

**A NEW SUBJECT FOR FEMINISM: PRINT-MEDIA, DRAVTDIAN  
MOVEMENT AND THE RECONSTITUTION OF READERS**

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This is to certify that I, K.Srilata, have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under Ph.D. Ordinances of the University.


I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of research degree of any University.




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For my mother and my late grandparents  
to whom I owe my deepest personal debt

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## Glossary

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the Tamil originals in this dissertation are mine. This glossary provides a rough, working translation of words, phrases and titles of books, journals and articles from the Tamil.

**'Dravida' Dinamaniyin** Paarpaneeyam: The Brahminism of the Dravida  
**Dinamani**

**Dravidanadu**: The Dravidian nation.

**Idazh**: Magazine, Periodical.

Idazhiyal: Research on the Tamil **journal/magazine**.

**"Kalaigal"**: The Arts.

**Kudi Arasu**: The Republic.

**Manqai**: Woman.

**Mangayar** Malar; A Special Magazine for Women.

**"Mariyal Cheyyum Idam"**: The Place to Agitate.

**19 aam Nuttrandu Tamizh Idazhgal**: Nineteenth Century Tamil  
Journals.

**Paqutharivu**: Rationalism.

**Parthiban Kanavu**: The Dream of Parthiban.

**"Patirikai"**: Journal.

**"Patirikaiyal Adaiyum Payan"**: The Benefits which ensue **from**  
Journals.

**Penn Yenn Adimai Aanaal**: Why Were Women Enslaved.

**"Penn Yenn Adimai Aanaal"**: Muslim Pennngallum Adimaigalle Thaan!  
Muslim Vidavaigalin **Nilamai**: Why Were Women Enslaved: Muslim  
Women are Also Slaves! The Plight of Muslim Widows!

**"Pennngallum Thozhilum, Pennngall Thozhilaligalle": Women and Work:**  
Women are Workers too.

Penn Urimai: Women's Rights.

Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal: The Thoughts of Periyar E.Ve.Ra.

Perivar Kalanjiyam: The Treasury of Periyar.

Perivar; Suvamariathai Samadharmam: Periyar: **Self-Respect,**  
Socialism.

Ponniyin Selvan: The Son of Ponni.

Puratchi: Revolution.

Puratchi Pecchallar Perivar: Revolutionary Orator: Periyar

**"Samadharma Ulagil Pennngall"**: Women in the World of Socialism.

**"Seydigal"**: News.

**"Sila Brahmana Patirikaiyin Thozhil"**: The Work of Some Brahmin  
Journals.

Sirupatirikai: Small/non-commercial magazine.

Sivakamiyin Sabatham: The Vow of **Sivakami**.

Suyamariathai Iyakkam: **Self-Respect** Movement.

**"Suyamariathai, Suyamariathaiattra Thirumanangal"**: Self-Respect,  
Marriages Without **Self-Respect**.

Tamizh Idazhgal: Tamil Magazines.

Tamizh Islamiva Idazhgal: Islamic Journals in Tamil.

Tamizhaqa Christuva Idazhgal – Oor Aayvu: Christian Journals in  
Tamil: A Study.



**Tamizhar** Talaivar – Periyar E.Ve.Ra **Vazhkai** Varalaru: **The** Leader of the Tamils: The Life-history of Periyar E.Ve.Ra.

Tani **Tamizh Iyakkam**: Movement for Pure Tamil.

Vaappu Vaari **Urimai** Yenn; Why Communal Representation

**"Veliedugal"**: Publications.

Viduthalai: Freedom, Liberation.

## Chapter One

### Introduction: Print-Media and the Normative Subject

Not only have the Aryans cunningly taken over the press, they have also ensured that no one else is able to gain a foothold in that world and publish dailies of their own.  
(E.V. Ramasami Naicker: 1946)

The accusation of the Dravidian movement's leader against the cunning "Aryans" is symptomatic of the intense and fascinating contests for control over the public sphere in Tamilnadu in the early twentieth century. Interestingly, this period, which is marked by the emergence of a number of non-Brahmin periodicals and women's journals, was also a time when the new politics of nationalism was on the rise. Like the vernacular novel, both the non-Brahmin journal as well as the women's journal were responses to this nationalism though in radically opposed ways. The former, shaped and nurtured as it was by E.V.Ramasami Naicker's Self-Respect movement, was intended as a Dravidian response to the cornering of the print media by upper-caste nationalists. Partly then, this dissertation is structured as a narrative of the different ways in which nationalists and the activists of the Self-Respect movement shaped the Tamil print media and used it to voice their very different and opposing concerns. The Tamil print media in early twentieth century Madras Presidency becomes a terrain of contest between the upper-caste, mostly Brahmin Tamilians (the "Aryans" of E.V.R's description) and the non-Brahmins, with the latter staking their claim for a specifically "Dravidian" public sphere. While such a claim underwrites the

emergence of a variety of "Tamil" cultural forms, "D.M.K cinema" being an obvious example, my focus will be on the journals which evolved with the ferment caused in Tamilnadu by the nationalist movement, on the one hand, and the Dravidian movement, especially in its Self-Respect phase, on the other.

Nationalism, argues Partha Chatterjee, "produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based" (1986: 30). In his more recent work, Chatterjee contends that nationalism achieves this by dividing its culture into the material and spiritual domains. In this spiritual domain, an inner domain of sovereignty and "Indianness" which nationalism produces in contesting imperial power, it locates women, religion, caste, peasants and the family (1993). While this domain was constructed as a pure space untouched by colonial influences, in the outer material domain constituted by it, nationalism was prepared to appropriate a western modernity. A new notion of "Indianness" was formed with the anti-imperialist struggle. As a result, oppressive structures of caste and patriarchy were sought to be maintained in the name of protecting the essence of Indian culture while a western modernity constituted by science, progress and rationality was available only to normative Indians, upper-caste, Hindu and male. At the same time, the construct of the nation itself was based on a series of exclusions so that lower castes and religious minorities, for instance, were placed on the margins of the new nation.

In a scathing critique of nationalism, the Dravidian move-

ment whose influence was wide-spread within the Madras Presidency, though perhaps strongest within the Tamil-speaking regions, questioned the ways in which the nation, as projected by the upper-castes, excluded the Dravidians or the non-Brahmins. Feeling the need for a public sphere which would adequately represent the interests of non-Brahmins, the Self-Respect leader E.V Ramasami Naicker or Periyar, as he was popularly known, systematically developed non-Brahmin periodicals, positioning them vis a vis the Brahmin public sphere. These journals present a striking ideological contrast to the journals they are meant to counter, journals with upper-caste/nationalist leanings. Chapter Four locates the rise of a Brahmin public sphere through two early twentieth century women's journals in Tamil, Sister Balammal's Chintamani and Vai.Mu.Kodainayagi Animal's Jaganmohini within an upper-caste nationalist matrix, a matrix which was marked by the emergence of a number of women's journals in the vernacular. The same chapter reads Kalki (R.Krishnamurthy), the Tamil novelist and editor of a Tamil journal bearing his name, as a paradigmatic upper-caste nationalist from Tamilnadu and analyses the resonances of his recovery of a glorious Tamil past (through his historical novels) and his attempts to fashion a modern Tamil for the enactment of a nationalist politics in a specifically Tamil context. The Self-Respect journals popularized by Periyar are clearly positioned against the upper-caste nationalist matrix represented by Kalki, Jaganmohini and Chintamani. Chapter Five locates the emergence of the Dravidian movement as a response to nationalism, describes its anchoring of a radical caste politics around notions of a Dravidian identity and a Dravidian

nation, examining in particular, E.V.Ramasami Naicker's contribution to the emergence of the non-Brahmin journal and his vision of a Dravidian press which would challenge the upper-caste, mainstream, nationalist press.

Informing this dissertation is another impetus: to analyze and put into question certain normative female subjectivities, to argue that female agency enabled by a neo-nationalist Hindutva and a new economic order should caution us against assuming the "natural" feminism of women. The concept of subject-formation is, therefore, central to this dissertation. The notion of the subject was developed as part of a critique of the humanist concept of the individual or a human essence that exists independently of and prior to the category of the social. The subject, according to Louis Althusser, is constitutive of ideology. With Althusser, there is an important shift in the Marxist conceptualization of ideology. The debate becomes increasingly focussed around its role in constructing people as subjects. In his seminal essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser proposes that to study ideology is not to study ideas, but to study their workings in the material practices of certain Ideological State Apparatuses or ISAs (1977). Unlike the Repressive State Apparatuses (the army, the administration and the judiciary) which work by repression and force, these apparatuses, which consist of institutions like the church, the school, the family and literature, function through ideology. A class cannot hold onto state power over a long period of time, argues Althusser, without exercising its hegemony through the ISAs. However, the ISA is not merely the stake but also the site

of class struggle. The ISA then also offers the space for resistance from the exploited classes. The ruling class cannot lay down the law in the ISA as it can in the Repressive State Apparatuses. However, there can be no direct or easy challenge to the ISAs. Althusser goes on to argue that "there is no practice except by and in an ideology' and that "there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects' (1984: 44). We acquire our subject positions in class, caste and gender through the institutions of what Antonio Gramsci calls "civil society", a concept which overlaps to a large extent with the Althusserian notion of the ISAs (1971).

In Chapter Three, I argue that a new public sphere constituted by contemporary women's magazines, Femina and Woman's Era (in English) and Manaai and Mangayar Malar (in Tamil) are tied to the emergence of politically dangerous and conservative conceptions of female agency in recent years. Most feminisms assume a pre-given category of women, a category that is taken as self-explanatory. It is because of this assumption that other categories are assumed as well, the category of "women's issues", that of "women's culture" and so on. To take "women" as a unitary and universal category also means to miss the differences in their formation, differences which have to do with their subject positions in caste, class, race and so on. It is also to miss the crucial fact that female agency derives from these subject positions. Chapter Three also analyses the norming of the upper-caste Hindu woman and the woman of the new economic order. What this norming also achieves is the othering of the lower-caste (therefore caste-ed) and non-Hindu female subjects. It is my

contention that women who participated in the **Self-Respect move-**  
ment are the "others" of these normative subjects.

The Self-Respect women disturb the normative subject of feminism, a subject who has much in common both with the upper-caste Hindu woman and with the woman of the new economic order. Given the dominant construction of feminism as something that some "modern" upper-caste/upper class women do, given the prevalent assumption that lower-caste women will have little use for feminism, the Self-Respect woman is an especially important historical figure. Even as her presence disturbs the logic that ascribes feminist agency solely to upper-caste/upper-class women, it poses a challenge to the exclusions within dominant feminisms. The Self-Respect woman makes available to us a different and non-normative point of feminist **identification**, a subject who has to be invoked in the contexts of liberalization and Hindutva, contexts which are hostile, in different ways, to a progressive gender politics. Chapter Six makes an argument for the recovery of the Self-Respect woman's agency and reads some essays written by Self-Respect women in an attempt to analyze the ways in which they articulate gender issues. Most contemporary debates about gender and the Self-Respect movement are anchored around two opposing axes — one, the **"anti-feminism"** of the Self-Respect movement/the passivity of the Self-Respect woman/the gendering of the Tamil nation and language, and two, **Periyar's** "progressive" vision of gender equality stemming from his radical critique of Brahminism. The second is repeatedly invoked to address the first. I suggest that what gets lost when the debate is posed in such a manner is the agency of the Self-Respect woman.

Reflecting my preoccupation with the question of female subjectivity and its constitution by the print media, Chapter Two will attempt to map two of the most popular and influential feminist approaches to the study of women's literatures – the images of women mode of criticism which analyses texts for their "positive" or "negative" stereotypes of women and the Audience Research approach promoted in Cultural Studies, an approach which operates with a highly problematic notion of female agency. Even while both approaches appear radically different, they both take for granted the category of "women" whose representation (as image) or whose response to certain texts they analyze. In the same chapter, I also examine some current scholarship concerned with retrieving and tracing the history of the Tamil journal and document briefly the emergence of print technology in India and its reception in South India.

The notion of the subject and the issue of agency is crucial to feminist theory and praxis. Even as it is important to recognize the processes by which certain female subjectivities become normative, it is important to remain vigilant about who then become the normative subjects of feminism. My narrative begins with the nineties and deals, in large measure, with the caste-less subject of a popular and, for the lack of a better phrase, Westernized Indian culture, a subject who, I would like to suggest, overlaps in many ways with the paradigmatic subject of English Studies in India. For, as Madhava Prasad has suggested, what we confront today is not English as "high culture" but English in its manifestation as popular culture or **"techno-cul-**



ture" (1995). Prasad has argued that while Classical English Studies or English as "high culture" worked by producing a mystique around itself, hence remaining untranslatable, the expanding presence of **English-as-technoculture** has succeeded in **demythifying** English. Thus Hollywood's Indian market now relies on dubbing with several films being released in Tamil, Telugu and Hindu versions. The Star T.V viewer can now watch the American soaps Santa Barbara and Bold and the Beautiful in Hindi. English, argues Prasad, has become "eminently translatable" (1995). The women's magazines **Femina** and **Woman's Era** which are analyzed in Chapter Three are metaphors, in a sense, of this new form of English. The non-normative female and caste-ed **subjectivities** shaped by the Dravidian movement would disturb the normative subject of English Studies, of English as popular culture and of feminism itself. Recent shifts within the discipline of English Studies have lent a certain legitimacy to feminism and feminist theory so that it has actually become possible for the normative English Studies subject to be feminist, at least in the limited, liberal sense of the term. Even as it has coopted issues of gender and feminism however, the discipline continues to be resolutely indifferent and, often, resistant to questions of caste, region and community, to categories which have remained "non-modern" in a sense and which, consequently, threaten the secular-modern foundations of the discipline. To speak about "caste" and "regional **specificity**" from an English Studies space is an act of translation. It is a necessary act however, and one that will hopefully open up new critical spaces.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>E.V.Ramasami Naicker, editorial, Viduthalai; 6-6-1946; Ve. Anaimuthu, comp., E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. (Trichi: Thinkers Forum, 1974): 1899.

## Chapter Two

### **Feminist Scholarship, Cultural Studies, "idazhiyal": Critical Approaches to Popular Culture**

This chapter describes what I see as two major and distinctly different critical approaches in contemporary studies of women and "popular" culture and goes on to examine current approaches in Tamil scholarship towards Tamil journals. What the former share is their allegiance to feminism (though, given their different locations, they differ in their "feminism" as well) and their attempt to use popular culture as a way of articulating questions about gender. However, their intellectual trajectories as well as their implications for gender politics are fundamentally different. Both approaches are valuable in that they compel us to take seriously genres that are either confined to the literature cataloging approach we will soon discuss, or, worse still, ignored partly because they are "popular" forms and partly because they are seen as something that only women read. However, even as they open up the realm of the "popular"<sup>1</sup> to feminist analyses, they are limited in their theoretical reach.

#### **The "Images of Women" Approach**

The first of the two approaches, the "images of women" mode of criticism, is enormously popular both on the left as well as on the right, both within and outside academia. It informs, for example, most popular analyses of women and media. This criticism is based on the assumption that "reality" or "truth" pre-exists its representation as image. The image of women in cul-

ture is then measured against this reality and judged to be either "stereotypical" or a faithful reflection. Implicit in most of this criticism is the notion that popular literature contains "negative stereotypes" of women and that it **"objectifies"** women in certain typical or formulaic ways. For instance, Gita Wolf in her article on the construction of gender in Tamil magazines perceives all of them as expressing the same kind of misogyny, irrespective of their caste **affiliations:**

The narratives [of Tamil magazines] work at two levels: firstly, they gratify, in a crude and often perverse fashion, male fantasies and projections of female sexuality; and secondly, they also project on their large female readership, continually limiting traditional versions of women's notions of themselves and their possibilities. ...although the various editors and publishers of these weeklies come from varied caste, class and occupational backgrounds, there is complete consensus on the ideology. All caste and class differences appear to be subsumed to patriarchy. (Wolf 1991: **WS-71**)

C.S **Lakshmi's** book The Face Behind the Mask: Women in Popular Tamil Literature (1984), which deals with the subject of women writers in Tamil Literature, also follows the images of women approach in describing popular Tamil journals:

The clinging creeper, educated yet unassertive, uneducated and tongue-wagging, "queen" of the house, "sweet-wife", **"loving"** mother", image with a **ofew** exceptions were the way women were portrayed. Most women heartily clung to these images and perpetuated them in their own literary attempts.... **Kalki** began a column called "Penngal **Ulagam**" in December 1942. One **"Lakshmi"** wrote in these columns on various fictitious women characters. The women were innocent, interested in dressing, movies; got angry with their husbands on small issues and were consoled only if they were taken out. An image of a child-like character was the first one that was written. The other women

characters were the gossiping types like the servant woman who talks of how she controls her husband and the rich woman's making fanciful conversation. (**C.S Lakshmi** 1984: 46-47)

Writing about the misogyny inherent in Anandavikatan's humour, she says:

Anandavikatan true to its name, (Happy Jester), carried a joke on its cover in every issue. Most of them were women. The image presented of a woman was mostly of one dominating her husband. One of the front cover jokes showed a husband carrying countless parcels with his wife walking beside swinging her hands. (Lakshmi 1984: 46)

There is a **moralism** inherent in the work of C.S Lakshmi and Gita Wolf which leads to the grouping together of what are quite possibly very different representations of women, different because their ideological histories and contexts are different. What happens then is that a range of representations are simply read as "bad" or "negative-stereotypical" images of women. Typically, any recognition of a woman's sexuality is judged in blanket and uncritical terms as an instance of her objectification, a "bad" image in textual terms. Inevitably, such negative stereotypes are perceived to be a feature intrinsic to popular literature, a natural extension of their "vulgarity". There is little attempt to tease out the ideological subtleties of each text. For instance, Wolf and **Lakshmi's** work does not account for the ways in which the caste affiliations of each magazine inflects its gender politics. Wolf argues that "all caste and class differences appear to be subsumed to patriarchy". She fails to recognize that patriarchy is not universal and monolithic, that

it is necessarily linked to questions of caste and class. C.S **Lakshmi's** work suffers from an almost total focus on Brahmin women writers and Brahmin owned magazines.

The notion of the "stereotype" in the work of both Wolf and **Lakshmi** corresponds to the Frankfurt school notion of "false consciousness", a notion which, as we shall soon see, has been critiqued within Cultural Studies. Implicit in both the images mode of criticism as well as in the Frankfurt School approach is the belief in a pure space of reality outside of ideology.

### **Cultural Studies**

Following the entry and the subsequent institutionalization of Cultural Studies as well as the range of critical and methodological approaches which emerged in its wake especially within U.S **academia**, feminist criticism of popular literature in the west has, by and large, moved away from the text-based "images" mode of criticism. In what follows, I will trace the intellectual trajectory of the discipline of Cultural Studies as well as that of the influential theoretical and methodological approaches such as ethnography, audience studies and psychoanalytic criticism which it helped promote.<sup>1</sup>

,

Allied as it was with the New Left, the work of critics such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall (of the Birmingham school in the U.K) sought to question the silences within Marxism on questions of gender, culture and subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> Marxist criticism of culture, perhaps best represented by the work of critics from the Frankfurt School, perceived some forms of high culture as outside ideology and all mass culture as ideologically pernicious. Even

as they pointed to the political importance of mass art, critics from the Frankfurt school such as Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse argued that mass art was completely dominated by the "consciousness industry" and that its audience lived in a state of "false consciousness".<sup>3</sup> As Raymond Williams points out, Marxist writing commonly uses three versions of the term "ideology": a system of beliefs typical of a certain class; a system of illusory beliefs or what is known as "false consciousness", as opposed to true scientific knowledge; or the general processes of the production of meaning and ideas ("Ideology": 1977). Drawing on the second meaning of ideology as illusory belief, critics from the Frankfurt school argue that most popular literatures are ideological, suggesting that there exists a pure space outside ideology which certain kinds of high literature inhabit. The work of Louis Althusser however demonstrated for us the problems with this particular definition of ideology. In his influential essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser argues that '**there** is no practice except by and in **ideology**' and also that '**there** is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects' (1977: 44). Cultural Studies challenged the distinction between high culture and popular culture and the assumption that the former could be outside ideology while the latter was always "ideological". The "popular" within Cultural Studies came to be seen as a potential site for the emergence of alternate ideologies.

Cultural **Studies**, Audience Response and Feminist Criticism

The work of Janice **Radway**, Tania **Modleski** and Carol Thurston, which may be broadly characterized as the American liberal-feminist engagement with Cultural Studies, represents a crucial though not very visible departure from the political agenda of Cultural Studies as it was envisaged by the Birmingham school. Using a range of methods to challenge what they regard as the dominant position often endorsed by feminist critics that romance is an all-powerful and politically disabling ideology and that romance-readers are largely passive victims of a false-consciousness, they read an incipient feminism into romance fiction and attempt to construct romance readers as **agentive** subjects.<sup>4</sup>

**Radway's** Reading the Romance employs ethnographic methods, questionnaires and personal interviews to explore what romance reading signifies to a small group of thirty white, middle-class housewives living in the American midwest in a town to which she gives the pseudonym **'Smithton'**. **Radway's** main informant, Dorothy Evans or **'Dot'** as she is referred to, runs a bookstore. All thirty participants in **Radway's** ethnographic study, most of whom are housewives with school-going children, are Dot's customers. Dot is an avid romance reader herself and publishes a newsletter in which new publications are rated for their quality. Her customers rely on her advice and assistance in choosing a varied array of romance novels. **Dots's** helpful and personalized suggestions frees them from having to rely solely on a single line of books like the Harlequins and enables them to experiment



with new authors. **Radway** argues that this gives readers a degree of control over what they read; the **romance** industry is hence not all-powerful.

Radway makes a case for romance readers by talking of their competence, their status as discerning readers and their ability to articulate their likes and dislikes. According to Radway, the **Smithton** group repeatedly emphasizes the fact that their tastes in romance fiction are not adequately addressed by the publishers and that they often read books which they don't fully like or endorse because "sometimes even a bad book is better than nothing" (1984: 50). She points out that despite the **formulaic** appearance of romance fiction, "there are important differences among novels for those who read them that prompt individual decisions to reject or to read" (1984: 50). The Smithton **women** have clearly articulated likes and dislikes regarding romance fiction, as Radway discovers in the course of her survey. She argues that they demonstrate a high level of competence in reading the romance and possess an intricate knowledge of the genre. In some cases, their expertise has led them to write their own romance for publication. The Smithton readers feel that romance novels, especially those rich in historical and geographical detail, enable them to gather knowledge about other times and places. Reading often becomes a substitute for travel.

Radway argues that romance fiction provides women with the care and nurturance they miss in everyday life:

As an activity, [romance reading] so engages their attention that it enables them to deny their physical presence in an environment associated with the responsibilities that are acutely felt

and occasionally experienced as too onerous to bear. Reading, in this sense, connotes a free space where they feel liberated from the need to perform duties that they otherwise willingly accept as their own. As a result, they vicariously attend to their own requirements as independent individuals who require emotional sustenance and solitude. (1984: 93)

According to Radway, through the act of romance reading, the Smithton women are laying claim to a leisure time when they are at least temporarily free from the task of caring for their families. In explaining the romance's appeal to women, she uses Nancy Chodorow's account of the female personality as a **self-in-relation**. Chodorow's argument is grounded in object relations theory according to which a child's social-relational experience from early infancy determines its later growth. The child's early social relations with its primary caretakers are internalized as its most basic model of itself as **self-in-relation**. This model survives well into adulthood. According to Chodorow, the effects of the mother-child relationship are manifested directly in both men and women. Early and exclusive mothering of a female child leads to a very strong **identification** of the daughter with her mother, making the process of **individuation** difficult for female children. The lack of sexual difference leads to a prolonged **pre-oedipal** state wherein the female child fails to experience herself as a separate entity. Chodorow argues that because girls remain unconsciously connected to their mothers well past their infancy, women are more likely to feel at ease in regressing to a state of identity diffusion, where the boundary between self and others remains largely indistinct. In a similar situation of exclusive

**mothering**, male children must insist on a rather violent separation from their mothers in order to establish their identity as "not female". Unlike male children, female children learn to view themselves as a **self-in-relation**, which is later generalized as a view of the self as an extension or continuation of the world and others.

During the oedipal period, the girl's turn to her father is motivated not by a desire for the intrinsic properties of the penis, but because of a recognition that it symbolizes all that is **not-mother**. Her first attempt at individuation then is indistinguishable from her **identification** with and desire for her father. According to Chodorow, when the female child learns that her mother prefers people like her father who have penises, she desires one for herself in order to secure her mother's love. Her need for her mother continues even into adulthood. Adult women constantly wish to regress into infancy in order to reconstruct the lost intensity of the original mother-daughter bond. Their ego boundaries continue to be permeable and they tend to experience an ongoing need for nurturance and attachment. Radway's argument is that the romantic heroine's story closely resembles **Chodorow's** account of female personality development. The romance narrative often begins at a point when the heroine has just lost a particular relationship, either through death or through separation, and is forced to face the world alone. Radway contends that the heroine's consequent terror and feeling of emptiness may evoke for the reader memories of her own separation from her mother and her attempts to establish an individual identity. The heroine appears boyish and independent at this

point. This independence, **Radway** argues, can be understood as a **symbolic** representation of a woman's journey towards individuation and subsequent connection. The heroine's search for her identity and her attempts at **individuation** are linked to her developing relationship with the hero. Symbolically, her relationship with the romantic hero represents a turn to the father. The narrative ends with the heroine successfully having achieved a **self-in-relation**. According to Radway, **Chodorow's** theory also accounts for the particular desires satisfied by romance reading. The heroine and, vicariously, the romance reader, become the object of the hero's unconditional care and nurturance. Such nurturance would otherwise be unavailable to them within a patriarchal set up. Radway argues further that once the reader finishes with a romance novel, she is forced to return to her real situation, a situation in which her relations with others continue unaltered. Romance reading then is temporarily therapeutic. The romance's "short-lived therapeutic value, which is made both possible and necessary by a culture that creates needs in women that it cannot fulfill, is finally the cause of its repetitive consumption" (1984: 85).

**Radway's** reliance on Chodorow once again indicates to us that gender is the only analytical category she is concerned with. In being uncritical of the discourse of psychoanalysis, Radway is also unable to account for the ways in which psychoanalytic theory itself reproduces the structure of sexual difference as it is deployed in western thought. Chodorow's framework is problematic because she equates sexual with social identity and

therefore fails to deal adequately with the construction of sexual identity.<sup>5</sup>

It is also significant that **Radway** does not choose to describe the participants in terms of their racial backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> She refers to them as "ordinary" women, housewives who form a community of romance readers in the small town of Smithton. The word "ordinary" then seems to function as a metaphor for middle-class white. Radway acknowledges the **smallness** of her sample audience. However, it is not the **smallness** of her sample or even the fact that it does not encompass women from a variety of racial locations which is problematic, but the fact that race is simply not part of her analysis. Her participants remain unmarked racially because they are white and hence, normative. **Radway's** analyses fails to account for the ways in which her **participants'** location as white women shapes them as a community and gives them the specific competencies which may be required to read romance fiction. As Ruth Frankenberg points out, racism is often conceived of as something external to white women even though it is a system that helps to shape their sense of self. She argues therefore that it is important to look at the "racialness" of white experience, to explore the ways in which "whiteness" is constructed (1995: 1):

Naming "whiteness" displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance. Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility ... To speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign everyone a place in the relations of racism. It is to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people — **that**, rather, racism shapes white people's lives

and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life. (Frankenberg 1995: 6)

If Radway puts forward the thesis of the reader in control, the resisting reader, Modleski makes the text of the Harlequin romance itself a site of protest and resistance, despite an overall appearance of a highly conservative plot. Unlike Radway, Modleski relies almost exclusively on psychoanalysis to analyze the structure and appeal of romance fiction. Challenging the position of the Frankfurt school critics on mass-produced art, Modleski argues that while the mass cultural text may **"both stimulate and allay social anxieties"** she would "avoid imputing **to...the** board of directors of the Harlequin company an omniscience about the nature and effects of their product" (Modleski: 1982: 28-29). In thus defending the "board of directors" as not-so-evil, she continues to be caught in the politics of **intentionality** that she is attempting to refute. Such a concern with **intentionality** is politically useless and implicit in this is the assumption that individual intentions can actually matter. Modleski goes on to argue that since the production of ideology is not the work of any identifiable group, one must turn to a study of the consuming unconscious.

Modleski cites a television commercial for Harlequin romances which shows a middle-aged woman lying on her bed holding a Harlequin novel and preparing for her "disappearing act". She contends that women's longing to "disappear" cannot be totally condemned in the light of John **Berger's** argument in Ways of Seeing (1973) that the display of women in the visual arts results in a woman's self being split into two. As a result, a

woman is constantly accompanied by her own image of herself; she has to survey herself all the time. Romances, according to **Modleski**, enable the reader to believe in the possibility of transcending this divided self, if only temporarily. They use the ideology of love to enable their readers to achieve a state of self-transcendence and **self-forgetfulness**.

Modleski uses the theory of repetitive compulsion to explain the romance's appeal. According to this theory, art derives from some persistently disturbing psychic conflict which, failing its resolution in life, seeks it in the symbolic form of fantasy. **Modleski** argues that the Harlequins, in presenting a heroine who has escaped psychic conflict, invariably increases the reader's own psychic conflicts, thus creating an even greater dependency on the literature. She contends that this leads us to believe the other commonly accepted theory of popular art as narcotic. Just as certain tranquilizers taken to relieve anxiety, though temporarily helpful, are ultimately anxiety producing, romance fiction is only temporarily successful in helping the reader to "disappear". Both Radway and Modleski then **defend** romance reading as a space where readers can temporarily seek respite from reality by finding nurturance and achieving **self-forgetfulness**.

The necessity to counter the Frankfurt school has compelled critics like Radway to theorize female agency in ways that are both unconvincing and problematic. Popular culture is seen rather simplistically as women's means of expressing resistance. Firstly, **Radway's** meticulous account of the way the romance industry makes use of new techniques of book production, distribution, advertising and marketing in order to generate a need

among its **female** audience for the romance genre leads us to believe that the romance industry is all-powerful. Given her own presentation, she would have to marshal stronger evidence to argue that the romance reader exercises agency vis a vis the romance industry's manipulative mechanisms. However, what is perhaps even more problematic is the way in which she theorizes agency as lying outside the field of power relations. From her account, it appears that the Smithton women exercise pure agency when they claim leisure time or when they take time off from their emotionally draining lives. She does not seem to recognize that the industry informs even those acts seemingly expressive of their agency. The problem seems to lie in her posing the debate as one about ideology versus agency, wherein both ideology and agency are mutually exclusive and therefore pure.

Similarly, from **Modleski's** analyses, it is not very clear what constitute the "elements of **subversion**" which she had earlier claimed were part of the seemingly conservative plots of the Harlequin. The temporariness of this subversion, which **Modleski** herself emphasizes, indicates to us that the subversive potential of the Harlequin is highly limited. Modleski argues:

An understanding of Harlequin romances should lead one less to condemn the novels than the conditions which made them necessary. Even though the novels can be said to intensify female tensions and conflicts, on balance the contradictions in women's lives are more responsible for the existence of Harlequins than Harlequins are for the contradictions. (Modleski: 1982, 57)

In a defensive move similar to Modleski's, Radway claims that the love of romance can be seen as a hidden protest against



patriarchal culture. She argues that "critical power ... lies buried in the **romances** as one of the few widely shared womanly commentaries on the contradictions and costs of patriarchy" (1984:18). She fears however that this critical power will not really develop into conscious resistance against patriarchy because the overall ideological effect of romance reading is to reconcile women with their positions in patriarchy. Given that readers take the historical and descriptive detail in romance fiction as true, **Radway** contends that they are likely to believe the romance's assertion that men can fulfill women's needs.

Radway seeks to represent romance fiction and romance readers as "resisting" patriarchal structures, though nowhere does she really elaborate on the precise nature of these patriarchal structures. Speaking at a workshop on Media and Gender" recently, Madhava Prasad pointed out that studies which describe the audience as resisting the "dominant" never define the dominant and are confined to talking in terms of individual resistance (1997). Audience research or reception studies always proves that there is no "dominant" but nevertheless requires the thesis of dominance to characterize individual response.

**Radway's** celebration of the resisting romance reader **and Modleski's** unsubstantiated claim that the plot of the romance contains subversive elements are both half-hearted, even premature, in the light of their own anxieties about the ultimate effects of romance fiction. Their theoretical move of describing the phenomenon of romance reading as a means of temporary respite from the harsh demands of reality is deeply problematic for it only reinforces dominant notions about popular culture as

a site of false-consciousness, an escape route from a reality which has been constituted as prior to the text. Even as they position their critique against the Frankfurt school argument that audiences of popular cultures are "passive" and exist in a state of **"false consciousness"**, their analyses unwittingly retain the **remnants** of this argument. In describing romance reading as "compensatory" and "therapeutic", they seem to suggest that the fairy-tale world of the romance helps women to cope better with the reality of their lives. The romance narrative continues to function for these critics as illusory ideology, the only difference being that this ideology is seen as temporarily beneficial, as giving women "a sense of emotional **wellbeing**" (1984: 93).

In their attempts to read "resistance" into the romance novel or agency in its readers, **Radway** and Modleski fail to recognise that there is no uncorrupted, non-ideological space, that the "free" reader is an impossibility. They do not see the female subject as regulated by power even at points when she appears to be exercising control, choice and agency. Given their rather simplistic understanding of how power or ideology works, Radway and Modleski resort to two extremes; on the one hand, they uncritically celebrate romance fiction and defend the reader, on the other, they express their anxieties about the connections they suspect between romance fiction and patriarchal structures. To see the subject as temporarily outside ideology/power would then be as problematic as assuming that ideology is all-powerful and makes agency impossible. Such a perception simplifies the

field of analysis, permitting us to read only one or the other, ideology versus agency, within a given cultural **formation**.

In her theorizing of female agency and liberation, Carol Thurston echoes Radway and **Modleski**. Using the **images-of-women** mode of criticism, she argues that the genre of the erotic romance has moved away from traditional sex-role portrayals, thus challenging the assumption that romances reinforce traditional social norms and that they have remained essentially unchanged through time especially as regards sex-role stereotyping. The erotic romance, she claims, has broken with conservatism to trace the **"evolution** of the **'liberated'** American woman with a responsiveness unmatched by any other mass entertainment medium" (1987: 7).<sup>7</sup> She argues that in the erotic romance, the female persona is no longer split between two characters, the "good", self-sacrificing, chaste heroine and the "bad", selfish, sexy, "other woman". Instead, the heroine is a complete person, sexually assertive as well as good. Moreover, she is an independent, modern person with a strong drive for self-determination. **Thurston's** thesis is that the erotic romance represents the sexual liberation of the American woman. Implicit in such a thesis is the equation of sexual "liberation" with female agency, an agency which she images as being outside the field of power relations (1987). However, as Michel Foucault tells us, relations of power are not exterior to other relationships such as the **sexual**; they are, rather, immanent in them (1976). Foucault argues that wherever there is power, there is also resistance. Resistance is therefore never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. The romantic heroine's sexual assertiveness cannot simply

be seen as occurring in a purely liberatory space. As Judith Butler tells us:

...agency belongs to a way of thinking about persons as instrumental actors who confront an external political field. But if we agree that politics and power exist already at the level at which the subject and its agency are articulated and **made** possible, then agency can be presumed only at the cost of refusing to inquire into its construction. (1992: 13)

In other words, both agency and the subject are always within the field of power and politics.

Radway, **Modleski** as well as Thurston take for granted the categories of "woman". They seem to assume that romance **fiction** is essentially part of "women's culture". Such an assumption characterizes feminist criticism of women's magazines as well. In her book Inside Women's Magazines. Janice Winship looks at the women's magazines published in Britain, at the domestic weeklies of the 1950s to the glossies of the 1980s. Winship argues that it is impossible to think about femininity and women "without considering, among other things, motherhood and family life, beauty and fashion, love and romance, cooking and knitting - and therefore romantic novels, cookery books and women's **magazines**" (1987:6). Like Radway then, she advances the argument that women's texts are belittled in a culture that is largely male. Again, in a theoretical move similar to **Radway's**, she goes on to defend the **"separate world"** created by women's magazines, arguing that they give women some breathing space and support.

The assumption implicit in the work of Radway, Thurston, Modleski and Winship that **'women'** pre-exist their representa-

tion and their construction in culture is premised in turn on the concept of a human essence that exists independently of and prior to the category of the social. Within this particular framework, the human subject who is represented as the origin and source of knowledge is **"socialized"** into certain values. However, the categories of the **human** subject and of "women", as recent theories show, emerge in the very construction of their representation. **Modleski**, Radway, Thurston and Winship tend to assume unproblematically that romance fiction and soaps are "women's culture". They seem inspired by the quantitative fact that these texts are so **"popular"** with so many "ordinary" women. There is an implicit **essentialism** in a position that fails to examine the processes by which certain texts come to be gendered as women's texts, assuming instead the popularity of certain texts among women as a "natural" fact.

Audience research criticism or reception studies allows for the asking of only two kinds of questions, why romances are popular and how the individual (and therefore "free") reader reads (and resists) these texts. However, when we attempt to situate women readers and popular literatures in a particular context such as our own, paying more attention to the specificities which govern and shape them, it is no longer possible to work with Reception **studies'** notions of the "free", individual reader and of the "popularity" of a certain kind of literature. Both the **images-of-women mode** of criticism as well as the reception studies mode works with the notion of the individual reader and of a certain reality as pre-existing cultural representations. We need to reconstitute our object of study in ways that

allow for the contextualization of readers, both institutionally and historically.

### **"Idazhiyal": An Approach to the Tamil Journal**

Since this dissertation attempts to signal the creation of "women readers" and "non-Brahmin readers" of Tamil journals within specific historical and institutional spaces, it becomes necessary to examine some of the most common critical approaches to the popular Tamil journal. Scholarship in Tamil regarding the journal, given its location, has been concerned with questions quite different from those posed by the Cultural Studies critics whose work we examined above. While gender, reception and readership are frequently used analytical categories in Cultural Studies, Tamil scholarship has been largely concerned with retrieving and tracing the history of the Tamil journal.

A growing realization that a monolithic history of the "Indian" journal would lack both depth as well as sensitivity to the regional scene has been largely responsible for the emerging sub-discipline of "Idazhiyal" or Research on the Tamil journal within Tamil literary criticism.<sup>8</sup> **"Idazhiyal"** scholars like A.M **Samy** have pointed out that most histories of the "Indian" journal either marginalize (sometimes even completely fail to mention) the Tamil journal or grossly misrepresent facts surrounding its rise and growth (1992: 20-23). Samy attributes this partly to the ignorance of Bengali historians who were among the first to write histories of the Indian journal and partly to the apathy of Tamil scholars who unthinkingly accepted histories written years

ago and hints at an anti-Tamil bias on the part of most scholars writing on the subject.

According to "Idazhiyal" scholars, despite the fact that Metcalfe's repeal of the press laws which resulted in official sanction to the practice of Indians owning printing presses came into effect only after 1835, a few journals both in Tamil as well as in other vernaculars, notably Bengali, printed and published locally by Indians, had begun to make their appearance even earlier. In Bengal, Madras and Bombay, Indians had owned and operated presses even before 1835. According to A.M Samy, way back in 1812 a person called Gnanaprakasan was running a press in Madras; Tiruvengadam owned a press in Kancheepuram in 1819; in 1816, Gangadhar Bhattacharya first published the Bengal Gazette and the still extant Gujarati journal Bombay Samachar appeared as early as 1822. Samy clearly refutes Murdoch's documentation of Tamil Magazine which appeared in 1831 as the first Tamil journal, arguing that the credit for being the first goes to the monthly Masadinasaritai which appeared as early as 1812. While there is no archival evidence for Samy's claim regarding the existence of this journal, it certainly appears to be an informed guess. He points out that there is evidence to suggest that one "Masadinasarithai" press, had printed the Tirukurral in 1812. Its title page mentions that Malayapillai Kumaran Gyanaprakasan is the printer and that the press was that of Masadinasarithai. Samy argues that a journal called Masadinasarithai must have existed at the same time that the Tirukurral was printed because the title page of the latter specifically refers to Masadinasaritlai's press in the possessive. Also, he argues, it was common

practice in those days (as also in some cases, in the present) for the names of journal as well as of that of the press which printed it to be one and the same. This journal, (**Samy** opines that this was primarily a news magazine), if it indeed existed, was **most** likely printed, published as well as edited by Gnanapra-**kasan**. Contradicting the claims of Samy, another "idazhiyal" scholar, **S.Innasi**, records Gangadhar **Bhattacharya's** Bengal Ga-**zette**, which appeared in 1816, as being the first journal started by an Indian and goes on to provide us with a very different trajectory altogether for the Tamil journal.

