Justice Party worked together.

instituted a memorial scholarship as a token of his love and affection for Dr. Nair. After Dr. T. M. Nair, Sir P. T. Chettiar enters the field. He championed the cause of the underprivileged and became the most popular person in the Madras Presidency. The unity in the Non-Brahmin Movement of Madras and Bombay did not end after Dr. T. M. Nair, as Sir P. T. Chettiar was again closely associated with H. H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur in 1920. "Sir P. T. Chettiar attended the conference held at Hubli in July 1920, under the auspices of the Karnataka Non-Brahmin Conference."39

The speeches of Shri Shahu Maharaj delivered at various places such as Khamgaon, Bombay, Navasari, Kanpur, Bhavanagar, Nasik, Hubli etc., in sum, bring home to one's mind that there was hardly any difference between the working of the two movements in every respect, viz., conducting of conferences, advocating for communal representation, social reforms, and calling at every juncture for unity between the Non-Brahmins. Perhaps there was more disunity in the Non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency than in Bombay Presidency. The respect which Shri Shahu commanded from among the various communities is already established. But

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in Madras Presidency the disunity came to the surface the very moment the Justice Party was launched through issuing a Non-Brahmin Manifesto with the signature of Sir P.T. Chettiar. The South Indian Liberal Federation was attacked, calling its Members as "Non-Brahmans and their self-constituted leaders, contradicting the cablegram sent by Sir P.T. Chettiar to Mr. Montagu stating that he represents 40 millions of Non-Brahmans in Madras Presidency." Following this on September 21, 1917, a separate Non-Brahmins' Association was formed. "This association of the Non-Brahmins affirmed the adherence of all the Indian communities of Madras Presidency other than Brahmans to the scheme of reforms propounded by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, subject to the principle of providing adequate representation for the several communities and interests." The Non-Brahmins in Tinnevelly formed "The Poor Schools Society" which represented Madura, Ramnad, Tinnevelly, and this organisation also approved the Congress-League Reforms, subject to the principle of communal representation.

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40 'New India', "Non-Brahmans and Their Self-constituted Leaders", September 7, 1917.
41 'New India', "Non-Brahmins and Home Rule", September 22, 1917.
42 'New India', "The Poor Schools Society, Madras," November 28, 1917.
An analysis of the disunity among the Non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency and the use of various Non-Brahmin Organisations particularly with the establishment of the Justice Party, helps to establish two facts. The rise of various Non-Brahmin organisations was due to the efforts made by Mrs. Annie Besant to bring Non-Brahmins under the Home Rule Movement, and secondly it can be considered as an indication of the dislike of certain Non-Brahmin leaders towards Shri Shahu's support to Justice Party. It is because of this that there is not much of a reference to Shri Shahu's relations with the Justice Party, but his correspondence and acknowledgements can be considered as ample proof of his intimacy with the Justice Party. Besides these organisations, in Madras there were two major societies (associations) of the Non-Brahmins known as "South Indian Liberal Federation" and the 'South Indian Peoples Association'. But on 27-3-1919, both these associations informed "the Government of India, that the South Indian Peoples Association and South Indian Liberal Federation had agreed to combine and accept eight (8) priority certificates for the delegation about to proceed to England to represent their views."*

* Madras Record Office, Refer G.O. (Ordinary Series) No.150, dated 27.3.1919.
With reference to these differences among the Non-Brahmins themselves, the Justice came out with a statement that "If the administration is to be of a representative character it is absolutely necessary to meet the ends of justice that each and every community among Brahmins and Non-Brahmins should be represented in councils and public service, so as to cause no harm to anybody. The present classification of Indians into two divisions viz., Brahmins and Non-Brahmins is unjust and has resulted in certain communities of Brahmins and Non-Brahmins becoming backward classes...

"The sub-divisions among Brahmins should be into
1) Tamil Brahmins, (2) Iyengar Brahmins, (3) Rowji Brahmins, (4) Telugu Brahmins, settled in the Southern part of Madras Presidency not forming part of the Andhras of the North.

