CHAPTER I

SOCIO – POLITICAL SITUATION IN TAMIL NADU – A BACK DROP

The analysis of the social policy of the D.M.K. Government pre-suppose a broad spectrum of Socio-political situation prevailing in Tamil Nadu during the first half of the twentieth century. An attempt therefore has been made in the present chapter to get some broad picture of the Socio-Political situation especially the caste conflict and the Non-Brahmin movement which ultimately paved the way for the emergence of D.M.K. as a Socio-Political force in Tamil Nadu.

A. Casteism in Tamil Nadu

The term ‘Caste’ is derived from the Portuguese word ‘Casta’ meaning ‘Pure’. The Indian Caste has economic, social and religious aspects. In the economic field it prohibits certain occupation and in the religious aspect it lays down certain customs and rituals. A Person’s social status is defined by the caste rather than his economic means or the occupation he follows. An Indian Hindu cannot choose or change his caste; castes also multiply due to slight change in occupation, migration, adoption of practices, religious rules, rituals and
In Sanskrit, the term Varna denotes the four fold division of society-The Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra. Jati refers to several castes that developed from the four Varnas. In the Madras Presidency, the Brahmin Varna was preserved at the one and the Sudra at the other, while differences between the Varna and Jati were totally disregarded, The society In the South consisted of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra and the Panchama. 

Even the Brahmins were broadly divided into Vaishnavites and Saivites which were further sub-divided into the other castes. A Brahmin alone could become priest, an officer of the state but never a domestic Servant. Further, they were considered holy for they automatically got the respect given to the priests.

The gradation of castes in society in the descending order of Varnas was determined in relation to a distance scale based on the ideas of pollution. The classification was called ‘Social Precedence’. Table I shows the Social Precedence of Castes,

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3 *Census of India, 1901, Vol.XV*, Madras, Part I, Report by Francis, W.
### TABLE – I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>CASTE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Brahmin and allied Castes</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Kshatriya and allied Castes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Vaisyas and allied Castes</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sat Sudras or good Sundras</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sudras who habitually employ Brahmins as purohits and whose touch pollutes to a slight degree</td>
<td>16.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Sudras who occasionally employ Brahmin purohits and whose touch pollutes</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sudras who do not employ Brahmin purohits and whose touch pollutes</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Castes which pollutes even without touch but do not eat beef</td>
<td>8.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Caste which eat beef but do not pollute except by touch</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Caste which eat beef and pollutes even without touching</td>
<td>14.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Caste which deny the Sacerdotal authority of Brahmins</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures show that in the Madras Presidency at the beginning of the century, the first three Varnas constituted 6% of the population, the rest belonged to the fourth (Sudra) and fifth (Panchama) Varnas. Brahmins dominated in all
Government jobs, the bar, the University, and the Government Secretariat. Their mastery over English was considered a passport to power, influence and a means to profit. Brahmins dominance was felt even in private business companies and Mercantile houses. Most of the leading journalists were from the Brahmin community. They virtually controlled the High Court of Madras.

The statistics of male literacy of selected castes from 1901-1921 confirms the superiority of Brahmins in the educational fields.

**TABLE – II**

Male literacy of Selected Castes 1901 – 1921 (in Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Brahmins</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telugu Brahmins</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nair</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chetti</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Christian</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadar</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balaji Naidu –Kavarai</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vellala</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamma</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappu, Reddi</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velama</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 Indian Census Commission, *Census of India, Madras, 1921*, XIII, pp. 128-129.
The Brahmin lawyers played an active role in the Indian National Congress. Anti-Brahmin feeling arose within the congress which was regarded by the Non-Brahmins as a secretarian institution of Brahmins that had no direct link with the Non-Brahmin masses. The Congress session in Madras in 1914 was dubbed as a "Brahmin Congress" and it as remarked that it would not hesitate to masquerate under the name Indian National Congress and make representation on behalf of all people.\(^6\) A fear was openly expressed that "Home Rule" would degenerate into Brahmin rule.\(^7\)

In striking contrast to the privileged Brahmins were the segregated Panchamas, who were called untouchables. They constituted 15% of the population. They established parallel societies, the members having their own roads, wells, their own shops, hotels, barbers and washermen, deities and priests, their own burial grounds from which all caste Hindus kept away. This elaborate system of apartheid, segregated the members of the Panchama society and kept them at the greatest physical, cultural and economic distance from the caste Hindus.\(^8\) Originally they were casteless, later they formed their own castes. They did not intermarry but were collectively known as the depressed classes and the Harijans. The Adi - Dravida Mahajana Sabha which advocated the cause of untouchable castes was founded in 1892. On many occasions the Sabha represented to the Government the grievances of the Pariahs. In the 1921 Census 15,025 retained their caste name as Adi - Dravida. On repeated petitioning to the

