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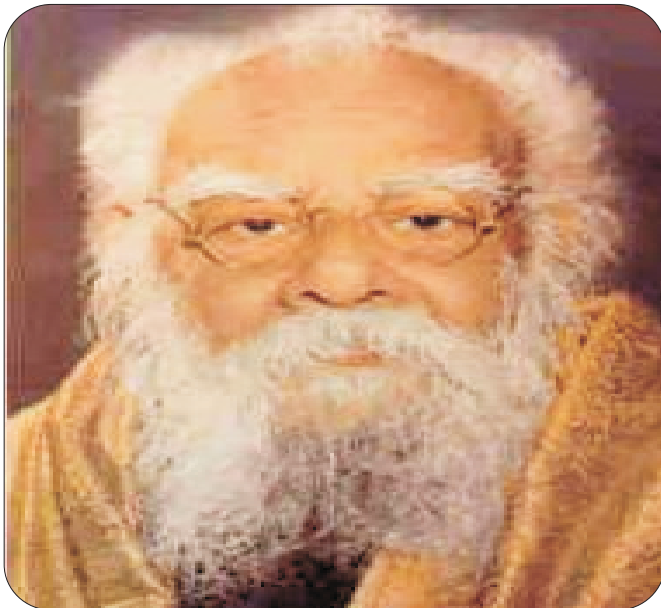
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# Golden Research Thoughts

**GRT****ANTI-CONGRESS AND ANTI-HINDI AND ACTIVITIES  
OF E. V. RAMASAMY IN MADRAS STATE****K. Ramesh****Ph.d. Part-Time Research Scholar in History , Bharathiar University , Coimbatore,  
Tamil Nadu State.****ABSTRACT**

**E**.V. Ramsamy was basically a social reformer and the social reform idea was inculcated even in his boyhood. He was attracted towards Gandhian ideology and the Constructive Programme of Congress. The Congress leaders like Rajaji, V.O. Chidambaram, Varadarajulu Naidu and Thiru. Vi. Ka influenced him much and by that influence he joined the Congress in 1919 and was in good position in public offices in Erode Town, his native place in Tamil Nadu. He sincerely followed and practised the Gandhian principles and by dint of his ability, he rose to highest position in Tamil Nadu Congress in between the years 1923 and 1925. However , in due course he was disappointed over the patronage of Gandhi and Congress to the

doctrine of varnashrama dharma. He came out of the Congress in 1925 with the determination to annihilate the Brahmin dominated Congress and he even became an atheist and strongly attacked the superstitious practices encouraged by the Brahmin citing the Shastras and vedic literature.

To create self-confidence among the common people, he started the Self –Respect Movement which advocated social reforms . In 1937, the Justice Party lost its power and subsequently E.V.Ramasamy became the leader of the Justice Party in 1938. The Rajaji became the Premier of the Madras Presidency and his rule lasted from 1937 to 1939. During this period the anti-Congress and anti-Hindi activities of E.V.Ramasamy became vigorous in Madras Presidency..EV.Ramasamy became the driving force behind the Anti-Hindi Agitation.

**KEYWORDS** :Tamil, Hindi, Agitation, E.V.Ramasamy, Rajaji, Congress, Justice Party, Kudi Arasu, Viduthlai, Premier, Dravidan, Madras, Government.

## INTRODUCTION :

Apart from strengthening the forces of Tamil nationalism, the period between 1937 and 1938 marked the emergence of E.V.Ramasamy as the leader of the Justice Party and the beginning of the Tamilization of the party.<sup>1</sup> There was a deadlock in the Justice circles; E.V. Ramasami Naicker to dominate the anti-Hindi movement. The anti-Hindi leaders needed the help of politicians and especially those like E.V. Ramasamy, because he had an organization with branches in almost all the mofussil towns, two popular Tamil newspapers and a team of speakers in Tamil. Therefore E.V.Ramasamy's Viduthalai and Kudi Arasu acted as unofficial organs of the anti-Hindi League.<sup>2</sup>