Disappointingly, "idazhiyal" studies remain mired in the cataloging approach. As we saw above, the cataloging of journals (or preparing a "pattiyal" as it is known in Tamil) is inevitably dogged by debates and controversies over which particular journal should be given the status of the earliest. Often, "idazhiyal" scholars are hampered in their efforts by inadequate archival material. At best, these catalogs offer us brief and pithy descriptions about each journal though with little attempt at providing us either with a sense of its particular context or with an analytical framework for reading it. Despite an implicit claim to "objectivity", these catalogs are inevitably limited given the ways in which they categorize journals. Innasi, for instance, divides journals into literary, social, religious and multi-lingual journals. A lot of journals which might not fit into these narrow categories would not be considered. This kind of cataloging as well as categorizing is indistinguishable from the reports on Indian journals published by the government or other official bodies such as the Press Trust of India. These



reports provide information regarding the periodicity, language and the place of the journal's publication, the year of its first appearance and details regarding its circulation. Some reports such as the annual report from the Registrar of Newspapers for India published by the Ministry of **Information** and Broadcasting, Government of India, employ only two categories to describe journals, "**news-interest** publications" and "non-news interest publications".<sup>11</sup>

### **Print-Technology and its Reception in South India**

Any history of the Tamil journal will inevitably have to begin by documenting the introduction of the printing press in India and its quick spread into South India.<sup>12</sup> Printing technology was first introduced into India by Christian evangelists from **Portugal**. Portuguese authorities dispatched a printing press to Abyssinia via Goa. The press never reached its destination however and the first printing press in India was established at Goa in 1556 by these Portuguese missionaries. This was both because of the growing awareness among the Fathers in Goa about the necessity of printing Christian literature in Indian languages and because of the Emperor of Abyssinia's unexpected loss of interest in the Portuguese missionaries. In 1577, acting on the request of the Christian fathers at **Ambalakkadu**, a village 20 miles south of Trichur in Kerala, the missionaries who had landed at Goa prepared part of the type for what was to be both the earliest example of printing in an Indian vernacular as well as the earliest example of printing in an Indian language in India. This was a book in Malabar Tamil titled **Tambiran Vanakkam**, a

sixteen page translation by Father Henriques and Father Manoel de Sao Pedro of Father Marcos Jorge's Doctrina Christina, printed at **Quilon** in 1578 (Kesavan: 1985). The Doctrina Christina also known as the Cartilha, which had earlier been printed in Lisbon in 1554, had transliterated Tamil into Roman characters and script and had preserved some of the Tamil colloquialisms of the sixteenth century. Tambiran Vanakkam was reprinted at Cochin in 1579. Printing technology therefore spread rapidly in the South with the first ever printed book in India being in Tamil. Within a century of the printing of Gutenberg's Bible in Germany then, efforts were on to fashion different types for Indian languages.

Tamil printing however went into a lull after 1612 and given the absence of paper mills and the difficulty of getting paper the dominant practice was to write on palm leaves. After the Portuguese initiative in printing, Danish Protestants who set up a mission at Tranquebar in order to counter the effects of the Portuguese Catholics, began to take the lead. In 1713, the Danish missionaries led by Bartholomew Ziegenbalg succeeded in getting a press for Tranquebar from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K) in London. With the help of the German Johann Gottlieb **Adler from** Halle, the first printing work in Tamil was started in Tranquebar the same year. Ziegenbalg printed his Catechism, a Tamil translation of the first part of the New Testament and devotional songs using the types made at Halle. Dissatisfied with these types, Ziegenbalg and his associates got smaller type faces engraved anew in Tranquebar, set up both a type-foundry and, later, a paper mill at Porayar close by. Religious books mostly connected with Christianity with

a few stray titles on the Vedas and Islam formed the bulk of the output of the Tranquebar press which functioned for over a hundred years. **Ziegenbalg's** book on Tamil grammar **Grammatica Damulica** printed at Halle in 1716 was an important sources for European scholars of Tamil. With him begins the Germanic tradition in Indological and Tamil scholarship.

Printing came to Madras in the mid-eighteenth century when a printing press was taken out of the French settlement in Pondicherry as booty by Sir Eyre Coote after the siege of 1761. Placed under the care of the S.P.C.K missionaries headed by Johann Philippe Fabricus in Vepery, a suburb of Madras, this came to be known as the East India Company's Press. The nineteenth century was marked by the emergence of many presses in Madras such as the Madras School Book Society Press (1820) which catered to the needs of the students at the Missionary schools and the Madras Male Asylum Press, the Government Press (1831) which printed various government and military orders. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1815), The Madras Religious Tract Society (1818), the Tinnevely Tract Society (1820), the Jaffna Tract Society (1823) and similar other societies brought out hundreds of Christian tracts in **Tamil**.<sup>13</sup>

John Murdoch's Catalogue of the Printed Book in Tamil (1865) is the earliest source of information on Tamil printing and publishing. This was followed by his Catalogue of the Christian Vernacular Literature of India (1870). Educated at Glasgow and the continent, Murdoch came to Madras as an agent of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland and joined the Christian Vernacular Education Society (known today as the Christian

Literary Society) on its formation in 1858. He was responsible for the establishment of a Religious Tract Society which was to produce Christian literature in Srilanka, then called Ceylon. He was also the motivating force behind the Christian Vernacular Education Society and published school books, pamphlets, tracts and books for general reading both in Tamil as well as in other regional languages. Despite certain glaring faults such as the omission of the year of publication and other misrepresentations arising from an improper knowledge of Tamil, the Murdoch Catalogues remain an invaluable source of information on books and journals published in the Tamil country, recording as they do hundreds of titles, mostly connected with Christian literature from Tranquebar's early printing up to 1865. Most "idazhiyal" studies including those by A.M Samy mention Murdoch's Catalogues as the first attempt to write a history of the Tamil journal. Obviously, the cataloging approach is in itself partly Murdoch's legacy.

As A.R Venkatachalapathy points out, though the first Tamil book was printed way back in 1578, it was not until the socio-economic transformation effected by colonialism and the loosening of administrative restrictions on Indians owning printing presses, that books began to be produced in large numbers (1994: 274). In 1835, the Governor General Charles Metcalfe withdrew the rigid press laws imposed by the British government, thus opening the floodgates of printing in India (Kesavan: 1985, 68). But Venkatachalapathy argues **that even** in the latter part of the nineteenth century, printed books existed side by side with palm leaf manuscripts giving rise to the simultaneous existence

of very different reading practices and orthographies (1994: 274-277). While the older generation was much **more** comfortable with the palm leaf manuscript and with the associated reading practices which emphasized memory and learning by rote, the younger generation had begun to take the printed book for granted. The availability of a greater range and a larger number of texts with the advent of print resulted in the gradual erosion of the authority of traditional scholars. With the printed book came the concept of private reading and the fixing of the text in terms of orthography.

Apart from Christian literature, the earliest printed material which began to appear in Tamil in the mid-nineteenth century, was mostly in the form of newspapers and magazines. Prominent among these were Dina Varthamani a weekly published from Madras which first appeared in 1855 and Sudesamitran which appeared in 1900. In the face of financial problems, the latter was sold to the Indian National Congress in 1973. It continued to appear off and on till March 31, 1981 when the last issue was published. In Sudesamitran, we have one of the earliest examples of what was soon to become a vibrant pro-nationalist Tamil journalism.

The development of the Tamil journal is closely linked to the growth of nationalism. As A.M **Samy** has pointed out, to the Tamil journal goes the credit of fashioning a simple, **"people's"** Tamil (1992: 284). The fashioning of an easy vernacular prose which would have a wider reach especially among the middle-classes was in itself a nationalist project. The high-flown Tamil of ancient Tamil literatures were accessible only to the

scholar. With the introduction of print and the appearance of the journal in Tamil, we have a new type of reader, a reader who was not required to be a scholar (which often necessarily meant a **Brahmin** male). The journal then democratized reading practices to a large extent. Despite the fact that the upper-castes continued to maintain their hold on literacy, the fashioning of a new type of journal Tamil meant that the journal became comprehensible to a wider audience. Given that newspapers often were, and, in fact, still are, read out to large groups of people by one person, they did not necessarily require a literate audience. This of course was not the case with the Tamil novel which made its appearance a few years after the first journals. The novel was far more suitable for private reading.

The Tamil journal of the early and mid-twentieth century was differentiated in terms of caste **affiliations**. It is crucial then to locate the journal within its specific caste matrix. As we shall see in the course of this dissertation, not only did each journal of this particular period vary widely in terms of its overt political agenda, it also differed in terms of style. What we have essentially are two kinds of journals, those which emerged out of the upper-caste nationalist press and those which were produced by the counter-nationalist Dravidian/non-Brahmin press. We begin however with the present, with the English language **Femina** and **Woman's Era**, on the one hand, and the Tamil **Manqai** and **Manqavar Malar** on the other, all four of them magazines of a very different kind from the early twentieth century Tamil journals.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Even within traditional literary criticism, attempts have been made at constituting a new object of enquiry in place of the literary text. Reader-response criticism represents one such attempt. Critics such as Wolfgang **Iser** and Stanley Fish claimed to have effected a shift in the status of the reader from passive, powerless consumer of the text to a dynamic figure who constructs and fashions the text's meaning. While so far reading had been seen as absorbing and attempting to understand the meaning of the text or as experiencing the effects intended by it, reader response critics problematized the interaction between reader and text, arguing that it was important to focus on how the reader chooses to interpret the text. These critics argue that the reader is always engaged in constructing certain hypotheses about the text's meaning, making implicit connections and filling in on its **indeterminacies**. No text, they argue, is complete without the reader. Reading is not a straightforward linear movement; the reader's '**pre-understandings**' generate a frame of reference within which s/he interprets what comes next, but what comes next may retrospectively transform his/her original understanding. Reader-response criticism created a climate within English Studies for questions such as what the reader likes to read and what constitutes a popular text and why.

Feminist critics such as Patrocinio P. Schweickart and Elizabeth A. Flynn have attempted to engage with Reader-response criticism (1986). Schweickart points out that mainstream reader-response criticism is largely preoccupied with two questions: first, does the text control the reader or vice versa? and, second, what constitutes the objective reality of the text? The reader, she points out, can either submit to the power of the text or take control of the reading experience. Schweickart argues that the feminist reader should read the text as it was not intended to be read, with a constant awareness of its androcentricity.

The "reader" in reader-response criticism remains a depoliticized figure existing solely in relation to the text. Her social situatedness, her location in class and race, her relation to other texts and the ways in which she is trained to read these, all of which determine her formation as a subject remain invisible. Reader-response criticism draws upon the legacy of Romanticism in suggesting that reading is by and large a private and socially unsituated act. Even as reader response critics recognise the existence of a "community of **readers**" who draw upon similar interpretative strategies, this community is not read as socially and historically located. While the role of **inter-textuality** and learnt interpretative codes in the reading process are emphasized, the ideal reader is still understood within a largely liberal framework as one who is "**open-minded**" and "apolitical". Even as s/he is bound by the limitations of the interpretative codes s/he has been trained in, these codes, for

Reader-response theory, are purely literary. Her social and historical location are not perceived as crucial **elements** in the shaping of her reading position.

<sup>2</sup>See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," **Cultural Studies**. ed. Lawrence Grossberg et al (New York: **Routledge**, 1992) for a **more** elaborate laying out of the intellectual and political trajectory of Cultural Studies. Also, see bibliography for references to the work of Hall and Raymond Williams.

<sup>3</sup>See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans., **John Cumming**, (New York: Continuum Books, 1969).

<sup>4</sup>See Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (London: Dent, 1929, originally written in 1790); **Shulamith Firestone**, The Dialectic of Sex (London: Paladin, 1972), **Simone de Beauvoir**, The Second Sex, trans., H.M. Parshley. New York: Bantam, 1952) and **Germaine Greer**, The Female Eunuch (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971) for an articulation of this position.

<sup>5</sup>**Reader-response** critic Schweickart also uses **Chodorow's** work to examine what she calls a feminist mode of reading that is "centred on a female paradigm (1996: 52). She refers to Adrienne Rich's essay "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson" to show that in feminist readings of women's texts, the dialectic of control which shapes mainstream readings of texts gives way to a dialectic of communication between text and reader. According to Schweickart, Rich mediates between 'the context of writing and the context of **reading**' (1984: 4). Her use of the personal voice reminds us that her interpretation is informed by her own subjective perspective. She reaches out to Dickinson in an attempt to establish her affinity with another woman poet. Schweickart argues that Nancy Chodorow offers an apt psychoanalytic explanation for women's desire to seek an affinity with others. According to Chodorow, while 'men define themselves through individuation and separation from others, women have more flexible ego boundaries and define and experience themselves in terms of their affiliations and relationships with **others**' (1986: 54-55). The problem with **Schweickart's** arguments is that she essentializes and universalizes "male" and "**female**" readings of texts without recognizing that reading positions are socially constructed, not **natural**.

<sup>6</sup>**Radway's** questionnaires solicit information about the participant's age, her financial and educational background, **marital** status, reading history and religious preference, the time she spends on reading, where she buys romance novels, whether she is employed, how many children she has and so on.

<sup>7</sup>**Echoing** this position, Leslie Rabine suggests in an essay titled "Romance in the Age of Electronics: Harlequin Enterprises", feminist Criticism and Social Change, ed. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (New York: Methuen, 1985), that romance fiction, like other forms of mass culture, has displayed an uncanny **abili-**



ty to "ingest... social, **economic** or cultural historic change in women's lives" (1985: 252). This, he argues, is obvious from the way the Harlequin series is selling the concept of the working heroine with a glamorous job. Rabine also describes the changes in the way the romance industry functions as one reason for the dramatic increase in the popularity of Harlequin romances in the last decade.

<sup>8</sup>See the work of A.M Samy, S.Innasi and Somaley (check bibliography for references). The word "idazh" is the Tamil version of the sanskritized "patrikai". When printing technology had just come to **Tamilnadu**, all printed matter (wedding invitations, news papers, literary magazines etc.) were referred to as "**patram**" or "patrikai". It was only much later that the word "patrikai" took on the specific meaning of a news magazine or "seydi **tal**". Non-news magazines and journals were referred to either as "**masikai**" (which was an adaptation from the English "magazine" and also meant a periodical that came out every month) or as "**sanjigai**". In current usage, the word "patrikai" refers both to newspapers as well as magazines while the word "seydi tal" is used specifically with reference to newspapers. In this dissertation, I have used the word "journal" as a way of referring both to the newspaper as well as to the magazine. This is necessitated by the fact that often both these forms share the same histories and reflect the same ideological moment.

<sup>9</sup>In fact, as Samy himself admits, the earliest Tamil journals for which we actually have archival evidence are Udayatarakai which appeared in 1841 and Narbodakam which first appeared in 1845. Copies of both these journals may be found at the Maraimalai Adigal library in Madras.

<sup>10</sup>The practice at that time was for the same person to take on the roles of printer, publisher and editor.

<sup>11</sup>**English** language journals are typically classified as "General interest newspapers" and "Periodicals". According to the UNESCO definition commonly followed by official reports in India, "General Interest Newspapers" is defined as any publication put on sale to the general public, which serves as an initial source or written news of current events in the field of public affairs, politics, government, etc. The term, '**initial** source'<sup>1</sup> is used so as to exclude periodicals such as weekly news magazines. UNESCO defines "**periodical**" other than a general interest newspaper as a publication which appears under the same title at regular intervals but more than once a year and whose contents range from information of a general nature to trade, technical and professional subjects. This definition covers all periodicals published weekly or at longer intervals except annuals. Similarly, the Government of India classifies papers into A and B categories. The A category is comparable to the "General Interest Newspaper" while category B is similar to the UNESCO's "**Periodical**".

<sup>12</sup> For detailed accounts of the origin and development of printing in India, see B.S Kesavan, History of Printing and Publishing in India; A Story of Cultural Re-awakening, Vol. I (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1985) and A.M Samy's book in Tamil which also bears the English title 19th Century Tamil Journals (Madras: Navamani, 1992) .

<sup>13</sup>For a detailed documentation of Christian journals in Tamil see A.M Samy's Tamil book with the English title Christian Journals in Tamil: A Study (Madras: Navamani Pathipagam, 1996) .

### Chapter Three

#### **Gender and the Politics of Modernity: The New Indian Woman in Four Contemporary Women's Magazines**

Politically and methodologically, this assertive participation of women in right wing campaigns, pulled many of our assumptions into a state of crisis for we have always seen women as victims of violence rather than its perpetrators and we have always perceived their public, political activity and interest as a positive, liberating force.<sup>1</sup>

The normativity of the upper-caste, middle-class Hindu woman is something we take for granted today.<sup>2</sup> However, it is my contention that the formation of a global middle-class in the post-liberalization 90s has subtly disturbed this normativity and set in place a new, although a related one. Dominating the imaginary of the 90s is the figure of the globalized, cosmopolitan Indian, a subject distanced from overtly "communal" markings, from the markings of caste, religion, region and language. While the logic of official secularism in post-independence India had always pushed for such a distancing, the nineties have certainly intensified this process. Within the altered imaginary of a post-liberalization India, the upper-caste Hindu woman and the "educated yet traditional" middle-class woman have come to be replaced by a figure who, for the sake of brevity, I will refer to as the "new woman". The new woman exists in a depoliticized magic space, in a space which, for the lack of a better word, we might call modernity. While she is apparently unmarked in terms of caste, religion and language, a complex and elaborate semiotic

system operates to produce her as essentially "Indian" and, in many ways, as the normative new Indian.

Despite the emergence of the "new woman" however, other normative figures which are constructed as representing Indian-ness continue to form part of our national imaginary. In the nineties, we see not only the formation and the gradual **norming** of the '**new woman**'<sup>1</sup>, we also see the reinforcing of the normativity of the communally marked upper-caste Hindu woman. This reinforcing takes place in many different ways. One is through an overt or subtle public interpellation and constitution of a Hindu female subject. Notions of "middle-class-ness", of family, and community are often invoked during this process. This chapter attempts to examine the constitution of these two different, yet, in many ways, related and simultaneous subjectivities in some contemporary women's magazines.

### **Manqai and Manqavar Malar; The Hindu Subject**

Monthlies published from Chennai, both Manqai (which means "Woman") and Manaavar Malar (which would translate roughly as "A Special Magazine for women") first appeared in 1975. Edited by Vishwanathan Reddy, Manqai has a circulation of 49,437 (Source: National Readership Survey, 1995). Manqavar Malar is edited by Manjula **Ramesh** and has a circulation of 49,437 (Source: National Readership Survey, 1995).

The two magazines employ the same generic mix which one has come to associate with women's magazines, carrying fiction (both the short story as well as serialized fiction) and articles on cooking and beauty care. However, what strikes us as different

about Mangai and Mangayar Malar are certain articles and columns which invoke the authority of upper-caste Hindu male religious leaders. Mangai. for instance, regularly runs an advice column by Jayendra Saraswathi of the Kancheepuram Mutt. Jayendra answers reader's questions which, as we shall see, range from the realm of the spiritual and the sacred to that of the profane from within a highly ritualistic upper-caste Hinduism. Thus, Malarkodi of Thiruvallur writes to Mangai's column "Shri Jayendirar Badilgal" ("Shri Jayendra's Answers") asking:

Can one adorn the deity of the Kalikaambal temple in Chennai with a garland of lemons? Which day of the week would be the most suitable?  
(Mangai July 1993: 11)

And Jayendra Saraswathi replies:

As a general rule, Tuesdays and Fridays are good for any form of Kali. It is customary to garland Durgai amman with lemons.  
(Mangai July 1993: 11)

Mythili Vijayaraghavan of Madras asks:

Is it proper to fast an entire day for any kind of Viratam? Or is it enough to fast till 12 noon?  
(Mangai July 1993: 11)

Jayendra is ready with his answer:

It is auspicious to fast the whole day on ekadasi. On auspicious days like pradosham you can fast until the completion of the puja and then eat.  
(Mangai July 1993: 11)

Rama of Tanjavur has an interesting question:

Our backyard is really spacious. I wish to buy and raise some rabbits. May I humbly request the guru to direct me?

(Mangai July 1993: 11)

Jayendra however does not quite approve. His reply is rather cryptic:

One must not raise rabbits at home.

(Mangai July 199: 11)

It is significant that the column should cover such a range of concerns. That Jayendra Saraswathi, whom the Brahmins consider an incarnation of God, should address himself to queries on rabbits says something about the wide reach of upper-caste Hindu religious authority and the consequent vesting of every aspect of life with a religious, ritual **significance**. The voice of the upper-caste Hindu religious icon is made available to us through the relatively modern technologies of print and photography. The advice column discussed above, for instance, is accompanied by the photograph of a smiling Jayendra Saraswathi (see Appendix III, 1). Pictures of Hindu deities often make it to the cover page of Mangayar Malar, an obvious reminder that of the magazine's focus and its intended audience (Appendix III, 2 a). Photographs are also employed by an article in one particular issue of Mangayar Malar which gives detailed instructions on how to perform "Annakashtami **Viratam**" and describes the benefits ensuing from it (May 1993: 116). The writer begins by declaring

that it is the wish of Shri Ganapathi Sachidananda Swamigal that a puja accompanied by a "viratam" (fast) be popularised. According to Shri Ganapathi Sachidananda Swamigal, the couples who performed this puja to Anakadevi, an incarnation of goddess **Lakshmi**, would be blessed with great good fortune. A photograph of the **puja samaqri** (coconuts, betel leaves, flowers and so on) arranged around the idol of Anakadevi is supposed to aid us in performing this puja (see Appendix III, 2 b).

It would be an interesting exercise to reflect on why it is that **magazines** meant for women should focus so intensely on a ritualistic Hinduism. Also, what does the popularity of such **magazines** signify in the context of a state which, as we shall discuss in Chapter Five, has historically asserted a non-Brahmin, anti-Hindu rhetoric? One might argue that within the framework of nationalist thought, upper caste Hindu women have always been seen as the bearers of culture and tradition, as gatekeepers of what Partha Chatterjee has referred to as the "inner domain of cultural sovereignty" (1993: 6). However, **Manqai** and **Manaavar Malar** also signal a Hindutva that has quietly but firmly begun to take root in **Tamilnadu**, a Hindutva which, increasingly, is beginning to gather women of all castes as well as non-Brahmins into its fold.

Critics such as **M.S.S** Pandian, V.Geetha, T.V Jayanthi, **S.V Rajadurai** and C.J Fuller have described the resurgence of Brahmin hegemony and Hindu fundamentalism in contemporary Tamilnadu.<sup>3</sup> C.J Fuller traces the striking change in the politics of religion with a reversal of the early Dravidian movement's hostility towards Brahminical, Sanskritic Hinduism to the coming to power

of the AIADMK under the leadership of Jayalalitha in June 1991 (1996). He points out that a **"Chief minister's Temple Renovation and Maintenance Fund"** was set up not long after Jayalalitha came to power. Jayalalitha also announced that a **"Tamilnadu Institute of Vedic Sciences"** would be set up to train temple priests in the vedas and to undertake translations of Sanskrit texts into Tamil. When this was criticized by the DMK, she argued that seats would be reserved in this institute for SCs and STs and that this would open up temple priesthood to the lower castes and that translations from Sanskrit into Tamil would benefit ordinary Tamils. Fuller points out that the institute, the setting up of which clearly negated the **anti-sanskrit** ideology of the early Dravidian movement, was presented as though it were a "logical continuation" of it (1996: 19). A resurgence of Sanskritic learning during this period is also obvious from the establishment of the Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi **Visvamala** Vidyalaya and International Library as well as the Indian Institute of Indology.

The Hindu Munnani (The Hindu Front) has been the principal organization articulating a Hindu revivalism in Tamilnadu. Hostile to both Muslims as well as Christians, the Munnani organized the first ever Vinayaka Chaturthi procession in Madras on September 2, 1990. This was obviously an imitation of the Maharashtrian version of the festival. In Madras, the celebration provoked Hindu-Muslim hostilities on more than one occasion. Both Pandian and Fuller point out that the 1992 Vinayaka Chaturthi procession was marked by pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim slogans. Slogans calling for support for the proposed building of the Ram temple at Ayodhya and slogans denigrating Pakistan and Babri



Masjid were heard (Pandian "Death in a City of Fools", 1992; Fuller 1996). The Hindu Munnani also issued statements in support of Jayalalitha's temple policy. Allied with the BJP, the Munnani has attracted the support of many Brahmin organizations in **Tamilnadu**.

Pandian has argued elsewhere that the new strategy for Brahminism in Tamilnadu to regain the power it lost with the anti-Brahmin rhetoric of the Dravidian movement has been the invoking of a "pan-Hindu identity, independent of caste distinctions" ("From Exclusion to Inclusion" 1990: 1938). Hindu communal organizations such as the Hindu Munnani, the VHP, Jan Kalyan, Jan Jagran, Tamilnadu Hindu Temple Protection Committee, and the Asthiga Samaj work by emphasizing a collective Hindu identity and underplaying caste divisions. According to Pandian, the conflict is no longer between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins, but between the Hindus (under Brahmin leadership) and the other religious minorities.

How, one might ask, is the spectre of Hindutva connected to the advice columns run by Hindu religious leaders in women's magazines which claim no allegiance to the BJP-VHP-RSS combine? Jayendra Saraswathi, moreover, does not, in any way, conform to our notions of the rabid Hindu fundamentalist. More importantly, given that the intended readers of **Manqai** and Manaayar Malar are "apolitical", **"ordinary"**, middle-class women whose activities are ideally understood to be restricted to the private sphere of the **home**, it seems a little far-fetched to visualize them as active political subjects. However, as recent scholarship has demonstrated to us, the Hindu right is marked by the increasing

presence and participation of women. Much of this scholarship, in fact, is concerned with theorizing the agency of women in the Hindu right.<sup>4</sup> As Tanika Sarkar has argued, women's participation in the politics of Hindutva began with the formation of the Rashtrasevika Samiti, the women's wing of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) in 1936. Since then, Sarkar tells us, the Samiti has **kept** a low public profile, working largely through informal networks, befriending the **Sevika's** family and advising her to always defer to the decisions of the family. The Samiti therefore has a long-term goal and works through an intensive ideological mobilization of middle-class women. Mass mobilization is not the issue and middle-class women form the **Samiti's** most important constituency. Sarkar argues that the Sevika often establishes an informal forum for the discussion of religious themes woven into a larger political fabric (1995: 201). Tanika Sarkar has argued that religion gives women "access to a world of meanings enclosed in epics, allegories or other forms of religious texts that she can interpret and dwell on and thereby transcend her own immediate and closed world of limited experience" (1995: 201-202). This might well be part of the reason why **Manqai** and Mangavar Malar choose to operate as modern-day religious texts, guiding readers on how to ritually organize their lives and displacing an upper-caste woman's ritualistic practices (normally carried out in the private sphere) on to a shared and visible public sphere, constituted in this case by the print **media**.<sup>5</sup> In interpellating its readers as Hindu women, in making certain upper-caste religious practices normative for all Hindus,

Mangai and Mangayar Malar are clearly connected to a process of molecular mobilization, a mobilization of middle-class women (Brahmin and non-Brahmin) as Hindu women.

### **woman's Era; The Middle-Class Woman**

Edited by Vishwa Nath and published by Delhi Press Patra Prakashan, Woman's Era has a total readership of eight lakhs twenty six thousand, out of which three lakhs twenty five thousand are men (National Readership Survey, 1995).<sup>6</sup> Most of its readers belong to the age group 25-34. The Patra Prakashan, which has cornered the women's magazine market in the country, publishes a chain of magazines in Hindi and English. Among its popular Hindi magazines for women are Saritha and Grihashobha. Advertisements claim that Woman's Era is India's largest selling woman's magazine in English and that it is the magazine that "wise women trust and admire". The publisher's blurb describes it as a magazine that "carries women-oriented fiction, articles of general interest as well as on family affairs, exotic food recipes, latest trends in fashion and films". Woman's Era is produced as a **"serious"**, "clean", "practical" **magazine** which draws upon "experience" and **"commonsense"** to advise "ordinary" middle-class women who are looking for ways to cope with "typical women's problems", in-laws, troublesome guests, a husband with a roving eye, and so on. A fine slide occurs between **"women's"** interests and the welfare of the family, and what gets constructed as the **"natural"** concerns, the **"problems"** of all Indian women are, typically, cooking and

housekeeping, child care, marital harmony, maintaining a good relationship with one's in-laws and so on.

One reason for the magazine's popularity appears to be its successful rendering of a commonsensical understanding of what constitutes a middle-class woman's problems, the "reality" of their lives. Working from within the limits set by this common-sense, it seeks to advise readers on how best to "adjust" to these "realities". As we shall see in Chapter Four, the notion of middle-class-ness which Woman's Era so successfully deploys is a legacy of the Social Reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Woman's Era naturalizes marriage as part of a good, "Indian" tradition and constructs it as the basis of a middle-class Indian woman's existence:

Marriage may be termed old-fashioned by the feminists, but it is the basis of a stable social life...Some people influenced by Western ideology would claim that marriage is not absolutely essential. Feminists and several women's groups also claim that there is no need for people to get married and to lead settled lives. In America and several European countries, many couples do not get married legally and with a wedding ceremony, but just stay together in a live-in relationship... These relationships flourish in Western countries, but in India, such an attitude would only be looked upon as very "loose living" with no values and meaning. India is a country steeped in traditional beliefs, culture and tradition, where marriage is looked upon as the only mode of adults living together.

(Nawaz, Heera, "Why Marriage?", Woman's Era October 1 1991: 83).

Nawaz makes two claims; one, that marriage is Indian and living together is western and, two, that "feminists and several women's

groups" are anti-marriage. She thus constructs feminism as being part of a Bad Western Modernity, that goes against Indian tradition and, ultimately, works against the interests of women.

Articles and stories suggesting that romance is an expression of a transient sexuality that would naturally lead to societal and parental disapproval are commonplace in Woman's Era. In the same article quoted above, Nawaz argues:

...Since marriage is essential, if one opts for a love marriage, all the positive thinking will not work if one has made a bad selection, or, one has been tempted by plain good looks, sexuality (which is usually not long lasting) or just "love at first sight" which is usually transient and not permanent.  
(Nawaz 1991: 84)

Notions of stability and permanence are essential to the self-definition of the middle-class, a love marriage based on individual whim is obviously not quite safe. A "love marriage" is bound to be based on "temptation" and sexual attraction, and fated to be "transient", risky.

A short story titled "A Change for the Better" by Valsala Balakesari elaborates on this theme. The story revolves around the discord that threatens the inter-religious love marriage of **Suruchi**, the only daughter of a well-to-do Hindu family, and George, the eldest son of a middle-class Christian family. A counselor figure in the form of **Suruchi's** college **mate**, Meena, who is described as the "only person in those old days who had not been carried away by romantic notions and had urged Suruchi to think carefully before taking the plunge", saves the marriage by advising Suruchi to go back to

her husband (Balakesari 1991," 16) In many ways, Meena is the sane middle-class figure who teaches the rich and therefore arrogant Suruchi the worth of middle-class values. In accusing Suruchi of not really loving George when she married him, Meena implies (like Heera Nawaz above) that romantic love is "false" :

"No you did not [love George]. Because if you had loved him, the question of religion would not have risen. You were carried away by all his adulation and worship and you only wanted to prove that you were a rebel, by marrying George. It was a matter of pride and prestige to you...if you love him now, think of him only as a man and a human being, not as a Christian or a Hindu..."

(Balakesari, Valsala, "A Change for the Better", Woman's Era October 1 1991: 18).

Meena describes the agency that Suruchi shows in marrying George as a pointless desire to prove her rebelliousness. She posits a pure love that would be radically different from **Suruchi's** romantic love which Meena believes is self-centred. Love is seen as a humanizing force and the subject of pure love is understood as automatically secular, free from the mediating factors of religion and community. In **Meena's** upholding of the human being, "not the Christian or the Hindu", the story is consciously '**modern**'. In its explicit coding of George as a Christian and Suruchi as a Hindu and in its emphasis on the class difference between the two, the story offers an advance, ready-made reason for their marital problems. Suruchi is fated to misread George as a Christian, to miss his essential **humanness**. It takes **Meena's** extraordinary wisdom and insight to **point** this out to Suruchi. The story is also about the

waywardness of those like Suruchi who are not schooled into middle-class caution.

If live-in relationships and love-marriages are constructed as threats to a stable, middle-class Indian life, divorce is seen as representing the worst excesses of a Bad Western modernity. For instance, the column titled "I am a Divorcee" uses "true life" stories told to us by divorced women. In these stories, divorce and the "unhappiness" which follows in its wake is understood to be the creation of a dangerous and anti-woman feminist agency. Inviting contributions to this column, the editor writes:

Are you a divorcee... **.And** wish you'd not gone into it? Woman's Era would like to publish your story... This series, which is open to both men and women, aims at presenting before the readers the causes that lead to the breakdown of marriage and divorce, so that they can take care of their own lives and ensure a happy married life.

(Woman's Era June 2 1992: 81)

The editor clearly solicits divorce stories that express regret. Divorce is very clearly constructed as a woman's "problem" and the solution of course lies in her ability to "adjust" to her husband. In one particular divorce story, the narrator's husband resents her friendship with other men. Haunted by the pain of being neglected by his mother in childhood, he also insists that she resign her job to look after their baby. The narrator, who claims to have been a "staunch believer in women's liberation" in the past, refuses to do his bidding and her son dies owing to the carelessness of the nurse. Her husband

is furious and sues for divorce. The narrator writes:

Even today, I often think about my wrecked marriage. And I ask myself whether my pride and my beliefs were more valuable than my home and my baby. Every time I get the answer: "No!"...I sincerely hope that nobody else will ever make the horrible mistake I made.  
(Woman's Era March 2 1992: 78)

Stories like the one above, which are obviously used to illustrate a particular moral, appear more authentic because of the particular genre, the "true life" story/the personal confession, which they employ. The "I am a Divorcee" column is framed in a way that allows only for the telling of one particular kind of story, a story that maps the divorced woman's pain and loneliness, the economic ruin that invariably follows her divorce, her regret at having attempted to travel outside the comfortable confines of family and tradition, at her misplaced faith in feminism.

The flip-side companion to the "I am a Divorcee" column is a column called "How I Saved my Marriage". Asking for contributions to this particular column, the editor writes:

Does your husband (or wife) have an infuriating habit, a hot temper, miserly ways, a roving eye or a lazy disposition? But still, since he is your husband, you have learnt to cope with the situation and keep your marriage and home safe and happy. How did you manage this?  
(Woman's Era November 2 1993: 44).

Feminism, "Western ideology", "live-in relationships" and divorce are invoked and constructed in Woman's Era as the dangerous, interlinked others of both the family as well as



Indian tradition, as threats therefore to women themselves. In holding up the sanctity of marriage, family and community and in producing them as part of an overarching good Indian tradition, woman's Era would appear to share an ideological base with the Hindu right. As Tanika Sarkar has argued, "hindu patriarchy, uncontaminated by western influence, has once again emerged as the embodiment of preferred values" and women in the Hindu right are required to forget about gender rights in order to maintain the supremacy of the Hindu community (1995: 212). Woman's Era makes similar demands on women, to "adjust" to their husbands and to their family, to preserve their marriages, so that a certain harmony in the larger community is preserved. While this community is never explicitly defined as Hindu, and the magazine's intended reader never overtly interpellated as a Hindu woman (unlike in the case of the two Tamil magazines we looked at earlier), notions of "family", "marriage" and "Indianness" which Woman's Era deploys may be read as part of the larger matrix of Hindutva.

#### Femina; The Magazine for the "Up-Market Reader

The cover story by Andrea Pinto and Ivan Mendes in the August 15th, 1997 independence special issue of Femina profiles "fifty women who've made India". Along with Indira Gandhi and Jayalalitha, one finds here the names of publisher Urvashi Butalia, ecologist Vandana Shiva, lawyer Flavia Agnes and Manushi editor Madhu Kishwar, women who are, in some senses, part of a "feminist" universe that most of us in the women's movement would recognize. What, one wonders, does a commercial glossy like

Femina have in common with feminism? What one often finds troubling are the points of intersection between our own location as feminists and the "feminism" of Femina. Such a phenomenon, of a commercial women's magazine attempting to coopt feminism, is not unique to our context alone. In fact, the British critic Janice Winship, pointing to the "feminism" of many contemporary women's magazines in the United Kingdom, says:

In the absence of "the women's movement" and clear-cut arguments on any given topic, the space is opened up for feminism becoming whatever you, the individual, make of it. This is all very well, perhaps, so long as those feminisms are not reduced to so many forms of ... individualism... (1987: 150)

Winship suggests that commercial women's magazines published in the United Kingdom such as Woman's Own and Cosmopolitan "tolerate and support" some forms of feminism (1987: 21). However, they do not support the "combination of feminism and socialism" that magazines such as Spare Rib represent (1987: 21).

The question that is a sub-text in the work of critics like Winship is: 'Do we read the intersections between feminism and the commercial women's magazine as a dangerous co-option of feminism by the mainstream or as the opening up of energizing new spaces for **feminism**?' Posing the question in such a way, asking essentially whether this phenomenon is a good thing or a bad thing is not very useful. It might be more productive to ask for instance how a magazine like Femina produces the effects of feminism. What does its engagement with feminism mean for the **women's** movement? How do we respond to the fact that Femina does not take an uncompromisingly anti-feminist stance in the way that

Woman's Era does, for instance? How do we theorize the new subjectivity constituted by it?

As a magazine whose intended audience is the upper-middle class urban woman, Femina was among the first women's magazines in India to be in the genre of the "leisure and lifestyle" magazine rather than in the genre of the advice magazine. Today, we have a host of such magazines beginning with Hema Malini's New Woman (which is priced the same as Femina) and the much more expensive Verve. Woman's Era's upmarket rival, Femina, which first hit the stands in 1959, has a total readership of eight lakhs sixty thousand. The fortnightly, which is published from Bombay by Pradeep Guha and is part of the Bennett and **Coleman's** Times of India group, was edited by Vimala **Patil** until 1993. Since then, it has been edited by Sathya Saran.

Columns such as "I am a Divorcee" and "How I Saved my Marriage" clearly code Woman's Era as a magazine that is in the genre of the advice magazine, a conservative and non-modern magazine. Its support of "arranged marriages" and its critique of "love marriages" reinforces its marking as old-fashioned.<sup>7</sup> Woman's Era English is marked as **Indian**. whereas Femina's English is far more American, far more global.

It seems almost inevitable to read the identity of Femina as constituted in opposition to that of Woman's Era. Such an opposition is partly inscribed into the different ways in which the two **magazines** are marketed, and the ways in which their intended readers are constituted by the magazine industry. Till recently, Femina was marginally more expensive than Woman's Era. However, both magazines are now priced at **Rs.25**. It is not in

terms of economic status, however, that the magazine industry defines and describes readership. In fact, the middle-class base of the readers of English magazines is taken as a given. There are other bases on which the readership of magazines such as woman's Era and its rivals Femina and Savvy, are marked as different. Rebecca Pothan, Deputy Manager (Marketing) at the Madras office of Femina. claims for instance that while both Femina as well as Woman's Era essentially cater to the same "economic group", the "psycho-social" profiles of their respective readerships are very different.<sup>8</sup> The Femina reader, according to her, is a fashion-conscious urban "upper class" working woman interested in both career as well as home. The Woman's Era reader, on the other hand, is usually a "bored housewife" with "a lot of leisure time" whose life is focussed on her home and family. Femina. she argues, "sells youth" as opposed to the more preachy Woman's Era which "sells wisdom". Market analyst Mona Rai argues that Femina offered advertisers a more upmarket readership than its "shabbier looking competitor", Woman's Era. which, given its "deeply conservative editorial mix", targeted the "traditional middle class housewife (1995: 78).<sup>9</sup> Like Pothan, Rai invokes the difference in the "psycho-social" profiles of the Femina reader and the Woman's Era reader. In the language of market research then, the "young, modern, fashionable and liberated" reader of Femina (who, for the sake of brevity, I will refer to as the "new woman") emerges in opposition to her Other, the "preachy, old-fashioned, conservative" reader of Woman's Era.