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\(^6\) Malayalee, 1 August, 1914.  
\(^7\) West Coast Spectator, 28 November, 1919.  
Government it recognised the new name by an order issued which directed that the term Adi -Dravida should be recognised in Tamil Districts and Adi - Andhra in Telugu districts in the place of the word 'Panchama' or 'Pariahs’ or similar names. The cause for the change may be due to the feeling of respectability that the change in name gave them.

Certain English administrators took keen interest in the upliftment of pariahs. In 1892, the Collector of Chingleput sent a long note to the Government on the very low status of Pariahs whom he described as "always badly nourished, clad if at all in the vilest rags, eaten up with leprosy and other horrible diseases, huztled like pigs; untaught, uncared for and unpitied. He felt that the Pariahs should be freed from the semi-sevile condition under which they lived by such measures as allotment of land for tilling and special facilities for education. Separate Primary Schools were established for pariahs and at the turn of the Century Social and Political leaders began to stress the need to extend philanthropic activities towards the lowest caste.

The Adi - Dravida Mahajana Sabha sent a petition to the Government in 1896 requiring the soil agrarian concession for the Pariahs. In 1898 it made a specific request for lowering in the case of Pariahs the standard of the qualifying test prescribed for admission to subordinate medical services. In 1916 the Depressed classes society, held a conference and requested the government to enquire into the exact condition of the depressed classes and to make

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9 G.0.817, Law (General) 25 March, 1922, Government of Madras.

10 G.O. 1016-110 A, 30 September, 1892.
recommendation for measures which will secure freedom and justice for the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{11}

All the non-Brahmin castes were collectively called 'Sudras'. Not only the untouchables but also the backward classes aspired for promotion in social Rank by changing the names of one's caste and getting it notified in the Gazette. The nominative singular ending 'n' was considered derogatory and the plural ending 'r' which was supposed to be honourable was insisted upon. Further the castes traced their origin from sun, 'Moon' or 'Fire' and books and pamphlets to that effect were published in the 19th century. For instance, Shanars, the toddy drawing community of Madura, Thirunelveli described themselves as 'Valankai Uyar KonduIravikula Kshatriya, meaning Kshatriyas of solar race belonging to the righthand faction. They also claimed that 'Shanan' was a corrupt form of 'Sanror' meaning 'learned men'. A.J.Stuart in the Tirunelveli District Gazetteer has observed that the Shanan had arrogated to himself titles which gave him a higher place in the social scale than that which had been assigned to him.\textsuperscript{12}

Another peculiarity of the caste system in south India was the division into 'Right hand faction' and 'Left hand faction'. Although they might belong to the fourth Varna, the two factions had terrible animosities and they often indulged in rioting especially when processions were taken; each one claiming superiority and exclusiveness of the routes through which the deities were taken.

\textsuperscript{11} G.O.No. 85-86, Home (Mis), 25 August, 1916.
Similarly, the Vannia Kula Kshatriya, a group formed by the combination of several castes like Palli, Naicker, Padayachi and Gounder united to form the Vanniya Kula Kshatriya. They published a treatise on the divine origin and royal state of the Vanniya caste in 1892. Thus Aryanisation of the caste began; they gave up drinking and meat eating, prohibited widow remarriage and encouraged child marriage. They started wearing the sacred thread and claimed relationship with Naickers and Pallavas the famous rulers of Tamil Nadu. Further, they claimed to be 'Kshatriyas' of Tamil Nadu. Thus the Vannia Kula Kshatriyas tried to raise their social position in the caste hierarchy.  

Social mobility in the caste hierarchy existed from ancient times. An old proverb says that a Kalan may become a Maravan, a Maravan an Agamudaiyan and an Agamudaiyan a Vellalan. This shows that formal change of caste is not possible, informal promotion does take place by migration or adopting new occupation and also by adopting certain religious practices. Many Vellala castes for instance after Brahminised in their habit, adopted titles like Mudali, pillai, etc.