"The sub-divisions of the Non-Brahmins should be into
1) Naidus, (2) Mooladars, (3) Pillays, (4) Chettiyars, in as much as Vaisyas and Kshatriyas are taken as separate classes, as also Mussulman and Christians and Anglo-Indians and (5) Panchamas."43 It is largely due to this disunity

43 Madras Mail, 'Communal Representation', (Justice editorial reprinted), November 24, 1917.
among the Non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency and its weakness that Lord Willingdon was transferred to that Presidency. The Justice Party in fact gained much by the transfer of Lord Willingdon, who swung the pendulum in favour of the South Indian Liberal Federation. The transfer was more an impetus to the Non-Brahmins in the Madras presidency. He was a seasoned Governor. The Justice Party in its initial period had to face opposition both from the Non-Brahmins and from the Brahmins. Of course the situation was similar in Bombay Presidency, but the towering personality of Shri Shahu did not allow disunity to continue, and once again it was this inspiration of Shri Shahu which did not allow the Non-Brahmin Movement in Madras to fade out, though it was suffering from many weaknesses ever since its inception in 1916. The Justice Party, working on the lines of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj', moved from place to place conducting Non-Brahmin conferences in the interior parts of the Presidency. The Justice Party lacked unity within, but there was no lack of unity between the Justicites and 'Satya Shodhak Samajists'. The unity between these two movements suffered a set-back between 1919-1922, as both these movements lost their principal leaders like Dr. T.M. Nair (in 1919) and H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj (in 1922). It is
worthwhile here to mention that when Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur passed away, a condolence meeting was held, presided over by the Hon’ble Dewan Bahadur P. Ramarayanaigai (the then Minister for Local Self-Government). The Chairman said that in the death of the H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj, they had lost one of their valued friends. "He was one of those who realised the importance of the South Indian Liberal Federation and its activities. He befriended the leaders of that movement and he tried his very best to espouse the cause of the depressed classes." Further to commemorate Shahu's memory, a committee was also constituted.

Conferences and Confederations of Non-Brahmin Movement in India (Justice and Satya Shodhak)

It is in such a social and political background that various confederations and conferences of Non-Brahmin Parties took place at various places. On February 8, 1925, the Seventh Non-Brahmin confederation was held at the Victoria Hall. It was an adjourned session of the Seventh

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44 'Madras Mail', "H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur", (Condolence meeting) May 22, 1922.
Non-Brahmin Confederation. The confederation was presided over by Mr. M. Krishnan Nair, who in his address declared:

"There was also the meeting of the All-India Non-Brahmins at Belgaum (Bombay Presidency). The Non-Brahmin conferences which used to be more or less a provincial affair had now been elevated to an All-India level. He was glad that Madras had come out creditably in that conference under the able guidance of Mr. Ramswami Mudaliar." 45

This All-India Non-Brahmin Conference was held in Belgaum on 26th December, 1924, which was attended by the Hon'ble Raja of Panagal (the then Minister in the Government of Madras) and Sir P. T. Chettiar and other notables. "Further it is also pointed that Ramswami Mudaliar had also attended the Satara Non-Brahmin conference 46 held on 18th December, 1922, which was presided over by H.H. Shri Rajaram Maharaj (son of Shri Shahu Maharaj and his successor) of Kolhapur, 47 and Ramswami Mudaliar's oratory was very much appreciated. The All-India Non-Brahmin conference of Belgaum was attended

45 The Hindu (Madras) "Non-Brahmin Confederation - Adjourned Session," February 9, 1925.
47 K.R.O., Presidential Address of H.H. Shri Rajaram Maharaj Satara, Non-Brahmin Conference, 18th December, 1922.
by members and delegates from Madras, Bombay and Central Provinces. In this letter it is also pointed out as to how late H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj was looked upon as the head of the Non-Brahmin Party. Ramswami Mudaliar and Sir P.T. Chettiar were in close touch with the Satya Shodhakas now under Rajaram Maharaj's leadership. (Refer Appendix 44).

Further, in the seventh Non-Brahmin Confederation held on February 8, 1925, Ramswami Mudaliar moved the following resolution: "In view of the fact that there is a general feeling in favour of bringing about unity between the various political parties in the country working for Swaraj, and in view of the fact that steps have already been taken by the Indian National Congress towards the end, this Confederation appoints the following members to represent the Non-Brahmins of Southern India in all endeavours in the direction of promoting all party unity: Dewan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair, Mr.A.Ramswami Mudaliar, Mr.A.Sivarama Menon, Mr.V.Sivaprakasa Mudaliar, Mr.S.G.Rajaramamujan, Mr.Pancharatnam Pillai, Mr.Kondappa and Mr.M.Ratnaswamy." 49