Even Rajaji accused that the anti-Hindi movement which was engineered by Somasundara Bharathi and E.V.Ramasamy, the former motivated by anti-Aryan sentiments and the latter by anti-Congress feelings. Thus by August 1938 Ramasamy built up a strong image, in the Tamil districts of the Madras Presidency. On 11 September 1938, the Raja of Bobbili, in his capacity as the leader of the Justice Party, issued, a 'very moderate statement'. In his statement he appealed to the anti-Hindi agitators to abandon all forms of coercive methods and suggested to the government that it should make Hindi an optional subject.<sup>3</sup>

The government acted swiftly to silence the opposition. As a first step it tried to intimidate the newspapers which were supporting the anti-Hindi campaign by raiding Viduthalai office on 5 October 1938. The raid was intended to suppress the only Tamil daily, which had been acting as the unofficial organ of the anti-Hindi campaigners. On the following day the editor, Pandit Muthuswami Pillai, and the publisher, E.V.Krishnaswami - brother of Ramasamy - were arrested. They were tried and found guilty of disrupting communal harmony in society and sentenced to six months simple imprisonment.<sup>4</sup>

The Tamil Nadu Women's Conference was held, at Madras, on 13 November, 1938 under the presidentship of T.Nilambikai, daughter of Maraimalai Adigal. In which E.V.Ramasamy was given the title "Periyar." Resolutions condemning the imposition of Hindi and appreciating the selfless service of the leaders and volunteers who had undergone imprisonment for the cause of Tamil were passed.<sup>5</sup>

The next day, on 14 November 1938 five women Dr.Dharmambal, Moovalur Ramamirthammal, Malarmukathammaiyyar, Pattammal and Seethamal with her three year old daughter Mangaiarkkarasi and one year old son Nachchinarkkinyan picketed in front of the Hindu Theological High School. All of them were arrested and sentenced to six weeks imprisonment. Following this, a large number of women were arrested and sentenced for picketing.<sup>6</sup> E.V.Ramasamy was sentenced to one and a half-year rigorous imprisonment for his speech at the Tamil Nadu women's conference. The Governor expressed his regret about the conviction of E.V.Ramasamy and intervened to alter the imprisonment from rigorous to simple.

The fourteenth confederation of the Justice Party began its three-day session at Madras on 29 December 1938.<sup>7</sup> It was attended by large number of delegates and visitors from all parts of the presidency. At the request of the members of the executive committee, Pannirselvan deputized for E.V.Ramasamy as the president of the confederation. E.V.Ramasamy's presidential address, which was read by Pannirselvam, outlined the programme of the future activities of the Justice Party. In the first place Periyar defended and accepted the communal side of the party as its cardinal principle because of the prevailing discontent among non-Brahmans which was the result of the administrative policies pursued by the government.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the party should defend the 'rightful supremacy of the Tamil language' and oppose any 'incursion of Hindi' on the Tamil country. Yet another aim of the party was to agitate for the creation of an independent Tamil Nadu with status similar to that enjoyed by Burma and Ceylon. E.V.Ramasamy's stand on communal justice, his opposition to Hindi and his call for independent Tamil

Nadu were put in the form of resolutions and were adopted unanimously as the future programme.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, at an informal Justice Party meeting on 3 January 1939, it was agreed upon that public meetings in the Tamil districts should be held in order to protest against the imposition of Hindi and demand E.V.Ramasamy's release from prison.<sup>10</sup>

The Congress high command in the Tamil districts directed its volunteers to arrange meetings and processions to counter the activities of the E.V.Ramasamy and Justicites and to mobilize support for retaining Hindi in schools. One such disturbance took place in the city of Madras on 8 January 1939 when the anti-Hindi agitators led by C.Basu Dev, a pro-Justice Party trade unionist. When the procession of over 12,000 reached Kalingarayan Street, Washermanpet, a number of Congressmen and sympathizers of Hindi shouted rudely at the processionists and called them 'hirelings'(kulippataikal). The processionists retaliated by denouncing them as traitors to the Tamil language (Tamil Turokikal) and slaves of Congress Brahmans (Congress Brahmana Adiyatkal ). The shouting match erupted into violence.<sup>11</sup>

The police intervened and arrested 12 persons including six Congressmen. Many persons received serious injuries and some policemen were hit by bottles. Violent clashes of similar nature between the pro and the anti-Hindi volunteers in the Tamil districts became a regular feature.<sup>12</sup> While the encounters between the pro and the anti-Hindi volunteers were on the increase the government's attitude remained unchanged. It refused to revise or modify its language policy.