In the villages Brahmins were not in a high position. Numerically they were a small group; economically also they were not superior; so they had to accept an inferior position. For a while, the lower caste Hindus of sufficiently high income were dominant while the Brahmins had to give respect to them. In the urban areas, urbanisation enhanced their status. Due to their English

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education and Government jobs, the Brahmins could maintain their superiority. Conversely many elite Non-Brahmins developed a sense of loss of status in the urban areas. Men who were identified as proud, orthodox leaders in villages were just Sudras in cities. Following the Varnashrama Dharma the Brahmins were culturally separated from the others as the only twice born caste in Tamil Nadu.

Making use of the historical researches and books, the Dravidians developed an idea of superiority of the Dravidian civilization over the Aryans. The Aryans were considered intruders and upstarts who had overthrown the original civilization. They concluded that the "down-trodden" were culturally superior to the alien ruling class and tried to infuse the 'new spirit' in the blood of all the Dravidians.

The Government also tried to encourage communities other than Brahmins; this can be traced as far back as 1854. The Board of Revenue issued a standing order that the district collector should be careful to see that all the appointments were not monopolised by a few influential families. It directed that the appointments were to be divided among all the castes. Further, it stated that a proportion of the Tahsildars should belong to castes other than Brahmins and no two Chief Revenue servants in the office should belong to the same caste.

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The appellation 'backward' was first employed when the Madras Government collected educational and employment statistics and found that in comparison with the Hindus, the Muslims were uneducated and occupied only the lowest grades in Government offices.\textsuperscript{16} The Madras Government to encourage the Muslims, granted recognition to Arabic and Persian and initiated Prizes for excellence in these languages.\textsuperscript{17} Efforts were made to recruit more Muslims into State services. The Government Order directed that vacancies should be filled up with Muslim candidates when they satisfied the stipulated conditions. This rule applied even for promotions.\textsuperscript{18} Even as early as the late nineteenth century, special privileges had been granted to those whom the government considered backward. This was extended to the areas of public education also. Small stipends of one or two rupees or even half a rupee were given to students from illiterate and backward castes.\textsuperscript{19} Change in religion did not affect the backwardness of the caste in the eyes of the Government.\textsuperscript{20} Due to these special privileges there was a heavy demand for many of the castes to get admitted into the backward list. Applications from several castes requesting admission to the list were received by the Government; these were generally forwarded to the District Collectors. They were asked to report on the position and the status of the caste in question, and on their favourable recommendation the castes were admitted to the list of backward classes. The number of backward

\textsuperscript{16} G.O.No.288, Education, 7 October, 1872.
\textsuperscript{17} G.O.No.215, Education, 7 July, 1873.
\textsuperscript{18} G.O.No.288, Education, 7 October, 1873.
\textsuperscript{19} G.O.No.511, 7 August, 1907.
\textsuperscript{20} G.O.No.511, 7 August, 1907.
classes which was 39 in 1895 rose to 173 in 1913 which was 128 in 1920 reached the figure of 152 in 1950. More castes began to demand and receive the special educational concession offered by the Government.\textsuperscript{21}

B. Non-Brahmin Movement

Non-Brahmin movement came into being to uplift the backward and depressed classes. The first to speak against the Brahmins was C.Sankaran Nair in 1903.\textsuperscript{22} A non-Brahmin social worker of Triplicane, C.Natesa Mudaliar started an organisation for Non-Brahmins called Dravidian Association in 1912. On behalf of the Dravidian Association, he published two books namely, Dravidian Worthies and Non-Brahmin letters.\textsuperscript{23} "This association professed to work for a Dravidian State, an idea of which was little heard later on.\textsuperscript{24}

The South Indian Liberal Federation was started by T.M.Nair and P.Theagaraya Chetti in 1916.\textsuperscript{25} An English Newspaper ‘Justice’, a Tamil paper ‘Dravidian’ and the ‘Telugu paper’ AndhraPrakasika were started. T.M.Nair was a highly respected doctor. He took an active part in the Congress. In 1916 he expected to be elected by the Madras Legislative Council to the Imperial Council in Delhi. To his disappointment two Brahmins B.N.Sharma

\textsuperscript{21} G.O.No.511, \textit{Op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{22} Excerpts from the Convocation Address of Sir Sankaran Nair, New India, 13 February, 1915.
\textsuperscript{23} Anaimuthu, V., \textit{Thoughts of Periyar E.V.R.}, Vol.1, p.189.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{New India}, 13 June, 1916.
and V.S.Srinivasa Shastry were elected. This incident gave an impetus to the formation of a non-Brahmin Political Party and resulted in the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation, which later on was Christened 'Justice Party' after its official journal Justice. The primary task of the Justicites was to neutralise the Home-Rule Movement. The Hindu, the established English daily of Madras refused to give publicity to the Justice Party because it felt obliged to keep from its columns anything that smacked of communalism.

