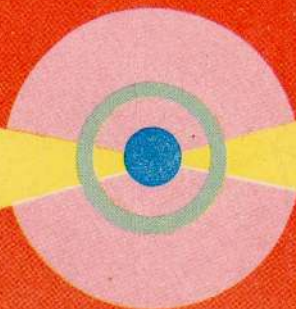


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UNDERSTANDING DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES



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DR. KARTHIGESU SVATHAMBY



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இந்த நூலைச் சேர்த்துப் பூட்டின
அவர்கள் நன்றிமொழியாக அளித்தது

கொழும்புத் தமிழ்ச் சங்கம்

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Foreword

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In the year 1981, the New Century Book House Private Limited, Madras, organised a seminar "On the Dravidian movement" at 'Balan Illam' (Tamil Nadu State Council office of CPI), South Boag Road, Madras - 17, on the initiative of Dr. Karthigesu Sivathamby. The learned doctor delivered a comprehensive keynote address which was discussed and supplemented by as many as thirty enthusiastic participants. The cassettes in which the speeches and discussions were recorded were reported misplaced by the person who recorded them. Efforts to retrieve them have not yielded any result. In the circumstances, the New Century Book House found it difficult to publish all the papers and discussions in book form from the memory of the organisers.

I am happy to observe that atleast the keynote address delivered by Dr. Karthigesu Sivathamby which was in his possession is now seeing the light of the day. Dr. Sivathamby, a Srilankan Tamil scholar who is free from the taint of subjectivism, characteristic of an average Indian-Tamilian takes the reader objectively through the various stages of growth of the Dravidian movement. Where tributes and praises

were found necessary for the leaders of the Dravidian movement, he had paid them handsomely and where criticisms were called for he had not hesitated to advance them forcefully.

Many devoted to Marxism-Leninism had, for a very long time, preferred to neglect or ignore the Dravidian movement. If cognisance was ever necessary on occasions, reference was made, sometimes with derision and sometimes with cynicism, but all the times with utter contempt. It was because of the notion that anti-brahminism is analogous to anti-semiticism of the Nazis, racist in nature, that it should be fought tooth and nail and that a revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism has nothing in common with or to learn from a social reformist ideology of the self respect - Dravidian movement. It was also believed that a Varna based hierarchical stratified society in India, a backward country cannot be different from the society of a developed country or an exception to the general rules of class struggle and a casteless and classless society is bound to usher in automatically when once revolution succeeds in establishing a workers' state. Unfortunately they failed to understand the social character of Marxism - a science to study the formation of societies and states and solve the social problems.

The spectacular electoral victories scored by the DMK in 1967, making it impossible for the Indian National Congress - the party of Mahatma Gandhi which led the country in the freedom struggle, to regain power in the state and marginalising the Communists movement brought into

focus the Dravidian movement, in particular and Tamil Nadu in general. Till that time neither the imperial historian nor the nationalist historian ever cared even to make a cursory reference and accord a place to South India in contemporary politics.

For the first time, South India, in particular Tamil Nadu got world wide attention (Kerala had it earlier after the first Communist ministry was formed). Sociologists and historians began to pay attention to Tamilnadu. Following E. Irschick's "Politics and social conflict in South India" and R. Hardgrave's "Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political culture of a community in change" and "The Dravidian Movement", which appeared before 1969 almost synchronising with the election, M. Barnett's "The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India", C.J. Baker's "Politics of South India 1919-1937", D.A. Washbrook's "The Emergence of Provincial Politics, the Madras Presidency, 1870-1920", R. Sundaralingam's "Politics and Nationalist awakening in South India, 1852-1891" and K. Nambi Arooran's "Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905-1944" appeared only after 1970. Foreign scholars have also made regional studies. A large number of research articles and books began to come out since then. Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu were recognised as distinct cultural entities within India.

The deep commitment to freedom struggle and devoted involvement in building up class organisations and waging class battles afforded little opportunity to the Communist movement to pay attention to the Dravidian movement. It also

remained illegal for long a period before 1950-51. Yet, with all its weakness it is the Communist movement which roused the depressed classes, the most downtrodden, against the caste tyranny practised by the upper castes. It put an end to the cruel practice of inflicting punishment on the agricultural labourers by forcing them to drink cow dung extract (சாணிப்பால்) accompanied by whipping and made the agricultural workers in the delta areas in Thanjavur District feel as human beings and walk erect. But, the struggle could not be extended to other areas or places where it had no hold or organisation or casteism had assumed different forms. The self-respect movement filled up the gap and grew into a very powerful Dravidian movement embracing the whole Tamil society-its language, literature, art and culture. Consequently it became the symbol of Tamil national consciousness.

Com. P. Jeevanandham operated in a limited sphere-language, literature and culture. He cried a halt for anti-Kamban, anti-Subramanya Bharathi outpourings and laid the foundation for the correct understanding of these literary giants. He was originally against the pure Tamil movement started by Manonmaniam P. Sundarampillai and Maraimalai Adigal. On realising that the attitude towards pure Tamil movement had landed the Communists in isolation, he did not hesitate to correct it and hail the movement, and its achievements while inaugurating the foundation conference of "Tamilnadu Kalai Ilakkiya Perumanram" held in 1961 at Coimbatore a few years before his death. Jeevanandham

was great - a giant in the literary field. His untimely death had snatched away an erudite scholar, a powerful orator and worthy propagandist of Tamil Culture with the result that a big void was created.

However, it must be said to the credit of N. Vanamamalai a close admirer of Jeevanandham and the two eminent Srilankan Tamil scholars K. Kailasapathy and K. Sivathamby that they picked up the thread and carried forward Jeevanandham's tradition. Their contributions have been massive, thought provoking and forward looking. No Tamil scholar worth the name can afford to ignore them.

Marxism studies the dynamics of society and also provides the tools of analysis; it is not merely a guide to build class organizations and wage class battles; it is a comprehensive social science. A conscientious Historical materialistic and dialectical study of Tamil society, its socio-economic-state formations under various stages and phases, from tribalism to capitalism through feudalism and colonialism, should have been undertaken and the results would have been scientific. Such a Creative study of Varna based backward society would have revealed the role of the economic factor in the development of Varna based class society at the apex of which firmly stood the brahmins who divorced from the production process were living on the surplus produced by other members of society, protected on all sides by high walls of ritualism and guarded by the ruling classes. An explanation based on scientific interpretation would have helped understanding the Tamil society in change; it would have influenced many

scholars of different schools whether Dravidian or non-Dravidian, to rethink, reformulate and reshape the opinion about Tamil Culture; it would have helped blunting the edge of rabid anti-brahminism of the Dravidian movement and diverting its attention more and more to the purposeful social reform activities. It would have also afforded an opportunity to saner and finer elements among the Brahmins who are plenty in number to change their rigid Varnashrama dharma mentality and offer responsive co-operation to social reform. The base of the marxist movement would have become securely broader. The Dravidian movement itself could have been influenced to lean on marxism by and large. Some of these observations may appear fanciful or far-fetched at this distance of time. But the fact remains that no genuine attempts were made to understand the movement till the end of the sixties, as already mentioned.

The initiative to understand the Dravidian movement in its varied forms was first taken up by Thiru. N. Ram. Thiru P. Ramamurthy's admirable work would have gained approbation and acceptance but for some of its invectives against the role of Dravidar Kazhagam and its precursor the Justice party in the freedom struggle. In this background, the work of Dr. Sivathamby is balanced and objective. It is worthy to note that many Justicites who played a negative role in the freedom struggle had become respectable congressmen later.

Any attempt to assess a movement after about forty years of achieving freedom in the background of vast

socio-economic-political changes that occurred in the interregnum, and on the basis of 'its role' in a given situation of the past, will not in my view, always yield correct conclusions. Many forces in the North which were against the freedom struggle gained respectability after the merger or collaboration with the Indian National Congress. The negative role of such parties or movements deserves noting but it loses its relevance in the context of the post-Independence transformation of society, in which the correlation of forces has become very different. In studying the past, one has to be cautious.

When Periyar, the self-respecter who launched a powerful anti-caste, anti-religious but a progressive movement for socialism joined the Justice party which thrived on brahmin-non brahmin dichotomy, renouncing the socialist principles which he propagated for over a decade braving all obstacles and adopted pure anti-brahminism as his main creed, it became evident that Periyarism had deviated from the path of socialism. But the sagging morale of the Justice Party caused by the electoral debacle, in 1937 was boosted up by the anti-Hindi movement launched by the self-respect movement. It is this movement which galvanised the Justice Party and the self-respect movement.