**Femina's** construction of the "new woman", a woman who is always already "liberated" given her class-caste status and her

upward nobility and given the global nature of the post-liberalization new middle-class, is part market-survey lore and is understood to constitute its success story. In an effort to survive the onslaughts it faced from an immensely popular woman's Era whose circulation in 1983 had risen to one lakh copies, usurping Fentina's status as India's largest selling English women's magazine, Femina was forced to re-think its format (Rai: 1995, 78).

Woman's Era was not Femina's only competitor. The magazine also faced competition from the newly-launched **Magna** Publications' Savvy, slated as a magazine for the "up-market" reader, the "liberated" working woman. Responding to the competition it faced from both Woman's Era as well as Savvy, Femina decided "to widen its audience beyond the traditional reader" and to target the modern woman (Rai: 1995, 78). Its articles and stories began to focus on "strong-willed and career-minded women" and its cover stories took up "social issues". (Rai: 1995, 78). Such a move was not very successful and sales continued to plummet. Rai's analysis is that while Savvy appealed to readers on the upper-end of the spectrum, Woman's Era prospered because of its appeal to the lower-middle class and Femina was left "in the middle", its positioning unclear. Given Femina's desire to retain its up-market image, it could not share the same ideological space as Woman's Era. Once again, Femina was faced with the task of changing its format so as to increase readership. Implicit in this task was the project of constituting the reader anew.

As Rai tells the story, Pradeep Guha, the publisher of femina consulted a 1989 study on working women by the Market Research agency "Pathfinders" which showed that the "target reader's" interest showed a clear shift away from family and home to personal care. It was felt that the Woman's Era formula would just not work with this "target reader". The management decided to re-orient the magazine towards the "working" woman. At the same time, however, there was a deliberate attempt to be "non-preachy" and "reader-interactive".<sup>10</sup> In the words of editor Sathya Saran, the new Femina which hit the stands in March 1992 was "chatty", instead of being "pedantic" (Rai, 1995: 79). Speaking of the new **Femina**, Pothan tells us:

Unlike **Savvy**, which is aggressively feminist, Femina takes a balanced position, promoting feminism only in a mild fashion and amongst a host of other things" (Personal Interview, August 1996).

Implicit in its 1992 re-launch strategies is the notion of a "new" reader, the highly visible woman of the new Indian economic order who was intended to serve, in the words of C.G Varghese, Chief Manager of Femina, as an "aspirational" model for the wider "non-working" audience of women (Rai, 1995: 79). Implicit also are notions of what constitutes work (i.e work that is performed in the public sphere), what constitutes "liberation", and, consequently, what constitutes the normative subject of feminism. There is a marked self-consciousness in **Femina's** projection of the "new woman", a self-consciousness that is particularly apparent in its use of visuals. Thus, model Meghna Reddy is literally presented to us as the "new woman" (Appendix III, 3 a). Such a

self-consciousness is far more obvious in the naming of Hema's Malini's women's magazine as New Woman (Appendix III, 3 b).

The fashion pages of Femina are perhaps the best visual indicators of Femina's change of format and once again, a comparison with Woman's Era seems necessary. The Woman's Era model is typically dressed in a sari or in a salwar kameez (an outfit that is perceived as modern and fashionable, yet non-western), wears her hair long, often in a plait and sports an elaborate bindi or, sometimes, even sindoor (Appendix III, 4 a and 4 b). Only rarely does a Woman's Era model wear casual western clothes, though even when she does, jeans is as far as she will go (Appendix III, Figure 5). She is marked as **"upper caste"**, (mostly) North Indian, and Hindu. However, ethnic chic is deployed as a sign of Indianness and used as a sign of the **neo-nationalist** modern in the fashion pages of Femina (Appendix III, 6 a, 6 b and 6 c). While the Femina woman sports "ethnic" Indian clothes with an easy grace, this in no way compromises her ability to carry off western clothes (Appendix III, 7 a and 7 b). The Femina - **Gokul** photo feature (see Appendix III, 8 a, 8 b and 8 c) featuring Sandhya Chib (Femina Miss India Universe 96) stresses the role-playing that only a post-feminist modern woman can afford to indulge in:

When the mood demands I can be the perfect Indian beauty - classical and demure...

Practice makes perfect - and posing pretty is as easy as pie.

(Femina May 8 1996: 52-53)

The post-feminist Femina woman, secure in her modernity, negotiates her different roles as a "modern" professional and as a "traditional" home-maker with playful and confident ease.

It is also important to recall here that Femina has been organizing the Miss India beauty contest every year since 1964. In the post-Sushmita Sen and Aishwarya Rai years, the Femina - Miss India contest has become an important metaphor for Femina's post-feminist politics. In an article with the rather revealing title "Miss India: The Search for the Complete Woman", editor Vimla Patil suggests that Femina organized the Miss India contest as part of its project of empowering the Indian woman:

Femina worked to establish a new genre of superwomanhood in India, so that nothing would stop ordinary women from achieving and acquiring extraordinary success...

The Miss India pageants soon became a part of Femina's success story....An ode not only to beauty but to the complete woman...

Girls who had the looks, the intelligence, the right style and confidence realized that it was possible to dream of fame and fortune...the show has become a festival...devoted to the quest of the complete woman.

Over the years, the Miss India title has been the gateway to the glitzy razzmatazz world outside - both nationally and internationally.  
(Vimla Patil, Femina. April 23 1992: 6-8)

In Woman's Era, fashion and personal care is stitched together with the notion of economy in a way that is meant to appeal to its intended audience of lower middle-class and middle-class women. By encouraging the use of "kitchen cosmetics" such as turmeric paste and cucumber and promoting non-designer Indian and western clothes worn with accessories that are often



mass-produced and affordable, Woman's Era packages beauty care, and fashion to suit lower middle-class incomes and lifestyles. The magazine also emphasizes the work behind beauty care as in the article quoted below:

...Skin care is a bit like housework; it is tedious and repetitive, it takes time and energy and also, like housework, it only shows when you don't do it...the best beauty treatment for your skin doesn't lie in a jar, or a bottle, or a facial sauna, or even in a diet of the purest vitamins...

(Singh, Chandra "Skin Care" Woman's Era. November 1 1992: 102).<sup>11</sup>

The figure dominating the imaginary of Woman's Era is that of the educated and modern woman whose "modernity" is carefully channellised towards making her a "pleasing companion" for her husband, a skilled housekeeper, and a good mother. Even fashion is marketed as a "woman's duty towards her husband". Fashion then comes to exist in harmony with Good Indian Tradition:

Some women simply let themselves go after having children. They put on weight and become unrecognizable from the pretty women they once were.

This is something a wife must avoid if she wants to retain her husband. A man meets so many attractive, poised and intelligent women outside his home that he is likely to compare his wife with these women at some stage or the other...

Some women feel that their wifely duties cease at being a good cook and a housekeeper. No, it does not. The modern husband is much more demanding.

He wants an intelligent, beautiful and smart mate who will walk proudly by his side, take interest in his work and share his interests.

(Tanushree Podder, "The 'Other Woman' Syndrome", Woman's Era. March 1 1992: 13).

The Woman's Era woman is ideologically reminiscent of the social reform movement's middle-class woman. For Femina however, being well-groomed and well-dressed is often part of the larger liberal project of boosting the modern woman's self-confidence.

If Femina's fashion pages constitutes the magazine as the more "modern" and "bold" than Woman's Era, its position on feminism achieves the same purpose, though far more dramatically. Part of Femina's larger project of projecting an "up-market", "upper-class" image is its co-option of feminism. Such a co-option is effected in many different ways. One way is by valorizing individual women as "important" and "different". This is the strategy used in the article "Fifty Women Who've Made India" cited earlier.<sup>12</sup> Another way by which Femina achieves the co-option of feminism is by marketing it in the form of "post-feminism". Universalizing the visibility and social mobility that some upper-caste women have acquired in the context of a growing cosmopolitanism, post-feminism assumes the liberation of all women. The normative subject of post-feminism is the English-educated, urban, upper-class woman whose agency is expressed in terms of her fluency in English, through her public visibility and attire, even through her participation in the liberal discourse of "free choice" and individualism.

The July 1996 anniversary issue of Femina carries an article which indexes the "changing face of the Indian **woman**" (read, the Femina woman) and the constitution of the new (Femina) woman of the nineties. Tracing the trajectory of the working woman and

the story of "women's liberation", the writer, Sita Menon, brings us to the present moment:

Come the 90s, and you see a radical change in the woman's thinking. Her earlier passionate outbursts dimmed, she neither has the time nor the inclination for rebellion. She is head-firmly-on-shoulders practical, yet can be as delicately vulnerable as the next person. What attests to her maturity is that she isn't afraid of showing herself for what she is... Her effort is to strike a happy, workable balance between home and career.

(Sita Menon, Femina July 8 1996: 10)

Once we are informed in no uncertain terms that "single motherhood, divorces and soured relationships" were the results of a women's liberation movement strategically confined to the 70s, we are invited to meet the post-feminist "90s woman who has successfully avoided the traps of feminism even as she retains her individuality. She is an independent and liberated woman who has outgrown feminism. She has made her peace with tradition and is too practical and balanced to be a feminist. Recall Pothan's description of Femina as unlike the "aggressively feminist" Savvy.

### **Reflections on "Feminism"**

What makes Femina's success story interesting is that it is also the story of the way in which a certain brand of "feminism", or "post-feminism", if you will, is increasingly becoming hegemonic, vis a vis notions of what constitutes the "conservative" and the "old-fashioned", vis a vis also what constitutes a "pedantic" and "passe" feminism.

What then has made post-feminism a marketable commodity? I would like to suggest that the emergence of a globalized modernity and of a new economic order has been conducive both to a "superwoman" style feminism and the post-feminism analyzed above. A rapidly globalizing Indian middle-class, partly the result of the Indian government's economic policy of 'liberalization', has strengthened the coding of the upper-caste Hindu as the secular-modern self. The expansion of **the** private sector has largely favoured the upper-caste, English-speaking elite. The cosmopolitan consumer of **the** global' middle class, whom Satish Deshpande aptly terms the new 'darling of the national **imagination**', is comfortably distanced from **'anti-modern'** caste and **'communal'** discourse :

The figure of the cosmopolitan is the unexpected or the **'new'** term, one that is relatively unprecedented in Indian ideological history. Its clearest representative is perhaps the ubiquitous figure of the Non Resident Indian, the closest approximation to a modern **mythological** hero that the Indian middle classes possess. The cosmopolitan is a more inclusive term, however, and refers to all those Indians (whether resident or not) who can and do consider themselves to be citizens of the world. For obvious reasons, this tribe is restricted to the "creamy **layers**" of the urban middle and upper middle classes, and is thoroughly **'modernized'** (perhaps "globalized" would be more accurate) in its outlook. For this group, economic challenges are not confined to the Indian economy, whether these involve decisions on the income/production or the expenditure/consumption side. This group, which consists of the Indian middle class elite, may be said to have joined the global middle class.

(Deshpande 1993: 27-28)

Even though the Mandal Commission's report and the furore that followed in its wake succeeded in putting caste back on the nation's agenda, the English-speaking urban elite, belonging to the growing private sector and the "cosmopolitan" remains, in a sense, untouched by Mandal's implications, unable to acknowledge his/her own embeddedness and complicity in a casteist politics. What we have is an ideal climate of "modernity", a climate in which a highly individualistic, assertive and visible post-feminist politics can grow.

Tanika Sarkar has drawn our attention to the fact that women who are part of the Hindu right and are allied with the forces of caste oppression, are also part of the new economic order (1995). Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana have argued that there is a need to prise out the alliances between the Right and the subject of liberal humanism (1996). It is important to recognize the overlap between women in the Hindu right and women of the new economic order. Both women are part of the same social base and share a certain confidence and assertiveness bestowed on them by their class/caste status. In different ways, they emerge as speaking a powerful new feminist language. They appear to be "natural" feminists, in a sense. However, and again, in different ways, both groups of women take anti-feminist positions. While women in the Hindu right are more likely to see feminism as dangerously western and threatening the structures of family and marriage, the women of the new economic order perceive feminism as out-moded and unnecessary for they are already "liberated". Both groups of women are essentially complicitous

with structures which legitimize caste oppression.

Such a convergence of all that constitutes our present modernity ("secular" Hinduism, liberalization, an anti-Mandal discourse) with the "feminism" indexed in a magazine like Femina is troubling for many different reasons. How does the norming of the post-feminist subject in Femina reflect on the "caste-lessness" and the lack of regional specificity of most contemporary feminist discourse? How does our own cosmopolitanness affect our feminist praxis? These questions become particularly relevant to us as feminists located within English Studies, a disciplinary space that in itself seeks to norm us as "modern" subjects, subjects of liberal humanism.

To place in question the kinds of female subjectivity and agency available to us today, to disturb the normativities of the new woman and the woman of the Hindu right, necessitates a look at other subjects who have not constituted the "subjects of feminism". In the case of this particular project, this will involve a recovery of female agency as it was articulated in the first four decades of the twentieth century – with the nationalist movement and with the counter-nationalist Dravidian movement in Tamilnadu.

<sup>1</sup> Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, "Introductory Remarks," woman and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays, ed. Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995): 3.

<sup>2</sup> See, among others, Uma Chakravarti, "Whatever Happened to the Vedic dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past," Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana, "Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender," Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on south Asian History and Society, ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakraborty (Delhi: OUP, 1996) and the essays in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, eds., Woman and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> See M.S.S Pandian, "Death in a City of Fools" EPW, 27. (43 & 44) (October 24, 1991): 2352-2353; M.S.S Pandian, "From Exclusion to Inclusion: **Brahminism's** New Face in **Tamilnadu**" EPW, 24.11 (March 18, 1989): 551; V.Geetha and S.V Rajadurai, "Neo-Brahminism: An Intentional Fallacy?" EPW. 28. (3 & 4) (January 16): 2437-2440; V.Geetha and T.V Jayanthi, "Women Hindutva and the Politics of Caste in Tamilnadu," Woman and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays, ed. Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995); CJ Fuller, "Brahman Temple Priests and Hindu Revivalism in Contemporary Tamilnadu" in South Indian Studies No.1, (January-June 1996): 2-34.

<sup>4</sup> See, among others, Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana, "Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender," Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society, ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakraborty (Delhi: OUP, 1996); Tanika Sarkar, "The Woman as **Communal** Subject: Rashtrasevika Samiti and the Ram **Janmabhoomi** Movement," EPW. 26.35 (August 31, 1991): 2057-2062, and the following essays in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia ed. Woman and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995):

Amrita Basu, "Feminism Inverted: The Gendered Imagery and Real Women of Hindu Nationalism"; Tanika Sarkar, "Heroic Women, Mother Goddesses: Family and Organization in Hindutva Politics"; Sikata Banerjee, "Hindu Nationalism and the Construction of Woman: The Shiv Sena Organizes Women in Bombay"; Teesta Setalvad, "The Woman Shiv Sainik and her Sister **Swayamsevika**"; V.Geetha and TV Jayanthi, "Women, Hindutva and the Politics of Caste in Tamilnadu".

<sup>5</sup> Pointing to a related though different form of such a displacement, V.Geetha and T.V Jayanti in their article "Women Hindutva and the Politics of Caste in Tamilnadu," Woman and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays, ed. Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995) have argued that the "elaborate, patterned and culture and **caste-specific** marking of

women's lives that is now sought to be displaced and re-produced in realms beyond the household by the activities of the BJP-RSS-VHP combine" (1995: 245-246). As evidence, they describe the organizing of annual Vilaku Pooias (a lamp-worshipping ritual) during the Navarathri celebrations involving 1008 women by the VHP in Tamilnadu, under the aegis of a school network run by the Vishwa Hindu Vidya Kendra (1995: 246). The women carry lamps in a procession through a city before consecrating the lamps to Goddess Ambal iconised as a huge sacred lamp. The authors argue that the VHP has several other such spectacles involving the public participation of women in a "Hindu" ritual.

<sup>6</sup>Interestingly, this seems to be true of most "women's" magazines in the Indian context. Femina for instance has a total readership of eight lakhs sixty thousand, out of which nearly half, that is, four lakhs twenty six thousand are men (Source: National Readership Survey 1995). This is perhaps because, as compared with women, a greater percentage of men are English-educated. Also, their purchasing capacity is higher than that of women. These facts are contrary to commonsensical perceptions of certain texts as "women's" texts.

<sup>7</sup>The romantic relationship leading to "love marriage", a self-arranged marriage that follows a period of courtship, has come to be regarded as the secular/modern alternative to the family-arranged marriage, or the "arranged marriage", as it is popularly known. The arranged marriage is understood to be symptomatic of traditional patriarchal structures, in that it removes all freedom of choice and agency from the couples concerned, and women, we are told, are the worst sufferers under this system. Also, since "arranged" marriages take place only between couples who belong to the same caste and community, arranged marriages are coded as non-secular, perceived as reinforcing caste, class, regional, linguistic and religious divides. Romantic relationships leading to a "love marriage", however, are placed in binary opposition to arranged marriages, and are seen as inhabiting a secular space, a space of freedom, choice and modernity, a space, one might even say, of feminist agency. The discourse of romance and love marriage is enabled by a secular-modern disavowal of factors such as caste and community.

<sup>8</sup> Personal Interview with Rebecca Pothan at Madras in August 1996.

<sup>9</sup> See Mona Rai, "Drop Your Inhibitions", Advertising and Marketing, Volume 7, No.1 (April 15, 1995): 78-80.

<sup>10</sup> Personal Interview with Rebecca Pothan at Madras in August 1996.

<sup>11</sup>Woman's Era's also fashions a lower middle-class modernity through stories which Amita Tyagi and Patricia Uberoi aptly describe as "post marital romances" or 'romance after marriage' stories (Manushi Vol.61). These stories begin by describing the



problems a married couple face in their relationship. After the occurrence of some dramatic event or through the efforts of a mediator, the couple is happily reconciled and back to "being in love". As I have already pointed out, Woman's Era treats romantic love outside of marriage as morally suspect, as something that is not part of Good Tradition. Post-marital romance stories work by surrounding a pre-existing relationship of marriage (often family-arranged and therefore between people who belong to the same caste, class and community) with the halo of a romance, achieved towards the end of the narrative after some difficulty. The element of romance then lends a touch of modernity to the stories. However, this does not disturb the sign of Good Indianness, which, in this case, is marriage.

A call to readers (specifically, parents of young men and women) inviting them to place advertisements in its matrimonial columns as well as in those of its counterpart in Hindi, Sarita, perhaps best epitomizes the Woman's Era style Indian modernity:

Searching for brides and grooms? The traditional priest and the family barber have become out of date and a thing of the past. Matrimonial columns in Woman's Era and Sarita provide you with an opportunity to establish contacts all over the country for brides and grooms for your sons and daughters and other relatives.

Being essentially upper class magazines, Sarita and Woman's Era are widely circulated all over India among the intellectual and affluent classes...

(Woman's Era 2 June 1992: 67).

In coding the "traditional priest"<sup>1</sup> and the 'family barber' (both caste-specific occupations) as "out of date and a thing of the past", Woman's Era represents caste as non-modern. It proceeds then to replace caste with class; the message of the advertisement is that class rather than caste is the category that should concern one in arranging a marriage. As proof of its fitness for the task of a marriage broker, Woman's Era describes itself as an "upper class" magazine.

<sup>12</sup>This is also used, though in a much more dramatic fashion by Femina's other rival, Savvy which regularly features the "Savvy woman of the month". In fact, this strategy of presenting us with "superwomen" is what gives Savvy its defining identity.

## Chapter Four

### **Nationalist Magazines and the consolidation of the Upper-caste public Sphere: The Case of Chintamani, Jaganmohni and Kalki**

Most of my sisters do not recognize the importance of reading. They spend their time with novels in hand. I would not say that all novels are bad and that we should abandon novel reading altogether. But most contemporary novels are vulgar. It **is** preferable to read material which stimulates our intelligence....If my sisters want to learn about world events, they should do so through magazines. It is only because they have never so far ventured to read magazines that they have remained ignorant about important political developments. ... Magazines are as vital for women as they are for men. (Puduvai K.Arasambal, "Patirikaiyal Adaiyum Payan", Chintamani December 1924: 49)

#### **Chintamani Serving the Nation**

It is our great good fortune, declares Puduvai Arasambal, that we now have a magazine for women; we should welcome Chintamani into our homes each month like we would a child and encourage our friends to do the same (Chintamani December 1924:49-50). As a reader, Arasambal is euphoric that a Tamil woman should have started a magazine and praises the editor, Sister Balammal, for her initiative. Magazines, she argues, have the potential to politicize and educate the woman reader and, for this reason, are better than novels.

Chintamani, which first appeared in August 1924, was one among many women's magazines in Tamil such as Pandit Visalakshi Ammal's Hitakarini (1909) and Revu Thayaramma's Penn Kalvi (1912) which appeared in the early part of the twentieth century. The

emergence of these magazines at this particular historical moment, the phenomenon of the woman editor and publisher and the creation of a new constituency of women readers are partly related to the Social Reform movement which lent them a new legitimacy and partly, to a new nationalist awakening which often expressed itself as a love for Tamil as against English, the foreign Other.

In many ways, the Social Reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was at the heart of the nationalist position on the "women's question". With this movement emerged the figure of the "decent middle-class, educated yet traditional woman", a figure who conformed to the nationalist project of fashioning a modern Indian culture that was nevertheless not western. This project was aided by Social Reform's foregrounding of education and book culture as the sites of women's emancipation. Such an agenda did not radically displace Indian women from "tradition" as configured within nationalism. However, as Partha Chatterjee points out, there was initial resistance to women's education due both to the fear of proletarianization and the exposure of women to Western culture (1993). After the introduction of vernacular education and the development of an educative literature in the vernacular, reading and formal education among middle-class Indian women gained acceptance. In the context of Bengal, Chatterjee argues, formal education became a requirement for the new bhadramahila (a term signifying the respectable middle-class woman from a "good" family) once it became possible for a woman to acquire

certain bourgeois virtues and cultural refinements differed from modern education without running the risk of becoming a memsaheb.

The nationalist intelligentsia made it their task to create a modern language and literature suitable for a widening readership that would include newly educated women. As Susie Tharu points out, the colonial government too made efforts to develop vernacular literatures ("The Arrangement of an Alliance", 1991); This proceeded along three lines. Firstly, translations from English and European languages on the one hand, and from classical Indian languages on the other, were encouraged. Secondly, Indians were urged to create original literary works in indigenous languages; novels addressing women were specifically welcomed. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, a classical Indian literary tradition was invented in place of literary traditions and practices considered as affronts to middle-class respectability and morality. This last process resulted in the cultural homogenization of the Indian middle-class.

Sumanta Banerjee argues that the appeal of popular genres of nineteenth century Bengal, composed and performed mainly by women of the lower castes and classes, cut across all economic divisions in Bengali society (1989). This street culture of songs, dances, doggerel and theatre performances brought into Calcutta by immigrant Bengali villagers represented an idiom partially shared by all Bengali women. However, with the social reform movement's foregrounding of formal education and book culture as the sites of women's emancipation, popular street culture was effectively displaced from Bengali middle-

class society. Under colonial influence, the bhadralok or the Bengali middle-class, began to frown on street culture as low and obscene, as exposing women to wantonness and vulgarity, as representing their 'natural' tendency towards depravity. Educated Bengali men attempted to wean their wives and daughters away from popular culture practiced in public spaces - the street, the market place, fairs and festivals. From the late eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, both missionary and administrative literature is full of horrified descriptions of the so-called abandonment which characterized women's popular culture. Banerjee points out that influenced by Victorian interpretations of Hindu religious mythology, some of the bhadralok turned to Christianity, while almost all of them disowned those forms of popular culture that made fun of the Hindu divinities.

Vital to the self-definition of the Indian middle-class, then, was the coming into being of the educated, "cultured" middle-class woman. Banerjee points out that from the end of the nineteenth century, the "emancipated" women of the Bengali middle-class who allied themselves with educated men, replaced older forms of women's popular culture with their "cultivated" writings", especially in women's magazines. The bhadramahila was obliged to practise a certain refinement, to cultivate tastes that appealed to their husbands. However, proficiency in the new literary forms was not the only requirement for entry into the world of the bhadramahila. A woman hoping to enter this world was expected to be totally home-bound and dependent on the male head of the family.

Her literary activities were confined within the parameters of a strictly defined domestic role. In contrast to this, the economic self-reliance and a certain non-conformity to the morals of bhadralok society allowed the Vaishnavaites women of the market place a greater mobility, which predictably enough came in for a great deal of censure. As Banerjee argues, they became targets of attack because they represented a literary as well as social tradition that was threatening to the founding principles of bhadralok society. Vaishnavaites women were gradually but firmly eliminated from the secluded world of the andarmahal to which the women of rich and middle-class families were seen as belonging. The rise of a bhadralok literary culture along with a certain construction of **middle-classness** thus tied in with the notion of a segregated domestic space over which the newly emancipated bhadramahila, a woman with the leisure to read and write, seemingly reigned. The street performer, the courtesan and the devadasi who made a living outside the domestic space suddenly found themselves recast as "loose women" or as prostitutes. In occupying a space outside of the domestic, they were literally in a no-woman's land, for they were not **"emancipated"** in the sense that their middle-class sisters were, nor did they function as figures of Tradition and Culture, living as they did outside of patriarchal, familial norms.

The bhadramahila was also constructed in opposition to the figure of the Bad Modern Western woman, the memsahab. Chatterjee points out that much of the literature on women in the nineteenth century concerns the threatened westernization of Bengali women:

To ridicule the idea of a Bengali woman trying to imitate the ways of a memsaheb . . . was a sure recipe calculated to evoke raucous laughter and moral condemnation in both male and female audiences. It was, of course, a criticism of manners, of new items of clothing such as the blouse, the petticoat, and shoes . . . of the use of Western cosmetics and jewellery, of the reading of novels, of needlework (considered a useless and expensive pastime), of riding in open carriages. What made the ridicule stronger was the constant suggestion that the Westernized woman was fond of useless luxury and cared little for the well-being of the home.

(Chatterjee 1993, 122)

Chatterjee has argued with reference to Bengal that the new literature which included textbooks, periodicals as well as creative works, was shaped by the nationalist desire to make it accessible to women who were proficient only in their mother-tongue (1993: 128). The formal education of Bengali women, Chatterjee points out, became possible and acceptable only with the development of educative material in Bengali. While English education would have made her into that figure of ridicule, the memsaheb. formal education in Bengali meant that she could retain her respectability. Her reading and education were therefore both shaped by the demands of nationalism.

The effects of the Social Reform movement in terms of the construction of the middle-class woman and the formation of a literary middle-class culture were not restricted to Bengal alone. Susie Tharu and K.Lalita describe the furore that followed when a learned courtesan, Bangalore Nagarathnamma, reprinted in 1910 the eighteenth century Telugu poet Muddupalani's work Eadhika Santwanam ("Appeasing Radha") (Tharu and Lalita: 1991).

Muddupalani's work, which describes the heroine Radhika's frank sensuality, was ultimately banned by a British government convinced that the book would corrupt its Indian subjects. The ban order was removed only in 1947. In Madras Presidency, the Social Reform movement took the more specific form of the Theosophy movement, launched by Annie Besant in 1906. Besant combined the agendas of swarai. spiritual renaissance and social reform in the interests of Indian women. This movement soon became the rallying point for upper-caste, middle-class Tamil women. Raising the marriageable age for women, women's education, voting rights and the passing of the Devadasi bill to end **"prostitution"** were some of the important demands raised by the theosophists who included **Rukmini** Devi Arundale and Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy. While the former was responsible for the transformation of the devadasi dance form of sadir into the **Brahminised** version of bharatanatyam, the latter fought for the passing of the Devadasi **bill**.<sup>1</sup> It is against this canvas of social reform, then, that one must read magazines like Chintamani.

Describing the mandate of Chintamani for instance, Sister **Balammal** says that it would deal with "women's education, progress of students, the condition of workers, hygiene, law... the puranas and so on" (August 1924: 3). It is the subject of women's education which Chintamani deals with most **frequently**, and the magazine as a whole produces itself as educative. In an article titled **"Penn Kalvi"** ("Women's Education"), the publisher (it is **not** very clear who this is), writes:

Though the Congress talks of education, participation of women in Khadi weaving and in the freedom



movement, though it has over one crore rupees as funds, it hasn't paid serious attention to women's education and employment. Despite thousands of party meetings and debates on these issues, has the Congress really given thought to women's education? How much has been allocated in the yearly budget for women who form over half the electorate? Have those who are arguing for communal representation paid attention to women who form fifty percent of our population?  
Chintamani. December 1924: 35)

We must also keep in mind the fact that the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries also saw the rise of the early women's movement and the formation of several independent women's organizations. For instance, Pandita Ramabai started the Sharada Sadan in Pune in 1892 to provide employment and education for women; in Maharashtra, Ramabai Ranade started the Hindu Ladies Social and Literary Club in 1902 and the Seva Sadan in 1909, and so on. Most of the branches of Annie **Besant's** Women's India Association (started in 1917) were in Madras Presidency. The National Council of Women in India was initiated in 1925, and in 1926, the Women's India Association brought together various women's groups in the country at a convention and many of them united under the banner of the All India Women's Conference. Vir Bharat Talwar has pointed to the centrality of issue of women's education for the women's movement at the time, especially in the Hindi provinces.<sup>2</sup> He has argued that this concern is reflected in the women's journals in Hindi (such as Stree Darpan which emerged between 1910 and 1920 (1989: 220)). Talwar contends that educated men were often dissatisfied with their uneducated wives and that their humiliation of the latter led women to identify the lack of education as a major reason for their oppression

(1989: 220). The kind of education that women ought to be given, whether one suited to domestic affairs or one suited to the social and political world, the "public" sphere, was a major point of debate. As the epigraph to this chapter tells us however, Chintaroani was deeply concerned with the issue of political education for women.

If the Social Reform movement and the women's movement, both of which emerged alongside the nationalist movement, are two different, yet inter-related canvases against which one can read magazines such as Chintamani and Jaganmohini. a specifically nationalist imagination and recovery of Tamil language and culture, and a consequent isolation of English as the foreign Other energized them.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, especially with regard to **Kalki** R.Krishnamurthy, the nationalist Tamil idiom was never constructed in opposition to Hindi or Sanskrit. In fact, it was opposed to the claim for a "pure" Tamil (a Tamil rid of all Sanskrit words) made, for instance, by a group of **Saiva-Vellalas** in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Chapter Five). As Sumathi **Ramaswamy** has argued, the nationalist attempt was to develop a living modern Tamil, suitable for science, administration, government and education, a Tamil rid of all arcane terms (whether Sanskritic or high literary Tamil), a Tamil which was simple and accessible (1992: 228). Given their lack of access to Sanskrit, the language of the Shastras and the Vedas, and to English, the language of modernity and hence, once again, the language of upper-caste men, it appears that women such as **Vai.Mu** Kodainayaki **Ammal** and Sister **Balammal** found it easier to relate to this particular project of nationalizing Tamil. The

periodical was an extremely potent means of fashioning a modern Tamil.

What is perhaps most striking about the early twentieth century is that it marked the emergence of the woman editor who had learnt to effectively market her magazine. We have, for instance, Sister Balammal declaring:

When I spoke of my plans to start a magazine, many friends warned me that it would be very difficult to finance it and find subscribers. They told me that those who wrote for magazines often demanded a very high salary. ... I believed however that if the editor showed a sense of social responsibility, the subscribers would respond favorably by patronising the magazine. I refused to be afraid.  
(Chintamani September 1924: 53)

If Sister Balammal "refused to be afraid" and took up the difficult and demanding task of editing a magazine in what was a male-dominated and patriarchal set up, Vai.Mu.Kodainayaki Ammal, the Brahmin editor and publisher of another women's magazine Jaganmohinj was even more remarkable for the shrewd marketing strategies she employed. What is interesting however is the terms within which the agency of both editors is framed. Chintamani's front cover declares it to be a "high class Tamil monthly for women" with an additional note that it is "devoted mainly to the cause of Indian women" (August 1924). It is this argument that the magazine would serve the cause of Indian women and, by extension, the nation, which Sister Balammal repeatedly stresses in the editorial of the first issue:

Magazines in vernacular languages are a means by which we can progress as a nation and educate our people. ... I started this magazine keeping in

mind the welfare of my Tamil sisters.... Every minute hundreds of Tamil magazines are being published. All of them are highly critical of the faults of other magazines and make claim that the world is going to benefit greatly from them. Woman that I am, I dare neither to praise myself nor make such tall claims. My magazine is devoted to serving society.... I request students, respected elders and men to subscribe to Chintamani and help women's uplift.

(Chintamani August 1924: 3-4)

The respect she reserves for "elders", the humility with which she addresses her readers, her appeal to men to subscribe to the magazine in order to help women's uplift clearly mark the limits of her agency as an upper-caste woman. In an essay addressed to the readers of Chintamani. "Enadu Patirikai Abhimanigaluku" ("For my readers"), she thanks them for their support and patronage and seeks the blessings of elders:

I offer my greetings to those readers who have written letters supporting, praising and blessing Chintamani. I also thank the editors of other magazines for their support... Many have written saying that they have sent in their money orders as subscription... Many elders have favorably reviewed Chintamani. I can only accept this as an order to serve the nation all through my life. I will not consider these as words of praise. I expect the blessings of bharatmata. my elders and all the educated women readers of this magazine.  
(Chintamani September 1924: 53-54)

The inside page of every front cover declares that **Balammal** is the "daughter of Late Dr.A.R Vaidyanatha Sastriar". Tracing her lineage to her father is one way of acknowledging her place in a patriarchal society. Balammal also indicates to her readers that she is a deeply religious Brahmin. In every issue, the reader is presented with "Subodha Rama **Saritam**" in Sanskrit, composed and

annotated by Balammal. This clearly signifies her upper-caste status, another strategy by which she gains acceptance among what was, presumably, a largely upper-caste audience.

jaganmohini; The Commercial Novel-Magazine

Vai.Mu. Kodainayaki Ammal, the editor and publisher of another women's magazine Jaganmohini which first appeared in December 1922 a few months before Chintamani, seems far more comfortable with the commercial nature of the magazine industry. The cover describes Vai.Mu as the "author and proprietress" of Jaganmohini. Vai.Mu bought the Jaganmohini Press from Vaduvur Doraiswamy Iyengar and ran it for over two decades. Located at Car Street in Tiruvelickeni, a historic part of Madras, the Jaganmohini Press was used to print not just the journal of the same name but also over a hundred of **Vai.Mu's** novels. The magazine itself is described on the cover as a madantha novel sanjigai. a monthly novel magazine. Most issues contained serial novels, especially detective stories, written by Vai.Mu herself. Others contained a few stray news articles on the Congress and on the Hindi issue, espousing the nationalist cause. We will soon see how writers and editors like Vai.Mu and Balammal were part of a growing Congress nationalism. There were also issues devoted to stories by other popular women writers of that time such as, for instance, "Gugapriyai". Occasionally, reviews of Tamil talkies also appeared. Vai.Mu herself appears to have been widely read and as we have already seen, she was also very Prolific. As was the case with Kalki, another magazine which appeared some two decades later, Jaganmohini was heavily

dependent on the novel form for its appeal. In fact, the two genres, magazine and novel, were interlinked, each being used to popularize the other. The magazine was much cheaper than the novel. A year's subscription to Jaganmohini cost only one rupee and eighty annas and each issue cost three annas, whereas those of Vai.Mu's novels which were published separately cost around two rupees. **Vai.Mu** advertised and marketed her magazine as well as her novels and solicited the patronage of her readers with remarkable elan and directness. In a move to ensure that readers of her magazine would also read her novels, she published full-page advertisements in the former for the latter. The January 1937 issue for instance carries the following editorial:

Readers have requested that I bring out a small novel costing four annas every month. It is my pleasure to do so. The first such novel, which has just been published, is called Anbin Shikaram. Readers may acquire their copy by paying the necessary amount through postal or money orders.  
(Jaganmohini, January 1937, editorial)

What Vai.Mu sought to ensure then was the creation of a regular readership both for her magazine as well as for her **novels**.

Unlike Chintamani, Jaganmohini produced itself as a commercial magazine meant to entertain rather than educate. In this sense, it is perhaps the forerunner of contemporary popular Tamil magazines. Vai.Mu appears much more at ease with the economics of **magazine** publishing than Sister **Balammal** does. Unlike the latter, she does not waste time on elaborate and decorous ethical justifications for the starting of her magazine. On the con-

trary, she is unembarrassed about asking for subscriptions to the magazine and employs various interesting advertising techniques to sell it. The issue preceding the tenth anniversary issue enacts a little scene on the cover:

Jaganmohini: Dear mothers and fathers! I will soon be ten. What present are you going to gift me? I grow thanks to your patronage.  
The People: Darling child! Jaganmohini! O Bright and Intelligent One! Your clear and readable style has given us much joy. Here is your gift - we give to you not only our own subscriptions but also those of our friends.  
(Mohini extends her hands, receives the gift and greets them)  
(October and November, 1932)

The narrative is accompanied by the picture of a little girl dressed in the traditional long skirt (the "pavadai") with her hands outstretched surrounded by people who are giving her money. As part of the tenth anniversary celebrations, the same issue announces a four-point scheme. According to this, Vai.Mu's novels would be offered at a discount price to six early subscribers; an entire year's magazine would be given free to those who found five other subscribers; Vai.Mu's novels Ivabharathi and Sarasaranjan would be given free to those who found three subscribers, and those who paid the life subscription of twenty five rupees would get free copies of all her novels to be published in future. Jaganmohini also carried advertisements for many products ranging from the familiar **Amrutanjan** balm to other magazines to talkies. The issues provided details about advertisement tariffs as well. The magazine was sold through agents all over Tamilnadu, at Bombay, Rangoon, Kuala Lumpur and Colombo.

The February 1937 issue, for instance, provides a list of such agents and their addresses and informs readers that Jaganmohini is also available at magazine shops, the Swadesamitran book shop in Madras and at railway stations (February 1937: 21). Jaganmohini also targeted the Tamil diaspora overseas. In a special notice to overseas subscribers, Vai.Mu writes:

You are all aware that Jaganmohini is the only Tamil magazine that does not charge higher rates for overseas subscribers. This despite the higher postal rates we have to pay. We wish that all Tamilians, irrespective of where they are residing, should pay the same amount to read Jaganmohini. (January 1936: inside front cover)

The upper-caste Tamil novel and journal were co-existing and overlapping areas of ideological production. Both were addressed to the same constituency of readers, which, in the wake of nationalism and its stress on vernacular education for women, was increasingly becoming female. Jaganmohini was only one of many instances where the overlap between novel and magazine becomes obvious. It is in the magazine Kalki however that we have the best known example. Even though Kalki was not a women's magazine, like Jaganmohini it appears to have had a large female readership. In the section that follows, we will consider some reasons as to why this might have been so.