49 The Hindu (Madras), Non-Brahmin Confederation, February 9, 1925.
Mr. Ramswami Mudaliar explained the reasons for the suffering of the Non-Brahmins because "of the schisms and divisions which had come into the political sphere of the country today. This was a fact on which there could be no two opinions. Whether they labelled themselves as Congressmen, Liberals, or Federationists, whether they were classified on a sectarian or religious basis, or whether they divided themselves as Non-Brahmins, Mahomedans, Christians and depressed classes, it was an undoubted fact that unless there was some amount of co-operative activity on the part of all these communities and parties, the political goal of the country was not likely to be hastened. If complete union was not possible among all the parties, at least that amount of joint action which the interests of the country at present desired was necessary." The appeal of Ramswami Mudaliar for unity came as an urgent need. He was a close associate of both Shri Shahu Maharaj and his Heir apparent Rajaram Maharaj. The Non-Brahmin masses in Madras Presidency were not aware as to how "His Highness Shri Shahu Maharaj had created a ground from which there sprang the Non-Brahmin revolt, particularly in Madras and the Deccan, against a

50 Ibid.
spiritual tyranny which threw a dark shadow over almost every phase of life." With the passing away of the two foremost leaders - Dr. T. M. Nair in 1919 and H. H. Shri Shahu Maharaj in 1922, came another blow to this movement with the irreparable loss caused by the death of Sir P. T. Chettiar on 29th June, 1925. "Sir P. T. Chettiar was the grand-old-man of Madras and Mentor of the Justice Party." On May 25, 1925, at the public meeting of the Non-Brahmins at Victoria Hall, the Raja of Panagal, who also presided over the meeting, said that Sir P. T. Chettiar was the spirit and soul of the movement, and also stated that he was responsible for its birth and for its growth. He further stated that though he has been characterised as a reactionary by some, he was the most democratic leader that is known to Southern India. By the time Sir P. T. Chettiar passed away, there was a great deal of disunity among the Non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency, and the meeting was a sort of reunion.

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51 The London Times (Supplement), The Maharaj of Kolhapur, February 12, 1925.

52 Justice Party Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Welcome by P. T. Rajan, p. XXIII.

53 The Hindu (Madras), 'Non-Brahmin Politics Move for Re-union', May 26, 1925.
Non-Brahmin Movement after Sir P.T. Chettiar

After the death of Sir P.T. Chettiar, it was Ramswami Mudaliar who formed a link between the Satya Shodhak and the Justice Party (Refer Appendix 44), which again resulted in conducting the Ninth Non-Brahmin Confederation on 19th December, 1925, in Victoria Hall, Madras. The Hon. Mr. B.V. Jadhav, Minister of Education, Bombay, presided over it. Mr. M. Krishnan Nair proposed the Hon. Mr. B.V. Jadhav as President and further stated that "the great Non-Brahmin Movement was started 13 years ago from which time it had been gathering volume and strength. If it was becoming an All-India movement, it was due to the advice, the energy and activity of leaders like Mr. Jadhav. Mr. Jadhav was the Captain General of their forces."

Further, seconding the proposition of Mr. Krishnan Nair, Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, stated that "with the combined efforts of Bombay and Madras, they hoped to effect the amelioration of their conditions and their liberation from the thraldom social and political and religious."54

Mr. A. Ramswami Mudaliar who spoke supporting the election of Hon. Mr. B.V. Jadhav stated that "something was wanting in their movement in the city, and they looked forward to Mr. Jadhav to give that lead which would give a new start to the movement which, to a small or great extent, was languishing in this Presidency." Mr. Ramswami Mudaliar wanted that a new start should be given to the movement, which indicates that he knew very well as to how the Justice movement was encouraged earlier from the Bombay Presidency. (Refer Appendix 44).

Ramswami Mudaliar, in order to maintain the link between the two movements, organised two All-India Conferences, one at Madras on 19th December, at the Victoria Hall over which Hon. B.V. Jadhav presided and another on December 26, 1925, at Amaroti. Maharaj of Kolhapur, Shri Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj presided over the First Session, and the second session was presided over by the Raja of Panagal. This again establishes the intimacy of relationship between the two Presidencies on this problem.

The Maharaj of Kolhapur delivered the presidential address in which he explained the origin of the movement.  