The anti-Hindi movement united the Tamils on the slogan of protecting the virtues, the vigour and the uniqueness of the Tamil language from the onslaught of Hindi and safe guarding the cultural tradition of the Tamils, and later

took shape as a movement for cultural renaissance and regeneration of the Tamils. It is in the background of this upheaval Thiru. C.N. Annadurai popularly and affectionately known as ANNA who started his political career as a secretary of the Rajah of Bobbili boldly broke with the past, redeemed the self respect movement from the Justice Party which earned the odium for being antipatriotic, radicalized the self respect movement and projected the demand for separate Dravidanad to combat Indian nationalism which believed in the superiority of the Aryan Civilisation and the Sanskrit. From 1938 onwards anti-brahmin, anti-Sanskrit, anti-Hindi, anti-Aryan, anti-God, anti-North and anti-Congress became the theme and theory of the self-respect movement. It will not be wrong to say that it was Annadurai's oratorical skill that drew closer to him a vast majority of the non-brahmin educated youth who were yearning for equality of opportunities in social treatment, education and employment - as equals to brahmins. Tamil cultural renaissance also came in very handy. In a country like India where the working class forms a small insignificant section among the population and the vast majority happen to be under the influence of different ideologies, the process of lumpen proletariat clustering around heroes will be quicker; and it is this class which will occupy a pride of place in motivating and activating the socio-economic-political process. This is precisely what happened in the Dravidian movement.

A network of Cinema houses, theatres and tents sprang up in the forties and fifties and connected wide and large

areas-cities-towns and major villages. Thiru C.N. Annadurai and some of his able followers realised in advance the efficacy of Cinema to spread ideas and made full use of it to popularise the Dravidian ideology. The grip of the matinee idols on the masses has been very powerful. Weilding political power has brought about , in a course of time, a metamorphosis qualitatively and quantitatively, because of the need for an all-round compromise. Except for short spells of President's rule the Dravidian parties were ruling Tamilnadu for over twentyfive years from 1967. The D.M.K. split; and there are three or four splinters. The Dravidian party in power, whether D.M.K. or AIADMK, had to shed many of the cherished dreams, values and principles of the self-respect movement and the Dravidar Kazhagam. Dravidanad, self-respect, rationalism, atheism - nothing is heard from any platform now-a-days.

The present generation is free from the oppressive burden of the past-the past which saw the crudest practice of Varnashrama dharma at all levels and is now living in a better atmosphere without suffocation. But strangely a sizeable majority of the present day youth are steeped in religious obscurantism. Religious revivalism is making rapid strides. Once the Tamils prided in giving their children pure Tamil names. Now the trend has been reversed. Under the influence of cinema and other media, they prefer to give names of any language (preferably north Indian names). Ritualistic and vedic marriages are revived; but there is stress on cutting down the number of mantras and the

duration of marriage. Further there is a new phenomenon - the springing up of large number of English medium schools and nursery schools, all over Tamilnadu, some in remote villages even, under the patronage of the government. On the one hand there is a tall claim that the government is encouraging Tamil in all walks of life; and on the other hand, the truth is this great language is facing a careful, systematic, respectful and merciful relegation to an unimportant place in education, job opportunities and social status. The process of westernisation in education commencing from infancy with the "Daddy-Mummy" culture is gripping Tamil Nadu so fast and so firmly and consequent cultural and spiritual decadence is so rapid that in the course of next generation, Tamil nadu is bound to lose what it once proudly sought to project as Tamil Culture. I am afraid that if this process born out of the anxiety to stem the tide of Hindi and the hope to enlarge the vision of the Tamils through English is not stopped in time, the Dravidian movement will be held responsible for the loss of Tamil identity. When once education becomes commercialised, the process of decay and degeneration is bound to set in and carried forward relentlessly to its logical and destructive end. Revivalism and Westernisation are going on hand-in-hand. It may be said that these are exaggerations. But those who care to study dispassionately the present trends in Tamil society, cannot escape these conclusions. Cauvery water, quotas, reservations, political corruption etc. are a few of the main topics engaging the attention of the Dravidian parties. At least the Dravidar Kazhagam appears to continue to cherish some of the principles of the self-

respect movement, but its influence is marginal except in reservation. Casteism is on the ascendant. Almost every village has a number of caste organisations and contributes occasionally to tensions.

But surprisingly the base of the Dravidian movement stands undisturbed.

Every political party whether Congress or Communist or marxist wants alliance with one of the Dravidian parties for winning a few seats in the legislative assembly and Parliament. This speaks of the great impact of Dravidian nationalism on the Tamil mind. The Dravidian phenomenon thus seems to have achieved uniqueness in history.

It will be no exaggeration, if we say that the history of the twentieth century Tamil Nadu is the history of Periyar EVR and his movement. Dr. Karthikesu sivathiamby hails him as social visionary. Whatever may be one's assessment of the results of the movement launched by him, he has to admit that Periyar strode like Colossus; his ideas have contributed in no small measure to guiding and shaping the destiny of Tamil Nadu for over seventy five years; and his influence is bound to remain undisturbed for years to come.

Dr. Sivathamby has made deep and penetrating study of Tamil society, in many of his articles and books. "The Drama in Ancient Tamil Society" which won for him the Doctorate degree of the Birmingham University under the guidance of the reputed marxist scholar George Thompson is a monumental work. His introduction to professor

S. Vaiyapuri pillai's "History of Tamil Language and Literature", attempts to present the scholar's contribution to Tamil language and literature in a new light. Many of his articles are quoted with approval by scholars all over the world undertaking Tamil studies.

The present essay "Understanding the Dravidian movement - Problems and Perspectives" is very small - a capsule. But, yet it traces succinctly the evolution of the Dravidian movement and brings out its essence. I am confident that this small book will certainly serve as a reliable guide to stimulate creative study of the Dravidian movement in proper perspective.

UNDERSTANDING THE DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Dravidian adj. The Sanskrit term *Dravida* seems to have been originally the name of the Conjeevaram Kingdom (4th to 11th century A.D.), but in recent times it has been used as equivalent to "Tamil". About A.D. 100 Kumarila Bhatta calls the language of the South **Andhra Dravida Bhasa**, meaning probably, as Bishop Caldwell suggests, what we should now describe as 'Telugu - Tamil language'. Indeed he has shown reason for believing that **Tamil** and **Dravida** of which **Dramida** (written **Tiramida**) and **Dramila** are old forms are really the same word. [Also see Oppert. Orig. Inhab. 25 seq; and Dravira in a quotation from Al-biruni under Malabar.] It may be suggested as possible that the *Trapina* is also the same (see below). Dr. Caldwell proposed *Dravidian* as a convenient name for the South Indian languages, which belong to the Tamil family, and the cultivated members of which are Tamil or Malayalam, Canarese, Tulu, Kudagu (or Coorg) and Telugu, the uncultivated Tuda, Kota, Gond, Khond, Oraon, Rajmahal. [It has also been adopted as an ethnological term to designate the non-Aryan races of India (see Risley Tribes and Castes of Bengal I.intro XXXI)].

Hobson Jobson -- A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo - Indian words and phrases of kindred terms, etymological, historical, geographical and discursive

by Col. Henry Yule R.E., C.B. and A.C. Burnell Ph. D., C.I.E.
(1st ed. 1886)

New Editioned. by William Crooke --1903

In this (new) edition the original text has been re-printed, any additions made by the Editor being marked by square brackets.

A semantic extension (the ethnological connotation) that had come about in the beginning of the twentieth century to a term that has been in existence for only a few decades at that time to denote the linguistic collectivity of South, had enveloped the social and the political consciousness of the Tamils within the next fifty years so much that it becomes the dominant political 'ideology' of the region.

It has become an undertaking of urgent social importance that the 'history' of the movement is understood properly to have some notion of the socio-political directions the Tamilian Society (of Tamilnadu) can and/or could take.

Samir Amin once commented to the effect that if history cannot provide us with all what we want to know, it is of no use. If history is to perform this (its) rightful function, it has to be viewed and studied not as accumulation of chance occurrences or material for arbitrary construction of idealistic schemata, but as a definite process revealing the factors and forces of social development; "genuine historical science begins only when historical events are explained, when their concrete objective role and meaning in the overall process of social development are revealed". At such a level of intellectual pursuit, wherein history becomes a science, it "cannot exist without systematization of objective

knowledge without theoretical generalization of empirical data, without penetration into the very essence of examined phenomena by disclosing the internal laws governing them". This approach warns us against taking the apparent for the real. It forbids taking anything as an end in itself and argues the need to take a comprehensive view that clearly sees the inter-linked and inter-linking character of social phenomena.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Dravidian Movement should be studied in depth in this comprehensive manner, as it is becoming evident that without knowing fully well this "part" of the Tamil Society, an analysis of the socio-political direction of that society as a whole is not possible. The role of this movement in shaping the history of the twentieth century Tamilnadu is very great. It has held political power whether in 'diluted' or 'concentrated' form from 1920 to 1926, 1930-37 and from 1967 to the present day. The sway it has over the electoral politics of Tamilnadu since 1967 is so complete that (a) it is the major 'ideology' in power, and (b) all the "national" parties have been forced to come to some form of arrangement with one or the other of the Dravidian parties. Equally important is the role of this movement in re-formulating the entire concept of Tamil Culture on a secularistic basis and make it an effective form of political consciousness at social level. In a way, the Dravidian Movement radicalised the politics of Tamilnadu.