#### Kalki; Historical Fiction and Nationalism

In September [of 1921], the Mahatma toured South India to campaign for the eradication of the evils of drinking and untouchability, to popularize khadi, and raise funds for the constructive programmes of the Congress. When he came to Tiruchi, Krishnamurthy had his first darshan of him, an



enthraling experience. At a massive meeting addressed by the Mahatma, he had the rare privilege of singing Bharati songs and of handing over to the Mahatma money he had collected from the audience. Gandhi patted him on his back with the words, "accha desh **sevak**"!  
(Sunda: 1993, 24)

The "accha desh sevak" or the "good servant of the **nation**" of Gandhi's description was none other than the Tamil writer and **magazine** editor R.Krishnamurthy or "**Kalki**" as he was popularly known. Both as a political activist and, perhaps more significantly for our analyses here, as a writer of "historical" and "social" novels serialized in the still extant Tamil magazine bearing his pen-name, Kalki participated in what was largely an upper-caste, elite project, the project of nationalism. To say that Kalki was a symbol of moral purity and goodness, a symbol of "**decent**" middle-class values and a figure of respectability for the Brahmin middle-class in **Tamilnadu** is no exaggeration. Given that he was iconised as a "good servant of the nation" by none other than Gandhi and encouraged by the politically influential **C.Rajagopalachari** (Rajaji) of the **Tamilnadu** Congress who went on to become the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency, this was only to be expected. During a writing career that spanned the thirties to the early fifties, **Kalki's** writings became part of the Tamil literary canon. No other figure signals quite so effectively the consolidation of an upper-caste nationalist public sphere to the same extent that Kalki does. His life-history then acquires special importance.

## Kalki: Writing and Political Career

Much of what we know about the life of Kalki comes from M.R.M. Sundaram or "Sunda"'s 900 page biography in Tamil Ponniyin pudalvar (Son of Ponni) published in 1976 and its abbreviated English version Kalki; A Life Sketch which appeared in 1993. This biography had earlier appeared in serialised form in the magazine Kalki over 99 weekly installments.

Kalki was born into a Brahmin family on the 9th of September, 1899 at Putthamangalam, a small village in Thanjavur where the river Ponni (or Kaveri) flows. After **Kalki's** father **Ramaswamy Ayyar** who was the village karnam passed away, Kalki was adopted and groomed by an elderly next-door neighbour, **Ayyaswamy Ayyar**, who ran a primary school in the village. When Kalki was still a boy, he had been initiated along with his brothers into the traditional **Brahminic** rites (Sunda: 1993, 18). Forced to discontinue their secondary education because of financial problems, Kalki and his brother began to give performances of hari katha kalakshepam, a semi-dramatic narration of bhakthi stories. Sunda traces the birth of patriotism in Kalki to the time when Ayyaswamy Ayyar brought him a booklet from Mayuram containing the Tamil poet Subramania **Bharati's** early national songs:

When Krishnamurthy read the poems and then sang them aloud, a new and strange feeling, the spirit of patriotism, surged in his heart and created a revolution in his mind. The refrain of one of the poems, "Let us worship our motherland with the mantra, Vande **Mataram**" became the "mantra" of his life from that very day, urging him to dedicate his task of liberating the Mother from the shackles of slavery.  
(Sunda **1993**: 21-21).

Eventually, Kalki joined the National College High School in Tiruchirapalli where he was given a scholarship and free boarding and lodging. These were formative years for Kalki, partly because of the number of books and journals relating to nationalism and social reform which he suddenly found access to, **and** partly because Tiruchirapalli was very active in the Congress-led freedom movement. When Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement in **1921**, Kalki left school to propagate Gandhi's ideals, his chakra-spinning and Khadi-weaving. It was during this phase that Gandhi met Kalki at a public meeting in Tiruchi and praised him for his patriotism. Following an impassioned pro-nationalist speech which he delivered at Karur, he was arrested, charged with sedition and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a year. While in prison, he wrote his first novel Vimala which later appeared in the magazine Swatantram edited by Va Ra. Soon after his release in 1923, Kalki joined the Congress office of Tiruchi as a **clerk-cum-propagandist**. At the Tiruchi office Kalki met Rajaji for the first time. The latter was then the General Secretary of the All India Congress organization. Rajaji praised Kalki for a pamphlet he had written and issued on behalf of the Congress office.

**Kalki's** writing career officially began when he joined the nationalist Tamil **tri-weekly** Navasakthi edited by Thiru.Vi.Ka. His translation of Gandhi's autobiography was serialised in this journal and later published as a book titled Satya Sodanai. Kalki **left** Navasakthi in 1928 with the intention of joining film producer S.S **Vasan's** Ananda Vikatan. However, he did not join it

at once because he got an invitation from Rajaji to be an inmate of the Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengodu in **Salem** district. **Kalki** took up the invitation and moved with his wife to the ashram from where he began to write for Ananda Vikatan. He also assisted **Rajaji** in editing Vimochanam, a monthly magazine in Tamil devoted to prohibition started in August 1929. In connection with the Salt Satyagraha of 1930, Kalki published four propaganda pamphlets which were then distributed throughout **Tamilnadu**. Along with his associates, he picketed several educational institutions. Some time later he was arrested and sentenced to a prison term of six months. On his release, he rejoined the Tiruchengodu Ashram. In 1931, Vasana persuaded Kalki to edit Ananda Vikatan. A short while later, Ananda Vikatan became a weekly and soon it was the largest circulating Tamil magazine (Sunda 1993: 31). The magazine, which was (and still is) well known for its humour, had as part of its staff writers like **"Tumilan", "Devan", "Bharatan", "Nadodi", "Kadir" and "Savi"**. Kalki proved to be all that Vasana had expected him to be. As a writer, he had a wonderful feel for his largely upper-caste and middle-class readership and skillfully wove a moral purpose into all his writings including his fiction, thus winning over an audience which up until that point had viewed the novel with suspicion. As a dynamic editor who had an instinct for spotting talent and encouraging new writers, he was almost single-handedly responsible for the remarkable growth in the readership of Ananda Vikatan. As Sunda tells us, Vasana in turn was a generous employer, rewarding Kalki with a fourfold **increase** in salary over a period of eight years and providing him with a staff car and

other perquisites. Kalki gradually became entrenched in an informal literary circle created by T.K.Chidambaranatha Mudaliar or "Rasikamani" TKC. To this circle flocked Rajaji's eldest son, Krishnaswamy, the Assistant Editor of The Hindu and R.V Sastry, otherwise known as "**Harijan** Sastry" for having edited The Harijan on behalf of Gandhi for a while (Sunda: 1993, 35). The patronage of this particular group as well as of that of the influential literary critic Professor Vaiyapuri Pillai who wrote the forewords to his novels played a crucial role in the canonizing of Kalki. In his foreword to Parthiban Kanavu (The **Dream** of Parthiban), **Kalki's** first historical novel, Vaiyapuri Pillai writes:

Readers of this novel will easily recognize the skill and the varied capabilities of the author. The author's Tamil style deserves special mention. Only those words which are linked to high ideals are used by him. He doesn't go searching closely for pure Tamil words; neither does he avoid the use of North Indian words. His style is lucid and reader-friendly. It inspires emotions and is apt for both character and situation. He stands at the forefront of the dialogue-writers of today. (Foreword to Parthiban Kanavu 1985: viii)

The style of **Kalki's** editorials, fiction as well as non-fiction, as his admirers repeatedly stressed, was accessible to the ordinary reader. Sunda praises the "racy, idiomatic, impressive and elegant" style of his prose and the "strict purity" of his writings (1993: 124 & 53). Moreover, as A.R Venkatachalapathy has pointed out, the Tamil novel which had till then been critiqued by middle-class intellectuals for being mindless adaptations of the works of western novelists such as Reynolds and for being

vulgar, attained a new respectability in the hands of Kalki (1997: 65). If Kalki's Brahmin, middle-class background had already won him some measure of acceptance, his connections with the Congress leader Rajaji, with influential literary critics and with the other elite of Madras, notably with Sadasivam and his wife, the famous classical singer M.S Subbulakshmi meant that he was accepted wholeheartedly into the Brahmin heartland of the city. Incidentally, his connection with Sadasivam and M.S Subbulakshmi as strengthened with the marriages of **Kalki's** daughter Anandi with **Sadasivam's** nephew and his son Rajendran with **Sadasivam's** daughter.

Kalki left Ananda Vikatan in January 1941 following certain differences with Vasana. Beginning with **Rajaji's ministry** in October 1939, all the seven provincial Congress governments had resigned in protest against Britain's involvement of India in the Second World War without consulting Indian leaders. Gandhi launched his satyagraha and people were requested not to cooperate with the British in their war efforts. When Vinoba Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru were arrested for performing satyagraha, Kalki responded by writing an impassioned editorial condemning these arrests. In a formal note to Kalki, Vasana asked him to refrain from printing articles which were likely to provoke official action against Ananda Vikatan (Sunda: 1993, 37-38). Ignoring the note, Kalki wrote another special article on the arrest of Rajaji in December 1940. He sought Gandhi's permission to offer satyagraha and when he received a favorable reply he applied to Vasana for leave. Vasana was not happy with his request however and Kalki was forced to resign. Sunda tells us that later in his life

Vasan "very much regretted his selfish and unpatriotic attitude leading to the loss of an efficient editor and gave public expression to it again and again" (1993: 38-39). It was at this point that Kalki was approached by Sadasivam with the offer of managerial and financial help in launching a new magazine. The magazine had to wait however for Kalki to finish his third prison term of three months following his satyagraha on the 21st of January, 1941, in Mayuram where he delivered a brief anti-war effort speech to a crowd. The capital for the new magazine which was named "Kalki" after its editor who had become something of a cult figure by then, was provided by the singer M.S Subbulakshmi who was also a film actress. Launched as a fortnightly in August 1941, the magazine became a weekly in April 1944. This 55 page magazine was printed at the Kalki Press, Madras. Within 12 years of its inception, its circulation shot up from 20,000 copies to 70,000 copies (Sunda: 1993, 41). When one compares these figures with those of the popular Jaganmohini which sold only 10,000 copies per issue (A.R Venkatachalapathy: 1997, 63), one begins to have some idea about the scale of Kalki's popularity . There were many reasons for this popularity. Firstly, Kalki offered a better mix of articles than Jaganmohini did. In this sense, it is closer generically to the contemporary magazine. Its issues typically contained short stories, cartoons and humorous pieces apart from its highlight, **Kalki's** novel in serial form. It was also a better produced magazine than Jaganmohini and used more illustrations, both in colour as well as in black and white, to accompany its serial fiction and short stories. More importantly however, Kalki was perceived as someone who not only wrote

interestingly and lucidly but also with middle-class decorum. Between six and ten pages of magazine space in most issues were devoted to his novels. Even though each serial was a structural unit in itself, it created a curiosity in the reader as to what the next serial would contain. This meant that **Kalki** always had a given number of regular readers.

The fact that Kalki was perceived as a **"respectable"** writer implied that his work could be "safely" read by middle-class women who, until then had **not** been permitted to read the work of most novelists with the exception of Vai.Mu.Kodainayaki **Ammal**. This meant a **dramatic** increase in readership for the magazine. Sunda tells us that not only did Kalki scrupulously follow a code of strict self-censorship, he also conducted a campaign against **"vulgar** and scurrilous writing" through the columns of both Kalki as well as Ananda Vikatan (1993: 52). Drawing on an anecdote to illustrate his point, Sunda says that when Kalki found certain passages bordering on the vulgar in the manuscript of a short story submitted to him, he called the sub-editor and asked him to **"tear** up the dirty thing" and throw it into his waste paper basket (1993:53). Again, addressing a conference as the President of the Tamil **writers'** association in February 1954, Kalki declared that a writer who "excites carnal lust, who incites violence, who encourages egoism, who sows the poisonous seeds of hatred" will not remain popular for long; their writings "will never be recognized as literature", they would be "just trash" (Sunda: 1993, 138). Sunda also quotes from an article written by Kalki on the Library movement:



I happened to read some Tamil novels published recently. Oh, the horror of it! I felt as though I were wallowing in a filthy gutter. Even actually falling into a gutter would not have been so bad; with water and soap one could wash away the foul scum from the body. Not so easy to purify your mind soiled by such nasty printed stuff. It would take many nights of sleep to get rid of it. The hand which produces such gutter stuff should be cut off. (**Kalki** R.Krishnamurthy in Ananda Vikatan. 10-6-33 cited in Sunda: 1993, 52-53).

Beginning with the mid-1910s, most Tamil **magazines** such as, for instance, Ananda Bodhini and Vivekodhayam published novels in serial forms. In fact, magazines like Manamohini and Naveenagam existed solely for the purpose of publishing serialized novels. Other low priced periodicals such as the monthly Naveenaaam edited by Nagai **C.Dhandapani** which first appeared in 1915 published novels in serial form. It was also the practice for periodicals devoted to fiction to offer bound volumes of an entire year's issues for sale. The growth of the Tamil novel was therefore inextricably linked with the rise of the magazine form. At the same time, the popularity of the Tamil magazine was due largely to the serialized fiction it offered readers. The novel and the magazine therefore existed in a parasitic relationship with each other.

Kalki tried his hand at two kinds of Tamil novels – the "social" novel and the "historical" novel – both of which emerged as rivals to the literature popular at that time. His predecessors Arani **Kuppuswami** Mudaliar, Vaduvur **K.Duraiswamy** lyengar and T.R Rangaraju specialized in detective stories, most of which were adaptations of and translations into Tamil from the

work of western novelists such G.W.M. Reynolds and Arthur Conan Doyle. The demand for these detective stories were so high that many publishing houses sprung up to keep pace with the growing readership. Reform Series, Viveka Chintamani Series, Hanumadwajam Series, Suguna Bodhini Series, Sri Vani Vilas Series, M.N.C Series, K.S.N Series, The Pleasure Creeper Series, Manamangalamalika Series, Janakanandhini Series, Prapanjamitran Series, Nitya Kalyani Series and Nithi **Malai** Series were among the publishing houses which produced hundreds of novels in the first three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> However, as is the case with most mass-produced "formulaic" fiction, these novels were deplored by literary critics such as V.A Gopalakrishna Iyer and **V.Muthukumaraswami** Mudaliar as lacking in taste and literary merit.<sup>5</sup> **Kalki's** own work may be read as a deliberate attempt to "raise" the standards of fiction, to take the novel away from what he as well as other critics perceived as "vulgar" writing. Praising his novels for their tasteful elegance, high moral purpose and attention to detail literary critic K.V. **Rangaswamy** Iyengar says:

A critical perusal of fParthiban **Kanavu**] made me realize that a star of the first magnitude had appeared in the firmament of historical fiction. (1951: xxi)<sup>6</sup>

The most famous of his social novels, **Tyaga Bhoomi** (serialized in **Ananda Vikatan** between 1938 and 1939 and then turned into a film) and **Alai Osai** (serialized in **Kalki** from March 1948 for eighteen months and published as a book in 1953) are clearly recognizable as sagas of nationalism. Kalki's historical novels, **Parthiban Kanavu** (serialized in **Kalki** in 1941 and published as a book in

1943), Sivakamiyin Sabatham (serialized in Kalki in 1944 and published as a book in 1948) and the voluminous Ponniyin Selvan (serialized in Kalki in 1950 and published in five volumes in 1959) recreate an ancient Tamil past to deal with questions of nation and nationalism in a manner that is both interesting as well as complex.

Partha Chatterjee argues that the new politics of nationalism situated the "women's question" in an "inner domain of sovereignty", "tradition" and **"national** culture", a domain that was comfortably distanced from the modern colonial state (1993: 117). He contends that by creating a home/world dichotomy wherein woman became a sign of home (and, by extension, of Indian culture), the nationalist project justified its selective appropriation of western modernity (1993:120). The new woman who emerged within nationalist discourse would be different both from the "traditional" woman as well as from the "Western" woman. Even as she was imaged as modern, she would display all the signs of national culture, thus reinforcing her essential difference from the **"Western"** woman (Chatterjee 1993, 9). Given their emphasis on a glorious South Indian past and chaste Tamil women, the serialized novels of Kalki are clearly attempts to create an Indian culture as essentially different from western culture. As I have already argued, the nationalist recovery of Tamil isolated English and not Hindi as the foreign Other. Moreover, these stories are also meant as inspirational nationalist texts.

The first two of these novels which form a trilogy are concerned with the history of the Pallavas and the last with that

of the Cholas. Though in narrative terms, Parthiban Kanavu (The Dream of Parthiban) is a sequel to Sivakamiyin Sabatham. the former, which was shorter, was serialized first, perhaps in order to gauge reader-response to historical fiction (see Appendix IV, 1 & 2). However, both novels were conceived simultaneously during Kalki's visit to the rock temples of Mahabalipuram, a short distance away from Madras city. In his introduction to Parthiban Kanavu. Kalki eulogizes the glorious Tamil past which Mahabalipuram represents:

Thousand three hundred years ago this beautiful land of Tamilnadu could boast of such highly skilled sculptors, sculptors who have created these marvelous sculptures of Mamallapuram! Tamilnadu also had kings who encouraged and patronized them. In that case, how highly developed our culture and social life must have been! Such progress and development can only be the result of centuries of effort in strengthening the arts, governance, education and the morality of that society. (Kalki: 1957)<sup>7</sup>

Sunda describes Kalki's Mahabalipuram experience as **"autistic"** (1993: 88). In his introduction to Sivakamiyin Sabatham Kalki writes that the characters of Aayanar, **Sivakami**, Mahendra Pallava, **Mamallan**, Parthiban, Vikiraman, Arulmozhi, Kundavi, Ponnan, **Valli**, Kannan, **Kamali**, Pulikesi and Naganandi came to him suddenly as in a vision (1955: 1-2). Kalki's historical novels are at once constructed as true to historical fact and as bearing the marks of inspired writing. Historical material on the Pallavas and the Cholas, argue critics like **Rangaswamy** Iyengar, has been skillfully woven together by Kalki with fictional events and characters. The historical **"veracity"** of the narrative is seen as

enabled by Kalki's extensive research on the Pallava and Chola Kingdoms.<sup>8</sup>

To any one familiar with contemporary debates on nationalism, it is obvious that Kalki's construction of the past glories of the Pallava kingdom which Mahabalipuram epitomizes, his narration of the fulfillment of **Parthiban's** dream of national unification through the expansion of the Chola kingdom, his recreation of **an** imagined golden age which one has now presumably lost are all part of a particular kind of nationalist response to colonial rule. **Shivarama** Padikkal describes this sort of response as a move to "revive the traditional culture in order to prove that India too had a great civilization, and to cull out from old histories, records and stories those elements which would aid the conception of nationhood" (1993: 224). Unlike most dominant nationalist reconstructions of India's past which tend to rely heavily on the Aryan civilization and notions of a Vedic age, Kalki's stories are centred around a geographic-linguistic region which is distinctly non-Aryan and an imagined community which is a Dravidian community. Unlike most nationalist narratives, the Self both in **Sivakamiyin Sabatham** and Parthiban Kanavu is Dravidian and the Other is Pulakesi, the king of the Chalukya dynasty in North India. Throughout these narratives, Pulakesi is contrasted with the Pallava king Mahendra. While Pulakesi is represented as barbaric, essentially cultureless (witness his treatment of the dancer **Sivakami** in **Sivakamiyin Sabatham**), crafty, lecherous and despotic, Mahendra is every inch the noble and benevolent king under whose rule the arts flourish and subjects live in happy harmony.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that even as Kalki was constructing a glorious Tamil past through his fiction, the non-Brahmin movement or the Dravidian movement was involved in a very similar exercise. Another aspect that Kalki appears to share with the ideologically very different Dravidian movement ideologues is his promotion of Tamil. Not only was Kalki directly responsible for the fashioning of a new and easy colloquial Tamil prose, he conducted a campaign through the columns of Ananda Vikatan for the inclusion of more Tamil songs in music concerts which, he argued, were dominated by Sanskrit and Telugu songs. However, Kalki's love for Tamil was constructed within the terms of nationalism. Professor Vaiyapuri Pillai's comment that Kalki "doesn't go searching closely for pure Tamil words; neither does he avoid the use of North Indian words" is instructive on this count. Even while Kalki was writing at a time when the Dravidian movement was recreating an ancient Tamil culture, the latter's ideological project, its constituency and its effects were very different from Kalki's. While Kalki's writings were read largely by the nationalist upper-caste and fed into a predominantly nationalist ethos created by the Indian National Congress and a Gandhian ideology, the Dravidian movement's emphasis on a Tamil past and a Tamil culture served to promote a Dravidian sub-nationalism based on a radically different caste politics from that promoted by a Congress nationalism. One might even read Kalki's historical fiction as essentially coopting the Dravidian movement's construction of a Tamil past into the project of nationalism. Such a cooption would have been

necessitated by the threat that the powerful mapping of "Tamil" culture and "Tamil" identity onto the non-Brahmin or the "Dravidian" subject would pose to the Tamil Brahmin, disinheriting him, in a sense, from "Tamilness" itself. Describing the linguistic regionalism promoted by the Kannada novel, Shivarama Padikkal has argued:

...the most significant motivating force behind the early Kannada novels is the search for a 'Karnataka-ness', an essence belonging to all Kannadigas. As print-media came into common use, the call for the unification of Karnataka arose. In the novels we begin to find the god-like figures of the kannadamatha (the Kannada mother). In different Indian languages too the novel discusses the rise and fall of linguistic empires in pre-British days. The same process of historical change and modernization', I would like to argue, underlies both the creation of linguistic identities as well as national identity. Language-centred regionalism and the concept of a nation that transcends linguistic divisions emerge as complementary notions. This is the unique feature of Indian nationalism, which stands at the conjuncture of English - which provided "modern<sup>1</sup> knowledge - and the vernaculars - which recast this knowledge into regional forms.  
(1993:226)

While Padikkal's argument about the complementary nature of language-centred regionalism and the concept of a nation certainly holds good for **Kalki's** historical fiction, it does not help us explain the manner in which the Dravidian movement harnessed a linguistic and regional identity in a move to challenge rather than reinforce hegemonic conceptions of nation and nationalism. The next chapter which deals specifically with the Dravidian **movement** and its journals will enable us to understand better the conflicting uses to which an imagined Tamil past have been put, the vastly different political matrixes it has been part of.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Srividya Natarajan, "Another Stage in the Life of the Nation: Sadir, Bharatanatyam, Feminist Theory", unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hyderabad, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> See Vir Bharat Talwar, "Feminist Consciousness in Women's journals in Hindi, 1910-1920," Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> See Sumathi Ramaswamy, "En/gendering Language: The Poetics and Politics of Tamil Identity, 1891-1970", doctoral dissertation in History submitted at the the University of California, Berkeley in 1992 for a discussion on the processes by which Tamil was sought to be "nationalized". Ramaswamy has argued that a number of nationalist Tamils, paradigmatic amongst whom was the poet Subramaniya Bharathi, belonged to a tradition of thought which sought to forge links rather than emphasise the differences of Tamil identity and culture with the larger Sanskritic, North Indian whole. However, some of the most eulogistic of songs and essays that celebrated Tamil were written by nationalist Tamils. Some of these songs were deployed by the Dravidian movement activists as well. For instance, the Dravidian movement activist and poet-laureate Bharathidasan proclaimed himself a devotee of Bharathi.

<sup>4</sup> See R.Dhandayudham, A Study of the Sociological Novels in Tamil (Madras: University of Madras, 1977): 100).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid: 102.

**K.V.Rangaswamy** Iyengar, Introduction, **Sivakamiyin** Sabatham. by **Kalki** (Madras: Vanathi, 1986): xxi. (Originally written in 1951).

<sup>7</sup> Kalki, Introduction, Parthiban Kanavu Madras: Bharathi Pathipagam, 1957): 3.



<sup>8</sup>Set in the 7th century A.D, Sivakamiyin Sabatham (The Vow of Sivakami) tells the story of the Pallava dynasty. King Mahendra Pallava who rules from the capital city of Kancheepuram patronizes artists and craftsmen. Foremost amongst these is the master sculptor Aayanar. Hundreds of stone artisans work under the guidance of Aayanar to build Mamallapuram, the dream township of King Mahendra Pallava. Aayanar's daughter Sivakami, a beautiful and talented danseuse, and Prince Narasimha Pallava fall in love. However, the king is not very happy at the thought of his son marrying a commoner and discourages them in every way he can. The wandering Buddhist monk Naganandi (also known as Nilakesi), who, it is later disclosed, is the twin brother of the rival king Pulakesi, comes to South India to watch bharatanatvam performances. He too falls in love with Sivakami and is prepared to give up his monkhood to marry her. During a secretive second siege of Kanchi by the Chalukya army, Naganandi abducts an unwilling Sivakami to Vatapi, the capital city of the Chalukya kingdom and imprisons her in a palace. Taking advantage of his temporary absence, the vicious and cruel Pulakesi blackmails Sivakami into dancing on the streets, threatening her that he would ill-treat her co-prisoners from the Pallava kingdom if she did not cooperate. Even as Sivakami dances in order to save her fellow prisoners from indignities and torture, she vows never to leave Vatapi without seeing it reduced to ashes. **Prince Narasimha** and his close friend and army chief Paranjoti go in disguise to Vatapi in an attempt to rescue her. Sivakami however refuses to escape until the fulfillment of her vow. Prince Narasimha returns to Kanchi in anger and marries the Pandian princess to fulfill a promise to his dying father. Years later, Paranjoti and the Pallava army go to war with the Chalukyas and destroy Vatapi. When Sivakami returns to Kanchi, she is shocked to find that Narasimha, now the king, is married and has two children. She dedicates herself to the service of the temple of Ekambareswarar at Kanchi.

Parthiban Kanavu (The Dream of Parthiban) is about the vicissitudes of the rulers of the small **Chola** kingdom overshadowed by the Pallavas. The Chola king Parthiban refuses to pay tribute to the Pallava king, Narasimha. Anticipating that the Pallavas would attack his kingdom any moment, he takes his young son **Vikraman** to a cave whose walls are filled with his paintings. The paintings depict **Parthiban's** dream of Chola supremacy. Vikraman promises to fulfill this dream. The Pallavas march into the Chola kingdom as expected and in the battle that ensues the Chola army is totally routed and Parthiban fatally wounded. Before his death however, a sivanadiyar (a Shiva devotee) who has somehow strayed onto the battlefield, promises to bring up **Vikraman** and make him a brave and worthy warrior. The sivanadiyar remains true to his word. Only later does the reader learn that he is none other than the Pallava king, Narasimha. **Vikraman's** step-brother **Marappan** plots against him and succeeds in getting him arrested by the Pallavas on the charge of challenging their rule over the Chola kingdom. As he is marched to prison, the

Pallava princess Kundavi sees him. The two fall in love with each other. Soon, Vikraman is deported from the Pallava kingdom. Traveling by ship, he arrives at Shenbaga island. The people of the island elect him king. After some years, Vikraman visits the princess Kundavi disguised as a gem merchant. Realizing that Marappan has recognized him, he returns to Urayur, the capital city of the Chola kingdom. On his way home through the forests, he is attacked by four people. He is helped by a stranger, Veerasenan (once again Narasimha Pallava in disguise). Veerasenan tells him the story of **Sivakami's** vow. It is this story within the story of Parthiban Kanavu that **Kalki** expanded for his second historical novel **Sivakamiyin Sabatham**. Marappan, who is the chief of the Chola army orders that Vikraman be arrested and sent to Kanchi. On the way, he is attacked by some **Kapalis (bhaktas** of Kali who practise human sacrifice) led by Kapala Rudra Bhairavan who is none other than Naganandi. He is saved by Ponnann, a boatman loyal to him. Accompanied by Ponnann, Vikraman meets his mother **Arulmozhi** and learns that she has been rescued from Naganandi by the sivanadiyars men. He also hears that the sivana-diyar's life is under threat, that he was going to be offered as a sacrifice to Kali by Kapala Rudra Bhairavan. Vikraman saves his foster father and is sent to Urayur for an enquiry. It is then that he learns that the mysterious sivanadivar who had helped him at various points in his life was none other than his father's rival, Narasimha Pallava. The Pallava king had sacrificed his own dream of unifying all kingdoms under his rule so that he could keep his promise to a dying man. He grants freedom to the Chola kingdom, giving Vikraman the status of a king. His daughter Kundavi marries Vikraman. However, **Parthiban's** dream of an extended Chola empire remains unfulfilled. It is only three hundred years later that **Rajaraja** Chola and **Rajendra** Chola fulfill this dream. This essentially is the story of the last novel in the trilogy Ponniyin Selvan. This rather long-winded story which, in book form, ran to some 2300 pages spread over five volumes, and, in serial form lasted for a period of three and a half years, defies any neat summarizing. Prince Arulmozhi, as Rajaraja Chola was known, is the grandson of Arinjayar who becomes king after his brother Kandaradithar dies. **Kandara-dithar's** son Madurantakan is just a boy at the time and is considered too young to be crowned king even when Arinjayar dies. **Arinjayar's** son (**Arulmozhi's** father) Sundara Chola therefore succeeds him as king. **Arulmozhi's** brother Aditha Karikalan becomes crown prince. Madurantakan, who is married to the daughter of Chinna Pazhu Vetarayar, the Fort's security chief, desires the crown. King Sundara Chola falls ill at a time when both his sons are away. Arulmozhi is away fighting a battle in Srilanka with the aim of bringing it under Chola rule. His sister Kundavai too is away at Pazaiyerai. A conspiracy is afoot to make Madurantakan the king. **Arulmozhi's** friend Vandidevan who observes these developments is requested by Kundavai to fetch Arulmozhi from Srilanka. Vandidevan does her **bidding**. Some time later, the crown prince Aditha Karikalan is killed by Periya Pazhu Vetarayar and Vandidevan falsely charged with the murder. In the meantime, conspirators from the Pandian kingdom attempt to

kill Sundara Chola and Arulmozhi. Both escape, Vandiaddevan is freed of all the false charges and Sundara Chola is ready to set right an injustice of the past by crowning Madurantakan king. In an act of great self-denial, Arulmozhi too actively encourages Madurantakan's case and succeeds in installing him on the throne. He then embarks on an expansionist programme which brings glory to the Chola kingdom.

## Chapter Five

### **Contesting Nationalism, Fashioning a "Dravidian" Constituency: The Non-Brahmin Journal**

If it is true that India became a nation because of Hinduism, if one were to accept that religion is of prime importance to a nation, then would India be a nation for Muslims, Christians and Parsis? On what basis should they consider India a nation? (Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal Volume 2, 1974: 651)

What is the basis for the statement that India is a nation? When was this country named India? What are its borders? Burma became a separate country last year. Srilanka became separate before that. Malaya was born before Srilanka. And before Malaya, Nepal and Bhutan were formed. Gandharam and Kabul (Afghanistan) preceded these two countries. How many countries have been joined together; how many partitioned! Given such a situation, what constitutes a motherland? ... I fail to understand why the Dravidian people of the Tamil country should consider India their motherland. Why should we desire to place all of India under the same umbrella? (Paautharivu Volume 3, Issue 6; Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal Volume 2, 1974: 650)

Even as Kalki was being praised and canonized by upper caste critics and audiences for his passionately nationalist writings, complex and fascinating alternate theories of the nation were beginning to emerge in the first half of the twentieth century in Tamilnadu with the non-Brahmin movement or the Dravidian movement. As a radical counter to the dominant ideologies set in place by nationalism, this movement, particularly in its early Self-Respect phase, questioned the ways in which the lower castes (the Dravidians, in the context of Tamilnadu) were systematically excluded from the Indian nation and constructed as the others of

the normative Indian self, the upper-caste Aryan. A "Dravidian" nation and a Dravidian cultural identity were imagined as points of emotional and political identification for all non-Aryans, that is, non-Brahmins, the lower castes and non-Hindu religious minorities. The influential founder-leader of the self-respect movement, E.V. Ramasami Naicker (popularly known as Periyar), lays out the term "Dravidian" in clear terms:

...Muslims, Christians, the depressed classes of people, those non-Brahmin Hindus who do not call themselves Aryans can all be classified as Dravidians. (Kudi Arasu 26-11 1939; Periyar E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal Volume 2, 1974; 655).

One of the most significant thrusts of the Dravidian movement, especially in its Self-Respect phase, was the creation of a specifically Dravidian press as a counter to the upper-caste nationalist "mainstream" press represented by newspapers such as Sudesamitran and The Hindu and magazines such as Kalki (see Appendix 1 a & b). It would be instructive therefore to look at the actual processes by which this specifically non-Brahmin press is fashioned. To do this however, it becomes necessary to locate this press in relation to what was perceived as the "Brahmin press" and its nationalist agenda. The creation of a non-Brahmin press was part of a much larger political process by which a non-Brahmin "Tamil" identity was fashioned. Tied to this new identity were issues of language, culture, religion and even indigenous medicine. In order to understand better the processes by which such an identity formation took place, it becomes necessary to

lay out at some length both the history as well as the ideological necessity for the Dravidian movement.

Historians and political theorists such as Eugene Irschick, E.Sa Viswanathan, **P.Rajaraman**, **Nambi Arooran**, Nicholas Dirks, C.J Baker and M.R Barnett have dealt extensively with various aspects of the Dravidian movement.<sup>1</sup> The Periyar **Self-Respect Propaganda Institution** has published biographies of Periyar by **Sami Chidambaranar** (1939), K.M Balasubramaniam (1947) and by "an admirer" in 1962. While these are very useful in terms of the detailed information they provide about **Periyar's** life and political career, they tend to read like hagiographies and fail to provide an analytical framework for the ideology of the Self-Respect movement. Recent times have been witness to a resurgence of scholarly interest both in the Dravidian movement and specifically in Periyar and the Self-Respect movement. Such interest has often been directed at reading the regressive political climate of the day against the radical political promise of the Dravidian movement. The destruction of the Babri **Masjid** justified by the exponents of Hindutva under the name of true nationalism, a growing Hindu fundamentalism in **Tamilnadu** especially after the Jayalalitha government came to power in 1991 and the agitation by upper-caste youth across the country against the Mandal commission's recommendations account for many of these recent re-readings of the Dravidian movement. Critics such as M.s.s Pandian, V.Geetha and S.V Rajadurai have, in different ways, not only contributed to a richer understanding of the radical potential of the Dravidian movement, they have also highlighted its **impor-**

tance and relevance for the present.<sup>2</sup> Most of the scholarship on the Dravidian movement in its Self-Respect phase has tended to centre around the crucial role that Periyar played both as the founding leader and ideologue of the **Self-Respect movement** as well as his more overtly "political" connections, initially with the Indian National Congress and later with the Justice Party which represented the interests of the non-Brahmins in South India. S.V Rajadurai and **V.Geetha's** book Periyar: **Suyamariyadai Samadharmam** (Periyar: Self-respect **Socialism**) published in 1996, is the most recent instance of "Periyar Studies" which, in many ways, has come to constitute an important area of research, a discipline almost. In their introduction to this meticulously researched book which runs to over 800 pages, the authors argue that it is important to assess the contribution of Periyar and the Self-Respect movement launched by him and to locate it within the larger political matrix of his times (1996: iv) . They draw extensively on some of **Periyar's** writings published in the Self-Respect movement journals such as Kudi Arasu in order to document its political and ideological history. Focussing on **Periyar's** political career, they skillfully situate the Self-Respect movement in relation to a Congress-led nationalism.

In many of the studies on the Dravidian movement, Periyar is represented and lionised as the chief ideologue and moving force behind the Self-Respect movement. Given the extent of his influence and the originality and breadth of his vision, this is not very surprising. To anticipate the thrust of my own arguments in this chapter, Periyar does seem larger than life given the various ways in which he energized the Self-Respect movement.

Arguably, he did more for the shaping of a radical non-Brahmin identity than any other figure in Tamil history. Looking at his political career and at the movement that he shaped, and **the** non-Brahmin public sphere which he helped fashion through his journals becomes especially crucial in a political climate created by the anti-Mandal agitation and Hindutva, the Dravidian movement is either misrepresented or, simply, made invisible.

### **The Dravidian Movement in Upper-Caste Representations**

Any history of the Dravidian movement would be incomplete without a reference to its reception within an upper-caste nationalist matrix, a matrix which the political energies of the movement disturbed profoundly. Upper-caste re-tellings of the Dravidian movement almost invariably centre around its promotion of atheism and its anti-Hindi stance, depending on literal readings of these positions. In these dominant upper-caste narratives, the people involved in this particular agitation and, by extension, in the Dravidian movement, emerge as lumpens, virulent atheists, misguided linguistic chauvinists or as anti-nationalists. As C.S Lakshmi has pointed out, in at least two novels, Padaniali and Pudumai Koil, Vai.Mu Kodainayaki **ammal** attacks the **Self-Respect** movement by critiquing the atheism of her characters (1984: 192-193).

Interestingly, an anti-Dravidian movement narrative circulates even in that supposedly apolitical and insular disciplinary space, English literary criticism! In this case, the narrative which originates from a position of cultural **indigenism** reduces



the Dravidian movement to an anti-Hindi agitation. This position of cultural indigenism, an influential position within New Delhi academic circuits best represented by Harish Trivedi and Badri Raina, is tied to dominant narratives of nationhood. Trivedi claims that at least the academic answer to the problem of an alien language and literature lies in replacing the canon of Western literary texts with the work of Hindi writers who have 'made the most searching, fertile, and creative use of English literature and then in due course gone on to liberate themselves from this historically necessary but now also historically exhausted stimulus'(1991, 202-203). Raina is less subtle:

It is just as well to recognize that ultimately the best (if also the only) argument on behalf of Hindi is that half the country's population is already functional in it. Despite the fact that politics in the southern states has so often organized itself as an opposition to Hindi, there is evidence that owing to the fall-out from a largely self-propelled dynamics (and to such market phenomena as the Hindi cinema), the younger generations among southern populations have not only acquired some Hindi but a conviction about its inevitability.  
(Raina 1991: 294)

My response to Raina is, "These "younger generations among southern **populations'** clearly know to whom the Indian nation belongs"! By attempting to establish that Hindi is a language acceptable to the younger generation, if not to its elders, Raina codes it as a contemporary modern language. Hindi, though for different reasons and to a different degree from English, has also been accorded the status of the "modern" even as it retains its status of "national"<sup>1</sup> language. What is

also interesting in Raina's text is a certain upper-caste, modern re-telling of Dravidian politics manifested in his trivialization of the anti-Hindi agitation which he locates firmly in the past. For Raina, the present modern generation has acquired a "conviction" about the "inevitability" of Hindi and so all is well. He thus sets up a historical model which works to legitimize a certain hierarchy of languages, with South Indian languages at the lower end and Hindi at the top.

A 1995 news item in the Hindu once again draws our attention to the dominant academic construction of Hindi as the appropriate national language :

The former Vice-chancellor of Ujjain University. Dr. Shivamangal Singh "Suman" expressed concern over the "growing dominance" of English in the country, affecting the interests of other languages.

He regretted that even after 50 years of independence, the country did not have a national language. The "undue importance" attached to English created a situation wherein the number of convent schools in the country was much more than what it was in England...

Dr. Singh was addressing the 59th annual convocation of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha here.

Hindi, being simple and easy to learn, deserved to be declared the national language, he said. Many eminent people had said that the language could be used to popularize Vedic thoughts among vast sections of people.

("Concern over growing 'dominance' of English" The Hindu May 15, 1995.)