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55 Ibid.
in India right from ancient times. "He stated that it was the Kshatriya who not only fought and ruled but who led all social and religious reforms. Those traditions of my Kshatriya order were later on suppressed by the ambitions of the priestly class until my ancestor, the Great Shivaji Maharaj, revived them in the Seventeenth century. The prominent part which my father took in the public movements outside his state was due to the feeling in him that, to be true to the traditions, he was bound to serve the people in every sphere of life."\(^56\)

Speaking on the policy of the British towards the Non-Brahmins Shri Rajaram said, "In British India, the policy has always been one of neutrality in social matters. But I can testify to the good work which is even now done indirectly by tactful and popular rulers like the Governor of my province, I mean His Excellency Sir Leslie Wilson, whose great influence is a great support to many a good popular movement. I have no doubt that His Excellency Sir Montagu Butler is no less a social force among you. The Backward classes especially, depend largely on the help of

\(^{56}\) *The Hindu*, (Madras), Non-Brahmin Social Confederation, All-India Session - Presidential Address, December 27, 1925.
persons in such positions as His Excellency today occupies. Co-operation, cordial and all-sided, between the leader of these classes and the Government is to my mind the surest road along which progress lies. I know your Governor (a reference to Lord Willingdon) is a man of very wide sympathies, ready always to do his best for the people and I am sure that he will do all he can to help the backward and the depressed classes in their efforts to improve themselves in all directions."  

The Second Session of the All-India Non-Brahmin Congress was presided over by the Raja of Panagal. The President began his address with a reference to the loss sustained by the Congress with the death of Sir P.T. Chettiar and Dewan Vijaraghavalu Mudaliar. Speaking on the ideals of Non-Brahmins, the Raja of Panagal stated:

"It was too late in the day for me to defend what has been termed the Non-Brahmin movement. When its activities have spread from Bombay to Madras, from the Vindhyas to Cape Comorin, its very extent and the lightning rapidity with which its principles have pervaded the country will be the best justification of the movement. The future that our great leader predicted for us in his Presidential address at Hubli in 1920 is come; the time when the movement of love for all and

57 Ibid., (Presidential Address).
hatred for none, the movement which seeks to afford equal opportunities for all, which makes everyone, whatever his class or community or creed may be, feel that he is a common citizen of the land enjoying equal rights and liberties and exercising such privileges - the time when such a movement of all-consuming love shall spread through the whole country carrying its message of hope and peace has arrived at last."  

The Hindu (an English Daily from Madras) had criticised this Non-Brahmin Congress. When the Raja of Panagal stated that the movement had spread from Bombay to Madras, he refers to the days of H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj, and to the prediction of Shri Shahu Maharaj at the Hubli Non-Brahmin Conference conducted earlier in 1920. The Hindu had attacked both Mr. Jadhav and Raja of Panagal, by stating "that the speaker was desiring to produce an effect in another province, forced him to draw rather freely on his imagination."  

The Hindu had failed to understand the movement in its right perspective, as the relations between the two movements were behind the curtain, perhaps, largely because Shri Shahu Maharaj himself was averse to the art of publicity as Lord Fraser points out, and H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj himself was 

58 The Hindu, (Madras), The Non-Brahmin Congress, Amrta Session (Second Session), December 27, 1925.  

59 The Hindu, (Madras), The Non-Brahmin Congress, Editorial, December 28, 1925.
not interested to see his name appearing prominently. Hence it can be stated that the relation between the two movements was known only to the real originators of the Justice Party, namely Dr. T. M. Nair, Sir P. T. Chettiar, and Ramswami Mudaliar. Further, the Raja of Panagal continued in his Presidential address... that the times are tenents of this great movement and already I see before me clear and unmistakable signs of the hold that our movement has got over the masses. But let us not be too optimistic. Our opponents, who are always on the alert and accustomed as they are to the niceties of a subtle propaganda carried on too adroitly to poison the minds of the public against us, possessed as they are of the sinews of war and with an over-obliging press too easily accessible and only too willing to help them in this insidious propaganda - they are ever watchful of the opportunity to bring about our down-fall. And it is against this, I wish to sound a note of warning. Who does not feel that he should do everything in his power to prevent such a catastrophe overtaking this movement?\(^60\) Raja of Panagal was also one of the

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\(^60\) The Hindu, (Madras), The Non-Brahmin Congress, Amroli, Session, Second Session, December 27, 1925.
originators of the movement and one who had the knowledge of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. He had attended the Nasik Session held on April 15, 1920 presided over by H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj. It was the Raja of Panagal who hailed the speech "as an epoch-making speech and wanted to get it translated into Telugu and Tamil."\(^\text{61}\)