It is therefore important that a comprehensive study is made of the movement, its evolution, the changing facets

of its appeal, support and impact. Naturally more than adequate academic attention has been focussed on this movement which has been in the vocabulary of Tamilian politics since 1892 (when the Adi-Dravida Jana Sabha was formed) and has been associated with political power since 1916 (when South Indian Liberal Federation, the political wing of the South Indian Peoples Association was formed). The works of Hardgrave, Suntharalingam, Washbrook, Baker and Barnett ¹ have provided the political history of South India connected with and determined by this movement. Though they have been done under differing territorial frame works, they do provide a clear picture of the evolution of the movement. The studies of Nambi Arooran and Mangala Murugesan ² written largely from a Tamilian point of view, read along with the above works, enable us to get a better 'rounded' view of the development. The attempts to understand this movements in terms of historical materialism are now on the increase. The studies of Ram, Mythily Sivaraman and, A. Srinivasan are important ³. P. Ramamurthy's response to a booklet serialised in 'Theekathir' in no less than hundred instalments (both the booklet and the review are in Tamil) is very valuable in understanding the history of this movement from the point of view of a Marxist who had been in the thick of political activity in this whole period.

It is rather unfortunate that in the very language that constituted the base for the political activities in Tamil, we yet do not have any standard work of critical scholarship on this question. In terms of communication studies, this is an

understandable situation for Tamil as a language and culture has been the chief emotive factor in this whole struggle and that amount of psychological distancing between the language and its politics has not yet come about in Tamilnadu to facilitate the writing of such a work.

It should be mentioned at this stage that in the case of those writings done in Tamilnadu on this issue, there is a marked difference in the pre-1967 times and the post -1967 era during which the Dravidian movement has been enjoying political power and patronage. The general trend of the writings of the pre -1967 era was to ignore the anti-Brahmin movement and avoid as far as possible⁴ the names of its leaders. But with the D.M.K (Dravida Munnetra Kazagam), there has been a complete reversal. The tenor now is to heap uncritical encomiums on the leaders (the chief victims are E.V. Ramasamy Naicker and C.N. Annadurai) and write about them and their activities as though nothing else occurred or mattered during those years in Tamilnadu.

I have dealt with the following as constituting the problematics in the study of this movement :-

- (i) The phases through which the movement passed; the forces and responses that shaped the character and continuity of the movement; the quantitative and qualitative changes that occurred in the movement.
- (ii) The Dravidian movement as constituting the major event in the national question in India; the politics of

its economic undercurrents and the economics behind the political moves;

- (iii) Periyar and his ideology; the important thematical problems that arise from the assessments of Periyar's activities; especially the question of 'caste-class identification.'
- (iv) The transition from D.K. to D.M.K. and the graduation from opposition to government; the role of Annadurai in shaping these transformations; the ideological and tactical shifts in these transitions.
- (v) The anti-Brahmin (Dravidian) Movement as the socio-political expression in Southern India of a movement with similar features, in other parts of India, e.g. the Satyo Shadak movement in Maharashtra. This has become a matter for urgent analysis in view of the ideology of the contemporary Dalit Movement. The Justice party aspect of the non-Brahmin movement seems to have had close contact with Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. The sociological parallels and the class implications of this national concern of the Justicities and Kolhapurians are worth pursuing.
- (vi) The significance of the Dravidian movement in history of social mobility in Tamilnadu since the thirties.

There are two more core-areas that need close study:-

- (vii) The split of the D.M.K. (1972) and its aftermath; a further shift in the character of the movement and

- (viii) The impact of the movement; the socio-cultural counter-offensives that arose as a result of it; the economics and politics of these counter-offensives; the impact of these on the Dravidian movement itself.

These two have not been taken up for analysis. But it is fully realised that the relevance of the first four lies in that they have contributed the last two, their characteristics, to what they are today. Academic propriety demands a clear and intensive analysis of the former four before we start relating them to the last two.

II

It is true that there has been intensive researches made in the history of Dravidian Movement, most of them dealing with only specified periods. This is inescapable as the Dravidian Movement is yet a "living" problem and continues to enjoy political power. This feature has resulted in bringing about a sharp difference in the literature written on this, viz. There is a difference of approach between those written within South India (in both Tamil and English) and those written by western scholars, the latter written within differing theoretical frameworks. Barnett's study differs from the rest in this respect. It tries to cover the entire period, but within too much of a theoretical straight-jacket, trying to squeeze facts and events into a not too-fitting mould. Of the available writings in Tamil, P. Ramamurthy's review in "Theekathir" is a very significant one because it tries to view and review the developments relating to the Dravidian movement with a CPI (M) point of view.

With tighter editing, it could in itself be treated as a significant marxist attempt to delineate the developments in the Dravidian movement.

The problem, as it stands, is to trace the genesis and growth of this movement and mark out of the different phases through which the movement passed. Such a study would bring to light the various forces at work during the difficult phases of the growth of the movement, and the different issues which received political emphasis during each of these phases. Right from its beginnings, this movement has attracted within its fold very different trends and the manner it welded them together took the movement on to the next phase, with new challenges to face and new problems to be solved. Such a development calls for an analysis of those "constant" factors amidst the "variables" and any analysis of the popularity and effectiveness of the movement should take into count this factor.

The point needs elucidation.

It is now held as almost an article of faith by some that the Self Respect Movement (SRM) of E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (1879 - 1973), referred to as Periyar, took over the Justice Party (JP) as something like its heir. It is seldom realised that at the time of their formation, the JP (in point of fact it really was the South Indian Liberal Federation known as the JP through its political organ Justice), and the SRM emerged out of two different and contradictory world views and the manner each sought the other in facing the common

enemy they had in the Indian National Congress reveals the character of the alliance and the basis of their friendship.

It is generally held now that the JP which gave political leadership to the non-Brahmins was generally anti-Brahmin and anti-Congress. The non-Brahmin Manifesto of the JP (1916) signed by P. Theagaraya Chetty is very revealing in its attitude towards the Brahmins.

The main grievance, as clearly set out in the manifesto, was that -

“no less than 40 out of the 41½ millions who form the bulk of the tax-payers, including a large majority of the Zamindars, landholders and agriculturists, also belong to the same class. But in what passes for politics in Madras, they have not taken part to which they are entitled Their political interests, therefore, (as compared with those of the Brahmins who number only about a million and a half) have materially suffered”.

And this is the position it takes regarding the Brahmins.

“No one denies this old established tradition, the position of the Brahmin as the highest and the most sacred of the Hindu castes, the nature of their ancient calling and the steady inculcation of the belief, both by written texts and oral teaching, that they are divinely-ordained intermediaries without whose active intervention and blessing, the soul cannot obtain salvation and their

consequent freedom from manual toil-all these helped them to adapt themselves easily to the new conditions under British rule, as under previous epochs, in large numbers and far more successfully than the other castes and communities".⁵

Though critical, in its tone, of the manner the Brahmin had endeared himself to every rule that has imposed itself on South India, the manifesto does not deny the ritual position of the Brahmins "as the highest and the most sacred of the Hindu castes".

But this is in sharp contrast to the stand taken by the SRM. It was started by the EVR when he found that the Congress was not ready to remedy the social oppression Brahminism imposes on the lower castes. EVR, the President of the South Indian Branch of the Indian National Congress, on the one hand, was an ardent advocate of the communal quota for government posts; on the other, he was against the varnasrama dharma, which legitimized caste distinctions. EVR's movement was, at the time of its origin, as we shall see later, radical and progressive, whereas the JP was undoubtedly conservative. The take-over of the JP by EVR, after he had eschewed all connections with the socialists and the qualitative character of the Dravidar Kazhakam (DK) that emerges out of these in 1944, have to be seen in this background of collaborations.

The "non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916" also has a revealing reference to the character of the Congress.

"The social reactionary and the impatient political idealist who seldom has his foot on solid earth, have now almost taken complete possession of the Congress".⁶

This clearly shows that the Dravidian Movement has had at different times come under the ideologies which were quite in contrast to each other. Even though both the SRM and the JP had demanded a South India free of Brahmin domination, the factors that made each of them to make that demand were different.

This is well demonstrated in the manner the demand for Dravidanadu was articulated.

The Justice Party was quite categorical that it wanted the British rule to continue. In their case, as long as they were in power and so long as the British Government was under no pressure to yield to the demands of the Congress for Swarajya, there was no need for a Dravidanadu. But things started changing, when after they were defeated and were out of power, they had to hand over the leadership to EVR, who was the only hope for them to carry on the struggle against Brahmin domination, albeit with a different emphasis and orientation. The imposition of Hindi by the Rajagopalachari Ministry was fully exploited by EVR and there arose the anti-Hindi agitation of 1938. The cry for a separate Tamilnadu arose out of that agitation.⁷ So the first regional demand made under the India Act of 1935, which had given limited regional political power, was for a separate Tamilnadu. It was a logical outcome of the anti-Hindi struggle.

The main demonstration against the imposition of Hindi was held on 11-9-1938.