The Justice Party was the only and all comprehensive party of the Non Brahmins of Madras. The first denunciation of the Non-Brahmin Manifesto was issued by P.Kesava Pillai, member of the Legislative Council. He called it as one "calculated to be harmful to the common causes and probably likely to promote the best interest of the classes, whom it sought to serve". Many Non-Brahmins were pained and surprised at the Non-Brahmin Manifesto and dissociated themselves from it. These public spirited men organised a 'Nationalist Meeting' at Gokhale Hall, Madras, on September 20, 1917, to show that there was a large number of Non-Brahmins in favour of Home Rule and that the south Indian People's Association represented only a minority of the Non-Brahmins.

26 The Justice, 9 January, 1917.
27 The Hindu, 30 December, 1917.
28 The Hindu, 28 December, 1917.
29 The Hindu, 17 September, 1917.
C. Justice Party

The first and most important conference of the Justice Party was organised in Coimbatore on August 19, 1917. The organiser, T.A.Ramalingam Chetty who was also a Congressman demanded that all persons attending the Congress Conference should be asked to sign a statement affirming that the aim of the Congress would be to attain self government only by gradual steps and further argued that all representative bodies in the future should contain the proper proportion of all communities and interests.30

The Montague Chelmsford Reforms announced the plan of increasing the participation of Indians in the governance of the country. Accordingly, the Government of India Act of 1919, introduced the system of Dyarchy in India. The reserve subjects were to be administered by the Government with the help of the Executive Council. The Transferred subjects were to be dealt with by the elected representatives. The drawback in the system was the division of powers to the effect that the important portfolios like finance, were reserved while less important portfolios like Local Self Government, Public Health, Hospitals etc., were given to the elected Government. So the effective functioning of the Government was not possible.

The Congress was against the system of Dyarchy for it rightly felt that it would not permit effective functioning of the government. Further, Gandhi was against the policy of Council entry. There opinions in the Congress about participation in the Government were divided. Many were against Gandhi’s political tactics.

The Justice Party agreed to co-operate with the Government and to assume office under the new reforms. In its opposition to Brahmin domination it was assisted by members of the I.C.S. in Madras who also feared a Brahmin usurpation of both political and administrative power in the Madras Presidency.

In 1916 the Depressed Classes Society held a conference and requested the Government to enquire into the exact condition of the depressed classes and to make recommendation for measures which will secure freedom and justice for the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{31} The issue assumed political importance on the eve of Montague Chelmsford Reforms and led to a coalition between the depressed classes and the Non-Brahmins against the Brahmins and the Home Rule Movement. References were made frequently to the deplorable condition of the depressed classes in the Non-Brahmin conference and the need to improve their condition was stressed. In October 1917, T.M.Nair addressed the Panchamas at Spurtank Road, Chetpet, in Madras at their request. He made a stirring speech asking them to assert their equality with other castes, shed the past formed by long submission and social injuries. He asked them to organize

\textsuperscript{31} G.O.No.85-86, Home (Mis), 25 August, 1916.
themselves to establish a committee of representatives for various areas so that the 'Non-Brahmin Party' and the 'Panchama Party' could participate together in politics. The Political Association of the Panchama agreed broadly with the stand taken by the South Indian Liberal Federation.

The Non-Brahmins and the depressed classes made several representations for reserved constituencies. Due to repeated representations made throughout India and considering the unequal social conditions the British Government agreed to have reserved constituencies. The Meston Award announced 28 seats (3 urban and 25 rural seats) all in the Plural member constituencies. This award enabled the Madras Government to complete the franchise arrangements for the 1920 elections. The Justice Party was elected unopposed in 63 out of the 98 seats. With the support of the nominated members it claimed a total strength of eighty out of a Council numbering hundred and twenty. The Justice Party concentrated on Provincial matters, rather than those of an All India nature. This was partly due to dyarchical system. The Justice Party proceeded to strengthen its position in the public life of Tamil Nadu by bringing before the Legislative Council in Madras, a series of resolutions designed to give Non-Brahmins a greater proportion of Government jobs. It realised that the implementation of Government orders to redistribute government appointments in favour of Non-Brahmins would fulfill some of the party's first articulated ideals administrative power, social position and economic justice to the Non

32 The Hindu, 7 October, 1917.
Brahmins. The second communal Government Order to meet these objectives was passed in 1922. It directed that the main appointments in each district should be divided among the several communities; the G.O. was to be implemented not only at the time of recruitment but at every stage of promotion. This way they fulfilled the purpose for which they formed a party.