The Dravidian movement which sought, among other things, to question the upper-caste interests at work behind the construction of Hindi as a national language, has been described repeatedly as "anti-national" and expressive of a narrow linguis-

tic chauvinism. As M.S.S Pandian has argued, within the framework of nationalist politics, what is perceived as the "linguistic insubordination" of **Tamilnadu** "gets written as '**chauvinistic**', '**fissiparous**' and '**divisive**' ("Towards National-Popular: Notes on **Self-Respecters'** Tamil": 1996, 3323). Pandian contends here that Tamil '**emerged** within the discursive **field** of the early Dravidian **movement** as a site for a '**national-popular**' project by encompassing a range of **democratic** concerns connected with caste, gender and region, and involving different subaltern **groups'** (1996:3323). Elsewhere, Pandian cites the ex-Chief Election Commissioner T.N **Seshan's** characterization of the anti-Hindi agitation as anti-national, as "a **fissiparous** agitation in the name of language", supported by the CIA, in which "**unruly mobs**" of "illiterate and semi-literate Tamil people" participated (Seshan; An Intimate Story. cited by Pandian 1994, 6). Tamil "**mobs**", Seshan declares, could be "particularly irascible" and their slogans "rabid" (Pandian 1994, 6). He defends and celebrates police violence against agitators in **Kamban** town with great glee:

[The armed policemen] were to storm into every house and drive out all the women into the nearby paddy fields. A secure police ring was welded around them when their **menfolk** screamed from a distance. Not one was spared. Every able-bodied adult was thrashed, leaving in his memory the scar of a scourge of which he was as much a part as were others.  
(Pandian 1994: 6)

Pandian argues that the anti-Hindi protesters were both "**demo-**cratic" and "inclusive" in their demands for a multi-lingual

movement and therefore ill-deserve their dismissal by **T.N Seshan** as "unruly mobs". The protesters sought to get the status of official language not only for Tamil but also for **the** other languages of the Indian union. They drew support therefore from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore as well. To quote **pandian** again:

[Their] demand, though confined to the issue of the official language of the Indian Union, involved an alternative way of imagining **the** nation. They desired a nation which would **not** erase the cultural particularities of different people who constitute the nation, but would accommodate and foster such differences.  
(Pandian 1994, 6)

For the Dravidian movement, Tamil was an important bearer of a **non-Brahmin/Dravidian** identity. It would be simplistic to read the upholding of a Tamil identity over and above every other identity as "**Tamil-centrism**" or as an instance of linguistic chauvinism. This is true especially of the **Self-Respect** phase, wherein "**Dravidian-ness**" was constructed as a political identity **meant** to include all the non-Brahmins, the Muslims and the Christians of South India. It was not merely an "**ethnic**" or linguistic identity. There is more to agitations "in the name of language" than just language. The Dravidian movement's anchoring of its anti-Aryan, anti-upper-caste politics around the question of Tamil is an important case in point.<sup>3</sup> The recovery and a constructive re-reading of the Dravidian movement would have **important** resonances for our present context, faced as we are with Hindu majoritarianism (of which Hindi is often a symbol) and the increasing hegemony of the English-educated Indian **middle** class.<sup>4</sup>

## The Justice Party and the Birth of the Non-Brahmin Movement

A deepening disillusionment on the part of a large and articulate section of non-Brahmins in South India, primarily the land-owning Vellalas and the Chetti merchant elite, with what they could not but recognize as the pro-brahmin politics of the Congress and Gandhi's own complicity with it, led to the birth of the Justice Party in 1916 and to the launching of the **Self-Respect** movement a decade later. The **Self-Respect** movement cannot be understood in isolation from the other major phases of the Dravidian movement, particularly the Justice Party phase which preceded it. As we shall soon see, despite his differences with the Justice Party, Periyar continued to support it politically. In order to understand the ideological underpinnings of the journals which appeared in the wake of the Self-Respect movement, it becomes necessary to explore the political and ideological contexts of the Dravidian movement as a whole.

The early phase of the Dravidian movement which sought to challenge and critique Aryan-Brahmin supremacy was marked by the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation (**SILF**) or the Justice Party (as it later came to be known) in 1916. The formation of the Justice Party signals the genesis of the Dravidian movement in South India. In his work on the Justice Party, the historian **P.Rajaraman** describes the various factors responsible for the birth of the Justice Party (1988). As he has argued, the superior position accorded to the Brahmins in the Hindu ritual hierarchy which meant that they could treat the non-Brahmins as

their social inferiors, the preponderance of **Brahmins** in the civil services, in the Legislative Council, in Annie **Beasant's** Home Rule League as well as in the Madras Provincial Congress Committee, the dominance of the politically influential Brahmins of the Mylapore clique, the Brahmin monopoly of the press, **the manner** in which all the non-Brahmin castes in South India were automatically classified as Sudras, the defeat of the non-Brahmin leaders in the 1916 elections to the Imperial Legislative Council as well as a resurgence of interest in Tamil language and literature, all these acted as triggers for the formation of the Justice Party.

The party had as its aim the protection of the **socio-political** interests of the non-Brahmin community. The non-Brahmin castes who amounted to nearly 97% of the total population of Madras Presidency were educationally and often financially backward when compared with the Brahmins who dominated the spheres of education and government service. The Brahmins monopolized more than 50 percent of the places in public services. **P.Rajaraman** has shown that while the leading non-Brahmins, the **Chettis**, Baliya Naidus, Nairs and Nadars attained a noticeable degree of progress in education, they were far behind the Brahmins where English education was concerned (1988: 50). A knowledge of English was considered absolutely necessary **for** government service, teaching and politics. In 1921, most banks employed Telugu or Tamil Brahmins. Public administration and law was also dominated by Tamil Brahmins, followed by the Vellalas and Telugu Brahmins.

Where the political sphere was concerned, the Brahmins

continued to exercise great influence. In Madras city, a group of politicians known as the Mylapore clique and led by **V.Krishnasami** Iyer were extremely powerful, as was another group called the **Egmore** group of which **C.Sankaran** Nair, T.Rangachari, Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar and T.M Nair were **prominent members**. Both these groups were affluent and educated. At the turn of the century, the influence of the Mylapore group was on the ascendant. Some of the members of this group had become judges in the Madras High Court, **some** were honorary members of the Legislative Council. They were often part of commissions appointed by the government and were a powerful voice in the Senate of the University of Madras. The Mylapore group also replaced some of the local **merchants** and contractors. They formed a society for temple reform and influenced the courts to appoint them as members of the managing committee of some of the richest temples in the province.

Between 1910 and 1920 the Madras Legislative Council was dominated by the Brahmins. A non-Brahmin had little chance of getting elected where the electorate was largely Brahmin. As **P.Rajaraman** points out, Brahmin supremacy was also visible from the composition of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee between 1914 and 1915 (1988: 54). Non-Brahmins were practically excluded from the All India Congress Committee too. The Home Rule League started by Annie Besant was **dominated** by Brahmins. The Mylapore clique wholeheartedly supported her and the non-Brahmins once again found themselves excluded from the League. As we shall see in the next chapter, the press too was dominated by the Brahmins.

The **non-Brahmin** movement was partly inspired by the work of a number of nineteenth century European and Indian scholars who argued that the non-Brahmins or "Dravidians" were the original inhabitants of the region and that they had been conquered by Brahmin/Aryan invaders from the North. These invaders had then imposed on the Dravidians a caste system by which the **latter's** subjugation had been naturalized. The Brahmin-Aryans were understood to be the guardians of "northern Sanskrit". As we shall see later, Hindi as a language that borrowed heavily **from** Sanskrit came in for sharp attacks from those protesting against Brahmin supremacy. The anti-upper-caste politics of **the** Dravidian movement then came to be articulated in **terms** of a "separate race" theory. Tied to this theory, was the necessity to recreate a "Tamil culture" distinct from the Sanskritic-Aryan culture. Efforts to fashion a "pure Tamil" got underway. The practice of replacing Sanskrit-based personal names with Tamil names dates to this period. Around this time, efforts were made by various Tamil and English scholars, some of whom were Christian missionaries, to unearth the "Tamil" past and to explicate Tamil language, literature and culture.<sup>5</sup>

English scholars and missionaries were part of a larger colonial enterprise with an interest in representing the "Orient". The colonial state attempted to categorize and hierarchize "India" and "Hinduism" and to offer a specifically evolutionary theory of Indian history. In fact, the two races theory (Aryan and Dravidian) which was used in interesting ways by the non-Brahmin movement to articulate a non-Brahmin identity



politics, was a product of these attempts. As **Sumathi Ramaswamy** has argued, colonial texts on "Dravidian" history often produced "**Dravidian**" culture and religion as "barbaric" and "**superstitious**", as opposed to the relatively superior "**Aryan**" religion which was supposed to be more "sophisticated" (1992: **64-65**). With the Portuguese conquest of South West India, Jesuit **missionaries** who began to establish schools and make converts also began to study and explicate the Tamil language. Various Tamil literary associations succeeded in stimulating a resurgence of interest in Tamil literature, particularly in one of the major Tamil epics, the **Silappadhikaram**, and in a Tamil grammar, the Tolkappivam. An Irish missionary, Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), published his Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages in 1856 in which he argued that Tamil was genetically unrelated to Sanskrit and belonged, along with Telugu, Kannada, and **Malayalam**, to an independent family of languages which he called "Dravidian".

The **Sangam** literature of the pre-Christian era, which was least influenced by Sanskrit, became an important symbol of the Tani **Tamizh** Iyakkam or the Pure Tamil Movement spear-headed by **Maraimalai** Adigal in 1915. The non-Brahmins also participated in what were largely Brahmin efforts to modernize Tamil so that it could be used as a means for political and scientific communication. This move, even while it participated in Orientalist-Nationalist projects of modernizing the vernaculars, was pressed into the service of a radical lower-caste politics. The desire to recreate a "Tamil culture" was also played out in

**terms** of demands for the recognition of indigenous systems of religion and medicine.

The emphasis on Tamil language and culture was crucial for the emergence of a non-Brahmin identity, and the Justice Party committed itself to the encouragement of Tamil and Tamil Studies, one of its major demands being that Tamil should be placed on an equal footing with other classical languages, especially Sanskrit. The primary agenda of the Justice Party was to fight the political monopoly, social tyranny and the religious domination of the Brahmins.

The publication of "The Non-Brahmin Manifesto" marks the birth of the Justice Party. This historic document, signed by Rao Bahadur P.Theagaraya Chettiar and addressed to the non-Brahmin community in Madras Presidency was issued by a joint-stock company started under the name of the "South Indian People's **Association**" in November 1916. The Manifesto which sets out the objectives and the scope of the non-Brahmin movement, emphasizes that the non-Brahmins were not interested in undermining the authority of the British who alone were able to maintain a certain degree of equality between various creeds and classes. It presented statistics to prove that the Brahmins dominated the public services, the University of Madras, the High Court and all political appointments. The Manifesto also pointed out that the Congress had become a sectarian and reactionary body and that consequently, there was a strong need for the non-Brahmins to organize themselves into associations that would further their cause.

The Justice Party **formed** the government in 1921 under the Montford constitution and remained in power first **from** 1921 to 1926 and then again from 1930 to **1937.**<sup>6</sup> Historians such as **P.Rajaraman** and **Eugene Irschick** have pointed out that the party was responsible for many radical legislations (**Irschick** 1969; **Rajaraman** 1988). During the period of its first ministry, it had an overwhelming majority which enabled it to pressurize the British government to issue G.Os providing non-Brahmins with the opportunity to enter government services (P.Rajaraman 1988: 269).

Under the leadership of the Raja of Panagal, the party succeeded in enacting a series of legislations such as Hindu Religious Endowments Act, the Madras University Act and the State Aid to Industries Act. The Justice Party tried to fight the **monopoly** of Brahmins in religious institutions and the utilization of all available funds by Brahmin-run institutions by framing a comprehensive legislation on religious endowments. A special board was constructed to supervise and control the management of religious endowments and all temples were placed under its control. The board could take over temples which were misusing funds and had the authority to inspect all temples and audit their accounts. Surplus funds were to be diverted for purposes of public utility such as education in Hindu religion, sanitation of centres of pilgrimage and so on. The bill, which dealt a blow to Hindu orthodoxy, was passed in 1925 with certain **modifications** despite stiff opposition. The Justice Party also launched various schemes for elementary education and the education of girls

and **the** depressed classes, rural **development**, housing, the improvement of public health and the laying of village roads.

The Madras University Act of 1923 changed the composition of a Senate hitherto dominated by Brahmins to a more representative one. It also provided for the expansion of the university with affiliated colleges attached to it. The Justice Party Ministry was also responsible for the formation of Andhra University in 1926. The State Aid to Industries Act passed by the ministry was intended to assist the establishment and development of industries which had an important bearing on the economic development of the Presidency. The Party also strove to improve the status of land-owning people and enacted a series of legislations among which the **Agriculturists' Loans (Amendment)** Act of 1935 was crucial. This permitted the granting of loans to agriculturists for the relief of indebtedness. The Justice government was also responsible for the Madras Cooperative Land Mortgage Banks (Amendment) Act which advanced money to landholders on easy terms repayable in twenty or twenty five years. The Madras Estates Land (Amendment) Act of 1934 passed by the Justice Ministry under the leadership of Bobbili safeguarded the rights of cultivating tenants and prevented middlemen from appropriating the right to occupancy. A further amendment to this act known as the **Inams** Act which conferred the right of kudivaram. the **cultivators'** right to a share in the produce of the land tilled by them. The Malabar Tenancy Bill passed in 1926 with the support of the Justice Party guaranteed that the tenants in the Malabar region would not be arbitrarily evicted. Like the **Self-Respecters**, some **Justicites** boycotted Brahmin priests as a mark of their

opposition to the Brahmin domination of the religious and cultural spheres.

Most of the initiatives of the Justice Party appear to be directed at the landed elite, the zamindari class among the non-Brahmins. Even as they fought Brahmin supremacy in many spheres, the Justicites attempted to reinstate a non-Brahmin elite who would be in relationship of relative power over the lower castes. It was the Self-Respect Movement which questioned and sought to undermine the Hindu varnashrama dharma and opposed the classification of all those who were not Brahmins as sudras.

#### **The Birth of the Self-Respect Movement**

The suva mariathai Ivakkam or the **Self-Respect** Movement launched by Periyar in 1926, struck at the very heart of nationalist rhetoric which prioritized the notion of preserving "**national unity**" even in the face of glaring inequities such as the caste **system**. **Periyar's** vehemently anti-congress, anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindi (anti-Sanskrit) position questioned all that the upper-castes had constructed as "sacred" - the nation, the Varnashrama dharma, even the Mahatma.

Ironically, **Periyar's** first significant entry into state-level and national politics began when he joined the Madras Presidency Association founded by the Congress in September 1917. This was an association of **nationalist** leaders formed with the intention of uplifting the non-Brahmins both within and outside the Congress, working against untouchability and introducing Prohibition. Much later, Periyar clearly stated that he joined the Congress with the belief that it would fight for independence

only after tackling the problems of untouchability and caste disparity (Viduthalai, 14/10/1951). The Congress pitted the Madras Presidency Association against the Justice Party. The association soon ceased to function. On the invitation of **c.Rajagopalachari**, Periyar formally joined the Congress in early 1920, resigning about 29 honorary posts in order to do so. Interestingly, Periyar became an ardent exponent of Gandhianism which he believed was the key to the removal of untouchability and other caste-related problems. He was also attracted by the Congress' Constructive Programme aimed at **bringing** about Hindu-Muslim unity, at closing down toddy shops and developing a khadi industry so as to aid the rural economy. He also took an active part in the Non-Cooperation movement in 1921. He was formally elected president of the **Tamilnadu** Congress in 1920, the very year he joined. As we shall see, it was only much later that he began to entertain serious reservations about Gandhian ideology. However, even as late as 1926 when his differences with the Congress became more sharply outlined, he continued to express his faith in Gandhi's Constructive Programme. In an early issue of the journal Kudi Arasu (The Republic) whose launching in 1925 is often taken to signal **Periyar's** break with the Congress, he **writes:**

Only by following the **Mahatma's** principle of Non-Cooperation and his Constructive Programme can we attain progress. This progress will be permanent. (Kudi Arasu. 3/1/1926).

The Self-Respect **movement** was a result of an increasing disillusionment on the part of Periyar and a section of non-Brahmins in **south** India with what they could not but recognize as the pro-Brahmin politics of the Congress and Gandhi's own **complicity** in it.

Several factors acted as triggers for the deep schism between Periyar and the Congress. For Periyar, the caste question had to be resolved and the **vanrashrama dharma** destroyed before any other social or political changes could be contemplated. In 1924, Periyar led the Satyagraha at **Vaikom** in Kerala in order that the street leading to the Vaikom temple be thrown open to the Ezhavas who were regarded as untouchables. The temple street was eventually opened to the Ezhavas. The **Gurukulam** controversy also led to **Periyar's** discontent with the Congress. A Gurukulam supposedly fashioned on the lines of similar institutions of ancient India was established at **Sermadevi** in Tirunelveli by V.V.S Iyer in 1922. The gurukulam was funded handsomely by the Congress. It was discovered that Brahmin students were given better food and facilities as compared to non-Brahmin students. The two groups were also not permitted to eat together, and their **messes** were separate as were their places of rest. Popular resentment against such discriminatory practices gradually spread, and the institution came in for sharp criticism, especially from those non-Brahmins with Congress leanings who had funded it liberally. As President of the TNCC, Periyar refused to pay the balance amount of Rs.5000 promised to the Gurukulam by the Congress unless and until the common mess, as advocated by Gandhi, was introduced. However, V.V.S Iyer and his associates outwitted

periyar by getting a cheque for the balance amount from the Brahmin joint secretary of the TNCC without the former's knowledge. Periyar and his friends Dr.Varadarajulu Naidu and **Thiru.V.Kalyanasundaram** declared an **all-out war'** on the Gurukulam and exposed the communalism inherent both in the **Gurukulam's** style of functioning as well as in the minds of the Brahmin Congress **members** who continued to support it. A lot of non-Brahmin public sympathy swung in favour of **Periyar's** campaign and the **Gurukulam** soon lost its patronage. This event only served to reinforce **Periyar's** growing suspicion that the Brahmin members of the Congress were **communal**. Gandhi's defence of the Varnashrama dharma came in for sharp criticism from Periyar who understood it to be a veiled **justification** for the evils of the caste system. Once again, it is in Kudi Arasu that he airs this criticism:

I think the Mahatma has not yet correctly understood the problem of untouchability. This is because he wants to use the name of religion to attract the common people. I fear that if we follow his teachings with respect to caste, we would once again find ourselves slipping into the dirt and mire of **untouchability**. We regret the fact that we are forced to confront this problem in his thinking. In the interests of our self-respect, in order to find a real solution to the problem of untouchability, we can no longer afford to be patient, we can no longer hide the flaws in Gandhi's approach.

...Like our Brahmins, Mahatma Gandhi has been arguing that the Varnashrama Dharma is innate to our social set-up, that it is determined at birth. Speaking at Mysore recently, Gandhi declared that the Varnashrama Dharma system is part of Hindu society, that it is essential to our society, that each person who is part of this system is allocated a particular set of duties, that if he performs these duties well he gains in stature and that if a Brahmin performs his duties he too gains in stature. It is this last statement that the Brah-



mins have interpreted to mean that they are great from birth.  
(Kudi Arasu 7/8/1927)<sup>7</sup>

periyar also pointed out the inequality inherent in the varnashrama dharma which Gandhi was refusing to recognize:

Gandhi has been saying that there is little scope for inequality in a system that very specifically allocates duties for each person. However, he has failed to clarify the necessity for such a rigid separation of duties. The Mahatma has not said a word on what possible harm might occur if someone from one caste performs the duties pertaining to **another's...**

If what the Mahatma says is true, he ought to have been a Sudra or a Vaishya right from birth. In that case, what right does he have to let go of the duties allocated to the Sudra or a Vaishya and perform the duties of a **Brahmin**, namely social service? Is there any sense in expecting others to follow a system which he himself has failed to?  
(Kudi Arasu 7/8/1927)<sup>8</sup>

**Periyar's** faith in Gandhian ideals was totally shattered when Gandhi continued to defend varnashrama dharma. Periyar understood this system as being at the root of the untouchability which Gandhi was attempting to fight. But Gandhi clearly did not see the links between Brahminism and untouchability, or between the varnashrama dharma and untouchability. Gandhi, it seemed to Periyar, did not believe in disturbing the existing caste equations in a way that would challenge the Brahmins. This was primarily because Gandhi equated Brahminism with Hinduism. Moreover, Periyar argued that the varnashrama dharma, when applied to **Tamilnadu**, would relegate all the non-Brahmins to the position of the sudras. If each caste was to follow its own dharma as Gandhi

had suggested, the non-Brahmin would be forced to serve the Brahmins. In September 1927, a year after the launching of the Self-Respect Movement, Periyar and his associate S.Ramanathan met Gandhi to convince him about the fallacy in his approach to the caste question. They pointed out to Gandhi that his position only strengthened the orthodox Hindu position on untouchability. Gandhi remained unconvinced. This reinforced Periyar's belief that ultimate freedom for India would come only once the Congress, Hinduism and Brahminism were destroyed (Kudi Arasu editorial 28 August 1927). Periyar's vehemently anti-Gandhi stance dates back to this point. The phrase Mahatma Gandhi Vazhqa (Long live Mahatma Gandhi) on the front page of Kudi Arasu was changed to Khaddar Vazhaa (Long live Khaddar) in the issue dated 20th November 1927. The picture of Gandhi in a weaving posture which also used to appear in the front page of Kudi Arasu was removed beginning with the issue dated 25th August 1927 onwards. Periyar also started referring to Gandhi as **"Mr.Gandhi"**, dropping the title of the "Mahatma".

The final parting of ways between Periyar and the Congress occurred in 1925 with the **Kancheepuram** convention of the **TNCC** at which Periyar made a last attempt to get his most controversial resolution passed. This had to do with his plan of reserving seats for the non-Brahmin communities in the legislature and in the services. To the Brahmin community such a plan which promised to bring about greater social equity was unacceptable. Periyar **had** proposed this plan as early as 1920 at the Tirunelveli convention of the TNCC. The proposal had been badly received and the resolution rejected at the final stage by the **chairman**

S.Srinivasa Iyengar who had described it as detrimental to national unity' ( Kudi Arasu 6/10/1925; "An Admirer" 1962, 31). year after year Periyar tried to push this motion through but remained unsuccessful because the Brahmin members of the Congress unfailingly scuttled it in the name of national unity.

Once again at the Kancheepuram convention, his resolution demanding proportional representations for the non-Brahmins on the basis of population strength failed to gain support and was defeated. Periyar and his associates were disgusted at the outcome of the convention. They felt that it clearly reflected the fact that the Congress was the closed preserve of the Brahmins. Around this time, the Non-Cooperation movement was crumbling rapidly because of the Swarajis who were arguing for the use of constitutional rather than agitational methods in the freedom struggle. The Swarajis were pressurizing the Congress to enter the legislature and the local boards. Periyar, who had till then continued to have some faith in Gandhi, felt that council entry and the Swarajis' style of functioning was a far cry from Gandhian ideals. Although the Kancheepuram convention hastened **Periyar's** exit from the Congress, these other factors also played an important role in his decision to quit.

The **Self-Respect** movement was born almost on the heels of **Periyar's** departure from the Congress. In keeping with his policy of offering unstinting support to any non-Brahmin individual or organization, Periyar always backed the Justice Party, even going to the extent of urging the people to vote for the party through the columns of Kudi Arasu after he left the Congress.<sup>9</sup> However, when Periyar was invited to join the Justice

party, he declined. He recognized the importance of fighting the Congress-Brahmin combine in the political sphere and that was part of the reason for his alliance with the Justice Party. However, he often emerged as its harshest critic, berating its members for leading a life of luxury and remaining untouched by the problems of the poor (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 36-37).

The Self-Respect movement was different from the Justice Party, firstly in that it saw itself as a social movement which was not a political party interested in seeking electoral power. In fact, **Periyar** strongly felt that politics were inherently divisive and that a social movement and a political party were mutually exclusive. He often suggested that the Justice Party be divided into two separate units, a political front and a group which would work for social welfare. (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 43-44). The support that Periyar extended to the Justice Party was entirely on his terms. He writes:

Those who are involved in social work may decide to support a politician; if they want to support and recommend his name, they should make sure that this does not in any way affect his social work.  
(Kudi Arasu. 31/7/1927)<sup>10</sup>

An article titled "Why Should we Join the **Self-Respect Movement**" describes the agenda of the movement as follows:

1. The Self-Respect movement is the only movement which is fighting for socialism and equality between men.
2. As a Socialist movement, it fights for the economic equality of all human beings and for the equal distribution of all property irrespective of economic **level**.
3. This is the only movement which advocates gender equality in all spheres of life.
4. This is the only movement which is working

towards the destruction of caste, religion, varna, nation and God in order to ensure equality between men.

5. This is the only movement which does not discriminate between worker and master and insists on equal sharing of all work as well as profits.

6. This is the only movement which insists that no one should ever be a slave. It demands the right to live according to one's rational mind and intelligence.

(Puratchi. 17/13/1933)

The term "Self-Respect" conveyed a sense of Tamil/non-Brahmin pride, a pride based on a radical critique of Brahmin supremacy in Tamil society. It was in 1926 that Self-Respect leagues were established all over **Tamilnadu** and Taluk as well as district-level conventions began to be organized. The first of the provincial **Self-Respect** conventions was held at Chengelpet on February 17th and 18th, 1929 under the presidentship of W.P.A Soundara Pandian. The convention passed a resolution condemning the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas and religion for the legitimacy they lent to the **Varnashrama dharma** or the caste system. Another resolution argued for women's rights to property and work. Critical of the supremacy of the Brahmins based on their role as religious interpreters, the Self-Respecters called for a radical **demystification** of Puranic Hinduism. In order to challenge the religious validity of the Brahmins they resolved that Brahmin priests would not be employed at religious ceremonies such as weddings. In fact, the names of those who swore to practise this resolution such as Periyar himself, Dr.Varadarajulu Naidu, **Thiru.Vi.Ka** and R.K **Shanmugham** Chettiar were published regularly in Kudi Arasu. **Self-Respect** marriages were performed without the presence of priests and the use of the tali or the manqala sutra.

which the Self-Respecters regarded as a symbol of the enslavement of women. Periyar and the Self-Respecters regarded Hinduism and the caste-system that went with it as being at the root of gender inequalities. The Self-Respecters dropped caste appellations (Periyar, for instance, dropped his surname "**Naicker**" which denoted his caste), avoided caste symbols, advocated widow remarriage, property rights for women, birth control and divorce, and denounced the dowry system and the devadasi system. The **Self-Respecters** were rationalists who aimed at destroying superstitions and blind beliefs in everything including matters pertaining to religion.

As scholars such as Irschick have pointed out, unlike the Justice Party, the **Self-Respect** movement was popular in its appeal (Irschick: 1969, 333-334). The leadership of the Justice Party had come mainly from land-owning groups and the zamindars. and **most** of its members were middle and upper middle-class caste Hindus from both Tamil as well as Telugu speaking areas. The Self-Respect movement, on the other hand, was focussed mainly on the Tamil speaking districts and on the groups lowest in the caste hierarchy.

The Justice Party began to face severe setbacks mostly owing to the crisis in leadership caused by the deaths of stalwart leaders such as P.Theagaraya Chetti (in April 1925) and the Raja of Panagal (in December 1928), who succeeded Dr.T.M Nair. Munuswami Naidu who became the leader of the Justice Party after the Raja of Panagal was elected the Chief Minister of Madras after the 1930 elections. At the twelfth annual confederation of the Justice Party which was organized at Tanjore on the 10th and **11th**

of October 1932 presided over by the Raja of Bobbili, a tussle ensued between the followers of **Munuswami** Naidu and those of the Raja, with the latter establishing his status as the leader of the party. Munuswami Naidu, who was basically an agriculturalist, was replaced by the Raja, a landed aristocrat who belonged to the **Padmanayak Velama** family of the northern Circars, **part of** present-day Andhra. Given the **latter's** autocratic attitude, the Justice Party was trapped in a vicious cycle of internal rivalries and wrangles. Periyar, who had all along criticized the Justice Party for its shortcomings, pointed out that it was fast becoming a party for the rich, that its ideals were lost amidst the political ambitions of its leaders and members, that it used money in order to try and win the elections and that its policy of including the **Brahmins** in its fold would only dilute its politics (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 259-262). In the 1934 elections to the Imperial Legislative Assembly, Justice Party stalwarts such as A.Ramaswami Mudaliar and R.K **Shanmugham** Chetti were defeated, partly because of the intrigues within the party. The rout of the Justice Party in the General Elections of 1937 by the Congress was something from which it never fully recovered. The party, which began to look towards Periyar and the **Self-Respect** movement for direction, accepted a modified version of **Periyar's** socialist programme, also known as the Erode Programme.<sup>11</sup> Even before his formal election to the post of Justice Party president in 1938, Periyar had become its leader. This year, which marks the formal entry of the Self-Respect movement into the "political" sphere, is considered as signaling the end of the movement.<sup>12</sup>

### The Non-Brahmin/Self-Respect Journal: Periyar's Patronage

What the Self-Respect movement created for the first time and in a way the Justice Party had not, was a non-Brahmin public sphere indexed by the significantly large numbers of non-Brahmin and often, specifically Self-Respect journals which came up at the time. Periyar started the Tamil weekly Kudi Arasu on the 2nd of May 1925 at Erode. This weekly was specifically directed at those non-Brahmin groups which had not been reached by the Justice Party's Dravidan. Even though Kudi Arasu was primarily a journal of the Self-Respect movement, it also gave prominence to the Justice Party's news. Significantly, the release of this weekly **is** often taken as the date of the birth of the Self-Respect movement, despite evidence to the effect that when Kudi Arasu was started Periyar was still essentially with Gandhi and the Congress. However, by the year 1925, Periyar had begun to feel the need for a journal which would reflect the interests of the Dravidian. He writes:

Despite the fact that our land has so many great and intelligent people, they remain unknown to the public. This is because Tamilians lack a journal that is effective and truthful. Even Mahatma Gandhi has to ask a Brahmin or read a Brahmin journal if he wants to learn about the greatness of Tamilians....What can we say about a situation in which the majority community of non-Brahmins has no means by which to communicate its news and ideas?

(Periyar, "Sila Brahmana Pattirikaiyin Thozhil"  
Kudi Arasu. 2/8/1925)

Recognizing the lack of a non-Brahmin journal which would effectively voice the interests of non-Brahmins, Periyar sought



to transform the Tamil journal scene by wresting some of the control away from the upper-castes who controlled the **major** portion of the press in the early part of the twentieth century. Systematically then, he nurtured the **Self-Respect**, non-Brahmin journals, positioning them vis a vis "Brahmin" journals which he constructed as either misrepresenting or otherwise inadequate to the needs of the Dravidian people. The Dravidian movement created the necessary conditions for the creation of a **non-Brahmin** public sphere. Journals, films and political speeches made by leaders such as **Periyar**, Sivanandam **Valliammal** and Neelavathi, were all part of this new public sphere. Critics such as **M.S.S** Pandian and **A.R** Venkatachalapathy have suggested that it was primarily the Dravida Munnetra **Kazhagam (DMK)** which appropriated cinema as an ideological weapon.<sup>13</sup> While the **Self-Respect movement** used the journal (alongside the speeches) as a means of propaganda, the DMK fashioned a radically different idiom through cinema in a way that appealed to a largely illiterate, lower-caste audience. The constituency addressed by the DMK films as well as the propaganda speeches of movement leaders was different from the addressee of the **Self-Respect** journal. The films as well as the speeches, which were clearly extremely influential, were meant for an audience that was largely illiterate. However, the **Self-Respect** movement journal was addressed to a constituency which was still in the making, a constituency of middle-class non-Brahmin readers and intellectuals. **It** was during the **Self-Respect** phase that a new constituency of non-Brahmin readers came into being. In this chapter, we look at the specific role that Periyar played in building a strong non-Brah-

min presence in the print media. While he was directly responsible for the launching of some major Self-Respect journals, he supported almost every new non-Brahmin journal which appeared in the wake of the Self-Respect movement.

Various factors have been responsible for the marginalization, in Tamil literary circles, of the Self-Respect, non-Brahmin journal. The genre of the journal is in itself seen as outside of respectable literary production. In the case of the non-Brahmin journal, such a perception is compounded by the notion that it is a "party" or "propaganda" journal. Also, unlike upper-caste journals like Sudesamitran or Kalki which are marked as "mainstream" and somehow "neutral", the Self-Respect journal is marked as "non-mainstream" and "political". Requesting readers to patronize the journal Vediquandu published from **Madurai** for its principled stand on social issues, Periyar remarks:

It is a difficult task to run a journal that does not change colour to keep pace with the **times**, a journal which is not "pure" or "neutral".  
(Kudi Arasu: 27/8/1933; see Appendix I a )<sup>14</sup>

While most scholars writing on the Dravidian movement use Self-Respect journals like Kudi Arasu, Dravidan and Viduthalai as their primary sources, they tell us little about the conditions under which they emerged and **Periyar's** extremely important role in creating a space for these non-Brahmin periodicals.

The Self-respect journals are significant for more than one reason. To historians and other scholars they constitute useful documents because they vividly lay out the agendas of the Dravi-

dian movement and trace the more obviously "political" aspects of the movement. Often, these journals are treated by historians as transparent records of the movement, its history and ideological basis. Again, it is only through these journals for instance that one is able to access the political speeches as well as writings by the leaders of the movement. In this sense, they have actually captured and preserved for us what took place outside the realm of the written word and the print media. I would argue however that their presence is important for two far more important reasons. As Periyar never tired of pointing out, the journals launched during the Dravidian movement created the space for a strong non-Brahmin presence in the print media (see Appendix I a & I b). Given what leaders like Periyar clearly identified as the Brahmin monopoly of the press and the dominant role which the upper-castes played in creating news and public opinion, the Self-Respect journals assume added significance. Related to this was another important development, the constitution and the politicization of a specifically non-Brahmin readership.

Reading the section titled "Seydigaal" in the third volume of V.Anaimuthu's extensive compilation of Periyar's writings titled Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintaigal published in 1974, one gets a sense of the extent of Periyar's belief in the importance of the print-media as a space that the non-Brahmins could use to their benefit. His fiercely loyal defense and patronage of all non-Brahmin journals even if they were not, strictly speaking, affiliated with the Self-Respect movement, is an evidence of this. This section carries some of Periyar's reviews, essays and speeches

about the journals of the Self-Respect movement, the Dravida Kazhagam and the Justice Party (see Appendix 1a for my translation of this section). In most of these essays and speeches, periyar introduces, advertises or reviews each new non-Brahmin journal that is launched. Much of my own understanding of the Self-Respect journal and the conditions surrounding its emergence derives from a reading of this particular section of Periyar's collected writings.

Reading Periyar's essays and speeches on the non-Brahmin journal in the section titled "**Seydigaal**" in **Anaimuthu's** compilation, what strikes one almost immediately is the **deliberateness** and the clarity with which Periyar set about the task of creating a Dravidian press. To him, this was an **important** political project, as important as fighting upper-caste control in the spheres of religion and politics. Expanding the constituency of a non-Brahmin reading public was a crucial issue with Periyar and he **makes** conscious and deliberate attempts to wean away the non-Brahmin reading public from Brahmin journals such as Sudesamitran. Arguing the case for Dravidan as against its rival Sudesamitran^he writes:

Not only the common people, even those who think of themselves as intelligent are carried away by what these journals have to say and end up as slaves to the Brahmins.... Despite knowing that these journals are being published in order to harm us and that their objective is to propagate Brahminism, if [non-Brahmins] offer them financial support and invite our downfall by buying and reading them, will anyone think of us as a society with shame, honour, integrity, intelligence and **self-respect**?

The journal Sudesamitran is funded mostly by non-Brahmins. Its publisher and manager are Brahmins. They enjoy a monthly salary of **Rs.1500, Rs.1000, Rs.800**

or Rs.600. Have you ever seen them do any other work besides spreading Brahminism and destroying the non-Brahmins? Should our own money help in our ruin? ... To patronize another journal over Dravidan is to behave like the man who ignores his own wife and favours the prostitute.<sup>15</sup>

Significantly, Periyar ends this essay by suggesting that the choice of a non-Brahmin Dravidan over the Brahmin Sudesamitran was the only way by which the non-Brahmins could retain their "self-respect" (see Appendix I b).

Along with requesting the non-Brahmin reading public to patronize the non-Brahmin journal, Periyar also argued for the spread of literacy, especially at the village level.<sup>16</sup> Introducing the journal Suyamariathai Thondan. he says:

Comrades!

**Self-Respect** journals should spread in each and every village. Otherwise, our country will not really progress. Education is necessary in order to read a journal. It is the responsibility of the leaders of the **Jilla** Board to provide this education. I request everyone to support Suyamariathai Thondan.

(Speech at Pallipalazham on 9-4-1929; Kudi Arasu. 14-4-1929)<sup>17</sup>

Kudi Arasu. the Tamil weekly started by Periyar and published at Erode, first appeared on the 2nd of May 1925, at a time when Periyar had not formally left the Congress. So influential was this journal, that the date of its first appearance is often taken to be the date on which the **Self-Respect** movement was launched. Most of **Periyar's** political speeches and essays were published in this journal, as was news of the activities of the **Self-respecters** and the Justicites. Though Periyar was directly associated only with Kudi Arasu, Viduthalai. the Justice Party's

Dravidan (Which he edited for a while) and the English weekly Revolt (see Appendix V, 1), he offered his unstinting support to non-Brahmin journals supportive of the Self-Respect **movement** which began to appear all over **Tamilnadu** and in places like Singapore. Since most of these journals disappeared as quickly as they appeared, we have little by way of archival evidence, making any extensive analyses impossible.<sup>18</sup> From what Periyar writes in his reviews of them however, most of these journals appear to have been in the genre of the "**siru** patirikai" or the small (non-commercial) journal.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the popular Tamil magazines Jaganmohini and Kalki worked predominantly within a nationalist-Brahmin matrix. This was the case with many other magazines and newspapers as well. Most of them were owned as well as edited by the upper castes. The Tamil monthly Ananda Bodhini and daily Sudesamitran, the Telugu daily Andhra Patrika, the English daily The Hindu and the monthly Indian Review were all edited by the upper castes and many others such as the English dailies Madras Mail and Madras Times were edited by Europeans.<sup>19</sup> The Congress and Swaraj parties had their own newspapers, Sudesamitran (started in 1900) and Swarajya. Periyar felt that upper-caste newspapers played a crucial role in ensuring that the Brahmins won the local elections and captured the local administrative bodies from the non-Brahmins. He accused these newspapers of using Brahmin reporters to publish false and mischievous reports (Rajadurai & Geetha 1996: 9). Interestingly, he also argues that Brahmin newspapers were by and large indifferent to the challenges posed by the emergence of the non-Brahmin journal:

[The Brahmins who own newspapers] look us straight in the eye and tell us to our face, "You are all stupid. You do not have shame, honour, self-respect or intelligence. Therefore, we deceive you. What is it that you can do? If some among you raise a hue and cry, let them do so. We do not care. We are not going to be scared. Neither will we change our objectives. We know how to coopt those among you who are wicked or foolish in order to stop you from your loud protests. We challenge you to fight us!

(Kudi Arasu - editorial - 30/1/1927)<sup>20</sup>

It is the Brahmin-owned newspaper that is the most frequent target of Periyar's attack. As we have already seen, Self-Respect newspapers like Dravidan are counterposed against Brahmin-run newspapers such as Sudesanmitran. Interestingly, there is never any mention of Brahmin magazines or fiction, partly because fiction and the magazine genre were used only to a limited extent by the Self-Respect movement. Journals like Kudi Arasu were generically closer to the newspaper than they were to the magazine. While Justice had served as the official journal of the Justice Party or the South Indian Liberal Federation since 1917, it is with the birth of the Self-Respect movement that the presence of non-Brahmins in the Tamil print media is strengthened. The journals that emerged in the wake of Periyar's Self-Respect movement proved to be an effective forum for the public articulation of the ideological differences between the Congress and the Dravidian movement. They provided readers with news about the Justice Party and the Self-Respect movement and publicized their conventions and their agendas. Most importantly, they sought to politically educate readers, teaching them to question everything that the nationalist press was constructing as "natural". This

included a range of issues which were part of a nationalist commonsense: the sacredness of Hinduism and the varnashraina dharma. an upper-caste patriarchy, the importance of national unity, the greatness of Gandhi and the role of Hindi as a "national" language. Fearless and strident, these journals consciously opted out of the neutral reporting style so common with mainstream newspapers such as The Hindu.