And by 31 January, 683 men and 36 women were sent to prison under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. At a public meeting Rajaji, the Congress Premier of Madras himself characterized the anti-Hindi controversy as 'not a fight between Hindi and Tamil but between liberalism and narrow mindedness'.<sup>13</sup>

This was further aggravated by the death of L.Natarajan, an anti-Hindi agitator while serving seven and a half month rigorous imprisonment at the Madras prison for having picketed before the Hindu Theological High School on 5 December 1938. He was arrested on the same day. But his health condition in prison was deteriorated but he died on 15 January 1939 at the hospital as prisoner.<sup>14</sup>

According to the medical report, read on the floor of the Madras Legislative Assembly on 18 January, Natarajan was given proper medical attention but died 'unfortunately of natural causes. Natarajan was the first in the history of Anti-Hindi Agitations to die for the cause of Tamil. Within two months after the demise of Natarajan, another Tamil volunteer, Thalamuthu, also fell ill in prison and died on 12 March, 1939. The death of Natarajan and Thalamuthu made to worry about the health of E.V. Ramasamy.<sup>15</sup>

In the first week of February news about E.V.Ramasamy's illness caused grave concern among his partymen, the Justicites. There was a heavy pressure to government to release E.V.Ramasamy in view of his 'unstable health'. Though the intensity of the agitations was so strong ignoring the continued agitation, the government issued an order on 3 April 1939 to extend the compulsory study of Hindi to another one hundred schools.<sup>16</sup>

In May, when E.V.Ramasamy's condition was serious. In this situation, the Congress ministry released him from jail without pre-conditions on 22 May 1939. It also released all the anti-Hindi prisoners before the expiry of their period of conviction in the first week of June. At the same time, Rajaji, the Congress Premier assured in the Madras Legislative Council that the government would consider abolishing the scheme of teaching Hindi in schools. On 18 June, when a women's delegation led by Dharmambal met the Congress Premier and he once again asserted that 'no compulsion' was attached to the teaching of Hindi.<sup>15</sup>

In contrary, the Congress government then took more drastic measures to suppress the

activities of E.V.Ramasamy and to quell the anti-Hindi agitators. On 3 August 1939, the police raided the house of Dr.Dharmambal, a staunch follower of E.V.Ramasamy in Mint Street, forced open a room and confiscated all the files relating to the anti-Hindi agitation. Swami Shanmugananda, a leader of the anti-Hindi movement, was arrested for organizing the picketing before the school. About the same time, the police raided the anti-Hindi headquarters in Peddunaickenpet, Viduthalai and Kudi Arasu office and took possession of some of the back issues, letters and files concerning the anti-Hindi campaign.<sup>16</sup>

The members of the executive committee of the Justice Party met at the residence of E.V.Ramasamy in Erode on 11 August 1939. Being the first meeting since E.V.Ramasamy became the leader, much importance was attached to its proceeding as it would be a pointer to the future programme. The language policy of Congress Government was thoroughly discussed. Many agreed that the best way to protect economic and cultural interests of the Tamils was to establish an independent Tamil country. As a first step to realize this aim the members of the executive committee unanimously decided to 'work for the overthrow of the Congress Ministry.'<sup>17</sup>

### RESIGNATION OF CONGRESS MINISTRY

The political situation in India took an unexpected turn owing to the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. The Congress Working Committee which met at Wardha on 23 October 1939 took exception to the war which was being forced on India without her consent. As no satisfactory assurance came from the British Government or the Government of India the working committee called upon the Congress ministries to resign. In accordance with this directive the Premier of Madras moved the anti-war resolution in the Legislative Assembly on 26 October 1939. The resolution was passed and the Ministry resigned.<sup>18</sup>