But the demand for a separate Dravidanadu comes after EVR was elected President of the JP. He was elected President at the 14th Sessions of the JP held on the 29th, 30th and 31st of December, 1938. With EVR as its President, the JP declared itself in favour of a Federal Constitution for India and formally gave up the demand for dominion States, the demand that was put forward by the Party when the Raja of Panagal was the President.

The demand for Dravidanadu comes up as a resolution at the 15th Sessions of the JP held at Tiruvarur.

The wording of the resolution is very significant. The official version as given in the publication “நமது குறிக்கோள்” - “Our Aim” of the Periyar Self Respect Propaganda Institution Publications is as follows:

“திராவிடர்களுடைய கலை, நாகரிகம், பொருளாதாரம் ஆகியவைகள் முன்னேற்றம் அடைவதற்கு, பாதுகாப்பதற்கு திராவிடர்களின் அகமாகிய சென்னை மாகாணம் இந்திய மந்திரியின் நேர்ப் பார்வையின் கீழ் ஒரு தனி நாடாகப் பிரிக்கப்பட வேண்டுமென இம்மாநாடு தீர்மானிக்கிறது.

அதற்காக வேண்டிய திட்டங்களை வகுக்க பெரியார் ஈ. வே. ராமசாமி, தோழர்கள் முனி, கன்னையாநாயுடு, பி. ராமச்சந்திரரெட்டி, குமார ராஜா முத்தையா செட்டியார், எம். எல். சி. நாராயணசாமிநாயுடு, எம். எல். சி. ராவ்பகதூர்

அப்பாதுரைப்பிள்ளை, ஆர். பி. டி. ராஜன், ராவ் பகதூர் ஏ. துரைசாமி முதலியார், திவான் பகதூர் மகாபெல ஹெக்டே, பி. பாலசுப்பிரமணிய முதலியார், சி. பாசுதேவ், கெ. எ. பி. விசுவநாதம், ஊ. பு. அ. செளந்தரபாண்டியன் ஆகியோரைக் கொண்ட ஒரு கமிட்டியை நியமனம் செய்வதென்று இம் மகாநாடு தீர்மானிக்கிறது.⁸

The operative part of the resolution is the reference to "Madras Presidency as the heartland of the Dravidians". Madras Presidency did not include within itself the principalities of Travancore, Cochin and Mysore which were also "home" of the Dravidians. This resolution refers to Madras Presidency alone. It is quite evident that this was an effort on the part of the landed aristocracy and the financial oligarchy that had arisen in the newly created Madras Presidency to retain its hold and to continue itself in power. The names of the members of the Committee, other than EVR, are enough indication of the role the "rural local bosses" and "urban-magnates" (referred to by Washbrook, when describing the political economy of Madras from 1870 to 1920) were playing in the demand for a Dravidanadu in the manner it was proposed in that resolution.⁹

The cry for Dravidanadu emanating from the Tiruvarur Conference is not the product of a mass movement as was the cry for Tamilnadu that arose out of the anti-Hindi struggle. The former had all the markings of a carefully-planned exercise to safeguard the interests of those who wore "the laced verties and silk jibbas", a term popularised

by Annadurai to refer to the landlords and financial oligarchs who constituted the cream of the pre-Periyar JP.

But the history of that demand does not end there. Whereas the D.M.K. formed in 1949, carries on the cry for Dravidanadu (to give it up ultimately in 1962), EVR reverts back to the demand for a separate "Tamilnadu".¹⁰

This raises the question of finding out those basic grievances which constitute the "constraints" of this movement. Anti-Brahmanism and the demand for communal quota of employment in State Services are the two pillars on which the entire edifice of Dravidian Movement stands. Here again, we can see anti-Brahmanism assuming different phases, of the movement. In the pre-SRM days, it was only a challenge to the Brahmin's secular privileges, but in SRM and post -SRM phases, it was also a challenge to both the temporal and secular pre-eminence of the Brahmins. At the second stage, it very well involved a challenge to the social order which it was not earlier and that determined the character of political struggles too. Then, when closer to official power, there was the effort made to emphasise that the movement was only against Brahmanism as an ideology and that it was not against individual Brahmins.

What do anti-Brahmanism and communal representation indicate in economic terms, for without an economic meaning, it could not become a part of social consciousness. That would take us on to the demographic classification of the society into Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

Baker had even tried to suggest "that the categories (Brahmin - non-Brahmin) marked out by the statistician and adopted by the administrator and the politician (and often subsequently the historian) shaped the vocabulary of politics although they may not have described accurately the reality behind the words".¹¹ The question whether Brahmanism did exist and constitute a form of social oppression in India will be taken up for analysis later, but at this stage, the point to be remembered is that at different stages of the evolution of the movement, different social groups among the non-Brahmins gain ascendancy and determine the type of concessions demanded. At the initial stage, as far as the Indian non-Brahmin was considered, the main distinction was between the non-Brahmin and the depressed classes, with also the Muslims and Christians finding a place. But, in economic terms, the categories backward castes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes are important, for they indicate the growing gap within the non-Brahmin group. As has been pointed out by Veeramani, the appellation "backward" came into being in 1875. Backwardness was initially utilised as a remedy to end backwardness in the Madras Presidency in the third quarter of the 19th century. **The number of the backward castes which was just 39 rose to 128 in 1920 and 152 in 1950**"¹² In 1960 the number was 174. This increase in the numbers along with the stout refusal to consider income as a basis of backwardness and the insistence of caste only as the identity for "backwardness" indicates the type of mobility that was at work within the non-Brahmin group and the history of the revisions of the official list of

the backward castes would also be the history of upward mobility of the different social groups within Tamilnadu. Such revisions of the list have also meant changes in caste alliances. The history of the award of "communal" quotas also reveals the type of socio-political ideology at work in the process of ensuring equal development in society.

It is therefore becoming abundantly clear that unless we phase out the evolution of this movement properly, we will not be able to grasp the different categories that were at work.

The Baker, Washbrook periodisation by virtue of the fact that they have taken 1870-1920 and 1920-1937 as the two phases indicate that they have taken "political" developments as the basis for the periodisation. The logic of that division would take 1937-1967 and 1967-1977 as the next phases. Nambi Arooran has taken 1905-1944 as the unit of time for his study -- Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism. 1905, according to Nambi Arooran, constitutes a dateline because "it saw the meteoric rise of Japan and her defeat of Russia in the war of 1904 -05 which caused the Indian hearts to beat faster and "youthful imagination to kindle".¹³ 1944, of course, is the date of the rise of the Dravidar Kazhagam. The question would now be, whether we could characterise the Dravidian consciousness as a form of nationalism.

This really is a problem of periodisation. As Senaka Bandaranaike very expressively put it, "it is an attempt at a

systematic and comprehensive demarcation of the successive stages of historical development. The stages or phases are marked by distinctive social, economic, political and cultural inter-relations and by major and minor transformation."¹⁴ In a history that has to deal with the genesis and the growth in effectiveness of the Dravidian consciousness in the socio-economic and political life of that group of people, it is important that the periodisation clearly indicates the important inter-relations it had with allied movements and the transformations in its own existence. Taken that way, the year it takes definite institutional form becomes crucial. Thus 1916 becomes important. The period prior to that can be treated as one of incubation. The beginnings could be traced from the first date of the socio-cultural effectivity of the term Dravidian; and that would of course be 1856, the year Caldwell's "A comparative Grammar of Dravidian languages" was published.

The next landmark would be the emergence of the Self-Respect Movement (1925). The marriage of the JP and the SRM, brings forth the D.K. in 1944 and after that comes the formation of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam by C.N. Annadurai (C.N.A.). The period 1944-49, through short, marks a crucial phase in the history of the movement, because it was during that period that Annadurai realised the increasing difficulties in making the D.K. an effective political organisation because of the associations it had with the J.P. and the constructions put down by EVR himself. The next landmark is the assumption of political power by

the DMK (1967) and from that we got on to the next stage when the movement again splits in 1972. Thus, the phasing-out will be as follows:

1856 - 1916

1916 - 1925

1925 - 1944

1944 - 1949

1949 - 1967

1967 - 1972

This periodisation of the movement has not taken into count the years of Justice Ministry as constituting a definite landmark in the development of the Dravidian Movement. It is no doubt important that the question is whether it is a crucial factor in the development of the Dravidian movement. For one thing it is not as important as EVR taking over the leadership. If one takes into count the years of Justice Ministry (1920 - 1925 and 1930 - 1937), we could see that its effective period was the first one and in the next term they end up so ignominiously. It is therefore suggested that the phases are taken as dates of important transformations within the movement that determined both its character and effectivity.

III

The next important question is how to understand the Dravidian movement? This is a crucial question. What does the Dravidian movement signify to the student of Indian and Tamilian history ?