Time and again, Self-Respect journals faced severe financial problems or, worse, ran into trouble with the authorities, cautioning many a journal to close down. This was the case with Periyar's Kudi Arasu. the most influential Self-Respect journal of the times. Anticipating large-scale labour movements in the country, the British government had resorted to a series of repressive measures directed at left parties as well as at the Self-Respect movement. Among the first casualties was Kudi Arasu. The editorial in the October 29, 1933 issue of Kudi Arasu titled "Why the Present Government Should Go" was adjudged seditious. Along with his sister S.R Kannammal who was the publisher of Kudi Arasu. Periyar was arrested under section 124-A on the 20th of December, 1933 at Erode.<sup>21</sup> Initially, Periyar was lodged at the Kovai Central Prison, having been awarded a sentence of six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs.300. Kannamal was released on bail. But Periyar refused to seek bail or appeal for his release. Due to the arrests of Periyar and Kannamal, Eudi Arasu could not be published between November 1933 and January 1935. The journal Puratchi (Revolution) edited by Periyar's brother E.V Krishnasami emerged as a kind of substitute during the interim period. The trials of Periyar and his sister



were closely followed by Puratchi (See Appendix V, 2). In a style typical of him, Periyar argued that it was ironical that he should be punished for an article far more harmless than others written by him and claimed that it was the spread of socialism which was the cause of such repressive measures by the ruling class (Puratchi. 20-5-1934; Perivar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. 1689). Periyar also suspected the Catholic priests, whom he had accused of **casteism**, of attempting to destroy Kudi Arasu. He writes:

Puratchi ("Revolution") was forced to appear because of the attempts to destroy Kudi Arasu. If there is no place in this world for a journal which was the voice of the oppressed peoples, a revolution is bound to occur. We have no doubt that people who are devoted to achieving a revolution will patronize Puratchi.

Since the ruling capitalist class is a slave to the Catholic priests, it has stabbed Kudi Arasu in the back. This reinforces our belief that the Catholic priests have to go before we are rid of the capitalists...

Puratchi is published in order to bring about a revolution that will ensure that all the capitalists and all religions are destroyed and social and gender equality is ensured. It will perform its duty throughout its life.  
(Puratchi. November 26, 1933)<sup>22</sup>.

Periyar also believed that along with the Catholics, the Brahmins too had a role to play in putting Kudi Arasu out of circulation. In his review of the journal Unmai, he writes of this and of the strategy by which non-Brahmin journals discontinued because of the repressive measures of the authorities, continue to **appear** under different names and in different forms:

In order to destroy Kudi Arasu, the Christians of this country wrote to America and got funds. The Brahmins started journals opposed to Kudi Arasu. However, the weekly Kudi Arasu became the daily

Viduthalai and continued to espouse the same cause.  
(Unmai. 14/1/1970)<sup>23</sup>

In fact, it appears that it was mostly the need to ensure the presence of a non-Brahmin print media in the face of repressive action by the state and by the upper-castes that so many different non-Brahmin journals, all with the same agenda, were published. Often, there were times when financial losses and practical difficulties matched the antagonism of the government and the upper-castes towards the very idea of a non-Brahmin journal, resulting in its winding up. Despite the general tone of optimism in much of Periyar's writings about Self-Respect journals then, he also stresses the fact that running a journal was not an easy task. It was an enormous responsibility and it was pointless to start a journal without a sense of commitment. Often, hard decisions were called for. Arguing for the withdrawal of the Self-Respect journal Pagutharivu (see Appendix V, 3) which first appeared on the 12th of January 1934, he writes:

Anybody who dabbles in politics and is labeled a **"nationalist"** these days wants to make a living by starting a journal. This in itself is not bad. This is the law of nature. But some people defy this law. This is the reason why in the last ten to fifteen years thousands of journals have appeared only to disappear.

Could our Paaautharivu be one such journal? We cannot deny that this is so. Pagutharivu acquired a declaration five years ago ... Recently, due to the simmering anger of some of our youth, it has been appearing as a daily. This is in order to counter the feeling we have that the Self-Respect **movement** does not have a proper daily and that **most** other journals not only do not help the movement, they seek to harm it. I do not wish to judge such a sentiment as being right or wrong...

However, it is not possible for the Self-Respect movement to publish any more journals.

Recently, over 20 journals which we had been supporting have disappeared. We are **blamed** for this. In spite of realizing what the situation is, it would be a big mistake to take on the responsibility for a new journal....

It appears pointless and unnecessary to run **Pagutharivu** as a daily.  
("Pagutharivu", Puratchi, May 27, 1934)<sup>24</sup>

For Periyar, journals were an important means of intervening in and transforming civil society. Effecting changes in civil society, fighting varnashrama dharma and, in doing so, critiquing both Brahminism and patriarchy, Periyar always argued, was far more important than political reform. So **important** was the print media to Periyar that as late as 1970 he launched two new journals, the Tamil fortnightly, Unmai (The Truth) and the English monthly, the Modern Rationalist. The non-Brahmin journal is an important indication of the Dravidian **movement's** fashioning not only of a dramatically different public sphere, but also of a new constituency of readers.

## Motes

<sup>1</sup>See bibliography for references to their work.

<sup>2</sup>See bibliography for references to their work.

<sup>3</sup> See Sumathi Ramaswamy, "En/gendering Language: The Poetics and Politics of Tamil Identity, 1891-1970," unpublished Ph.d dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1992; M.S.S. Pandian, "Notes on the Transformation of "Dravidian" Ideology: Tamilnadu, c.1900-1940", *Social Scientist*. Volume 22, Nos. 5-6, (May-June 1994): 84-103 and Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Transition: Gender Politics and Literature in Tamilnadu," paper presented at a seminar on Interrogating Post-colonialism organized by the Indian Association for Commonwealth Languages and Literatures at Shimla between October 3-5, 1994. The specific charge of **"Tamil-centrism"** may perhaps be most easily brought to bear on what, in many ways, is the precursor to the Dravidian movement, the **Saiva-Vellalar** backed **Tani Tamizh Iyakkam** or the Pure Tamil movement spear-headed by Maraimalai Adigal, **P.Sundaram Pillai**, **J.M Nallaswami Pillai** and **V.Kanakasabhai** between 1880 and 1915.

Portrayed even by scholars such as Sumathi Ramaswamy who are sympathetic to their political position as "Tamil revivalists" who contributed to the "divinization of Tamil" as part of a "neo-Saivite religious assertion", the Saiva Vellalas, who argued for a freeing of Tamil from the influence of Sanskrit, became active in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For the first time, a monotheistic, non-ritualistic **Saivism** and a "pure Tamil", "non-Brahmin identity came to be posited against an Aryan/Brahmin identity. As M.S.S Pandian points out in his article "Notes on the Transformation of 'Dravidian' Ideology", this Saivite non-Brahmin identity was distanced both from the Brahmin identity as well as from lower-caste identities. In fact, lower-caste gods were de-legitimized just as "Vaishnavaites", "Aryan" gods were. Pandian points out that the Saivites constructed themselves as "superior" both to the Brahmins who were seen as trapped in a barbaric, ritualistic Hinduism as well as to the lower-castes. They held themselves responsible for the discovery of settled cultivation and tied to this was the fact that they saw themselves as having highly cultivated minds and superior moral codes and behaviour. One index of their superior morals and compassion was their vegetarianism. While Periyar initially considered the **Saiva-Vellalas** as his allies, he soon began to distance himself from them both on account of their "elitism" as well as on account of their belief in Hinduism. On their part, the Vellalars responded by branding Periyar a "Vaishnavaites". However, even in the case of the Pure Tamil movement, language identity and religious identity were deeply intertwined with a "non-Brahmin" identity.

Language-based agitations in the present are in fact increasingly linked to right-wing politics. They serve as a pointer to

the fact that the Right has indeed occupied the realm of culture. One instance is the communal riots that took place in response to the introduction of an Urdu newscast in Bangalore city in October 1994. These riots testify to the collaboration between Kannada linguistic chauvinism and the Hindu fascism of the Sangh **Parivar**. The resurgence of Kannada linguistic chauvinism in Bangalore should be read, as Janaki Nair argues, in the context of already existing anti-Muslim sentiments that were readily tapped by the Shakti Kendra, the Karnataka Yuva-jana Parishad and the Hindu Jagran Vedithe (1994). Nair suggests that the Kannada movement in this new phase is restricted to directing its ire against other equally dominated cultures in Bangalore city, such as Tamil and Urdu. (Earlier, in 1990, the Cauvery river waters dispute had led to vicious attacks on the city's **working** class Tamil population). In the process, the pro-Kannada activists are deliberately side-stepping the fact that in a city towards which both national and international capital has been flowing (Bangalore is the **techie-yuppie** capital of the nation), it is English, the language of business, commerce and advertising, that is especially hegemonic. The English-speaking elites of Bangalore, as Nair shows, continue to be secure in their economic and social power, untouched by the Kannada **activists'** fury. Riots don't happen on their territories. This peculiar *bonhomie* between Hindu revivalism and English hegemony then leads us to question the very **unquestionedness** of the latter, though differently from either **Raina** or Trivedi.

5 See Ravindran V, "The Unanticipated Legacy of Robert Caldwell and the Dravidian movement," South Indian Studies **No.1** Jan-June 1996; 83-110).

6 The Secretary of State, Montagu's declaration of 20th August 1917, stated that British policy in India would have as its objective 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' (Sumit Sarkar, 1983: 163). Such a "self-government" was achieved through the granting of provincial autonomy and the device of "**dyarchy**", transferring certain functions of provincial governments such as education, health, agriculture, local bodies to **ministers** responsible to legislative assemblies while keeping other subjects reserved. The Government of India Act of 1919 set up a bicameral system at the centre, Council of State and Legislative Assembly. According to Sumit Sarkar, the system of dyarchy transferred less important departments with little funds to **ministers** responsible to provincial legislatures. Indian politicians were, as a consequence, often blamed for not improving areas like education, health and agriculture. Thanks to the **Montagu-Chelmsford** Report, communal representation and reservations were extended and the British conceded the Justice Party demands for reservations for non-Brahmins in Madras.

From Perivar **E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal**. Volume 1, **comp.**, Ve.Anaimuthu (Trichi: Thinkers' Forum, 1974): 76.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid: 77.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Kudi Arasu. 26/9/1926.

<sup>10</sup> From Perivar E.Ve.Ra.Chintanaigal Volume 1, 1974: 470-471.

<sup>11</sup> Periyar returned from a year long continental tour in November 1932, deeply impressed with the functioning of the communist government in Russia and with the trade unions and labour movement in England. In collaboration with the labour leader M.Singaravelu, he formulated the "Self-Respect Socialist Party Employment Programme", otherwise known as the Erode Programme or the Singaravelar Programme which was presented at a convention in Erode in December 1932. The programme envisaged the formation of two wings within the Self-Respect movement, the Self-Respect League and the Self-Respect Samadharma (Self-Respect Socialist) Party of South India (Kudi Arasu 1/1/1933). The Socialist wing was envisaged as a more broad-based group than the Self-Respect League and invited non-Brahmin leaders such as Dr.Varadarajulu Naidu and Thiru.Vi.Ka to the Erode Self-Respect and Socialist Convention. However, unlike M.Singaravelu, Periyar did not believe in "purging" the Self-Respect movement of all non-socialists, declaring that the movement would not lose its purity due to the presence of either theists or non-socialists.

<sup>12</sup> N.K.Mangala Murugesan's unpublished M.Litt dissertation Social Reform Movements in Tamilnadu from 1920 to 1940 With Special Reference to the Self-Respect Movement, University of Madras, 1977, sees the year 1940 as marking the formal end of the Self-Respect movement.

<sup>13</sup> See M.S.S Pandian, "Parasakthi": Life and Times of a DMK Film," EPW. 26.(11 & 12) (March 1991): 759-770; also see, by the same author, The Image Trap: MG Ramachandran in Film and Politics (New Delhi: Sage, 1992) which argues that M.G.R's powerful screen presence and the kinds of roles he chose to enact, his filmic image was ultimately responsible for his popularity with the masses and his success in the elections. This was despite his anti-poor economic policies. A.R Venkatachalapathy's in his paper titled "The Context of the Dravidian movement and its Cinema" was presented at a workshop on "Tamil Cinema: History, Culture, **Theory**" organized by the Madras Institute of Development Studies at Madras between August 15th and August 19th, 1997 also argued that it was the DMK which used the medium of cinema as an ideological weapon.

<sup>14</sup> From Periyar, E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. Volume 3, 1974: 1895- 1896.

<sup>15</sup> See editorial, Kudi Arasu. 30/1/1927; Dravidan. 7/5/1927; E.V.Ramasami Naicker, "Patirikaigal", Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal, Volume 2, comp., Ve.Anaimuthu (Trichi: Thinkers' Forum, 1974): 1284 - 1286; also see Appendix I b.

<sup>16</sup> The **Dravida Kazhagam** and the DMK also popularized "**Padipagams**"

(reading circles) in the towns and villages of **Tamilnadu**.

**17** **From** Perivar E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal. 1974: 1893.

**18** The Periyar Thidal Library and the Anna **Arivalayam** located at Madras only have copies of the major journals of the **Self-Respect** movement **Kudi Arasu**. Viduthalai, Puratchi. **Paqutharivu**, pravidanadu. Tamizhan. Desabandhu. Naqaraduthan and **Samadharmam**.

**19** **See** P.Rajaraman, The Justice Party: A Historical Perspective 1916-37 (Madras: **Poompozhi**, 1988), 56-57.

**20** Also in **Dravidan**. 7/5/1927; See section titled "**Patirikaigal**" written by Periyar in Perivar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal, Volume 2, **comp.**, **Ve.Anaimuthu** (Trichi: **Thinkers'** Forum, 1974): 1284 - 1286); also see Appendix **Ib**.

**21** **See** Puratchi. 24/12/1933.

**22** Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal Volume 3, 1974: 1896; See Appendix I a.

**23** Ibid: 1904; see Appendix I a.

**24** Ibid: 1897-1898; See Appendix I a.

## Chapter Six

### **Gender and the self-Respect Movement: A Case for Female Agency**

The protest against Hindi became a battle like the Purananuru battles where Tamil warriors were being sent to battlefields and jail by their women and where the women themselves entered the battle as supporters of their men. Many of these women went to jail with their children in 1939 protesting against Hindi. Not all the children were breast-fed babies. The mothers took them obviously because they were considered responsible for them and also possibly because there was a constant need to prove to themselves and others, whatever activities (sic), their roles as mothers would not suffer. (C.S.Lakshmi, 1990: WS-75)<sup>1</sup>

Though perhaps not intended as a specific critique of C.S. Lakshmi's statements regarding the participation of the Self-Respect women in the anti-Hindi agitation of 1938-1939, S.Anandhi narrates an incident in which a **member** of the Congress ministry commented that these women were getting arrested to get milk for their children in prison (Anandhi, 1991: 33).<sup>2</sup> At the Madras provincial Self-Respect women's conference held at Vellore in 1938, women activists demanded that the minister withdraw his comment and offer an unconditional apology (Anandhi, 1991: 33). This incident, I would like to suggest, gives us an important insight not only into the agency of **Self-Respect** women but also into the specific ways in which they questioned their construction and subsequent dismissal as "mothers" who could not be active political agents themselves. Curiously enough, this agency is made invisible even by those critics who, unlike Lakshmi, are sympathetic to the "gender" politics of the Self-Respect



movement. Most debates about gender and the Self-Respect movement are anchored around two opposing axes – one, the "anti-feminism" of the movement/the passivity of the Self-Respect woman/the gendering of the Tamil nation and language, and, two, Periyar's extraordinarily "progressive" vision of gender equality as stemming primarily from his critique of Brahminism and Hinduism, and, arising from this, the "progressive" Self-Respect marriage which is marked by the absence of rituals, the chanting of vedic texts, the Brahmin priest and the "enslaving" tali or managalasutra. The gendering of the **Tamil** nation and language in Self-Respect discourse is, as in the case of **Lakshmi's** arguments, often conflated with the participation of **women** in the anti-Hindi agitation, the organizing of **women's** conferences and the participation of **women** in these conferences.

#### Self-Respect Women and the Anti-Hindi Agitation

The anti-Hindi agitation of 1938 is among the most widely cited events in analyses of the Self-Respect movement from the perspective of gender. This event **is** invoked both to signal the presence of women in the Self-Respect movement and to argue that the Tamil nation is gendered. It might be instructive, then, to examine briefly the socio-political contexts in which both this agitation as well as other agitations in the name of Tamil were **staged**.<sup>3</sup>

In 1937, when the Congress Ministry assumed office in the Madras Presidency under the Chief Ministership of **C.Rajagopalachari**, it made compulsory the study of Hindi in the 1st, 2nd

and 3rd forms of 125 schools. The Self-Respecters, including the Justicites who had now merged with the former, agitated against what they perceived to be the imposition of an Aryan language on the Dravidian peoples, one moreover, as Periyar often liked to point out, was unsuitable to the needs and requirements of **modern times**. As we shall see, there was an entire history to this particular agitation and it was followed by other such agitations initiated by the non-Brahmin movement in **Tamilnadu**. By a careful and deliberate process, the nationalist movement had constructed Hindi as the "natural" choice for a national language. In this, however, it was helped partially by the colonial attempts at reconstituting vernacular languages. Grammars of the vernaculars were rewritten in terms of European grammatical categories in an effort to "purify" and "standardize" **them**. More **significantly** for our analysis here, **Sanskritized** versions of languages were created and constructed as "authentic" even as Persian usages and dialects shared by larger linguistic communities were marginalized.

Here then, we have the beginnings of the hegemonic rise of Hindi, a language which, unlike Hindustani, was heavily Sanskritized. As Christopher King has argued, the modern Sanskritized Hindi of North India gradually became an important symbol of Hindu nationalism while Urdu became communally marked as the language of the Muslims (King: 1989)<sup>4</sup>. Writing about the development of Hindi up to the eighteenth century, **Amrit Rai** argues that prior to the decline of Mughal rule, a common language - Hindi/Hindavi united the linguistic and cultural traditions of Hindus and Muslims in India (Rai: 1984). This

Hindavi was inflected differently in different parts of the country. Two distinct languages, Hindi and Urdu, were fashioned later by a deliberate process of Sanskritization and Persianization respectively. British Orientalist scholars advocated Hindavi for the Hindus and Arabic and Persian for the Muslims, in place of a common and shared language, Hindustani. They were therefore among the earliest to link languages with religious groups. In much of early nineteenth century Northern India however, both **Muslims** and Hindus remained familiar with Urdu.

In the **1860's**, questions regarding the proper official language for the North Western provinces began to figure in the vernacular press. The provincial government received a series of **memoranda** in 1868, 1869, 1872 and 1873 urging the use of Hindi as the official language. The Arya **Samaj**, which propagated Hindi throughout Northern India, was formed in 1875. The Nagari Pracharani Sabha (Society for the Promotion of Nagari) established at Benaras in 1893, aided the establishment of Hindi as a legitimate discipline of study. Both the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Samaj (established in 1880 under the leadership of Madan Mohan Malaviya, a prominent member of the Indian National Congress) enjoined its members to learn either Sanskrit or Hindi. Organizations such as the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Samaj were actively involved in the ongoing project of rewriting Indian history. According to their version, alien and immoral Muslim rulers had imposed their culture and values on Hindu India. Hindi, they argued, was a language of the masses and reviving it would help restore "**Hindu nationality**". As S.V

Rajadurai has demonstrated in his book Hindu. Hindi. India, the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj used Hindi to construct a Hindu India:

[The RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj] marginalized the Hindi that was widely spoken by the masses, a Hindi which was alive. They sought to artificially fashion a new language. In order to do this, they gave the name of "Hindustani" to the dialect popular amongst the masses.

The Hindi language they attempted to create was different from Hindustani in two respects. Firstly, all Arabic and Persian words and phrases were removed in the process of fashioning this Hindi. Secondly, this language was primarily Sanskrit based. These organizations reasoned that Arabic and Persian were both languages of a foreign culture. They belong to a people who invaded and attacked India. Sanskrit represents the true India because it is the language of our religious texts (Rajadurai: 1993, 135-136)<sup>5</sup>

Rajadurai also points out that those who used such arguments in favour of the adoption of Hindi were dominant in the Congress (1993: 136). Interestingly, the sections of the Hindu community which did benefit from a change in official language from Urdu to Hindi were the Brahmins, the Rajputs, and the Banias, educated in the Hindi-Sanskrit rather than the Urdu-Persian tradition. The growth of the Hindi movement which was supported by the entire spectrum of the nationalist leadership, from the Arya Samajis to the members of the Indian National Congress, led to a significant re-alignment of caste-dominance among the Hindus. In April 1900, the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces issued a resolution giving Nagari equal status to that of Urdu.

The use of Hindi in place of English and other regional Indian languages had always been used by the Indian National

Congress as an ideological weapon in the struggle for freedom, in 1925, the Congress adopted a resolution to conduct all its proceedings in Hindi. English, or the provincial language, was to be used only if the speaker was unable to speak in Hindustani. Gandhi, in fact, berated the Tamil Congress delegates to the Karachi Congress meeting in March 1931 for not using Hindi **and** argued that the use of Tamil was an act of tyranny by a minority and that the Tamil delegates could easily learn Hindi in three months by studying it three hours **a** day (Irschick 1986: 212). A bill making Hindi a compulsory subject in all the provincial schools was introduced in the Madras legislature when the Government of India Act of 1935 came into effect. And, as I have already mentioned. Chief Minister Rajagopalachari announced the compulsory study of Hindi at the primary level in certain schools of the Madras Presidency in the year 1937. Speaking at a convention of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Rajaji said:

My decision to make Hindi compulsory in schools is like a mother forcing her child to drink milk. There is nothing wrong with such a compulsion.  
(Kudi Arasu 6/6/1937)

Rajaji also argued that learning to read and write in Hindi would enable one to become a scholar of Sanskrit and read the Ramayana. The **Tamilnadu** Congress leader **S.Satyamurthy** welcomed this as a move which would ensure literacy in Hindi within the next decade (Rajadurai & Geetha, 1996: 610). Rajaji's announcement triggered off **a** large-scale agitation by the activists of the non-Brahmin movement in Tamilnadu. In February 1938, at an anti-Hindi procession **and** public **meeting** organized at Kancheepuram, the

Self-Respecters and the Justicites passed a resolution condemning the imposition of Hindi. The Justice Party and the Self-Respecters formed a boycott committee in Madras city on June 1st, 1938, and picketed the home of C.Rajagopalachari. In August 1938, Periyar organized a march from Trichi to Madras city to protest the imposition of Hindi (Irschick 1986: 220-226). The **criminal** Law Act was used consistently against the protesters and over 800 of them were arrested (The Hindu. April 12, 1939). Periyar was sentenced in December 1938 to nearly two years imprisonment both for speaking at the women's convention and for picketing the Hindu Theological School at Pedha Naicken **Palayam** where Hindi had been introduced. It was while he was in prison that he was elected president of the Justice Party. He was released in May 1939 before completing his sentence on grounds of ill health. After his release, Periyar met Ambedkar and Mohammed Ali Jinnah in Bombay and convinced them of the rationale behind the anti-Hindi agitation. In February 1940, the British government withdrew the compulsory Hindi programme. At the same time, in a **move** to appease all major political parties whose support it required for the war, it permitted the continuance of Hindi as an optional subject in the first three forms of high schools (**Raja-**durai and Geetha 1996: 667).

Gendering of **the** Tamil Nation **and** Language: "**Mother-Metaphors**"

What is especially striking about the anti-Hindi agitation, and what concerns us most here, is the active and large-scale participation of women. As we already know, many among those arrested and sent to prison were women. Many of the meetings and

conventions organized as part of this agitation were addressed by women leaders such as Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar, Narayani Ammaiyar, Thamaraiakanni Ammaiyar and Munnagra Azhagiyar (Anandhi, 1991: 32). A Self-Respect women's convention was held in Madras city on the 12th and the 13th of November 1938 under the leadership of Neelambikai **Ammayar**. Among other things, the convention passed a resolution condemning the imposition of Hindi (Rajadurai and Geetha 1996: 656).

Anandhi tells us that women often participated in processions and **meetings** clad in sarees printed with the Tamil flag (carrying the symbols of the three ancient kingdoms, Chera, **Chola** and Pandya) chanting anti-Hindi and pro-Tamil slogans. The image of the Tamil woman wearing the Tamil flag could well be read as a powerful signifier of a gendered Tamil nation. As **Sumathi Ramaswamy** has argued, not only is Tamil feminized in the discourse of the anti-Hindi agitation which she reads as part of a larger Tamil "revivalism", it is also feminized specifically as a mother:

... the **personification** of Tamil as mother enabled revivalists, especially in situations that appeared as crises and that demanded public response and resistance, to deploy different parts of **Tamilttay's** [Tamil mother's] body – her womb, her milk, her tears, her scarred face, her fettered limbs, etc. as symbolic devices with which to awaken and arouse a "sleeping" Tamil populace to activism. This is especially true during the Hindi protests when revivalists circulated tracts that contained provocative images of Tamilttay being fettered in chains, or being confined to a dungeon (1992: **361**).<sup>6</sup>

Sumathi **Ramaswamy** specifically mentions that **Lakshmi's** arguments about the **Self-Respect** Tamil mother reflects her own position (1992: 379).

### **Defense of the Self-Respect Movement's Gender Politics**

How then might we read the participation of women in the anti-Hindi agitation and in the Self-Respect movement as a whole? It is in response to the arguments that the Self-Respect movement frequently invoked the mother-metaphor and that it gendered the Tamil nation and language, that critics sympathetic to the movement have built up a defense of its gender politics. To go over Lakshmi's arguments in detail: her stated objective is "to locate the mother in the functional context of Tamil culture and politics and to understand the multiple ways in which meanings have been loaded on the term mother, literally splitting mothers into mothers and non-mothers, pure mothers and whore mothers, mothers of sons and mothers of daughters" (1990: WS-72). She begins by examining the obsession with the image of the Tamil mother in classical Tamil literature, in the Purananuru and in the Silappadhikaram and the ways in which it is invoked in these texts and elsewhere to represent the ideals of purity and chastity, of Tamil language and of the Tamil country itself. As if to mark the historical continuity of the mother-metaphor in "Tamil" culture and politics, Lakshmi goes on to look at the "mother-woman of the Self-Respect movement" who, she claims, was erected on the foundation of the nationalist Tamil poet Subramania Bharati's "new woman". Citing the participation of Self-Respect women in the anti-Hindi agitation, she argues that they entered the "battle-field" as "supporters of their men" and went to jail with their children in order to portray themselves as women who were primarily mothers (1990: WS-75). The DMK, she argues, was "like



an extended family ... almost an all-male party with members who thought of themselves as warriors fighting battles" and women, who were by now ensconced in Self-Respect marriages, were "glorified mothers, sending their sons and husbands to battles, feeding them and their friends, bringing up sons with valorous milk<sup>1</sup> with as much ease as Maltova-mothers" (1990: WS-77). Lakshmi also critiques DMK cinema for constructing an opposition between "good" women (mothers, sisters) and "bad" women (vamps). Among her many other scattered and hyperbolic attacks on the Self-Respect movement unfortunately based on ahistorical and unverified claims, Lakshmi mentions that to the female Self-Respecter, "Self-Respect meant supportive actions and acceptance of whatever was meant for them as **mother-community'** and that many of the Self-Respect marriages, which were considered love-marriages, occurred between two people who had already been married in the conventional fashion, that, in fact, they encouraged a bigamy that was not permitted of women (1990: WS-77). She also cites **Periyar's** own marriage in 1949 to a woman much younger than him, "much against the reform he himself undertook to stop old men **marrying** young girls" (1990: WS-76).

One dominant and strategic response to **Lakshmi's** position has been to invoke Periyar's own agenda for women as "radical" and "progressive". Conceding that what Lakshmi argues may well be true in relation to the politics of the DMK and the AIADMK, both of which, functioning as they do within the limitations of an electoral politics, have a "history of ideological compromises and propagation of socially retrogressive stereotypes, including that of women", M.S.S Pandian, Anandhi.S and A.R Venkatachala-

pathy contend that the Self-Respect movement had a radically different agenda and that this is indexed especially by Periyar's own work, his writing as well as his activism.<sup>7</sup> They contend that Lakshmi "constructs a false history of the Self-Respect movement, which was the early as well as the most progressive phase of the 'Dravidian Movement'" and that she excludes from her discussion the role of the Congress nationalists in the formation of a Tamil culture and politics, thus laying the blame squarely on the Dravidian movement for glorifying the mother metaphor (1991: 1059). In the course of their lengthy and scathing dismantling of Lakshmi's position, a position they rightly characterize as politically irresponsible, biased, and often unsubstantiated, they repeatedly invoke Periyar as representing the most progressive aspects of the Self-Respect movement. They argue, **for** instance, that Periyar was opposed to the project of reviving a glorious Tamil past, quite unlike the DMK and the **AIADMK**. They quote **Periyar's** statement to the effect that such a revival of the past was contrary to the principles of rationalism (1991: 1060). They point out that the Self-Respect movement never glorified ancient Tamil literature and argue that Periyar always attacked the Silappadhikaram, and the Tirukkural for the ways in which they degraded women. Pandian, Anandhi and **Venkatachalapathy** also cite Periyar's advocacy of contraception as an important sign of his support of a motherhood by choice (1991: 1061). They also argue that in her trivialization of Self-Respect marriages, Lakshmi forgets the difficult socio-political context in which they were performed and the principles of gender equality on which they were based (1991: 1062). The difficulties faced by

Periyar in performing some of these marriages are mentioned (1991: 1062). The authors then proceed with what in many ways, constitutes the best and most promising argument against Lakshmi's reading, that the Self-Respect movement brought women into the public sphere, that it invested women activists with many important political responsibilities. Unfortunately, however, even the presence of women, which should suggest to us other ways of reading the Self-Respect movement, is explained in terms of Periyar's agency. For instance, the authors argue that Periyar attempted to make even inarticulate women articulate:

Significantly, Periyar took special interest in breaking the culture of silence that characterized the women activists of the movement. He insisted that even the most inarticulate woman member should utter at least a few words in the course of women's conferences. Incidentally, when Periyar was arrested in December 1938 for his leading role in the anti-Hindi agitation, the charge against him was inciting women to enter jails. (1991: 1063).

Ironically, they quote M.Singaravelu (a communist, who collaborated with Periyar in the writing of the Erode Socialist Programme) in support of their stance, implying that **Periyar's** was literally the last word on the issue of gender equality and women's "liberation". In Singaravelu's words:

Women who have been confined to the kitchen **are** speaking today from public platforms; they are debating about public issues; they are involved in social work as equals of men. The credit for facilitating all these goes to Periyar. (1991: 1063).

### Making Agency Invisible

Where, one wonders, is the agency of the Self-Respect woman in all this? If Lakshmi's statement that the Self-Respect woman entered the anti-Hindi agitation as supporters of men and as women who were primarily mothers makes this agency invisible, Pandian, Anandhi and Venkatachalapathy, in defending the gender politics of the Self-Respect movement as almost entirely represented by Periyar's own agency, his work and thought, effectively obscure woman's agency once again.

Anandhi's article, which I cited at the beginning of this chapter, does not really articulate a radically different position.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the argument in the co-authored article about Periyar's efforts to make the inarticulate Self-Respect women more articulate and Singaravelu's appreciation of his efforts figures in exactly the same fashion in Anandhi's own article published subsequently. Anandhi argues here that Periyar's views on the women's question found practical expression in three major activities of the movement: the performance of Self-Respect marriages, the organizing of women's conferences to "raise [women's] consciousness" and to "highlight their problems" and, thirdly, the involvement of women in mass agitations (1991: 27). The case history that Anandhi provides us of the Self-Respect woman activist, Moovalur Ramamirtham Anunaiyar, in order to "explore how far the movement had succeeded in raising the consciousness of women about their own plight", despite the framework in which it is offered, suggests an exciting and different way both of defending the gender politics of the Self-Respect

movement in terms of the initiatives it enabled, and critiquing the ways in which dominant historiographies of the movement make these initiatives invisible (1991: 33). Unfortunately, however, Anandhi takes up this aspect only as a way of pointing out how the movement "raised the consciousness" of the Self-Respect woman. The woman then is still not perceived as an active agent in the movement. Rather, the movement (often, represented by Periyar) acts on her to raise her consciousness.

In her critique of Lakshmi's article, V.Geetha raises the issue of the Self-Respect woman's agency and argues that this agency is invisible in Lakshmi's reading of the Self-Respect movement's gender politics.<sup>9</sup> Geetha points to the inadequacy of Lakshmi's theoretical framework, its inability to provide a convincing model of motherhood in Tamilnadu, and the confused and fallacious analogy she draws between the Dravidian movement's "essentialization" of motherhood and the propagation of motherhood in Nazi Germany. Geetha argues that Lakshmi refuses to see Self-Respect women as "active historical agents, making and re-making their everyday lives and, hence, history (1991: 388).

So overwhelming is the impetus to conflate the Self-Respect movement as well as its progressive gender politics with Periyar that in their recent book Perivar: Suvamariathai Samadharmam. Geetha and Rajadurai briefly raise the notion of the Self-Respect woman's agency, only to revert back to the strategy of citing Periyar as the ultimate and most radical authority on gender issues.<sup>10</sup> They also attribute the problematic "gendering of nation and language" to forces outside of the Self-Respect

movement which acted in unison with the movement during the anti-Hindi agitation:

Not only did Periyar have to unite the various forces which joined hands during the anti-Hindi agitation, he also gave them the opportunity to use the journals and the forums of the Self-Respect movement... Very diverse voices began to make themselves heard, the voices of Tamil nationalism, voices which constructed the language and the nation as a woman, those that pictured women as harmful, cartoons, songs, lovers of ancient Tamil, all became part of the anti-Hindi agitation.

(1996: 651-652)

Geetha and Rajadurai cite examples from Kudi Arasu and other texts to argue that the image of the Tamil mother was being deployed even by activists such as Neelambikai Ammaiyar in order to urge the Tamilian to join the anti-Hindi agitation. They argue:

Such a gendering of the nation and language is being critiqued from a feminist perspective today. The fact that some of the women activists who took part in the anti-Hindi agitation performed "aarathi" for their male companions... is no doubt true... In order to rouse the Tamil people, they did invoke notions of the warrior-like Tamil, of honour and pride (especially in their Tamil ancestors) and so on. They also used the Tamil flag. It is also true that hundreds of women who took part in the agitation and went to jail... did not have any "feminist thoughts" or principles. However, their participation reflected much more than just a love for Tamil. It was a self-conscious, self-stimulated participation. Many among these women were lower caste and believed in fighting casteism, in supporting inter-caste marriages, and remarriages...

(1996: 653)

The authors argue that while there is truth in the criticism of some "Brahmin feminists" (C.S Lakshmi's own position would be seen as representative of a Brahmin feminism) that the gendering of nation and language is dangerous and that there are many shortcomings in the gender consciousness of Self-Respect women, these feminists fail to recognize Brahminism itself and can only think in terms of feminism. Geetha and Rajadurai cite instances of the Self-Respect woman's agency - the passing of two important resolutions at the Tamilnadu Women's conference and at the 14th Justice Party conference. One of these resolutions was in the nature of a condemnation of the Brahmin **Congress-affiliated** Indian Women's Association's support of Hindi. In response to this, the Self-Respect women who participated in the two conferences challenged the Association to organize a conference in support of Hindi. The second resolution was a response to the disrespectful way in which the **"nationalist"** newspaper Sudesamitantran had referred to the Self-Respect women who participated in the Vellore conference, even as it addressed Sarojini Naidu with respect. A resolution to boycott such newspapers was passed.

Even as they explicitly invoke the agency of the Self-Respect woman in a way that other critics have not, Geetha and Rajadurai finally revert to the familiar strategy of focussing on **Periyar's** individual contribution to an alternative gender politics:

However, Periyar's presence made itself felt over and above all other voices. While he occasionally invoked concepts of honour and heroism to rouse the Dravidians, he stated clearly that he did not believe in valorizing Tamil  
(1996: 654).

While defending Periyar is both necessary and strategic in the face of upper-caste misrepresentations of Self-Respect politics, it may not always be productive to do so in the context of gender politics. Granting that Periyar's vision of gender equality was progressive and far ahead of his times, invoking him in such a compulsive fashion may well close off other valuable directions in which debates about gender and the Self-Respect movement could proceed. The Self-Respect woman's agency, which still remains to be theorized, is only one such direction.

#### **Theorizing the Self-Respect Woman's Agency: Some Suggestions**

Recovering the history of the Self-Respect woman involves reading against the grain of existing historiography which sees her as having been acted on by the male Self-Respecter, as having had her consciousness raised, as having provided the necessary support, through her activism, to what was essentially a male cause, the cause of the "larger" movement. It is simply not enough to see her either as the object of political education or as the mobilized subject. What I propose below is more in the nature of notes, towards theorizing the Self-Respect woman's **agency**.

Let us examine what Anandhi, Pandian and Venkatachalapathy have identified as one of the most important means by which **the** Self-Respect movement fought the gender battle – the Self-Respect **marriage**. This marriage, as we know, was performed without Brahmin priests. It was marked by the absence of upper-caste, Hindu rituals, the recitation of religious texts and the



tali seen as the symbol of women's oppression. Speaking at the Self-Respect marriage of Karpagam and Kalyanasundaram performed on 8/6/1934 in Madras, Periyar seeks to outline the differences between what he calls the "conservative", "old-fashioned" marriage and the Self-Respect marriage, constructing the latter as a critique of the former (Puratchi. 17/6/1934). He describes the typical, conservative marriage as one in which the bride and the groom have absolutely no say. In fact, argues Periyar, in 99% of conventional marriages, the bride and the groom have never met or spoken with each other. Marriage then is not a personal contract between two individuals but one that is arranged by the parents, the grandparents or the family elders and family friends of these individuals. Periyar then speaks of the irrational basis of these marriages wherein the time of birth of the bride and groom is often the deciding factor in arranging for a match. Also, neither the bride and the groom, nor their families and friends understand the reason behind the various rituals which are an inevitable part of such marriages. Periyar also points out that these marriages are characterized by a great deal of unnecessary waste of financial and other resources. Often, families who can ill-afford it, perform extravagant marriages and end up as permanent debtors. Periyar describes these marriages as both "cruel" and "foolish" and advocates the Self-Respect marriage as a progressive alternative. Periyar critiques the sanctity and the godliness attached to marriage, the burden of which, he argues, is borne by women who have to put up with a great deal of injustice and cruelty within their marriages. Given his generally anti-Hindu, anti-Brahmin stance and given his references to

certain rituals, there is little doubt that in the text of Periyar's speech, the "conservative" marriage is essentially the Hindu marriage. Periyar's critique of Hindu marriage and his posing of women's problem as arising from a Hindu/upper-caste conservatism is grounded in rationalism and a notion of individual rights. The Self-Respect marriage is posed essentially as a "rational" alternative, a marriage which is a contract between two rational, consenting adults, a marriage free of ritual and "superstition". As Sami Chidambaranar tells us, some Self-Respect marriages were deliberately performed at times which were considered "inauspicious" by the Hindu calendar (1983: 118-119). Often, the venue of these marriages became a platform to condemn Hindu scriptures which emphasised women's slavery, insisted on chastity and monogamy on their part, while letting men go scot-free. Anandhi relates the discussion session which formed part of the marriage ceremony of two activists, S.Neelavathi and Ramasubramaniam at Pallathur in Ramanathapuram district in 1930 (1991: 29). When one of the participants asked Periyar why the Self-Respect movement allowed second marriages, the latter responded that marriages could only be tentative arrangements between men and women and should not be treated as eternal and, further, that men and women should have equal right to marry for the second time and to divorce their partners. Implicit in the very structure of the Self-Respect marriage, is the construction of the "rational", "atheistic", "iconoclastic" and, therefore, "free" individual, male and female. Agency itself, therefore, is constituted in terms of the rational Self. However, given the **embeddedness** of "rationalism" in structures of

male power, given its predominant gendering as male, it would appear that the Self-Respect woman is oddly positioned within rationalist discourse. The inadequacy of the rationalist framework in dealing with the women's question might well explain what C.S.Lakshmi reads as the "failure" of the movement's gender politics – and what I suggest may be read as its moments of rupture with rationalism itself – the gendering of the Tamil nation and language which occurred especially during the anti-Hindi agitation, the wearing of the Tamil flag-sarees by women, the deployment of the mother-image even by movement activists such as Neelambikai Ammayar, and the ritual "aarathi" which they performed for their male companions. The issue is not whether the Self-Respect woman was truly "progressive". Instead of rescuing her, like V.Geetha does, by arguing that even though she might not have had any "feminist thoughts", her participation in the anti-Hindi agitation was a self-conscious one and that, as a lower-caste woman, her fight was against casteism

**what we might do is to**

pose other questions as a way out of the critical impasse. What was the Self-Respect woman's relationship with rationalism? What resonances did the construction of the "progressive", "rational", Dravidian Self have for the women's question? Is this Self essentially male? How does the issue of women's emancipation tie up with notions of the "free", rational individual? The women's question is used centrally to critique Hinduism and Brahminism. As we have seen, Hinduism itself is described as "conservative" especially regarding women. I would like to suggest that the Dravidian "Self-Respect" Self (and Periyar is paradigmatic of

this Self) is essentially that of the male (reformer) constituted as naturally "progressive and "pro-women". The terrain on which this "progressiveness" is played out is the critique of Brahminism and Hinduism. The inadequacy of an approach that assumes the radicalness of all non-Brahmin or non-Hindu cultures vis a vis women and theorizes the women's question in terms of a critique of Hinduism alone is addressed by a Muslim woman activist of the Self-Respect movement, Alhaj Subako in an essay in the journal Puratchi;

The objective of this essay is not to review our comrade E.Ve.Ra's book Penn Yenn Adimai Annal?. the first publication of the Rationalist Press. In describing the plight of widows, he has attacked Hindu society. This implies that the stigma of widowhood and the problems related to it does not exist in Muslim society.