The government established the Staff Selection Board consisting of three senior civil servants and two officials appointed by the Government. Competitive examinations would be held to eliminate patronage or nepotism. There was some doubt among the justice party members that the Staff Selection Board would not represent the interests of Non Brahmins or the principles set out in the communal G.O. Finally in December 1928, the Government agreed to establish Communal Representation Committee which would 'examine the procedure of the Staff Selection Board.

An outstanding legislative measure passed during the Justice Party rule was the Hindu Religious Endowment Act, which regulated the administration of the many temples and Mutts that, dotted the country side. The Act provided for a board of commissioners to supervise the working of these endowments, to settle disputes over the use of funds of temples and Mutts and to levy fees on

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certain temples which attracted a large number of devotees, for providing sanitary other facilities for the pilgrims. The Madras Legislative Council passed a resolution in favour of women's franchise on April, 1st 1921\textsuperscript{35}.

D. **Depressed Class Movement**

The depressed classes who had first welcomed the Non - Brahmin Movement for democratic liberation, later began to regret this enthusiasm. They began to feel that their condition had not improved at all, while the higher caste Non- Brahmins replaced Brahmins in power and position. The Justice party had abolished the Labour Department and further an important leader P.Thiagaraya Chettiar had refused to support the anti - untouchability law in 1922. These led them to conclude that Non - Brahmin rule would not protect the interest of the depressed classes. At a conference, the issue "The Brahmin was driven away to make room for the Chetty, the Naidu, the Reddi and the pillai. What about the millions of the depressed classes?" was raised.\textsuperscript{36} A motion of no confidence was brought against the ministry by the dissidents in 1923, but it was defeated by 65 votes against 43. In 1923, M.C. Rajah the most prominent leader of the untouchables in the Justice Party withdrew, taking a number of untouchable leaders with him. These untouchables made a number of charges against the Justice Party policy. The charges were that the higher castes had appropriated all the posts in the British administration for themselves, the

\textsuperscript{35} Madras Legislative Proceedings, XV, 27 November, 1923 , p.62.  
\textsuperscript{36} The Hindu, 13 June, 1923.
Adi–Dravidas were not represented in proportion to the numbers. Further the Justice Party had not initiated house building schemes, they had not; given Adi–Dravidas economic help, they had not implemented free education schemes or initiated land distribution schemes. The Justice party leaders had not visited the Adi–Dravida villages to hear their grievances. It was said that the professed object of the Non-Brahmin Movement viz., the uplifting of the masses was a mere show and the intention of the high caste non–Brahmins was to keep the depressed classes for ever under subjection. In fact no member of these classes found admission into the Central Legislature or into the provincial ministry. The Adi–Dravida Mahajanasabha presented a memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission of 1927, requesting the constitution of separate electorates for the depressed classes. Similar requests were made at various conferences during the period. The Simon Commission rejected the plea for separate electorates for the depressed classes but the question was opened again at the Round Table Conference by Ambedkar and R.Srinivasan, who were nominated to represent these classes.

The Justice Party which came to power as a Non-Brahmin political party did not promote the concept of Non-Brahmin unity. On the contrary a feeling spread that the Justicite politicians in office with their friends and supporters formed a class exclusively benefitting themselves by the Non-Brahmins rule.

37 Andhra Prakasika, 6 April, 1923.
38 Dheena Bandhu, 11 April, 1923.
Those who remained down-tredden whose lot had not improved turned hostile. It was alleged that the ministry conferred power and offices on their own friends, fitted up the municipal boards, councils and local boards as they pleased and in their enjoyment of their newly won power and offices, forgot the people whom they were supposed to represent.

The Madras Provincial Backward class league was formed in 1934. It held regular meetings, conducted conferences; sought concessions and facilities for the educational, economic and other advancement of the backward community. In March 1934 three methods were suggested for securing the job interests of the Backward classes. Firstly the Backward Non-Brahmins had to be classified separately as an additional group. Secondly, they were to be classified separately as Backward Non-Brahmins, and the forward Non-Brahmins groups. Thirdly the Madras Service Commission should be asked to give preference to the Backward Hindus instead of the term "Non-Brahmin Hindus". C.Krishnan a member of the Legislative council wrote in The Mail pressing the need for revising the communal order because the Backward classes constituting one third of the total did not derive even as much benefit as the depressed classes.