Ram has this to say:-

“We propose that any in-depth and theoretically fruitful research into the Dravidian movement can be conducted only if it is hypothesised as a complex response to the meeting and working-out of the following historical processes :-

- (a) The national awakening in Tamilnadu as a part of the old Madras Presidency;
- (b) The inter-linked stirrings (initially spontaneous, later organised to a certain extent) of the masses of the people against caste and class oppression;
- (c) The ‘divide and rule’ manoeuvres of British imperialism; and
- (d) The compromising policy of the bourgeois leadership of freedom movement on social and class issues”¹⁵.

Of these, the most significant one from the point of view of All-India development is the first and the following three are really factors that have determined the content of its ideology and the character of its struggle. So at an all-India level, if the Dravidian movement is best taken as a movement that

characterised the nationality development of the Tamils. It is refreshing to note that the polemicists of the Communist Party of India have taken this view as far back as the late fifties and early sixties. Majini's "Thiravida Mayai" (NCBH-1909) quite categorically refers to the concept of national question and argues that the national question cannot be solved within the capitalist framework. A pamphlet authored by A. Balasubramaniam (Inthiyava, Thiravidama Thamilakama -- Publication of the Communist Party of India-- 1961) discusses the whole question of nationalism and nationality identity within multi-national state in relation to the split breakaway from D.M.K. of E.V.K. Sampath in 1961. V.P. Chintan's brief introduction to the pamphlet states clearly the Marxist position that in a multi-national state, national unity and love for one's language are not mutually contradictory.

If it were to be accepted that the Dravidian movement is the political expression on the part of the Tamils to emphasise their identity as a nationality within India, then how come that it was expressed through the slogan of "Dravidianism" and "Dravidanadu" and not as a cry for Tamilnadu.

Before we set out to go into the reasons for this, let us remind ourselves that in spite of the early days' formulations relating to Dravidian culture, it was the sentiments relating to Tamil and Tamilnadu that ultimately found political expression. The reason simply was that Dravidian consciousness was false consciousness, in that it arose against the late 19th century, early 20th century formulations of

Aryan supremacy which found devoted adherents in India. Aryanism soon became the governing factor in Indian historiography and everything Aryan was considered high. The Dravidian cry was a counterpoise to the Aryan cry.

The significance of the term Dravidianism could be fully appreciated if we know the historical circumstances that led to its rise. In "The literary history of Tamil: a historiographical analysis", I have in the course of delineating the different phases in the growth of literary history, analysed this problem and found that--

"This (1835 - 1929) was a period of the struggle for the very identity of the Tamils as a cultural group, independent of Sanskrit influence. This struggle has to be differentiated from the struggle in the fifties (under the DMK) when the problem was one of defining the rule of the Tamils and of Tamilnadu as a nationality and as a State within independent India. The struggle in 1835-1929 was one of establishing the cultural identity of the Tamils as Dravidians. The Aryan-Dravidian polarisation in South India was historically inevitable. As T.R. Venkatarama Sastri states "most South Indian Brahmins believe themselves to be Aryan in race. They are attached to Sanskrit and the Aryan culture and the religion which has become part of the composite religion named Hinduism. They do not feel called upon to abjure it. They are aware that a small section of non-Brahmins make a grievance of it. These talk of Tamil culture and **Dravidian culture**

as distinguishable from Sanskrit culture" The emergent non-Brahmins, socially kept aloof and professionally overwhelmed by the Brahmins sought to liberate themselves from this cultural domination by invoking the pre-Aryan glories of the Dravidians. This movement for their cultural identity began to manifest in all walks of life from Politics to language¹⁶.

The Dravidian cry was the other side of the coin of non-Brahmanism. To challenge the myths of Aryan superiority, that movement used this term which was essentially a Sanskrit way of denoting the non-Sanskrit culture. At that time, in the pre-independence era, and in the immediately post-independence era, when Tamil nationalism had not struck deep economic roots through a typically Tamilian bourgeoisie, it was nothing but natural that the emergent South Indian bourgeoisie gave political credence to this concept of Dravidianism for it was the only ethno-cultural sign/symbol that would have brought together the Tamil Chettiyars, Mudaliyars and Pillais, the Telegu Komatis, Kammass, Kapus and the Reddis and the Malayali Nairs. Washbrooke's description of the political economy and of the local structures of political power in the Madras Presidency, especially that of the City of Madras, reveals the corporate character of the magnates.¹⁷ The Dravidian cry arose as the super-structural adjunct of this newly intergrated landed, aristocracy and financial oligarchy.

Even if 'Dravidianism' was not there, they would have invented it; such was the cultural necessity to formulate a concept that would express their togetherness. Baker's description of Madras Presidency fully reveals this situation. "The British had not inherited a province in South India they had created one.....The Madras Presidency then was an artefact of British rule, put together by piece over forty years and dismembered much more rapidly once its makers had departed" ¹⁸. The Dravidian cry was the cultural glue that was intended to hold this together so long as it lasted.

This also explains why the Dravidians cry was never anti-imperialist in its stance. It could never have been so. A re-reading of the text of the Tiruvarur resolution of 1940 would be very meaningful. The resolution demanded "the separation of the Madras Presidency, the heartland of the Dravidians as a separate country under the direct rule of the Secretary for India to develop and safeguard the arts, civilization and the economy of the Dravidians."

With changing economic pressures and emergence of new forces, the very cry for Dravidanadu also goes off.

It may not be out of place to mention that, understandably enough, because of the antiquity of the Tamil literary and cultural traditions and its independence of the Sanskrit tradition, it was in the Tamil region that the Dravidian cry was articulated effectively and not in Kerala, Andhra or Karnataka. It is not that anti-

Brahmanism was not there in those districts, but it did not arise out of, nor did it lead to a Dravidian consciousness. Even lexically, the word Dravida in Sanskrit refers also to Tamil.

So historically speaking, it was inevitable that Tamilian national consciousness at a particular stage of its development, had to have a Dravidian ring. The word Dravidian conjures up in the minds of the literatti the image of the independence of Tamil. It is significant that at the seminal stage in post-war of the 20th century, even Brahmins who were quite conscious of their Tamilian heritage, identified themselves with this cry. T.R. Seshayengar wrote the famous book "Dravidian India". It may be noted in passing that most of the Vaishnavite Brahmin scholars of Tamil (Ra. Raghvayengar, Mu. Raghvayengar, P. T. Srinivasayengar, T. R. Seshayengar) were relatively more sympathetic to the cultural identity of the Tamils.

As referred to earlier, in the thirties the Dravidian cry was a convenient umbrella for the "magnate elite" of the Madras City. But to the SRM, which arose out of EVR's struggle against the social dissemination practised by the Brahmins (Cheramadevi incident), Dravidianism meant anti-Varnashrama cry.

It was this aspect of it that was sharpened to the point of fineness by Annadurai when he spoke of Dravidianism. To him, at least in his early polemics,

Dravidianism was everything noble and Ariyanism everything degenerate in Tamilian life and society. More than EVR, Annadurai propagated Dravidianism as a secular cultural concept and made it the sheer anchor of the identity of the Tamils.

While on the question of the Dravidian movement as the national question of South India and later of Tamilnadu, it will be useful to view this in marxist theoretical terms.

Partha Chatterjee's statement deserves close analysis:-

"When there is perceptible uneven development within the political boundaries of a nation-state, including its dependencies, and the lines of division between the developed and backward regions, or more precisely, peoples (it is not necessarily true that uneven development is perceived in terms of geographical areas) are perceived along the lines of division between ethno-cultural communities of nationality, there is the growth of separatist national movements. It is important to note the difference between this kind of nationalism which arises out of a perception of uneven development within the realm of capitalism, and the earlier kind of nationalism which represented the first consolidation of bourgeois nation-states out of feudalism".¹⁹

If we review the developments that took place in the Madras Presidency in the light of the above statement, it is quite clear that it was the onset of colonialism and the establishment of an All-Indian administrative system and the consequent efforts of the semi-feudal landlords and usury capitalists to emerge as bourgeois, that there developed the perception of an uneven development, not only in geographical terms but in social/caste terms. It was this perception that led first to the pro-imperialist and later separate stands.

But the problem is not that simple. As Irfan Habib observes:-

“Despite the unevenness of capitalist development which is reflected in the variation of the degree of nationality formation processes amongst the various nationalities, the bourgeoisie of the major Indian nationalities, are relatively well developed and the non-big bourgeoisie of these nationalities have degrees of contradiction and collusion with the All-Indian ruling classes. While the dominant sections of the Indian bourgeoisie is multinational, this does not preclude tension and conflict, firstly between the big bourgeoisie and the non-big bourgeoisie of different nationalities and secondly amongst the non-big bourgeoisie of different nationalities themselves”.²⁰

It would be therefore important to identify the

exact type of economic pressure that the non-big bourgeoisie of Tamilnadu brought on this problem and the clashes it had with the All-India big bourgeoisie. It is too well known that the DMK had the support of the non-big bourgeoisie of Tamil at the early stages and later when the Dravidian stand of the State government was becoming constrictive for their expansion in the All-India market, they exerted pressure on the DMK government to give up their separatist stand. Ramamurthy states that Annadurai gave up the separatist demand because of the insistence of the emerging big bourgeoisie of Tamilnadu which by this time had emerged as the third developed region in India. The Chinese war, according to Ramamurthy, was a good opportunity.²¹

It will not be very difficult to relate the various stands taken by the DMK on this question (first the abandonment of the separatist idea and later the idea of regional self-government especially during the time of Karunanidhi) to the development of the Tamilian bourgeoisie and the expansion of its economic interests.