### FUTURE PROGRAMME OF JUSTICE PARTY UNDER E.V.RAMASAMY

When the executive committee of the Justice Party under the leadership of E.V.Ramasamy met on 28 October 1939 to consider the resignation of the Congress ministry and to re-evaluate the future programme of the party in the light of changed political climate of the country. Three issues dominated the proceedings. They are: 1) the immediate question of supporting and extending cooperation to the war effort. 2) Deciding to accept the office if the party was called upon to do so. And 3) formulating a firm policy for attaining Tamil Nadu. Without any discussion a unanimous decision was reached to support the British Raj in its 'hour of trial.' On the question of accepting office.<sup>19</sup>

Finally the Justice Party decided that to work for the independence of Tamil Nadu should be the 'principal post-war demand of the Justice Party.' The executive committee's decision to demand a separate Tamil Nadu and E.V.Ramasamy's vigorous propaganda for it was criticized by the nationalist press which supported Congress. They were unanimous in condemning E.V.Ramasamy and the Justice Party for following a regretful policy and undermining the unity of the country.<sup>20</sup>

The Mail felt sorry for the 'great political party declining into a narrow and separatist sect' and criticized E.V.Ramasamy for this act. It called on E.V.Ramasamy to define Tamilnadu and its geographical boundaries. Further it was stated that it would be impracticable. The criticism of the Mail challenged by E.V.Ramasamy to justify his demand for an independent Tamil country. He elucidated all details connected with its formation.<sup>21</sup>

E.V.Ramasamy explained the geographical boundary of the Tamil Nation, (Dravidianadu) which would be approximately included the composite territory of Madras State and the adjoining territories where the four major Dravidian linguistic groups lived. A unitary form of government was envisaged for the moment. But if that was unsuitable, a federation of linguistic provinces would be formed. Until its

defense potentialities were strengthened it would be a British protectorate. Furthermore, E.V.Ramasamy assured his readers that in the Dravidian nation equal opportunity would be afforded to everyone without caste differences.<sup>22</sup>

### DISCUSSION WITH JINNAH AND AMBEDKAR

In the first week of January 1940 E.V.Ramasamy went to Bombay specifically to meet M.A.Jinnah and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, the leader of the Muslim League and the Scheduled Castes Federation respectively. On 6 January 1940 he met Ambedkar and explained to him Justice Party's attitude to the Congress, its stand on Hindi and the need for demanding a separate country for the Dravidians. On the following day, E.V.Ramasamy had a lengthy discussion for three hours with Jinnah on the same subject. Apart from these two, E.V.Ramasamy had useful discussions with two Maharashtrian leaders, V.P.Jadev and M.R.Jayakar. On his return from Bombay, E.V.Ramasamy became a spokesman for the Muslim League in the province. Jinnah's leadership and his statesmanship were praised at all public meetings held by the Justicites.<sup>23</sup>

Again coming to anti-Hindi agitation there was an article in The Madras Mail, on 17 November 1939, in which requested the Governor to repeal the policy of the Congress Government on Hindi. The Governor also in his fortnightly reports requested the Viceroy, Linlithow and the Secretary of State, Zetland, to permit him to revoke the previous Government's order on the compulsory study of Hindi. But, both the Viceroy and the Secretary of State refused to accept the Governor's views. At the same time, the Congress Government's earlier proposal of extending the compulsory study of Hindi to another 100 schools was cancelled on 27 November 1939.<sup>24</sup> It was all because of the tireless crusade waged by E.V. Ramasamy against Congress and imposition of Hindi in Dravidan land.

To conclude, the period from 1937 to 1938 witnessed hectic political activities on the side of E.V.Ramasami. He hated the Brahmin dominated congress much because when he was in Congress he was much affected by the activities of the Brahmin leaders who dominated Congress and national and state level. When Rajai, the Premier of Madras adopted coercive measures in the imposition of Hindi, E.V.R. staged anti-Hindi agitation along with his followers who were drawn from Self-Respect League and Justice party. He strongly believed that Brahmins with their initial advantage of Sanskrit would master Hindi as it was akin to Sanskrit and would reestablish their hegemony in the public services, as they had done in the earlier period by acquiring knowledge of the English language. Thus, E.V.Ramasamy became an anti-Congress leader and anti-Hindi Propagandist and Agitator in his life period from his exit of Congress in the Madras Presidency.

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