The lower Non - Brahmin castes repeated the same charges that the forward Non - Brahmins had leveled against the Brahmins. A new grouping

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40 The Hindu, 5 June, 1923.
41 The Hindu, 23 August, 1933.
42 G.0.No.858, Public Services, 11 August, 1934.
came up consisting of Brahmins, High caste Non- Brahmins, Backward Non - Brahmins and untouchables.

The popularity of the Justice Party slowly declined. The party was badly organised, its newspapers were no longer effective as the propaganda media. The party required a thorough overhaul and reorientation. To establish itself on national level, the justice party attended the All India Non-Brahmin Congress, convened at Belgaum on 27 and 28 December 1927. The notable speech was that of A.Ramasamy Mudaliar who described the Non-Brahmin Movement as "Jobocracy". The object of the All India Non-Brahmin Congress was said to be the attainment of Swaraj or Home Rule for India as a component part of the British Empire at an early date as possible by peaceful, legitimate and constitutional means, by promoting goodwill and amity, safeguarding the interests of all communities by means of communal- representation and by social amelioration and reorganisation. Further, the Non-Brahmin Congress decided to co - operate only with those political bodies which recognised the principle of communal representation.43

**E.V.Ramaswamy and congress**

The Congress meanwhile concentrated on building up its party. Its party men, set up committees in villages and spread its ideals. The Congress organisation and propaganda slowly gained effectiveness. A group of

43 New India, 2 January, 1925.
Congressmen led by S.Sathyamoorthy and his allies proposed that Congress should invade Legislatures. On May 1, 1934, Delhi announced the general election. In 1937 general elections, the Congress defeated the Justice party and formed its ministry under C.Rajagopalachari. Hut in 1939, the Madras Ministry resigned along with other Congress ministries in other provinces because of Britain's attitude towards India in the Second World War. Even during its short term in office its record of Legislative activity was quite impressive, It passed the Debt Relief Act, the Temple Entry Act, the Sales Tax Act, and the prohibition Act. These show the zeal with which the Congress ministry went about governing the province. During the war, the constitutional machinery was done, away with and Madras was ruled directly by the Governor with the help of official advisers.

In 1938, E.V.Ramaswamy the leader of the Self-Respect Movement was elected the leader of the Justice Party who had been in the political scene of Tamil Nadu from the early years of twentieth century.

From 1907, E.V.Ramaswamy took an active interest in the Indian National Congress. He took interest in Municipal affairs. He was an elected Chairman of Erode Municipality. C.Rajagopalachari. and E.V Ramaswamy were fast friends. C.Rajagopalachari was quick to realise that E.V.Ramaswamy would admirably suit the purpose of defeating the Non-Brahmin Movement. So he encouraged E.V.Ramaswamy to take a leading role in Congress activities. E.V.Ramaswamy was actually given the promise when he enrolled himself in
Congress in 1919, that the Congress was in agreement with the principle of communal representation advocated by the Non Brahmin Movement. Further, he was led to believe that 50% of the Government jobs would be set apart for Non-Brahmins and that the Congress had no intention of contesting the general election.\footnote{Anaimuthu, V., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.XXII.}

E.V. Ramaswamy fully believed in these assurances and went on pressing for acceptance of his resolutions on communal representation at various committee meetings and conference of the Congress held every year, at Tiruchirapally in 1922, Madras in 1923, Thiruvannaimalai in 1924 without avail.\footnote{Viswanathan, E.Sa., \textit{The Political Career of E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker, A study of the politics of Tamil Nadu, 1920-1949}, Ravi & Vasant Publisers, Madras, p.61.} Finally E.V.Ramaswamy attended the TamilNadu Congress Comittee Conference at Kancheepuram in 1925, ready for a show down with the Brahmins. At this conference he submitted two resolutions recognising the principle of communal representation for Non-Brahmins in the public services and representative bodies. These resolutions were disallowed on the ground that they had already been rejected by the subjects committee. At this point E.V.Ramaswamy and several other Non - Brahmins in the conference walked out.\footnote{Ibid., p.62.} E.V.Ramaswamy lingered on in the Congress- for a month or more, acting
as a member of the khadi Board. In 1925 he left the congress and found himself free to start an organisation of his own.  