Also we should be able to relate the demands of the backward classes as distinct social groups to the process of nationality formation. It is in that sphere we could see that the nationality formation in Tamilnadu has been accompanied with the anti-feudal democratic struggle. It is significant that today there is a 50% reservation for the backward classes and 18% for scheduled castes

tribes in the Tamilnadu. The unstinted support most of the backward castes gave to the DMK is connected to this.

This also touches on the problem of caste-class continuum and conflict.

A correct assessment of the role of EVR is crucial to the understanding of the Dravidian movement. An analysis of his life and struggles takes us on to an examination of the following questions:-

- (a) The socio-economic realities of Brahmin domination;
- (b) The socialistic content of his ideology; and
- (c) The problem of caste-class continuum and conflict.

As mentioned earlier, the post-1967 research trends in Tamilnadu, especially tend to heap uncritical praise on Periyar and describe his life and achievement justifying all what he did and spoke. Even though it could sometimes be held that this tendency is part and parcel of an intellectual trend that is dominant in Tamilnadu today, yet one cannot deny the esteem the large majority of non-Brahmins, especially those who have been able to make their way into professional employment have for him. It is an irony of fate that the memory of this man who in his atheistic contempt for idol worship, was responsible for breaking icons, is now commemorated by the erection of statues all over Tamil

nadu, in all the villages and towns. State-sponsored studies of him had gone to the extent of coining terms like "Periyariyal" (Periyar Studies) and "Periyariana" for studies connected with him.

Much has been written on him recently. "Periyar E. Ve. Ra. Cintanaikal" a well-edited collection of Periyar's speeches and writings by V. Anaimuthu is a commendable work.

The significance of EVR in the history of Dravidian movement lies in the fact that he argued the necessity for a secularistic democratic revolution to overcome the restraints of traditional society. He exposed the inadequacies of the Congress Movement to lead the social revolution in Tamilnadu and emphasised the need for the adoption of socialist principles for the upliftment of the socially oppressed. His hatred of the leadership of the Congress and his total rejection of the varnasrama dharma first took him on to a path of socialistic struggle and later, when confronted with the wrath of a colonial government which did not want to tolerate his socialist-oriented activities he retracted. But this did not mean that his campaigns against social oppression ceased. His social progressivism was not matched by his activities in the political field. He took over the defeated J.P., made it the D.K. and when his lieutenant CNA broke away, he opposed the breakaway group. But Annadurai, the clearer tactician he was, outdid him, carried the D.M.K. flag into Ft. St. George, occupied the seat that Rajaji

occupied twice by out-Rajaji. Rajaji. CNA saw to it that EVR was hailed as the mentor of Tamilnadu. EVR in his later years became the living symbol of anti-Brahmanism and devoted himself completely to his anti-temporal, social reformist activities. He died in 1973 at the age of 94, a grand old man greatly respected.

Of late, an intellectual trend extolling the progressive role of EVR in marxist terms, has been developing. Such attempts find fault with the communist parties for having opposed him.

“இந்தியப் பொதுவுடமைத் தலைமை, நிலப்பிரபுத்துவ-தரகு முதலாளித்துவ இலக்கியத்தையும் கலாசாரத்தையும் எதிர்த்துப் போராடத் தவறி விட்டது”.

ஒரு மார்க்சியவாதி இந்தியாவில் நிலப்பிரபுத்துவக் கலாசாரத்தை எதிர்ப்பதானால் பார்ப்பனியத்தை எதிர்த்தாக வேண்டும். சாதிக் கொடுமைகளைக் கடுமையாகக் கண்டித்தாக வேண்டும். ராமாயணம், பாரதம், குறள் போன்ற நூல்களை மக்கள் நோக்கில் விமர்சிக்க வேண்டும். இந்தப் பணியைப் பெரியார்கள் போன்றவர்கள் செய்யத் துணிந்தபோது நமது மார்க்சியவாதிகள் எதிர்த்தார்கள்.²²

-Maruthamuttu

This attempt to depict Periyar as having performed the dutiful functions of a marxist at that historical point of time is also seen in the recent writings of Anaimuthu Group too. (Anaimuthu group cover this one of the factions; it has close ties with the Dalit Movement.)

It is important that this question is faced fairly and squarely and a proper assessment is made of the "Progressive" content of Periyar's activities.

The need for such an analysis is urgently warranted also because of the ideological stand taken by the Dalit group of activists. The ideologue of this group is V.T Rajshekar Shetty. In his "How Marx failed in India" (Bangalore 1978), "Class and Caste struggle" (Bangalore 1980) and "Brahmanism" (Bangalore 1982), he has given a fairly clear picture of his views...

"The fundamental mistake of the Indian left movement is its blind adherence to the Marxist-Leninist path of class struggle without taking note of the peculiar conditions of Hindu India. Perhaps the very class character of our left leadership will not allow them to destroy the Hindu value system.

Marxism - Leninism - Maoism cannot be blindly applied to Hindu India which has its own specialised problems. So it is necessary that we should evolve our own indigenous philosophy - Indianising Marxism; the theory of the class struggle should be welded to 'caste struggle'.

In this country, we have the great philosophy of 'caste struggle' evolved by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the greatest leader of the untouchables, Periyar Ramaswamy Naicker, India's greatest rationalist leader who gave three successful

non-Brahmin governments to Tamilnadu, and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, India's first political leader to make a happy blending of "class and caste struggle". The philosophy of Kerala's great sage also offers a type of caste struggle. There is a need to synthesise all these philosophies of "caste struggle" with the philosophy of "class struggle" as propounded by Marx, Lenin and Mao and thus evolve an indigenous marxism".²³

In his "Caste and class struggle", Shetty analyses the caste struggle in Tamilnadu and makes the observation that "Tamilnadu" however, the Periyar movement has enveloped mostly the backward Shudras whose interests are antagonistic to that of the untouchables". He reiterates his theory of the class-caste struggle and goes on to say "It is a happy sign that lately quite a number of people not only inside the left parties but also in Ambedkar, Periyar and Lohia movements have realised the need for class-caste joint action".²⁴

With the recent media focus on the horrors of caste oppression in North India and the forging of ties between organisations working for eradication of caste disabilities in North and South India, there is definitely a renewed interest in EVR's philosophy and methods of struggle.

It is important, therefore, that a careful analysis is made of Periyar's activities and how 'marxist' they were in content.

The most important fact that should be borne in mind in this connection is that by the time Periyar developed his theory of self respect, he had the help and assistance of Singaravelu Chettiyar, the famous Communist leader of South India. Furthermore, he designed his ideas of social equality on the basis of the social justice that was prevalent in Soviet Russia. EVR had visited the U.S.S.R. in 1932 and on his return, along with Singaravelu Chettiyar founded the "Cuyamariyatai Iyakka Samatarmak Kadchi" (Self-Respect Socialist Party) with full-scale socialist policies of public ownership of all lands and transport. Singaravelu Chettiyar collaborated with him in EVR's movement for atheism and self-respect. A perusal of the records would reveal that it was EVR who disowned the communists and the socialist movement. The writings of Singaravelu Chettiyar also show that, after their disenchantment with Periyar, the communists attacked EVR for his undialectical approach towards the concept of rationalism. In fact, Singaravelu Chettiyar in a contribution of his to "PuthuUlakam" (July 1955) expresses his dissatisfaction with EVR for taking up casteism as an issue more important than socialism and rationalism.

The following extract from the issue of Puthu Ulakam of May 1935 indicates how and why and on what communists came to attack EVR:-

“..... மேற்படி இயக்கமும் (சுயமரியாதை இயக்கம்) அதன் தலைவராக ஈ. வே. ராமசாமியும்

சமதர்மக் கொள்கை பரவுவதில் செய்த ஊழியத்தை தென் இந்தியா எப்பொழுதும் மறக்கமுடியாது. மேற்படி பிரச்சாரத்தால் கோடிக் கணக்கான ஜனங்களுக்கு கண் திறந்து சமதர்மக் கொள்கையும், அதன் நூட்பங் பளும் தெரிந்து சமதர்மத்திற் காக பாடுபடத் தயாராகவு மிருக்கிறார்கள்.