It is my intention to declare to the world, 'No, Muslim women are slaves too; The situation of Muslim widows is not praise-worthy'; to challenge the Muslims who say 'Islam has granted women all the rights possible'; to reform the irresponsible Muslims who are making such claims. May Muslim men and parents shed their prejudices and arrive at a rationalist understanding of women's problems! ('Penn Yenn Adimai Annal?': Muslim Pennnallum **Adimaigalle** Thaan! Muslim Vidavaigalin **Nilamai**" ('Why were Women Enslaved: Muslim Women are also Slaves! The Plight of Muslim Widows!'), Puratchi. January 28, 1934 (See Appendix II for a complete translation)

**Subako's** argument, which is essentially clarificatory in nature, forces the issue of the non-Hindu woman, a woman who, by **Periyar's** own definition is also Dravidian, on the **Self-Respect movement**.

We see that such attempts to define the terrain of the women's struggle is frequently made by Self-Respect women. In an

essay titled "Mariyal Cheyyum Idam" ("The Place to Agitate"), the Self-Respect leader Meenakshi writes:

The places where we women should agitate are not the arrack shop, the foreign cloth or the foreign goods store ... Until laws are passed which ensure women's rights, freedom and progress, you should agitate against the Brahmin who opposes such laws and prevents your young widowed sister from remarrying; you should fight to protect your devadasi sister from the pottu kattu forced on her by her parents; agitate in the house of your upper-caste sister who refuses to give your non-Brahmin sister a pot of water... conduct a satyagraha to reform those men who have literally imprisoned women in their homes so that they never see the sun. If you do all this, you will get your rights and your freedom. You will be praised for your intelligence, intellect, sacrifice and patriotism. ("Mariyal Cheyyum Idam", Kudi Arasu. 6/3/1932)

Not only does Meenakshi specifically proscribe Congress style agitations for women (anti-arrack and anti-foreign goods), she constructs the non-Brahmin woman as different from both her "upper-caste sister" and from the "devadasi" who it is her duty to protect from pottu kattu (a ritual marriage to God which would entitle her to be the mistress of any upper-caste man).

If rationalism was one ideological weapon used to address the women's question, the vision of a socialist society based, in principle, on equality was also seen as potentially liberating for women. As we shall see, this socialism too was linked to rationalism. In fact, Jayasekari invokes the promise of socialism in terms of its implications for women.<sup>11</sup> She argues eloquently for the recognition of women as workers in the new socialist world. In a critique of the gendering of "work" as essentially male, Jayasekari tells us that even socialists tend to see

workers as male and are confused when you suggest to them that women are workers as well. She writes of the different kinds of "work" which women perform, both in the public sphere as well as in the private sphere, and argues that women and work are intimately linked. She points out the importance of women's work in a socialist society and envisions this society as a world where all work is shared and there is no artificial division of work as "men's work" or "women's work":

You cannot chain the women of the future to the home.... What we will have is not a separate "women's work" but the work of the human race. In the future socialist world, the entire community will share in house work and women will not have to bear the burden for this all by themselves.... To believe that women will only do certain kinds of work is a misreading of socialist principles.

The women of today will continue to perform the work that women in the past did. But they will also take on what has been understood as men's work. Their work will be such that they will derive happiness out of it; it will be in keeping with rationalist principles. Our lives revolve around work. This is why work becomes the basis of socialism. A socialist society will provide everyone with work, irrespective of gender.

("Samadharma Ulagil Penngal" ("Women in the World of Socialism"), Puratchi. 29/4/1934; See Appendix II for a complete translation).

Even as Jayasekari critiques the male-ness of the socialist world, she sees a socialism (again based on rationalist principles) as holding out the promise of equality, an equality which she hopes will encompass women as well. Jayasekari's reading of socialism is complicated by her understanding of women's traditional lack of access to "work", seen as occurring only in the public sphere and performed solely by men. What this essay, like Subako's essay, demonstrates for us is the fact that the Self-

Respect woman's own position on the gender question did not necessarily reflect Periyar's position. The agendas of the Self-Respect woman and that of the movement (that of the male Self-Respecter) might not seem vastly different. Perhaps it is not quite necessary to look for heroic narratives of challengaes to male authority by Self-Respect women. It is more productive to take small departures from mainstream narratives seriously, departures which, in different ways, both Subako and Jayasekari have achieved.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>see C.S. Lakshmi, "Mother, Mother-Community and Mother-Politics in Tamilnadu," EPW, 25.(42-43) (October 20-29, 1990): WS 75.

<sup>2</sup> Anandhi S, "Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement: c. 1925-1948," Social Scientist (May-June 1994): 26-41.

<sup>3</sup> For references to and analyses of women's participation in the anti-Hindi agitation, see C.S. Lakshmi, "Mother, Mother-Community and Mother-Politics in Tamilnadu," EPW. 25.42-43 (October 20-29, 1990): WS 75; Anandhi S, "Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement: c. 1925-1948," Social Scientist (May-June 1994): 26-41; M.S.S.Pandian, Anandhi S. and **A.R. Venkatachalapathy**, "Of Maltova Mothers and Other Stories," EPW (April 20, 1991): 1059-1064 and **Sumathy Ramaswamy**. "En/gendering Language: The Poetics and Politics of Tamil Identity, 1891-1970", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1992.

<sup>4</sup>Christopher King quotes from a late nineteenth century Hindi play by Pandit Gauri Datta which stages a debate between Urdu (personified as Begum Urdu) and Hindi (personified as Queen Nagari). In the short one-act play written in the **svang tradition**, Begum Urdu, dressed as a courtesan, addresses Queen Devanagari attired as a proper Hindu wife. The action takes place in a courtroom presided over by Maharaja Righteous-Rule. Babu Moral Law Singh represents Queen Devanagari, while Mirza Cunning Ali Khan argues the case for Begum Urdu. Queen Devanagari belongs to Kashi and embodies the moral and religious values of the Hindu merchant class, especially that of credit-worthiness. She is righteous and guarantees the continuing credit of business and government records. On the other hand, Begum Urdu is corrupt and threatens to destroy the economic well-being of the country. Each claims that India is her **birth-place**. Begum Urdu argues that although her **mother**, Begum Persian, was a foreigner, her own birth took place in India, and therefore she has a right to stay. Her lawyer points to the British recognition of Urdu and its use in courts and offices. Maharaja Righteous-Rule's judgment however, is a foregone conclusion. Invoking the sacred law of the Hindus, he orders that Urdu be cast out and Nagari take her place.

<sup>5</sup>S.V.Rajadurai, Hindu. Hindi. India. Madras: Arivagam, 1993. (in Tamil).

<sup>6</sup>See Sumathy Ramaswamy, op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> M.S.S.Pandian, Anandhi S. and A.R. Venkatachalapathy. "Of Maltova Mothers and Other Stories", op.cit: 1059-1064.

<sup>8</sup>Anandhi S, op.cit: 26-41. The article she co-authored with Pandian and Venkatachalapathy draws heavily upon this.



<sup>9</sup>V.Geetha, "Gender and Political Discourse," EPW (February 16, 1991): 387-388.

<sup>10</sup> S.V.Rajadurai and V.Geetha, Perivar: Suyamariathai Samadharroam (Coimbatore: Vidiyal, 1996) (in Tamil).

<sup>11</sup> In the essay "Penngallum Thozhilum, Penngal Thozhilaligalle" which appeared in Puratchi. April 29, 1934, Neelavathi (a well-known leader, hailing from Trichy, and who was elected as a propaganda secretary at the Samadharma Party conference held at Erode in 1933 and given the responsibility of inaugurating Self Respect Leagues in villages) explains the concept of May Day and, like Jayasekari, draws the reader's attention to the range of tasks performed by women. What is interesting is that even as Self-Respect women fought for greater gender equity, they were not isolated from other aspects of the Self-respect struggle. He find therefore that Neelavathi inaugurates the Ramanathapuram District Third Self-Respect youth convention held at Sivagangai and delivers the welcome address (Puratchi. 10/12/1933). Other Self-Respect women leaders such as A.R Sivanandam Valliammal delivered fiery speeches at large gatherings and conventions. For instance, at a speech that Sivanandam Valliammal gave at the Kovai women's conference in 1933, she says:

As women, we are considered slaves in a Hindu society, slaves to those in power, slaves to men. To add to this, we have internalized the notion that we are slaves to men. Comrades, today there are no limits to the freedom envisaged by men. They can aim for any status, any job and can actually hope to acquire it. As women however, we are bound by the dictates of religion, the vedas, the Shastras and social customs. Even our demands for freedom are voiced from within these boundaries, these fences. These boundaries put us in the situation of a man who is told that he can attend any exam but that he cannot study for it.  
(Puratchi November 26, 1933)

\* See page 199.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

This dissertation has dealt with two different historical periods: the first four decades of the twentieth century and the present. I have attempted to place in conversation four different ideological moments emerging at these two historical periods, the moment of Hindutva, the moment of liberalization, the moment of nationalism and the moment of Dravidian nationalism, mapping each of these moments through constructions of the Indian woman/the Tamil woman. My task has been one of invoking a specific past, the moment of Dravidian nationalism, as a critique of certain moments in the present. One of the risks attendant on such a task is that it does not permit the telling of a linear history. Thus, for instance, the four decades following independence, the decades which saw the formation of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (a breakaway group from Periyar's Dravida Kazhagam), its aggressive entry into electoral politics and its dramatic rise, the coming to power of the AIADMK ( an offshoot of the DMK), the M.G.R phenomenon, the Jayalalitha government, are not written into my narrative.\* One of the questions left unanswered in this dissertation is: What happens to non-Brahmin women after the consolidation of the DK and the DMK? How does the entry into electoral politics affect the gender question as it was articulated by the Self-Respect movement? My dissertation has also not dealt with the ways in which Tamil cinema has constituted the non-Brahmin public sphere in Tamilnadu.<sup>2</sup>

My task in this dissertation has been to argue for the opening up of a new area of enquiry: the subjectivity of the Self-Respect woman.<sup>3</sup> To write a women's history of the Self-Respect **movement** (and not, a history that develops on "Periyar scholarship", is really to write history from below. It would be a history of those on the margins of the movement. This is not an easy task and requires firstly that we re-define what constitutes **"research material"**, "evidence", "facts", "historical truths". We need really to look for very different texts. Secondly, we have to develop a theoretical framework adequate to the task of interpreting these texts. To theorize the Self-Respect woman's agency, we need to move away from the visible ways in which the gender question has already been theorized, from the problematic of the critique of Hinduism/Brahminism, from the construction of the **Self-Respect marriage** as the "progressive" alternative to Hindu marriage, from the construction of the Self-Respect Self as rational, iconoclastic, male. We need to ask if the Self-Respect woman's challenge to patriarchy figured in the critique of Brahminism and, if not, why not? What did this critique enable for Self-Respect women? And what questions and issues did it foreclose? Addressing these questions is crucial for feminism, the Dravidian **movement**, and for a better historical account of the inter-connections between gender and caste.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> To briefly address this gap then. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or the **DMK** was formed in 1949 under the leadership of C.N Annadurai. The decision of Annadurai and his associates to leave the Dravida Kazhagam to which they belonged, followed on the heels of the 72 year old **Periyar's** highly controversial marriage with **Maniammai**, a trusted party member who was several years junior to him in age. Periyar believed that Maniammai would lead the Dravida Kazhagam ably after his death. The marriage, however, was only the apparent reason for **Annadurai's** decision. Other differences had been festering between Annadurai and Periyar. While Periyar boycotted the Independence Day celebrations of 1947, declaring the day as one of mourning, Annadurai, as General Secretary of the Dravida Kazhagam, had opposed this stand. In a 12-page letter in the journal **Dravidanadu**, the latter explained the necessity (on the part of the party members) of celebrating India's Independence Day (Dravidanadu, 1/8/1947). In the 1967 general elections, Annadurai became the Chief Minister of **Tamilnadu**, having secured the majority of the seats in the **Tamilnadu** assembly. He pledged his ministry to Periyar and his ideals and, in turn, Periyar extended his support to the DMK until his death on the 24th of December, 1973. Annadurai enacted the Self-Respect Marriages Act, legalizing all the Self-Respect marriages which had been conducted in the past and granting legal status to all such marriages to be conducted in the future. He also introduced the two language formula of Tamil and English for **Tamilnadu**, in place of the three language formula, including Hindu, prescribed by the Central Government. The AIADMK was founded on 17th October 1972 by **M.G.Ramachandran** following his suspension earlier that year from the DMK for flouting party discipline. On the 30th of June 1977 he was elected the **Chief Minister of Tamilnadu**. He was sworn in as Chief Minister for two successive terms after that, in June 1980 and in February 1985. Jayalalitha assumed the role of his successor after his death in 1987 and assumed office as Chief Minister in 1991. The Jayalalitha government reversed **many** of the policies of the Dravidian movement, diluted its politics of Tamil nationalism and its anti-Brahmin, anti-religion rhetoric, and actively encouraged Hindu religious causes, even supporting the **kar seva** at Ayodhya. In **1997**, the caste-clashes between dalits and the dominant non-Brahmin castes in rural South **Tamilnadu** and the tacit support which the ruling DMK under the Chief Ministership of M.Karunanidhi has extended to the non-Brahmins, has raised the issue of the relevance of the non-Brahmin movement to dalits (See, for instance, K.A **Manikumar**, "Caste Clashes in South Tamilnadu", **EPW**, 32.36 (September 6, 1997): 2242-2243).

<sup>2</sup> For analyses of the post-independence non-Brahmin public sphere, see M.S.S Pandian, The Image **Trap**: M.G Ramachandran in Film and Politics (New Delhi: Sage, 1992); Vivek Dhareashwar, and

Tejaswini Niranjana, "Kaadalan and the Politics of Resignification: Fashion, Violence and the Body", Journal of Arts and Ideas. No.29: 5-26; Robin Jeffrey, "Tamil: Dominated by Cinema and Politics", EPW. 32.6 (February 8, 1997): 254-256.

<sup>3</sup>If the nationalist and Social reform movements made it possible for upper-caste women like Sister **Balammal** and **Vai.Mu.Ko** to start their own **magazines**, the **Self-Respect** movement created the space for non-Brahmin women writers of the calibre of **Moovalur Ramami rthathammal** and **Neelambikai Ammayar** whose writings were inseparable from their activism. Moovalur, who was initiated into the devadasi system at a young age, started her political career as a Congress activist. One of the initiatives she took up was the abolition of the devadasi system. In the mid-1920s she broke away from the Congress to join the Self-Respect movement. She addressed various conferences of the movement and spoke about how Hinduism and upper-caste men were enslaving women. She was also involved in the anti-Hindi agitation in 1938. In 1936, Moovalur **published** the novel **Dasigalin Mosa valai Allathu Mathipettra Mainer** ("The Treacherous Net of the Dasis or a Minor Grown Wise"). This semi-autobiographical novel deals with the lives of two devadasi sisters, exploited by upper-class men, who leave their profession to organize a "Devadasigal Munnetra **Sangam**" (Federation for the Progress of Devadasis).

Vijaya **Ramaswamy** in her paper "Transition: Gender Politics and Literature in **Tamilnadu**" presented at a seminar on Interrogating Post-colonialism at **Shimla** in 1994 tells us about another writer, Neelambikai Ammayar, who was a scholar with a remarkable grounding in Hindi, English as well as in Tamil. In 1937, she compiled a Hindi-Tamil dictionary in which more than 7000 technical terms in Hindi were provided with a Tamil equivalent. Her book Six Hundred Parallel Proverbs in Tamil and English published in 1931 was motivated by her desire to prove that the English language did not have anything more to offer than the Tamil language in terms of the richness of its vocabulary, its idioms or its literary traditions. **Neelambikai's anti-sanskrit/Hindi** essays earned her the title of "Tani **Tamizh Tiruvatti**". **Neelambikai's Muppenmaniqal Varalaru** (1940) was written in order to familiarize Tamil women with spiritual literature. The book was a hagiography of three chaste Tamil women who belonged to the Saivite Nayanar pantheon, Karaikkal **Ammaiyar**, Mangaiyarkkarasiyar and Tilakavatiyar.

Most critical works on Tamil literature do not mention either of these writers. For instance, C.S Lakshmi in her book The Face Behind the Mask: Women in Tamil Literature (New Delhi: Shakti, 1984) mentions Vai.Mu, "**Kumudhini**", "**Gugapriyai**", Visalakshi **Ammal**, Sister Balammal, K.Savitri **Ammal**, K.Saraswathi Ammal, and "Lakshmi", all of whom were upper-caste women writing in the early twentieth century. However, the fact that Moovalur was a novelist and that Neelambikai, a biographer, translator and compiler of dictionaries, ensure that their work is discussed at least by feminist scholars interested in women's literary creations and historians of the Dravidian movement. Susie Tharu and K.Lalitha in their introduction to Women Writing in India Volume 2 mention **Moovalur's** "self-recriminatory posture" in

Dasigalin Mosa Valai (p.13) . Vijaya Ramaswamy (1994) discusses the work of Neelambikai Ammayar and Moovalur. What is overlooked however is the work of **many non-Brahmin** women essayists, Jayasekari, Meenakshi and S.Neelavathi, who wrote for the **columns** of Puratchi and Kudi Arasu. Many of these women were also powerful orators and their speeches, published in the Self-Respect journals, are equally impressive. In Appendix II, I have provided a translation of essays by the **Self-Respect** activists, Jayasekari and **Alhaj** Subako.

## Appendix I a

I.Excerpts from Periyar's writings in the section titled "Beydigal" ("News") Periyar E.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. volume 3, compiled by v.Anaimuthu (Trichy: Thinkers Forum, 1974) (Translation from the Tamil, mine).

### 1.Revolt

Revolt is not concerned with working in the political sphere. However, it is concerned with exposing the evils of the our political system openly and fearlessly. Similarly, it is not concerned with God and religion. But it is crucial to publicize the lack of ethics, the slavish mentality and the ignorance which result from religion. When we registered Revolt with the government authorities, we stated that its objectives were as follows:

The English weekly Revolt has the same objectives as Kudi Arasu. We have interpreted the word "revolt" to mean the breaking of social rules, control and decorum. That is, we will oppose anything that runs contrary to the human spirit, be it politics, religion, capitalism, patriarchy and make it known that the world and its comforts are common to all, that everyone is equal. We will achieve our aims in a way that does not go against our conscience.

The owner is Thiru.S.Ramanathan, M.A, B.L. I too will participate in the editing. We request our youth to support the

journal both by subscribing to it themselves as well as by finding other subscribers.

(Kudi Arasu. "Notice" 11/11/1928; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1891-1892)

## 2.Munnetram

Munnetram is a journal edited by **Thiru.V.S.Narayanasami** and published by Thiru.G.S Sarangapani from Singapore. Its objectives are the destruction of superstitions, the ignorance caused by religion, **Brahminism** and the caste system and the spreading of the Self-Respect message. Since this journal, true to its name, works for the progress of the people, it is my opinion that it will guide them well.

At present, people appear to be sick and tired of journals. However, such an attitude is not an intelligent one. A country or a society has to be saturated with schools and journals in order for it to progress. If we wish to gauge the progress of a country, we can do so by asking its people, **How many journals do you have? How many schools and cultural centres?** There is no place therefore for us to dismiss the journal.

The journal is a teacher beyond compare. Like a mother, it feeds us knowledge. Like a father, it sharpens our intelligence. It is like a son who helps us through difficult times. It is a true friend. Like an ideal wife, it gives us sensuous pleasure. It is our greatest fortune. It is like people close to us, our friends and relatives. It is like medicine for disease. It is like sweet nectar. It serves us with devotion. Entering every



house where ignorance, selfishness, hunger, laziness and poverty prevail, it breaths new life and rouses people to action.

Unlike journals which serve only a small minority, limit **themselves** to national news and waste the **readers'** precious leisure time, each issue of Munnetram, which runs to about 20 pages, gives good value for money. It carries pictures of all important leaders and articles written in good Tamil by intellectuals who are interested in social issues. Since each page, each word of the journal is expressive of the principles of the **Self-Respect** movement, we trust that everyone will support it.

(Kudi Arasu. "Review", 3/3/1929; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1892-1893)

### 3. Suyamariathai Thondan

#### **Comrades!**

Self-Respect journals should spread in each and every village. Otherwise, our country will not really progress. Education is necessary in order to read a journal. It is the responsibility of the leaders of the **Jilla** Board to provide this education. I request everyone to support Suyamariathai Thondan.

(Speech at **Pallipalazham** on 9-4-1929; Kudi Arasu. 14-4-1929; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1893)

### 6. Vedigundu

It is a widely known fact that Vedigundu, a journal supporting the Self-Respect principles, is being published from Madurai. It is a difficult task to run a journal that does not change colour

to keep pace with the times, a journal which is not "pure" or "neutral". We hear that Vedigundu is facing difficult times. Despite this, thanks to the support of the Municipal councillor A.A. Arumugam who has also supported the Self-Respect league at Madurai, the journal continues to run. However, it is not wise to rely on the support of one individual throughout. I request all **self-respecters** to patronize this journal and spread it to all our villages.

(Kudi Arasu. "A Request", 27/8/1993;E.Ve.Ra, Chintanaigal: 1895-1896)

#### 7.Puratchi

Puratchi ("Revolution") was forced to appear because of the attempts to destroy Kudi Arasu. If there is no place in this world for a journal which was the voice of the oppressed peoples, a revolution is bound to occur. We have no doubt that people who are devoted to achieving a revolution will patronize Puratchi.

Since the ruling capitalist class is a slave to the Catholic priests, it has stabbed Kudi Arasu in the back. This reinforces our belief that the Catholic priests have to go before we are rid of the capitalists.

Therefore, Puratchi has had to oppose the Catholic priests much more strongly than Kudi Arasu.

Because of this, Puratchi may be stabbed at any point in time. But the revolution caused by the Self-Respect movement will never die. It is certain that the **movement** will never cease till it attains its objectives.

Jawaharlal Nehru of the Congress has admitted that till

recently he never rebelled against religion, that he was cheated into believing in it and that the capitalist class was gaining ground even as religion continued unopposed.

Religion is the enemy of man's self-respect.

Religion is the enemy of human freedom.

Religion is the enemy of our mental growth.

Religion is the enemy of socialism and equality.

Religion protects the capitalists.

Religion encourages laziness.

Religion keeps the working classes in poverty and ensures that those who do not work are wealthy.

This is why Puratchi was born.

We are happy that Jawaharlal Nehru has, at least now, openly admitted that religion is opposed to socialist principles.

Puratchi does not expect the support of those who are lazy and ally themselves with the Self-Respect movement for the recognition and social status it gives them. We expect the working classes who go hungry after labouring for others to be our patrons.

Puratchi is not interested in protecting the interests of black masters after the white masters go. In other words, we are not interested in replacing the rule of the colonial masters with that of our local capitalists. similarly, Puratchi is not concerned with spreading Christianity or Islam after destroying Hinduism.

Puratchi is published in order to bring about a revolution that will ensure that all the capitalists and all religions are

destroyed and social and gender equality is ensured. It will perform its duty throughout its life.

We therefore request all those interested in revolution to patronize Puratchi.

fPuratchi. Kovember 26, 1933; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1896)

#### 8.Viduthalai

I have seen two issues of the Justice Party's journal Viduthalai launched in the month of June which is published twice a week from Madras. It does not appear necessary to review it. This is because we all know how the Tamil people are thirsting for a good Tamil journal. Night and day, we can hear them crying out for a journal which will represent their interests. The disastrous election results are a natural consequence of the way in which our leaders have consistently ignored the need for a good non-Brahmin journal. In such a context, any non-Brahmin will consider it his/her fortune that a journal like Viduthalai has actually appeared and will not stop to ask, "Will reviews of this appear? How are the reviews?"

Therefore, I will not take on the unnecessary task of writing a review. Instead, I will herald and publicize its arrival, declaring, The Tamil journal has come!'

As of now, Viduthalai is published twice a week. I do not doubt, however, that in keeping with the people's wishes, it will soon become a daily.

Since Viduthalai effectively counters the mischievous propaganda of the Brahmins, it demands our support.

We do not have to elaborate on the opposition and the difficulties faced by this journal. It is surprising that it manages to survive despite all odds. So far, no journal which has been considered anti-Brahmin has survived in our country.

The situation is such that even journals which start on a very brave note either disappear by the end of the year or become slaves to the Brahmins. Kudi Arasu has managed to survive. There is no difficulty or problem that it has not faced. While we are happy that Viduthalai has appeared even in a context such as this, we are always tense that it might be suppressed any minute.

It is the duty of the Tamil people to patronize Viduthalai. It is futile to criticize our leaders.

There is no need for anyone to suspect the motives and the work of Viduthalai. Everyone should begin to subscribe to it. The yearly subscription is three rupees and ten annas. No other journal either in Tamilnadu or in India which appears twice a week and has 10 pages of material costs so less. Therefore, please send your subscription tomorrow by money order. If we manage to get 2000 subscribers within 3 months, Viduthalai can become a daily. Its owner, Comrade T.A.V Nathan, ran the journal Justice. Given that such an intelligent person is running Viduthalai, we hope that it will change the lives of oppressed people everywhere.

(Kudi Arasu. 9/6/1935; **E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal:** 1898-1899)

## 10. Our Weapon -- Viduthalai

Viduthalai answers the Dravidian people's deeply felt need for a journal. It is now their duty to patronize it and encourage it to grow.

Among the many reason for the low status of the Dravidians is the lack of a proper Dravidian daily.

All the dailies published in the Dravidian country belong to those who are the enemies of the Dravidians since birth. Not only have the Aryans cunningly taken over the press, they have also ensured that no one else is able to gain a foothold in that world and publish dailies of their own. If a Dravidian braves it and starts a journal, unless he becomes a slave to the Brahmins and serves their interests, he is suppressed and humiliated to such an extent that he can not show his face to the world. Otherwise, the journal dies a premature death. The Dravidian is forced to follow manudharma and be a slave to the Brahmins.

The Aryans control the press in **Tamilnadu**, all over India and all over the world. Therefore, the Dravidian people cannot live with self-respect and dignity. The Aryans use the press as a weapon to suppress the Dravidians in a manner that resembles army rule. The Aryans from abroad also support the Aryans within our country.

For some time now Dravidians, students, youth, women, **are** fired with the resolution to change the state of affairs. If despite the establishment of so many pro-Dravidian organizations and movements, we have still not progressed, it can only be because of the Aryan control of the press.

There may be many internal divisions and wrangles amongst the Aryans. But when it comes to the press, they unite and work against our interests. While the press continues to be under their control, we Dravidians will continue to be an oppressed, illiterate, backward class, a class of labourers. Where is Dravidian unity? Where is our sense of community? Where are our principles? How united the Aryans are even though they do not suffer as we do? How can we fight our oppression by the Aryans without developing a Dravidian press?

There are two kinds of Dravidians: those who support the Aryans and those who are totally self-centred, uninvolved in anything beyond themselves.

It is important that Dravidians change their attitudes. Ignoring all the differences which exist between us and placing our trust in our youth and the masses, we have started launched Viduthalai. Notwithstanding the failure of many other journals earlier, we have undertaken this task. Comrades! Mothers! Intellectuals! Youth! Students! What is your duty now? (Viduthalai. editorial, 6/6/1946; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1899-1902).

#### 11.Dravidanadu

E.V.Ramasami,  
Erode.

Date: 1/4/1943

#### A Request

All Tamilians are aware that C.N. Annadurai's journal Dravidanadu published from Kancheepuram works truthfully for their liberation.

The journal is in need of a printing press so that it can

be published without interruptions and delays. The owners would like to buy a press (double crown cylinder) costing **Rs.1200.**

We request the Tamil people to generously contribute and help raise this sum.

**E.V.Ramasami**

Contributions from:	Amount
<b>E.V.Ramasami</b>	100.00
Gopi and <b>friends</b>	<b>63.00</b>
<b>(<u>Dravidanadu</u>. "Notice", 18/4/1943; <u>E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal</u>: 1902)</b>	

12. Greetings to Thozan

I am happy to see the journal Thozan published by comrade **Janardanam**. Normally, one observes that journals which are started in order to espouse the non-Brahmin cause change colour so that the publisher can survive and earn enough to feed himself. If comrade Janardanam has started a journal in a situation like this, no one need entertain any doubts about its quality and character. I recommend it highly and request Dravidians to patronize it.

It is my hope that Thozan will serve our comrades for a long time to come and address the grievances of Dravidians.

**(Thozan 1/1/1947; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1902-1903)**

13. Unmai

I am starting the journal Unmai in the year 1970. Its aim is to make people rationalists. 85% of our people are superstitious and ignorant. Moreover, they are assigned a very low status in society and belong to the depressed castes.



The factors responsible for such a situation are god, religion, the vedas and the Shastras, rituals and politics.

Such a situation has existed since times **immemorial**. Human beings are said to **possess** higher intelligence **compared** to animals. But if they operate under such superstitious beliefs, isn't it shameful? Unmai was started with the intention **of** teaching people to be rational and self-respecting.

We expect to be branded atheists, we expect to be hated. Despite this however, we have entered into this task.

Thanks to my position on these issues, I have been to prison several times and faced state repression. Since I am responsible **for** the Self-Respect movement, the government, especially the upper-castes, have tried to stop me by imposing an income tax of 15 lakhs.

Apart from all this, I am hated by each and every Brahmin and Saivites who consider themselves upper-castes. 90% of the Christians hate me. The Muslims, I think, do not openly express their hatred.

What is surprising is that with the exception of some adivaidas in power, I have the support of no one. Some people come to me occasionally seeking my help. Others are open about their **enemity**.

Within the movement, we follow a strict code. Anyone who does not like the way the movement is functioning is free to express himself and leave.

Unmai is faced with an uphill task. When we began Kudi Arasu however, we were faced with worse problems.

In order to destroy Kudi Arasu. the Christians of this

country wrote to America and got funds. The Brahmins started journals opposed to Kudi Arasu. However, the weekly Kudi Arasu became the daily Viduthalai and continued to espouse the same cause. Now we have Unmai which is going to work for the same cause.

Unmai is an atheist journal. But you do not have to be afraid. Socrates was an atheist; Bertrand **Russel** was an atheist; Jesus was killed because people labeled him an atheist; Mohammed Nabi was also beaten and chased away because he was perceived as an atheist. Buddhists are also considered atheists. Their mutts and houses are burnt; their women 'raped. Large numbers of people in America, England, Germany, China, Russia, Spain, France, Burma and Siam are atheists. There are many atheist nations. All these may be termed rationalist nations.

The present government in **Tamilnadu** is atheist too. In Kerala, not only is the government atheist, one thirds of the people are atheists. They break temples today and destroy statues tomorrow. They may bring in a resolution in our parliament to the effect that there is no god. Will the world drown as a result of atheism?

Moreover, the white man has conquered the moon, considered to be one of our far-away gods.

Why is Unmai spreading the message of atheism? So that you are not referred to as a "**sudra**". So that your wife is not called "prostitute". Therefore, I request all of you to read Unmai. Find us 10,000 subscribers! It is up to you to ensure that Unmai becomes a weekly (Unmai, Editorial in the first issue, 14/1/1970; E.Ve.Ra. Chintanaigal: 1903-1905).

II. Excerpts from Periyar's article "Pagutharivu" in Puratchi.

**May 27, 1934)** (Translation from Tamil, mine)

It is only about a month since we began the journal Paaautharivu. So far we have neither gained nor lost. Though we can claim that it has helped the people to some extent, it seems futile to continue publishing it. We do not differ in our belief that journals are very important to society. However, they are required only for two tasks. Firstly, they have to communicate news from all over the world to the people. Secondly, they have to spread new ideas and help society progress.

However, very few journals act according to these objectives. Most of them are self-centred and interested only in promoting themselves.

There still exist some journals which live up to certain ideals.

Anybody who dabbles in politics and is labeled a "nationalist" these days wants to make a living by starting a journal. This in itself is not bad. This is the law of nature. But some people defy this law. This is the reason why in the last ten to fifteen years thousands of journals have appeared only to disappear.

Could our paaautharivu be one such journal? We cannot deny that this is so. Paaautharivu acquired a declaration five years ago. It was intended not as a daily but as a monthly with a yearly subscription of eight annas. Recently, due to **the** simmering anger of some of our youth, it has been appearing as a daily. This is in order to counter the feeling we have that the

Self-Respect movement does not have a proper daily and that most other journals not only do not help the movement, they seek to harm it. I do not wish to judge such a sentiment as being right or wrong...

It is not possible for the Self-Respect movement to publish any more journals. Recently, over 20 journals which we had been supporting have disappeared. We are blamed for this. In spite of realizing what the situation is, it would be a big mistake to take on the responsibility for a new journal.

The world of journals is facing a lot of problems these days. Even highly powerful journals are suffering. Subscriptions have dropped by 50%. The price of journals have also been reduced. Even in a situation such as this, people start journals so that they can declare proudly that they have started one. It appears pointless and unnecessary to run Pacrutharivu as a daily.

All of you are aware that in Tamilnadu at least some journals are spreading the Self-Respect message. Their price has been reduced to half an anna. None of these are opposed to our interests. Therefore, I think it is better to use Puratchi to spread our principles and Tamilnadu to communicate our news....

## APPENDIX I b

Excerpts from the section "Kalaigal" ("The Arts") in Periyar K.Ve.Ra Chintanaigal. Volume 2, compiled by V.Anaimuthu (Trichi: Thinkers' Forum, 1974: 1284-1286) (Translation from the Tamil, mine).

### 4. "Veliedugal" ("Publications")

#### 1. "Patirikaigal" ("Journals")

In order to maintain their hegemony, the Brahmins of our country have used the name of religion, the vedas, god and salvation for thousands of years now. Not only have they forced us to occupy an inferior status and fed their own stomachs, they have used the concepts of political swaraj and nationalism to launch many new organizations and journals. By doing this, they want to prove that they are great patriots and that their journals are nationalist journals and they advertise their greatness using our money. They stamp on us and push us down, finding many different ways by which to retain their domination and feed themselves. The most dangerous among all the nationalist journals are Bramin journals!

The influence of these journals has effectively worked like a siege of our country. Not only the common people, even those who think of themselves as intelligent are carried away by what these journals have to say and end up as slaves to the Brahmins. If the people of Tamilnadu want to be free from the cruel siege caused by these Brahmin journals, if they want to free themselves from the rule of foreigners, they should stop themselves from being deceived by these journals. When we look at the injustices

perpetuated by the **Brahmin** journals, we are forced to ask: Are our people really **human** beings? Do they have a sense of **shame** and honour? Despite knowing that these journals are being published in order to harm us and that their objective is to propagate Brahminism, if we offer them financial support and invite our downfall by buying and reading them, will anyone think of us as a society with shame, honour, integrity, intelligence and self-respect? When we want to accuse others, we say, '**What** stupid people! People with no pride! They know that it is harmful to drink **kallu. sarayam**. Yet they **drink**.' However, not even one in a thousand stop to consider whether or not we have the intelligence and that sense of honour. If we spend our money on Brahmin journals despite being aware that they are published not only to enforce Brahmin domination and rule, that they are published in order to ruin us, it means that we do not care to question ourselves as to whether or not we have a sense of pride. Let us take the example of one particular journal:

The journal **Sudesamitran** is funded mostly by non-Brahmins. Its publisher and manager are Brahmins. They enjoy a monthly salary of **Rs.1500, Rs.1000**, Rs.800 or Rs.600. Have you ever seen them do any other work besides spreading Brahminism and destroying the non-Brahmins? Should our own money help in our ruin? Publicity for it is provided mostly by the non-Brahmins! Those who read these **journals** and .cause themselves harm are mostly non-Brahmins! Is there any secret involved in this? Or are the Brahmin up to something on the sly? On the contrary, they look us straight in the eye and tell us to our face, "You are all stupid. You do not have shame, honour, self-respect or

intelligence. Therefore, we deceive you. What is it that you can do? If some among you raise a hue and cry, let them do so. We do not care. We are not going to be scared. Neither will we change our objectives. We know how to coopt those among you who are wicked or foolish in order to stop you from your loud protests. We challenge you to fight us! ' We ask if there is no way out of this.

Although Sudesamitran lost nearly 2000 subscribers after the appearance of Kudi Arasu. those associated with it secretly got non-Brahmin shareholders to join and fund it. What can we say about our abilities if our people hesitate to touch the journals that we launch for their progress and well-being? Do our people realize under what difficult circumstances Dravidan is being published? Does anyone realize for whose good this journal is run? If you approach people and ask them, Sir, Are you getting the journal Dravidan? If not, do get it. Learn from it about Brahmin treachery and the difficulties that our communities face as a result and do whatever needs to be done to escape from this situation<sup>1</sup>, they will reply, Dravidan? What does it have to offer? It appears most peculiar! We do not even like its name! Let us accept that this is what they really feel about the journal. But this can be compared to another situation. When we ask a man who visits a prostitute and ruins himself financially, "Why is it that despite having a wife at home, you go to a prostitute and spend all your money and ruin your health?', he would reply, What is there at home? I do not like the very sight of my wife. I find it repulsive to watch her activities and behaviour. Is there a cot? Is there a mattress? Does she

smell good? Does she play with me and give me pleasure? After **all, she** is only someone who washes vessels. He does not **stop** to think that it is he who will suffer in the long run. Similarly, Brahmin journals hypnotize and lure us to **a** terrible fate. They might offer us enough material for an entire **day**. But, what kind of material is it? It helps us pass the **tine** and is very boring. Just as people with a sense of shame think **it is** their duty to protect and look after their women , **it is** our duty to look after Dravidan. To patronize another journal over Dravidan is to behave like the man who ignores his own wife and favours the prostitute. I request all of you to patronize Dravidan. For the common people, this the only path by **which** they can acquire self-respect.

(Kudi Arasu - editorial - 30/1/1927; Dravidan daily, 7/5/1927)



புரட்சி

9

ரஷ்யப்புரட்சி  
தினக்கொண்டா  
ட்டம்.

லாம் துணல் படிக்கக் கூடாது என்று சொல்லுவதுபோலவே இருக்கிறது.

18-11-88 திங்கட்கிழமை பன்து  
புதுவையில் ராஜ்யப்பாட்சி  
யின் 16ஆவது தினத்தொண்டாட்

[illegible]

R. சிவானந்தம் வள்ளியம்மாள்

கட்டுப்பாடுகளை உடனடித் தேர்வு  
பராமல் தத்தெறிக்கலை, சம  
த்துவம் இல்லலை, எப்படி  
பெளரிஸ் ஐஸ்ஸுக்கு நிறை  
கட்டப்படாமல் கைநி விடுதலை  
அடைபடி முடியுமா?