While in the Congress, E.V. Ramaswamy had gained recognition and fame in the Madras Presidency by his picketing of liquor shops in 1922 for which he was imprisoned and kept in Coimbatore jail. Further, he had played a leading role in Vaikom Satyagraha in 1924. A conflict arose over the question of untouchables using certain roads outside a temple in Vaikom in Travancore State. E.V.Ramaswamy arrived in Vaikom on April 13 he was imprisoned for a month in Travancore. After his release he began the agitation, again he was arrested and this got him a sentence of six months. Finally the prohibitory order was removed by the Travancore Durbar. E.V.Ramaswamy got at lot of acclaim and was given the title. The Hero of Vailcom.  

Another incident in which E.V.Ramaswamy was involved was the agitation against the separate dining enforced for Brahmin students at the Gurukulam in Shermadevi, Thirunelveli District, established in December 1922, by V.V.S.Iyer. As a result of Non-Brahmin pressure, V.V.S. Iyer resigned the post as the Head of the Gurukulam in May 1925. The publication of Kudi Arasu as a weekly was registered on January 19, 1923 and the first issue was published on May 3, 1925. Through the weekly, E.V.Ramaswamy carried out

\[\text{New India, 7 April, 1925.}\]
incessant propaganda to arouse Dravidian people from age long stupor and infused in them a true sense of human dignity and self respect. He wrote and published nearly two hundred books which form the backbone of Tamil literature in the field of free thinking and rationalism in 20th century.

After his exit from the congress in 1925, he started working for the destruction of the congress. He began to attack congress programmes in a relentless manner. In doing this, he contradicted himself, for the policies he attacked were those he had canvassed passionately earlier. He attacked Khadi, and Prohibition on the Ground that the States were incurring heavy losses by their enforcing prohibition.\textsuperscript{50}

\section*{F. Self - Respect Movement}

The Self- Respect Movement and Justice Party ran on parallel lines, for both worked for the upliftment of Non-Brahmins. The first Self-Respect Conference was held at Chingleput in 1929. The Justice Party leaders participated actively in it. The conference heralded the formal inauguration of the Self Respect Movement, although it originated as soon as E.V.Ramaswamy came out of the Congress in 1925. The Resolution passed guaranteed social equality and freedom from economic exploitation to all castes , and creeds. From 1927 onwards, E.V.Ramaswamy interested himself in propagating the tenets of Buddhism and in expounding the teachings of Thirukkural. He was also a

\begin{footnotesize}
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forerunner in the advocacy of women’s education and championing the cause of women for equal rights.\textsuperscript{51}

E.V. Ramaswamy was attracted by the Bolshevik revolution of Russia and its beneficial effects on the Proletariat. From 1931 he frequently wrote in Kudiarasu about this social revolution. In 1931 he visited Greece, Turkey, Africa, Germany, France, Portugal, England and Ceylon. In Russia he attended the May Day Celebration of 1932 and was introduced as the leader of atheistic thought from India.\textsuperscript{52}

On his return from Russia he busied himself with meetings with workers of the Self-Respect Movement, and explained to them the novel features of the Socialist State. In this M. Singaravelu, the first communist in South India was of great help to him. E.V. Ramaswamy had also supported the Railway workers' strike in 1927 - 1928. Singaravelu helped in opening the eyes of several Self - Respect workers to a wide horizon and to a New Order in which the toiling people's- liberation would guarantee the abolishing of all social injustices and establish a society without the horrors of caste in social administration.\textsuperscript{53}

Singaravelu gave the opening address In the conference of. Self Respectsors in Madras in December 1931. He told the Self-Re spec tors that only

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Kudiarasu}, 16 April, 1930.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Anaimuthu, V.}, Op.cit., p.XXXIV.
a Socialist society can be free from caste, religious distinction, and economic disparity. Further, Singaravelu wrote a series of articles in Kudiarasu on Socialism, Science and on Moral belief. These articles gave him a high standing among the Self - Respect workers. They were enthusiastic about changing the Self – Respect Movement from one of Social reform to a movement with political objectives as well. A new programme was drawn up and placed before the meeting of the Self Respect workers in Erode in December 1932. It suggested the foundation of a political party of Self Respects called Sama Dharma Party (Self-Respect Socialistic Party) of South India.  

To intensify the propagation of Self - Respect Principles, E.V.Ramaswamy started an English weekly Revolt in 1928, Puratchi a weekly in Tamil in 1933 and Pagutharivu a weekly in Tamil in 1934, Pagutharivu daily in 1934 and Pagutharivu Tamil monthly in 1935.