ஆனால் பல்வேறு கோடி ஜனங்களைத் திரட்டி ஒரு பெரிய கட்சியை ஏற்படுத்தி ஜஸ்டிஸ் கட்சியையும் காங்கிரஸ் கட்சியையும் தோல்வியடையச் செய்து, ஏழைகளின் கட்சிகளை ஆதிக்கமடையும்படி செய்ய இப்பெரும் தேசத்தில் நாதியில்லாமலிருக்கிறது. சமதர்மத்துக்காக நேற்று வரை பாடுபட்ட ஈ. வே. ராமசாமி ஏதோ தான் தெரியாமல் விஷயங்களை செய்து விட்டதாகவும் தான் மிகவும் நல்ல பிள்ளை என்றும். சர்க்காருக்கு வேண்டியவ ரென்றும் சமதர்மத்திற்கும் அவருக்கும் சம்பந்தமில்லை என்றும் சொல்ல ஆரம்பித்து விட்டார். அவரது பிரதம சிஷ்யராகிய மிஸ்டர். ராமனாதன் நேற்றுவரை சமதர்மத்தைப் பற்றிப் பேசிவிட்டு. இப்பொழுது அரசியல் வேண்டாமென்ற புதுக் கொள்கையை உண்டாக்கியிருக்கிறார்.¹²⁵

The estrangement between the communists and EVR was due to the fact that EVR disowned all connections with the communists for fear of reprisals by the British government.

It is quite interesting to note that once he cut himself off from the socialist movement and the type of inter-nationalist struggles that go with the movement, he turned a pro-imperialist and ultimately took over the reins

of the only major pro-imperialist party of the day in Madras (J.P.). It is also useful at this juncture to consider what in the context of that time constituted the major contradiction of the period.

It is interesting to note that Kuna, who blames the communists of Tamilnadu for Periyar's abandonment of the socialist principles, categorically stating that Periyar's ideology was anti-marxist and that his anti-Brahministic activities would never have brought about any qualitative changes in Tamilian life.²⁶

Where periyar did not exercise his critical insight was (and Shetty quite correctly points it out) in not seeing the differences, social and economic, within the non-Brahmins. That was perhaps determined by his rejection of socialism.

But these are all continuous from the point of dialectical and historical materialism, an ideology in which he did not believe. Any assessment of him should first deal with what he did within the framework of his world-view.

Periyar was convinced of the opposite role of Brahmanism. The question now is, wasn't there the phenomenon known as Brahmanism? Before we deal with this question, it should be admitted that in September 1917, some non-Brahmin members of the Congress got together and formed the Madras Presidency Association. According to Kaliyanasundara

Mudaliyar, the aim of this association was to work for the welfare of the non-Brahmins without going against the Congress. Eminent Congressites like EVR, Kaliyanasundara Mudaliyar, V./O. Chidamparapillai were members of this movement. The very founding of this Association so early as 1917 (within one year of S.I.L.F.) shows that the non-Brahmins within the Congress itself felt a need for such an organisation.²⁷

This brings up the question rather pointedly - Was there a conscious-phenomenon which could be described as 'Brahmanism'? There can be no denying of the fact that the sanction for the hierarchic social order and the need to take it as the given order and the acceptance of it as something inevitable came from those socio-religious traditions which were written down and explicated by the Brahmins. And as B.T. Ranadive quite correctly points out "a movement for equality, against caste-domination is bound to have an anti-Brahmin edge at that time, the Brahmins being the supreme caste in the Hindu hierarchy". And what Ranadive says of western Maharashtra is true of the South too; ".....The Brahmins dominated the Hindu society treating the non-Brahmins as inferior beings... The new intelligentsia under the British came mostly from the advanced Brahmin community....., creating the fear of the return of the old nightmare."²⁸

It needs mention that the full weight of Brahmanism as a system of social oppression would have been perceived only after the establishment of the British

rule and its insistence of such fundamental tenets of British administration as the rule of law. In South India, the additional problem was that this system and the authority that legitimised were considered alien to the indigenous non-Aryan culture. So in South India, the non-Brahmin movement assumed a strong pro-Tamil bias too.

For Periyar, Brahmanism was the chief bane of Tamilian society and in his opinion the best way of opposing it was by adopting a rationalist-atheist attitude. It is in that background of thought that the term 'self-respect' had meaning. It was Periyar's conviction that man to have the basic self-respect should be against religion. Once one is out of the reach of the 'spiritual tentacles' of the Hindu religion (belief in God, belief in Karma etc.), it was easy to fight against it. He campaigned against all those social practices in Hinduism that hurt the self-dignity of man. It is of interest to note that EVR was for the liberation of women.

Such a stand against social oppression inevitably led to the fostering of an anti-feudal, secular, democratic tradition. Periyar's major contribution to Tamilian life was that he initiated the anti-feudal, secular revolt of the down-trodden masses. But because the type of the struggle he advocated was not based on the basis of dialectics, it did not take him on to new horizons. Though it was a drawback to that movement, that cannot take

away the credit due to him as the one who initiated the trend towards democratization and secularisation.

Periyar deserves the credit for having been responsible for this movement. Perhaps it is at this juncture one could see the greatness of Jeevanandam. Though he himself started life as a man of the SRM, he was able to overcome the limitations of the SRM by taking on marxism as his guiding philosophy. While the non-marxist self-respect with his rationalist atheism was able to fight against all forms of religious and social oppression, the marxist Jeevanandam could admittedly go much further, because his marxist insight led him on to bring in the concept of humanism into this struggle. With humanism, the concept of self-respect had a better meaning. It also enabled Jeevanandam to take a more meaningful attitude towards the cultural legacy of the Tamils. Whereas EVR with his atheism and rationalism was forced to reject the entire part of Tamil culture (except perhaps Tirukural) out of hand, Jeevanandam could argue the need to understand legacy of the past from the point of view of humanism.

EVR, however, deserves praise for the struggle he initiated for democratization and secularization at the hitherto inarticulate levels of Hindu Tamil Society and it was this process of democratization that led to the process of modernization of the lower levels of that society.

But a deeper analysis of the implications of the anti-feudal democratic revolutions started off by EVR at the level of the backward non-Brahmin caste group raises the question of the caste-class continuum and conflict.

The lower castes are also in terms of "class" the worst deprived. Landless labourers are found in all castes, but harijians alone however constitute nearly 85% of the landless in Tamilnadu.

"From the independence to date, it is those from the high castes who have in general greatly benefited from the development programmes of the government. Further, it is also seen that it is the same high castes who have gradually changed into the upper classes. A vast majority of the low castes still remain in a state of utter poverty".²⁹

While it is true that class consciousness is growing, it is also true that caste consciousness, negating class consciousness, is also on the increase.

It is not possible to go in for an exhaustive discussion of this problem here. But it should be remembered that unless a proper theoretical framework taking into count historical specifics of Tamilnadu, is developed, it will not be possible to make any headway in understanding this problem fully.

Both caste and class are forms of social stratification. Whereas class is an objective phenomenon

arising from diverse production and exchange relations people have with the elements of the economic formation (and concentrates on the relations that group of people have with the means of production and distribution.³⁰ Caste "is a system in which a person's membership in society is mediated through his/her birth in a particular group which is assigned a particular status within a broad social hierarchy of such groups; this group has a particular accepted occupation or range of occupations and only within it can a person marry and carry on close social relations such as inter-dining".³¹ It has too often been seen and realised that caste has a persisting validity in our social reality. It is important to remember that it "has co-existed with several different modes of production" and "is clearly far from vanishing".

A clear understanding of the relationship of caste to class under the historically different social formations in Tamilnadu is necessary. That needs close study of the production relations and this cannot be achieved unless we have a thorough study of the social formation in Tamilnadu.

With the renewed political interest there is now for Brahmanism, this is perhaps the opportune moment to go in for a comparative study of the non-Brahmin movements in Tamilnadu and Maharashtra. Whereas the non-Brahmin movement goes from a social visionary (Phule) to a Maharaja (Shahu Maharaj) the movement in Tamilnadu goes from the Maharajas to EVR, a social

visionary. The study of the Tamil movement in comparison with the Maratha one would enable us to evaluate both in an all-Indian perspective.

With Canjeevaram Nataraja Mudaliyar Annadurai, we pass on from D.K. to D.M.K. and to the Dravidian movement enjoying the same of its power and authority. Annadurai, though he used to maintain quite often that the D.M.K. very faithfully carries on the traditions of T.M. Nair and E.V. Ramasamy, was responsible for go on almost complete metamorphosis of the Dravidian movement. He broke away from the man who assured him of a promising political career (EVR) and from the organisation (DK) which was breathed into existence by the resolution proposed by him (in 1944), only 5 years before the split. DMK formally abandoned its cry for Dravidanadu and when in power (1967), it argued the case for regional autonomy, a cry which would take us from CNA to his lieutenant, Muthuvelu Karunanidhi under whom the DMK Split up into the Anna DMK (ADMK) (now All India Anna DMK - AIADMK) and the DMK. Annadurai's time saw Tamilian nationalism at its height.