These factors such as (a) H.H. Shri Shahu Maharaj spreading the Non-Brahmin Movement; (b) the socio-political thought of the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'; (c) the association of Shahu with Dr. T.M. Nair, P.T. Chettiar, Ramswami Mudaliar, and the Raja of Panagal; (d) the timely transfer of Lord Willingdon from Bombay to Madras Presidency, that had popularized the Justice Party in 1916, because of which "the basic ideologies of the party, which governed its policies, while in power, were largely determined between 1916 and 1920."\(^\text{62}\) Hence, in the fifty years since the proclamation of the Non-Brahmin Manifesto and the founding of the Justice Party, the character of Tamil social and

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political life has changed fundamentally. The present social and political thought (Dravidian) is certainly different from the socio-political thought which was projected by publishing the Non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916. The Non-Brahmin Manifesto had a great influence on the aims of 'Satya Shodhak Samaj'. Further commenting on the unity conferences of the two movements, M.N. Srinivasan points out: "It is interesting to note that a similar move was afoot in Madras Province. The leaders of the Non-Brahmin Movement in Madras were in touch with their counterparts in Belgaum, Satara and Amaravati. (See the proceedings of the First provincial conference of the League of Non-Brahmins Youth (Central) Madras, 1927)." It was only after 1927 when the Justice Party decided to allow its members to join the Congress that large number of Non-Brahmins left. By this time the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' also suffered a serious set back in Bombay Presidency.


"because of the non-cooperation in 1930's and the non-Brahminizing of the Congress." In Bombay Presidency the serious set-back to the movement was also due to the rise of the new leader of the backward classes Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Shri Shahu had been considered as a leader of the backward classes, and after his passing away Dr. B. R. Ambedkar launched a different movement. "It was since 1919 that Ambedkar came in closer contact with the Maharaj of Kolhapur through Dattoba Powar. Ambedkar secured from the Maharaj some help for the fortnightly paper which he started on January 31, 1920, under the title Mook Nayak, (Leader of the Dumb). Although Ambedkar was not its official editor, he was the man behind it and it was his mouth-piece. The 'Kesari' refused even to announce its publication, even when Tilak was yet alive." On March 21, 1920, Ambedkar presided over a conference of the untouchables at Mangaon in Kolhapur state. It was attended by H. H. Shri Shahu Maharaj himself. Speaking at this conference the Maharaj declared in a prophetic voice, "you have found your saviour in Ambedkar. I am confident that he will break your shackles. Not only

66 Ibid.
67 D. Keer, Dr. Ambedkar - Life and Mission, p. 41.
that. a time will come when, so whispers my conscience, Ambedkar will shine as a front rank leader of all India fame and appeal."  

"Further in 1924, Dr. Ambedkar felt that he should prepare himself to launch his social movement for the uplift of the untouchables, and to achieve his objective he convened a meeting on March 9, 1924, at the Damodar Hall, Bombay, to consider the desirability of establishing a central institution for removing the difficulties of the untouchables. On July 20, 1924 an institution called the 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha' was established.  

Hence the Non-Brahmin Movement, Justice and 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' had a great influence on each other. This has not been duly noticed by students of the Non-Brahmin Movement. Besides, it is worthwhile to mention that the two presidencies proceeded on the same lines so far as the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin conflict is concerned. By 1927, the rise of the nationalist forces in India, and non-Brahminisation of Congress left the movement to find its own way. Since then the two movements moved on different paths.

68 Ibid., p.42.  
69 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
lines and led to the emergence of provincialism in Indian politics. Nationalistic forces were mainly responsible for kindling provincialism which came to have a stronghold in Southern India, and it did gain ground in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. The Justice Party was a weak force during 1927-1937 but it was still a live force, and it was necessary for the Justice leaders to find some dynamic leaders who would carry on the propaganda of the 'Justice' on behalf of the Non-Brahmins. It was in this search for dynamic leaders, Thiru.E.V.Ramaswami Naicker was given an opportunity to carry the Justice Party and its ideals all over Madras Presidency. Before trying to assess the movement of D.M.K., it may be pointed out that by the 1930's the original justicities like Dr.T.Nair, Sir P.T. Chettiar, the Raja of Panagal were no more to guide the destinies of the Justice Party and by which time Satya Shodhak was also fading out and the Dravidian philosophy supplemented the Justice Party's propaganda work. Though the Justice Party suffered much in its initial stages, it did create the ground to further the cause of Dravida Kazhgam first and of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam later. But it should be remembered that D.K., and the D.M.K., made a significant departure from the basic ideology and approach of the Justice Party.