E.V.Ramaswamy” keenly watched the working of the Congress Ministry of 1937 and criticised that Brahmins who were just 3% of the total population had occupied six places of high position out of ten in the Ministry. He campaigned vigorously against the closing of 2000 Schools in rural areas for want of funds. He pointed out that when a Veda Padasalai had been opened at a cost of 12 lakhs of rupees, then the comparatively inexpensive schools could still be run.  

54  Ibid., p.123.  
The compulsory introduction of Hindi in selected schools gave rise to the Anti-Hidi Agitation. Many were imprisoned. At a meeting on the Marina beach at Madras on September 11, 1938, Ramaswamy raised the call of "Tamil Nadu for Tamilians". On July 1, 1939 the first Dravida Nadu Separation Day was celebrated. E.V.Ramaswamy was imprisoned for 2 years. While serving the sentence, he was elected the leader of the Justice Party. At the conference of the South Indian Liberal Federation, held on December 29 & 30, 1938 at Thiruvarur, E.V.Ramaswamy's Presidential address was read by A.T.Panneerselvam.\textsuperscript{56} Even here he insisted on a homeland for Tamilians. After the Conference at Salem in 1945, the South Indian Liberal Federation was renamed Dravida Kazhagam.

Although E.V.Ramaswamy tried to unite all the Non-Brahmins under a common banner 'Dravidar Kazhagam' he was not successful. Firstly a split occurred in the Non-Brahmin group into backward and forward Non-Brahmins. A government order of 1947, recognised that 'backward classes' as a category was separate from 'Non-Brahmins' and eligible for separate terms of recruitment to the public services. The G.O. equated the forward Non-Brahmins and Brahmins.\textsuperscript{57} Secondly the Madras Provincial Backward Classes League continued to function independently. Among the communities that joined together in the Backward class association were two prominent castes, the Vannia Kula Kshatriyas and the Mukulathor. Service castes like Acharis, Ambattars and other small castes were also members. The Backward Non-

Brahmins felt that the Congress as a body was not sympathetic to the aspiration of the Backward classes. The Justice Party had degenerated into a 'Job hunting party'. The Self Respect Movement which could have brought about a social reconstruction in South India, bad drifted into politics and had allowed itself to be dragged on to the Chariot wheels of the Justice Party. So they felt that it was not, safe for the Backward Non-Brahmins to ally themselves with any political party. Only they themselves could work for their salvation independent of politics.

The politics of the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by the Brahmin Non-Brahmin controversy De-Aryanisation was the fashion, the Brahmins stepped down from their high pedestal and tried to identify themselves with the South Indian Non-Brahmins. Even Tamil language was not spared. Efforts were made to restore Tamil to pristine purity, and remove the Sanskrit influence from the language. The Brahmins also desired to combat the threat of cultural alienation by actively participating in the transformation of Tamil into a more pliable language. Some of the important persons involved in the Tamil Renaissance were E.V.Rama,swamy who wrote in Kudiarasu, ceaselessly in the simple homely language for five decades, and C.N.Annadurai, a lieutenant in his party.

The problem of Brahmin predominance in administration and politics was curtailed to some extent by getting the communal CO passed and fixing only the

\[ \text{Irschick Eugene, F., } \text{Op.cit., p.303.} \]
fifth and twelth places to the Brahmins in the Government jobs. It also got reservation in the legislature and other Government bodies. But the Justice Party did not take any interest in national affairs. It was essentially communal and regional in outlook. Its opposition to the Congress was also based on the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin controversy, not due to policy differences. Further its government was ineffective due to factions and also due to ineffectual portfolio given to the elected ministers in the Dyarchical system.

Anti-Brahmin was the political aim in 1916-1936, it turned to anti-Brahminism from 1935-1963. It helped in freeing the people from the hold of dogmatic scriptures and superstitions. Led by E.V.Ramaswamy, the Self-Respect Movement involved itself in mass campaigns, setting fire to copies of Manusmiriti, Ramayana and many other religious books, desecration of images, blackening of Hindi name boards' and removal of the word Brahmin from Hotel Name Boards. The Anti-Aryan feeling culminated in the demand of Dravidasthan. Anyway the Anti-Brahmin Movement made the Non-Brahmins rise from their stupor and take an active interest in their position and demand their rights in the society. The Anti Aryan and Anti-Brahmin Movement may have succeeded, but Anti-religious movement of the Self Respects failed, for Tamil Nadu remained an intensely religious and orthodox Presidency.