The greatness of Annadurai lay, in that he was persuasive enough to convince his adversary of his (CNA's) sincerity of purpose. As leader of the opposition, he left no stone unturned in discrediting the government of the day, but when he assumed office as Chief Minister, he displayed a very rare sense of



humility and understanding that earned him praise from all who mattered and who concerned. So much so Ramamurthy has stated:-

“திரு. அண்ணாதுரை முதலமைச்சராக இருந்த காலத்தில் கேரள, மேற்கு வங்காள அரசுகள் போல இல்லாவிடினும் ஒரு பாந்த ஜனநாயகவாதியாகவே பணியாற்றினார். அவரிடம்பல தொழிலாளர்கள் விவசாயிகள் பிரச்சினையை நான் எடுத்துச் சென்றிருக்கிறேன். அவர்ஒரளவு தோழி லாளர்களுக்கு நியாயம் வதுங்கக்கூடிய வகையில் தான் நடந்து கொண்டிருக்கிறார்.”³²

Coming from such veteran fighter for trade union and peasant rights, this really is a compliment.

M. Kalyanasundaram, the CPI leader (in a personal conversation with the author of this article) expressed satisfaction with the efforts CNA was taking to meet with the situation that arose from the Keela-venmani incident and testified to the fact that CNA was much grieved that such an incident should take place during his period of office.

The greatest significance of CNA in the history of the Dravidian movement is that he was the founder of the D.M.K. and that he led it to victory at the polls. He was able to achieve the victory because of the manner he established the DMK and propagated its ideals.

Unlike in the case of D.K., Annadurai made the DMK acceptable to as many of the Tamils as possible. Annadurai's slogan “Onre kulam, Oruvane Theivam” (There is only but one caste one God) brought within his fold

all the atheists. The name of the Party gave a territorial dimension by its name "Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam" - the Association for the Progress/Development of Dravidam. Dravidam refers to a territorial entity. D.K. was just Thiravidar Kazhaham - the Association of Dravidians. The most important change was the manner he articulated Tamilian nationalism; he emphasised the antiquity of Tamil as a language; the antiquity of its kingdoms, the richness and uniqueness of its literature. This brought over to him the primary and secondary school teachers. It also brought to his fold the followers of the Pure Tamil School, propagated by Maraimalai Atikal; this school was known for its love of Tamil and for its administration of Saiva Siddhantha school of Hindu philosophy.³³

He had overcome the pro-imperialistic stances of the D.K. and the J.P. by announcing that the independence from British rule is a major political landmark and that it should be celebrated.

Most important of all was the socialist stance he gave for the D.M.K. He ridiculed J.P. as a Party of rich men wearing "laced verties and silk jibbas", of Zamindars and of princes, and characterised the DMK as the party of the toilers. He claimed that the DMK was more communistic than the Communist Party.

With these populistic stances, he stormed Tamil nadu with his master oratory and alliterative rhetoric

which took his message both to literate, and illiterate, rich and poor. His use of the media (magazines, pamphlets, films, plays etc.) swung the Tamilians in his favour. It would be no exaggeration to say that he very carefully cultivated the image of an Anna - elder brother - in a family and exploited that image fully. His followers were his 'Thambys' (younger brothers) and the blood of his blood. Under him the Party became a well organised militant organisation, in fact, the party cells were referred to as 'pakuttarivu Pasarai' - the army camp of rationalism.

An important historical advantage the DMK had in the initial attraction of it was the ban on the Communist Party in Madras from 1948 to 1952. The D.M.K. made full use of this. The C.P.'s inability to work in the district, especially among the agrarian workers of Thanjavur, where thanks to the pioneering work of persons like P. Srinivasa Rau, and Manali Kandasamy the communists had a firm base, added to the attraction of the DMK. Thus both in the towns and the villages, there was a vacuum. The DMK made use of this situation by expressing its opposition to the repression of the communists. As far as the present struggle was concerned, it was possible for them to take it over without struggling for it. It is quite revealing to see in the creative writings of Annadurai and Karunanidhi (especially short story), there are references to the sturdy farmers and how they were kept down by madathipathies and mirasudars.

The use made of the communist type of propaganda is, well attested by Spratt. Writing on "DMK in Power", he has this to say in 1970:-

"Remembering the wild words of the DMK propagandists in the 1950s, many people must have feared that its leaders were communists at heart. It is certain that the leaders are not communists and know little about communism as a theory or as a functioning system. It is fairly clear that the left wing propaganda of ten years ago, like the propaganda for secession was merely the exuberance of opportunists who had now early expectation of power and that they have no undergone the normal sobering and mellowing of opportunists who have attained power".³⁴

It is useful to look into the economic policy of the DMK. According to Spratt "the most conspicuous weakness is its lack of a distinctive economic policy."³⁵ But this was detected only when they were in power. We must now see how the DMK in its early stages were able to appeal to the Tamils.

At the start, the emphasis was on Brahmin the exploiters. This fulfilled with his anti-Brahmin stand. It was argued that "the Brahmin was a real capitalist because he was a capitalist by birth, his caste conferring on him the privilege to exploit. Real economic progress was thus possible only after social emancipation from the oppression of the "Aryans".³⁶

In "Panathoddam" (Garden of money) written in 1947, Annadurai formulates a theory of social classes which spoke of the capitalists, the workers and the consumers. "This enabled him to give an average orientation to his party by identifying it not with capitalists or with labour wholly, but with the "public" as consumers and to campaign for consumer power". This clearly reveals the economic aspect of the populism that he consciously propagated to enable the party to have a wide appeal.

In "Panathoddam", Annadurai also spoke in favour of the Dravidian capitalists. "The Roopchands, the Jeevanlals, the Shiv Narayans, have camped in every nook and corner of Dravidanadu doing business in everything from groundnuts to diamonds. And yet, is there any place for Danapals, the Annamalais, the Arumugams in the North".

No wonder the DMK found itself without any comprehensive economic policy when it came to power. The economic achievements, Annadurai lists for his government in the booklet "Puthiya Varalaru" - (Madras - January 1969) deals with only ameliorative measures and does not refer to any planned economic policy.

Annadurai's major achievement lies in the manner he politicalised Tamil culture and gave it a secular twist and the manner he exploited the media for this.

Annadurai provides the best example of the type of leaders who by their persuasive skill are able to take the masses with them. It would be a useful exercise to analyse the process by which he came to be referred to as Arignar Ann (Anna, the learned) and what in the opinion of his followers made him worthy of that sobriquet. It is interesting to note that in the eyes of the average DMK follower, Annadurai is associated with learning. Most of the statues erected in his honour in the various villages and towns of Tamilnadu show him engrossed in reading a book, presumably 'Thirukkural'. This image of Annadurai, as the learned man, should be considered part of the democratic revolution initiated by EVR and symbolises perhaps the literacy development among the lower groups. Anna Padippaham (Anna Reading/Study Centres) are a common sight in the villages and towns of Tamilnadu.

Perhaps the best tribute to Annadurai's communicative skill and skilful handling of the media comes from himself. Ramamurthy refers to the attempts he took to get him to go on a holiday and mentions that he did not take his advice nor made use of the arrangements he made. When asked why, Annadurai had told Ramamurthy:-

“என்னுடைய கட்சி நான் விரும்பியதற்கு முன்பே ஆட்சிக்கு வந்துவிட்டது. நான் இன்னும் சில காலத்துக்குப் பிறகுதான் ஆட்சிக்கு வரும் என்று எதிர்பார்த்தேன். என்னுடைய கட்சியில் லஞ்ச ஊழல் பரவிவிட்டது. இந்த நிலையில் இதனைச்சீர்ப்படுத்தும் நிலையில் நான் இல்லை, எனவே

பணியாற்றிக் கொண்டே உயிர் நீத்திருவது என்று தீர்மானித்து விட்டேன். I want to die in harness. என்று இறுதியில் ஆங்கிலத்தில் கூறியதை வேதனையோடு கேட்டேன்.¹³⁷

As mentioned at the outset, two major areas of study relating to the history of Dravidian movement - (a) the 1972 split in the DMK, and (b) the socio-cultural counter offensives that arose as a result of the Dravidian movement - are not being discussed here. No study of the Dravidian movement would be complete without them - in fact a thorough study of (b) is absolutely essential to gauge effectively the impact this movement has had on the society.

The history of the Dravidian movement, its sources of strength, the attraction it had for the emerging literate masses, the hope it gave for the ascending classes should form areas of compulsory enquiry for anyone who is interested in the social history and social progress of Tamilnadu.

கொழும்பு தமிழர் அறநிலையத்துறை
திரு. கண்ணப்பன் குமாரன்
அவர்கள் நன்கொடை யாக அளித்தது

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A preliminary draft of this paper was read at a seminar organized by the New Century Book House (Ltd.) Madras in 1981. One aspect of the rise of DMK in Tamilnadu - the politicisation of culture - was the topic on which I worked during the visiting fellowship I had at the University of Cambridge, Centre for South Asian studies in 1983 and 1984.

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A more comprehensive work dealing with all the light problematiques is under preparation.

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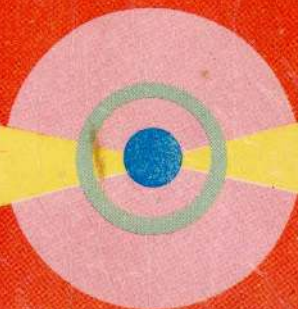
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