ஆகையால் பெண்மக்களாகிய  
நாம் இருந்து எந்தாகக் கூடியிருந்  
தின்றோமென்றால்,

1. பொருளாதாரத் துறையில் ஆண்களைப் போலவே பெண்களும் சொத்தரிமை பெறவேண்டும்.

2. சமூகவாழ்க்கையில் எல்லாத் துறையிலும் ஆண்களுக்கு உள்ள சம உரிமைகளும் பெண்களுக்கு இறங்கவேண்டும்.

3. அரசியல் துறையில் சிறு  
கூடும் பெண்ணுக்கும் எந்தப் பத  
வியிலும் எவ்வித வித்தியாசமும்  
இருக்கக்கூடாது.

4. ஆண் பெண் துணைவாழ்வு  
கையில் எவ்விதத்திலும் ஒருவரு  
க்கொருவர் உயர்வுதாழ்வு என்  
ன்ற உணர்ச்சிக் கற்பனையே இரு  
க்கவேண்டாது.

5. காதல்துறையிலும் சூனங்  
கும் பெண்ணுக்கும் முழு காதல்  
சம் இருக்கவேண்டும். இத்தொடரில்

[illegible]

விஷயங்களில் காம் பூரண வெற்றி பெற்றிருந்தான் பென்சுமுதத்தின் அடிமைத்தன்மையும் கேவலத்தன்மையும் நீங்கிவிடுதலையும் அதன் மூலம் பெற்று சபமரிபாதையுடன் வாழமுடியும்.

தேயுக்களே இன்று இம்மகா  
சாவுக்கு உங்கள் எல்லோரையும்  
உயிர்த்திருமுறைப் பென்சுமுக  
சிறிதில் அகியமாக என் மன  
நிற்பிடல் சில ஸுதாநகையும  
அதன் தீவர்தி மாகக்கங்கும  
சொல்லி அதற்கிற நாபிய  
கடை செய்து வழிசாட் வேண்டு  
மென்று உங்கள் கேட்டுக்கொ  
ண்டு மற்றவொருமுறை உங்கள்  
எல்லோரையும் மனப் பூர்வமாய்  
பரவெந்தீரே.

உங்கள் வாவு கல்வாவாகுத,

## Appendix II

Most self-respecters, Periyar included, made extensive use of speeches as well as essays ("Katturai"). While speeches were popular with an audience that was mostly illiterate, the simplicity and the directness of the essay form meant that it was accessible to most readers and ideally suited for the task of political education. What is interesting is that their essays often read exactly like propaganda speeches. The essays by Self-Respect women constitute an source of an alternate women's history of the Self-Respect movement. I have provided below translations of essays by Jayasekari and Alhaj Subaku.

"Samadharma Ulagil Penngal" (Women in the World of Socialism)

Comrade Jayasekari, B.Sc.

From Puratchi. April 29, 1934 (Translation from the Tamil, mine)

It is widely known that the socialist world belongs to the workers. However, very few people seem to know what this socialism is all about. For those who are just beginning to understand what socialism is all about, it appears natural that it relates to male workers. It disturbs them to be told that women are workers too and that they have a part in socialist politics. What is the future of women in matters related to work? This is a question that still confuses many. Many believe that in the ideal society of the future women will be relieved of the burden of work. Others think that women will spend their intellect and energy

looking after the family and the household. Both these opinions are problematic because they are obstacles to progress.

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If, in the socialist era, we come across women who are merely lazing around without any sense of responsibility, this would not denote the progressiveness of human society. It should be understood as a regressive trend and women would only be pushed further into the private sphere of the bedroom. Such a situation would only result in the isolation of women from mainstream living. Society will lose out on their valuable contribution. Women will be forced into economic subordination and dependence. Would this constitute progress and opportunity for women? It would only represent the manifestation of the older subordination in a relatively newer form. You cannot chain the women of the future to the home. This is because capable and healthy women will never be content with this. The handicrafts which kept our grandmothers busy have disappeared without a trace. The education of our children is no longer a private, family affair. It is a social one. Both education as well as work are gradually becoming part of a common public sphere. Women's work too will travel outside the confines of the home - to shops, factories, schools and cultural centres. What we will have is not a separate "women's work" but the work of the human race. In the future socialist world, the entire community will share in the house work and women will not have to bear the burden for this all by themselves. We are never going to opt for manual labour anymore given that we have machines to do some of our work.

People are not going to opt for the home-made candle in place of electric lights. Similarly, no one is going to choose the small nuclear family over the corporate family. To believe that women will only do certain kinds of work is a misreading of socialist principles.

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Who are the women who do not work? A small group who are of no use to society and who are totally selfish. Who are the women who work? All those who do not live off the labour of others. Women work in offices, factories, shops, colleges, cultural centres, schools, kitchens, hotels and in farms. In short, they work both in their private lives as well as in their public lives. This is not just a recent phenomenon. They have worked right from the day the human race began. They have always been the producers. Whenever men have gone to battle and destroyed all that existed around them, women have taken primary responsibility for growing crops. We observe that women and work have always been intimately linked. They are inseparable. It is impossible for socialism to alter this fact.

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The women of today will continue to perform the work that women in the past did. But they will also take on what has been understood as men's work. Their work will be such that they will derive happiness out of it; it will be in keeping with rationalist principles. Our lives revolve around work. This is why work becomes the basis of socialism. A socialist society will provide everyone with work, irrespective of gender. It will satisfy the needs of both men as well as women.

Penn Yenn Adimai Aanaal?: Muslim Penngallum Adimaigalle Tbaan!

Muslim Vidavaigalin Nilamai!

Why were Women Enslaved: Muslim women are Also Slaves!

The Plight of Muslim Widow!

[Comrade Alhaj subaku Mo. Tiruchirapalli]

Puratchi. January 28, 1934 (Translation from the Tamil, nine)

The objective of this essay is not to review our comrade E.Ve.Ra's book Penn Yenn Adimai Aanaal?, the first publication of the Rationalist Press. In describing the plight of widows, he has attacked Hindu society. This implies that the stigma of widowhood and the problems related to it does not exist in Muslim society.

It is my intention to declare to the world, "No, Muslim women are slaves too; The situation of Muslim widows is not praise-worthy"; to challenge the Muslims who say 'Islam has granted women all the rights possible'; to reform the irresponsible Muslims who are making such claims. May Muslim men and parents shed their prejudices and arrive at a rationalist understanding of women's problems!

The Muslims consider Muhammad Nabi as their leader and the Koran as their holy book. However, the way they treat their women as less-than-human creatures is proof enough of their utter disregard for both Muhammad as well as the Koran.

This essay is primarily concerned with the plight of the Muslim widows. We will proceed to consider this question and take up other issues later.

Not one among the Muslims is unaware of the manner in which

Arabian widows were treated during Muhammad Nabi's times. But they pretend otherwise. Let us remind them of this history before we proceed further.

Thousand and three hundred and fifty years ago, before Muhammad was born, the Arabians considered the birth of a girl child as an evil omen, as something that would harm the entire kula. They often buried female babies alive. The plight of widows in such a society is anybody's guess.

The prophet was deeply concerned about the status of widows. At the young age of 25, he fell in love with and married the 40 year old Katheeja who had been widowed several times. Right up to his death, he remained married to his first wife, Katheeja and even had children by her. He believed in practising what he preached and his marriage to Katheeeja was an example to his people. If all our present-day reformers were to practise what they preached, there would be a drastic fall in the number of widows from 26 lakhs to 26 thousand. Even at the ripe old age of 54, the prophet uplifted some 7 or 8 elderly widows by marrying them.

Far from following the example of Muhammad, the Muslims of today oppress the young widows of their respective families and do not permit them to remarry. They criticize the few progressive Muslim men who choose to marry widows. To prove that my statements are true, I will now cite an incident which occurred within my own family.

A close relative of mine was widowed when she was young. My uncle, who is a devout Muslim, did not permit her to remarry. Despite his faith in the prophet, he treated his young, widowed

daughter as a prisoner. This was considered an action that was in keeping with family honour. Everyone in my family boasted that our widows did not remarry. Another married cousin of mine, the sister of the widowed one, passed away. Her husband, who was exposed to many progressive and rationalist ideals, wished to marry his widowed sister-in-law. My relatives were furious and indignant. They claimed that it was a move to cast a slur on the family honour. A male cousin succeeded in stealing my widowed cousin out of the house and got the two married. So angry were my relatives upon hearing this that they turned him out of the house.

I can show you many such examples. Despite being kept in purdah, our widows do find ways and means of satisfying their natural desires. Unlike in the case of Hindu widows, the illicit actions of our widows are difficult to uncover. This is the only difference. Parents and society at large keep up a pretense of not knowing the truth.

I have established that the situation of Muslim widows is in no way deserving of praise. In praising themselves, Muslims are merely deceiving themselves. The Hindus openly reveal and admit to their oppressive practices and attempt to reform them. The Muslims, on the other hand, mask their problems and claim, 'Our prophet, our religion, our Islam has given our women all possible rights'. This is nothing but pretense.

"Shri Jayendra's Badilga"

Mangai July 1993



## ஸ்ரீ ஜயேந்திரர் பதில்கள்

எஸ். லதா, வாரங்கல்

வெள்ளிக்கிழமையில் அடுப்பில் பால் பொங்குவது நல்லதா? கெடுதலா? என் சந்தேகத்தை நீக்குமாறு பணிவுடன் சமர்ப்பிக்கிறேன்.

என்றைக்கும் பால் பொங்குவது நல்லது. ஆனால் பொங்கி அடுப்பில் வழியக் கூடாது.

அமாவாசையன்று தர்ப்பணம் ஆன கள் செய்கிறார்கள். அதை காலையில் செய்வது உத்தமமா மதியில் செய்வது உத்தமமா?

தர்ப்பணம் பித்ருக்களுக்குச் செய்வதை காலையிலும் மாலைவிலும் செய்யக் கூடாது.

மதிய வேளையில் செய்ய வேண்டும். அதாவது காலை 9 முதல் 12க்குள் சங்கல்ப காலத்தில் செய்ய வேண்டும்.

மலர்க்கொடி, திருவள்ளூர்  
சென்னை காளிகாம்பாள் அம்மனுக்கு ஏழுமிச்சம்பழ மாலை வாங்கி சார்த்தலாமா? எந்தக்கிழமை நல்லது?

பொதுவாக எந்த அம்பாளுக்குமும் வெள்ளி, செவ்வாங்கல் கிழமை நல்லது. ஏழுமிச்சம்பழ மாலை வாங்கி தூர்க்கை அம்மனுக்கு அணிவது வழக்கம்.

வி. கே. ராஜலட்சுமி,  
ஹைதராபாத் (ஆந்திரா)

ஒரு குடும்பத்தில் கூடப் பிறந்தவர்கள் நான்கு பேர்கள். ஒவ்வொரு வீட்டிலும் ஒரே வீட்டில் ஒரு வருஷத்தில் கல்யாணம், சீமந்தம் முதலியன வருகிறது.

அவை மாத வித்தியாசத்தில் வந்தால், அவர்கள் தனித்தனியாக கமங்கலிப் பிரார்த்தனை செய்யலாமா? ஒருவர் செய்தால் போதுமா? ஒரே வருடத்தில் மறுபடியும் செய்யக் கூடாது என்பதற்கு என்ன விடம் வழிகாட்ட வேண்டும்.

ஒரே குடும்பத்தில் பல அண்ணன் தம்பி வீட்டில் பல திருமணங்கள் நடந்தாலும், தனித்தனியாக கமங்கலிப் பிரார்த்தனை

தனை செய்யவேண்டுமென்ற தீர்ப்புத்தம் இல்லை.

பாகப்பிரிவினையாகி வெவ்வேறு ஊர்களிலிருந்தால், பல தடவை கமங்கலிப் பிரார்த்தனை செய்தாலும் தவறு அல்ல.

ராமு, தஞ்சாவூர்  
வீட்டில் கொல்லப்பட்டும் தாராளமாக இடம் இருக்கிறது. நான் முயல்கள் வாங்கி வளர்க்க விரும்புகிறேன். குருவின் ஆக்கை என்னவென அறியலாமா?

முயல்களை வீட்டில் வளர்க்கக் கூடாது.

மைதிலி விஜயராகவன்,  
சென்னை - 28

எந்த விரதம் இருப்பதற்கும் ஒருநாள் பட்டினி இருப்பது சரியா? அல்லது பகல் 12 மணிவரையில் எதுவும் சாப்பிடாமல் உபவாசம் இருப்பது சரியா?

ஏகாதேசி போன்ற விரதங்களில் ஒருநாள் பட்டினியாக இருப்பது விசேஷம். பிரதோஷம் முதலிய சிறப்பு நாட்களில் பூஜை முடியும்வரை உபவாசம் இருந்து பிறகு சாப்பிடலாம்.

எந்த நோக்கத்திற்காக விரதம் இருக்கிறோமா அந்த காரியம் முடியும் வரையில் உபவாசம் இருக்க வேண்டும்.

எஸ். கந்தசாமி, ஈரோடு  
சில கோயில்களில், அச்சுண்டிக்கு சாமி சிலைக்கு துணுக்க சாமந்திப்பூ வேண்டாம் என்கிறார்களே, ஏன்?

கபகாசங்கள் (நிகழ்ச்சிகள்) நடந்த துணுக்க சாமந்திப் பூவை பயன்படுத்தக் கூடாது. அதை முன்னிட்டு சில ஆலயங்களில் இதை தடைமுறையில் வைத்திருக்கிறார்கள்.



## மங்கள குருவே சரணம் புலவர் சிதம்பரம் கவாமிநாதன்

திதிவா ரங்கள் திகழ்வின் பீங்கள்  
தினயோ கங்கள் கரணங்கள்  
பதிவா கிபபல பஞ்சாய கங்கள்  
பலனுக் கிவர்தம் சரணங்கள்  
விதிபா வங்கள் விநீனவே கங்கள்  
விநரத்தே அபியும் சத்தியமே  
துதிவா ரங்கள் தருவோ மிவர்க்கு  
துணையா புன்னார் நித்தியமே!

காளிய யோத்யா மதுரா மாயா  
காஞ்சி அவத்தி துவாரகையே  
பூசித் தேத்தும் புண்ணிய தலமியை  
புரையாம் பிறவித் கோர்பகையே  
மாளித் தலமேயும் மகிகை அனைத்தும்  
மாறாவி காஞ்சிப் பார்வையிலே  
ஆசீத் தேபெற ஹரஹர சங்கர  
அடிமலர் பணிலோம் ஆவலிலே!  
(வேறு)

மங்கள குருவே சரணம்  
மாதா முனியே சரணம்  
சங்கர சங்கர சரணம்  
சதாபதி தேவே சரணம்!

அனுஷத்தில் அவதரித்த  
ஆசார்ய ரத்தினத்தை  
அனுதினமும் அகித்திருத்தி  
ஆனந்த நிலை பெறுவோம்!

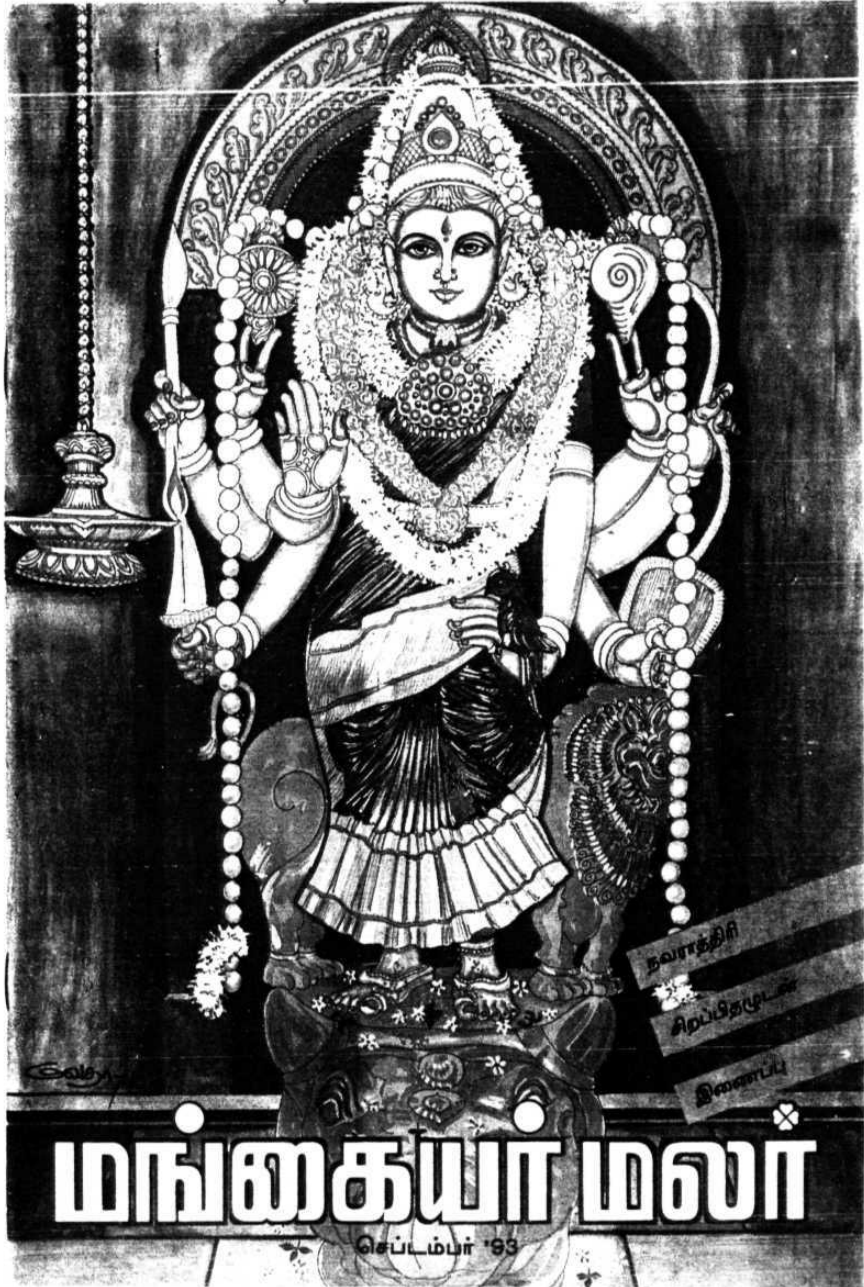
(சத்தம்)

பூவிரி கங்கை புன்கை வழுனை  
பூவை சரஸ்வதியே  
காவிரி கவிகோ தூவிரி நர்மதை  
சிந்தெழு நீர்நிலையே  
பாவிரி காஞ்சிப் பதிசங் கரரின்  
பாதங்களிலே தான்!  
தாவிரி துதியால் நாமெத்திடுவோம்  
நலமே நல்கும்தான்!



Appendix III (2 a)

Mangayam Malai (Sept. 93)





"Annekashtanam Viralam"  
Mangayal Malay May 1993

APPENDIX III (26)

## அனகாஷ்டமி விரதம்

சென்ற இதழில் ஸ்ரீ கணபதி சக்சி தானந்த ஸ்வாமிகள் பற்றி எழுதியிருந்தோம். அதில் ஸ்ரீ ஸ்வாமிகள் அனகாஷ்டமி விரதத்தைப் பரப்ப திருவுளம் கொண்டவர்கள் என்று குறிப்பிட்டிருந்தோம். ஸ்ரீ தந்தாரேயரின் இவ்வற வாயுவே அனகாஷ்டமி. அவரின் சொம்பாதிபே அனகாதேவி. இவர் இலக்கியமில்லாதேர் அவதாரம். இவர்களுக்கு எட்டுவித சித்திகளே பூத்திரர்களாய்த் தோன்றியதாக ஐதீகம்.

இத் தம்பதிகளை எட்டு சித்திகளாவ பூத்திரர்களுடன் வழிபட்டால் அனைத்துச் செல்வங்களும் கைகடும் என ஸ்ரீ தந்தருக்கு கார்த்தவீரயார்ஜுவனுக்கு நேரில் கூறினார். வியாசரின் தந்தபுராணத்திலும் விரிவாக உள்ளது. இவ் விரதத்தைத் தாரதனும்

இராமனும் மேற்கொண்டதாகவும், தருமனுக்கு ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணர் சொன்னதாகவும் கூறுவர். பிறகு மறைந்து போன சிறப்பு வாய்ந்த இவ்விரதத்தை இக்கலியுகத்தில் கடைப்பிடிக்க ஸ்ரீ ஸ்வாமிகள் திருவுளம் கொண்டார்.

படத்தில் உள்ளது போல அஷ்டல பத்மம் ஒன்றை அமைக்க வேண்டும். எட்டு திக்கிலும் எட்டு அலங்கரிக்கப்பட்ட கலசங்கள். மஞ்சள் பூசி ரவிக்கைத் துணியுடன் கூடிய தேங்காய் வைத்த கலசங்கள். நடுவில் ஸ்ரீ

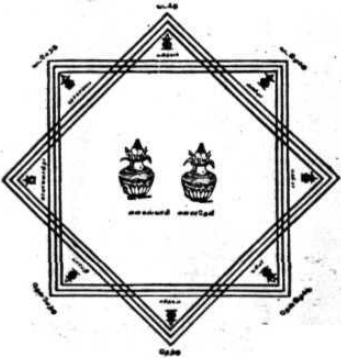
தந்தர் அனகாதேவியைக் குறிக்கும் இரண்டு கலசங்கள். ஒவ்வொரு கலசத்திற்கு முன்பும் வெற்றிலை பாக்கு பூ வைத்துப் பூஜிக்க வேண்டும். நோன்பிற்கான சரடு சிவப்பு, மஞ்சள், வெள்ளை எனும் மூன்று வர்ணத்தில் தோய்த்த மூன்று மெல்லிய நூல்களை இணைத்து முடிச்சு போட்டுத் தயாரிக்க வேண்டும். இது மும்மூர்த்திகளைக் குறிக்கும். ஒன்றை குஞ்சுமத்திலும், ஒன்றை மஞ்சளிலும், ஒன்றை வெள்ளை நூலாகவும் வைத்துக் கொள்ளலாம். இதை அனகாதேவியின் முன்வைக்க வேண்டும்.

எட்டு கலசங்கள், தேங்காய், ரவிக்கைத் துணி என விரிவாக வைத்துத்தான் செய்ய வேண்டும் என்ற அவசியமில்லை. எட்டு திக்கிலும் வெற்றிலை பாக்கு வைத்தும் கூடச் செய்யலாம். அவரவருக்கு எப்படி வசதியோ அதற்கேற்றாற்போலச் செய்யலாம்.

எட்டு கலசங்களுக்கு முதலில் பூசை, பிறகு அனகாவாமி, அனகாதேவிக்கு அஷ்டோத்திரங்கள், பிறகு சரடு பூசை செய்து முடித்து அவரவருக்கு என்ன வசதியோ அதை தைவேந்தியமாகப் படைத்து சரட்டைக் கட்டிக் கொள்ள வேண்டும்.

இவ் விரதத்தினை மார்ச்சு மாதம் கிருஷ்ணபக்ஷ அஷ்டமியில் செய்வது மிகவும் விசேஷம். அல்லது ஒவ்வொரு மாதமும் அஷ்டமியில் செய்யலாம். அனகாதேவி தோஷமில்லாத, சஞ்சலமில்லாத லக்ஷ்மி தேவி. எனவே இவ் விரதத்தைச் செய்பவர்கள் செனபாக்கியங்களைப் பெறுவர் என்கிறார் ஸ்ரீ ஸ்வாமிகள்.

- ஜ்வாலா



Femina

September 23, 1994

[page: 99]

MEGHNA REDDY  
EXEMPLIFIES THE  
'CONFIDENT, BOLD  
INDIVIDUAL' FOR  
WHOM SANGEETA  
DESAI HAS DESIGNED  
THIS ECO FRIENDLY  
COLLECTION

THE NEW WOMAN  
DESIGNED BY SANGEETA DESAI

The  
NEW  
Woman

JUNE, 1977

INVITATION PRICE RS. TWENTY

# New Woman

HE'S A BIT LIKE YOU

APPENDIX III  
C36

**OF HUMAN BONDAGE...**  
**CELEB MOTHERS ON**  
**THEIR FAMOUS**  
**DAUGHTERS**

**INTO THE BLAZING**  
**INFERNO AND BACK**  
**HAJ RETURNED COUPLE**  
**NARRATE THEIR NIGHTMARE**

**OUR HUBBY,**  
**TAME CAT OR**  
**MACHO BRUTE?**

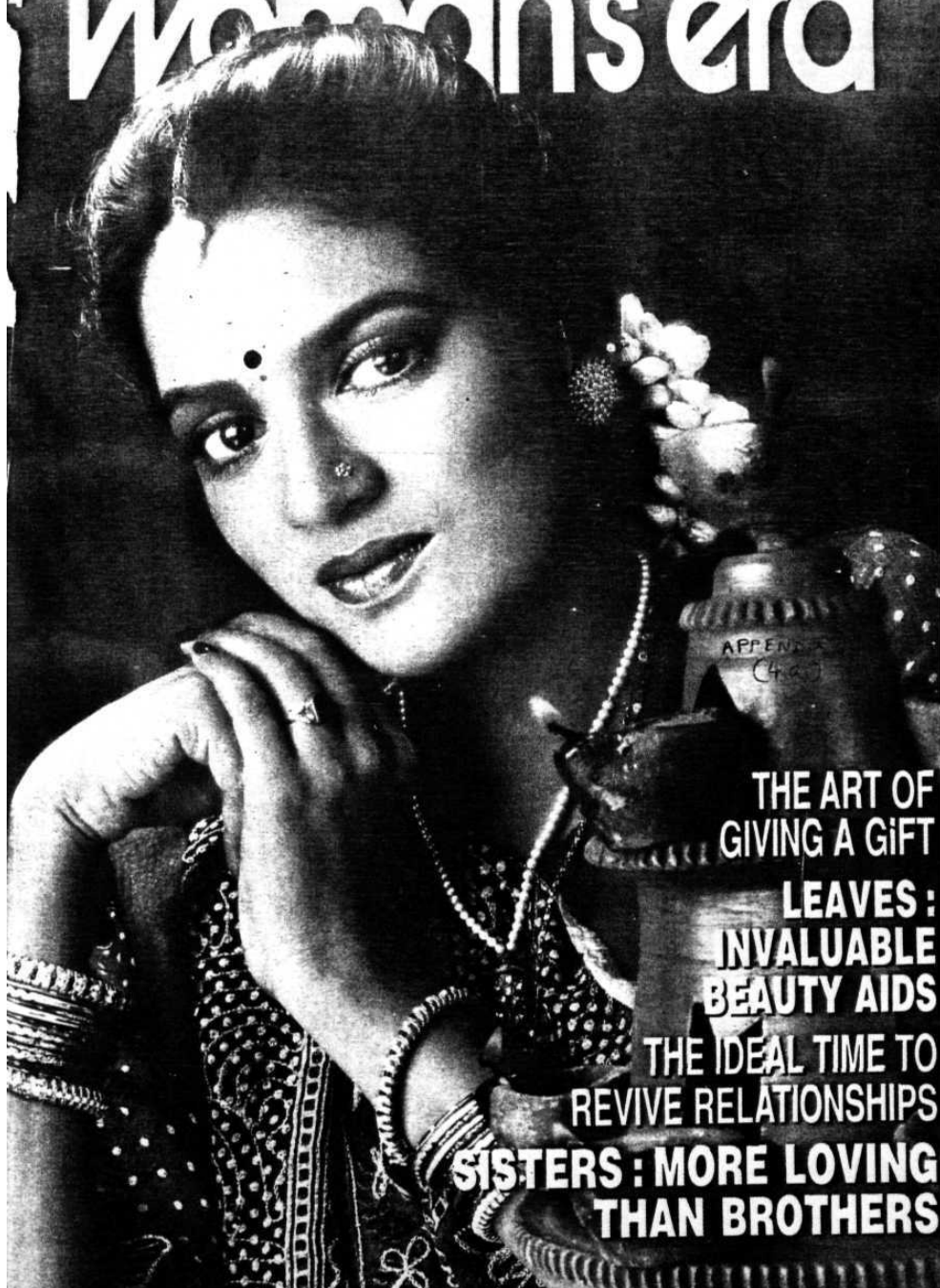
**SHOULD K.G. KIDS**  
**BE GRILLED WITH**  
**INTERVIEWS?**



**THE DIETS**  
**THAT WORKED!**



# Woman's era



THE ART OF  
GIVING A GIFT

LEAVES :  
INVALUABLE  
BEAUTY AIDS

THE IDEAL TIME TO  
REVIVE RELATIONSHIPS

SISTERS : MORE LOVING  
THAN BROTHERS





*Spring /n t f e air puts a spring in the step too as gorgeous flowers—andfashions—bloom side-by-side—and young lasses emerge from heavy winterwear like dainty butterflies to greet the warm sunlight....*

APPENDIX III, Figure 5  
Woman's Era November 2, 1993

**More play than work?  
Then what about  
pale, pale blue jeans  
and a full-sleeved  
figure-hugger  
in vivid red?**







1973



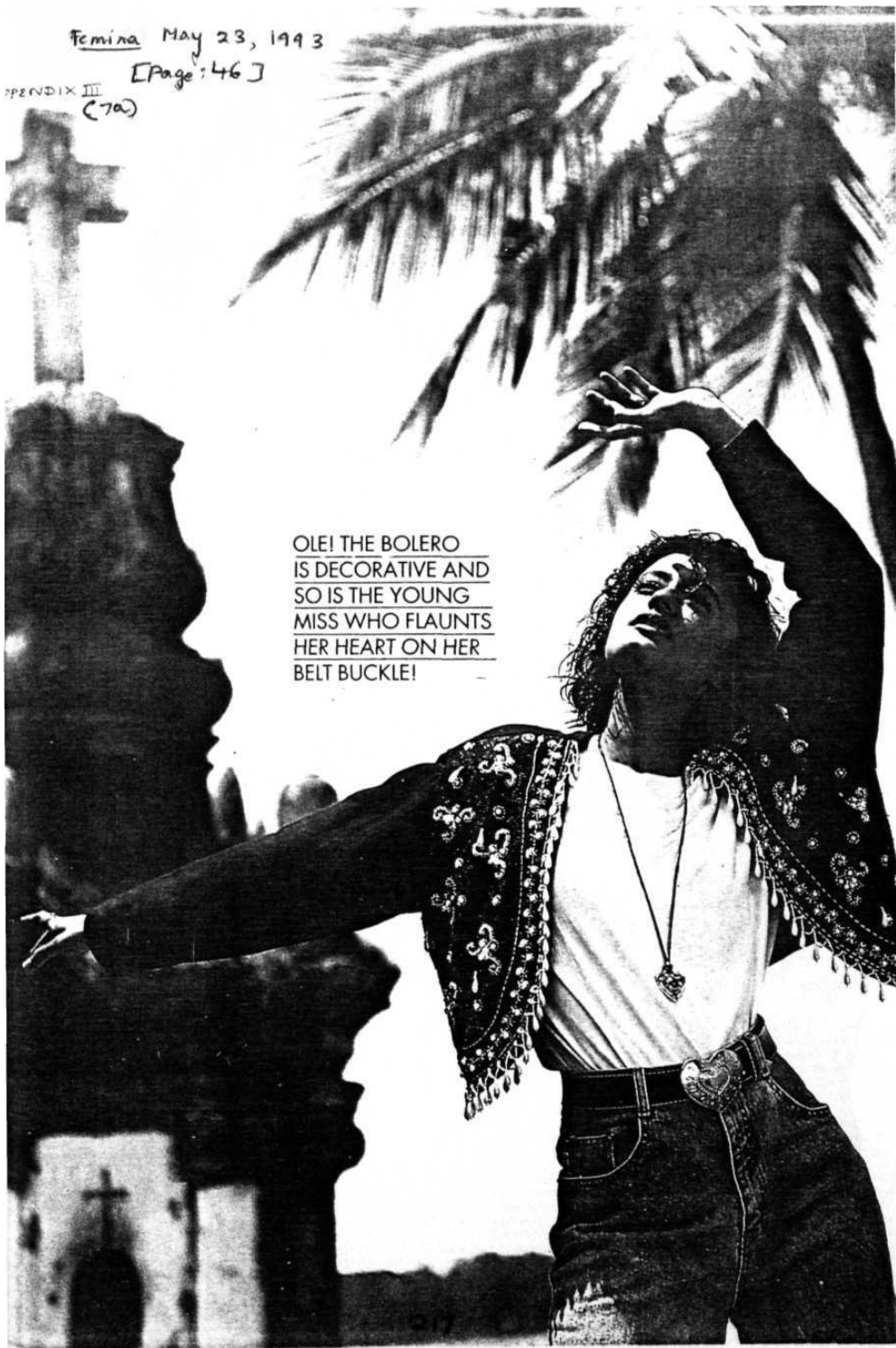


Femina May 23, 1943

[Page: 46]

APPENDIX III  
(7a)

OLE! THE BOLERO  
IS DECORATIVE AND  
SO IS THE YOUNG  
MISS WHO FLAUNTS  
HER HEART ON HER  
BELT BUCKLE!





# MOODS & MENTIONS

BEYOND ON THE  
HORIZON, A NEW  
SHAPE DAWNS, WILL IT  
BRING FRESH FLOWERS  
FOR ME?

FEMINA GOKUL PHOTOFEATURE

SHE'S CONFIDENT,  
SHE'S SHY....., SHE'S  
READY TO TAKE ON  
THE WORLD

## MOODS OF A WINNER

CONGRATULATIONS !!  
**Sandhya Chib**

Sandal GOKUL® Tale  
SANTOL®

MODEL: SANDHYA CHIB FEMINA MISS INDIA UNIVERSE 1996 PHOTOGRAPH: RAFIQUE SAYED



*Femina May 8, 1996 Lp. 547*

PRACTICE MAKES  
PERFECT AND POSING  
PRETTY IS AS EASY AS PIE

NOTHING SUCCEEDS  
LIKE  
SUCCESS

*Go for it !!*

*Santal* **GOKUL®**  
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Femina May 8, 1996 [p. 53]



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Appendix IV (1)  
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NO. 6

## The Call of Science.

What is the difference between the wise man and the fool? The wise man is not infallible, nor is the fool necessarily a blunderer. Both are liable to err. Both commit mistakes. But the wise man learns from his mistakes. The fool does not. Science is an attempt to draw the attention of man to the mistakes he has committed. Science is a call to mankind to learn by past failures. He who heeds the call of science is wise. He who does not is otherwise.

Elsewhere we publish an article by "Simha" setting forth the changes in our method of living necessitated by recent advances in science. The positive measures advocated by Eugenics may not win immediate approbation in the circumstances prevailing in our country, however desirable they may appear from a theoretic point of view. But there is negative warning conveyed by Eugenics which we desire our readers to clearly understand. Investigations relating to laws of heredity have not only indicated the directions in which humanity should advance if it would improve its breed but they have also brought into clear relief one false step we took in the past. One of the most serious of blunders that we have been guilty of is an inculcation of belief in the heritability of acquired characters. No other idea has created such bad blood between friends and neighbours or has produced so much unnecessary suffering and misery. Wars have been fought to enlist its application to one set of facts rather than to another, causing tremendous loss of lives and untold sufferings to the nations.

Pride of descent is born of our vanity. We like to think of ourselves as superior beings. We delight in imagining that others are our inferiors. The sense of our own supreme worth is so pleasing to us that we desire to display it to the public gaze. But no human failing can find vent in public unless it is reduced to a dogma and sanctified as a creed. We have therefore exalted our prejudice into a doctrine. We have postulated that our own superiority is such a magnificent affair that we could not have acquired it in a single birth. Our forefathers through the generations

accumulated the treasure for us; our descendants will continue to add to the store. Heredity is made to pile up human qualities even as the miser who adds up one hard earned coin to another, never losing a farthing, ever on the look-out to increase the hoard.

But science has stepped in and has expropriated our superiority from this ill gotten wealth. It has been established that acquired characters are not inherited. A genius may be born of humble parents. The shastris, learned in the scriptures, may beget a son with an antipathy to the sacred lore. The Devadasi may give birth to a Savithri. A Gandhi may rise from among the Banias. It is no longer possible to construct intellectual dreadnaughts. The child at the Agraharam is not the superior of his contemporary in the Chetti, either in intellectual ability or in moral worth. Both are liable to error as both are liable to catch measles. The mighty edifice of Varnashrama has crumbled like a house of cards. The orthodox ostriches will not face facts. But let the intelligent reader learn wisdom from the conclusions of science.

## Racy.

This week "G. R." is giving our readers a treat. "G. R." is a blue blooded Gandhite. But he is in a fighting mood, and active Khadi service is keeping him in good form. His attempt to give us "a hard hit" has fallen wide of the mark. But he has designed to praise us and has made us blush. "G. R." has fallen in love with "Sak". He is right. For "Sak" is a fine swordsman. But his sally on Communal representation has not done him or his keen sword full justice.

Our contention is that separate electorates have an equal claim to be considered along with joint electorates in any scheme of organising constituencies in our country. We did not maintain, as "G. R." wrongly supposes we did, that communal electorates are the best method of electing representatives. Joint electorates are synonymous with territorial electorates. But separate electorates are not identical with communal electorates. A communal electorate is a separate electorate. But a separate electorate need not be a communal one. We

பெரியார் ச. வெ. ரா. அவர்களால் 7-11-1928-ல் திறுவப்பெற்ற, Revolt-தினாவால்

ஆங்கில வார ஏட்டின் 6-ம் இதழின் முகப்பு அட்டை

1933 டிசம்பர் 24

புரட்சி

D.

## தோழர்கள், ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி சா.ரா. கண்ணம்மாள் கைது செய்யப்பட்டார்கள்.

டிசம்பர் 20-ல் மாலை 19-இலிருந்து மணி 8-வரை இரு மூன்று சர்க்கில் இன்ஸ்பெக்டர்களுக்கும் சப் இன்ஸ்பெக்டர்களுக்கும், பத்தும் பதினாறு போலீசுகளாலும் மோட்டாரிலும், மோட்டார் பைக்களிலுமாக "புரட்சி" க் காரியாலயத்திற்கு வந்து தேழர் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி அவர்களோடு கைர் அரை மணி அளவில் தனித்துப் பேசிக்கொண்டிருந்தார்கள். பின்னர் "புரட்சி" காரியாலயத்தின் Letter-File களைப் பரிசோதனை செய்தும் Press-Book பார்வையிட்டும் 46 கடிதங்களைக் கைப்பற்றிய போது Press-Book கிருத்த மூன்று கடிதங்களில் மூக்கியோ சத்தையும் குறித்துக்கொண்டார்கள். 29-10-33 "சூ. அரண்" சேறிகளில் பலவற்றையும் கேட்டு வாக்கிக்கொண்டார்கள் மற்றும் "சூ. அரண்" பதிப்பகப் புத்தகங்களையும் பலவற்றைக் கவனித்துவிட்டு தேழர் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி அவர்களை சற்று தங்களுக்குடன் வருமாடியும் தேழர் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி அவர்களின்மையிலையையும் பார்க்கவேண்டுமெனவும் அழைத்துச் சென்றார்கள். அதன் பின் மோட்டாரில் "புரட்சி" க் காரியாலயத்திலிருந்து விரிசேர்ந்து பரிசோதனை செய்து விட்டு தேழர் எஸ். ஆர். கண்ணம்மாள் கிட்டுக்கு வந்து அங்கு தேழர் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி தங்கியிருக்கும் இடத்தையும் பார்க்கவந்தாகவென்று கேட்டுக்கொண்டு அங்கு சென்றார்கள். சிறைகளில் தேழர் எஸ். ஆர். கண்ணம்மாள் அவர்கள் விட்டையும், தேரட்டக்கறியும் (கூச்சமந்தையும்) பார்வையிட்டு தேழர் எஸ். ஆர். கண்ணம்மாள் அவர்களையும் போலீசின் கட்டுக்கு அழைத்துச் சென்றார்கள். அங்கு இருவருக்கும் இ. பி. கே. 124 A. செல்லுப்படி பொதுவுடமை பிரகாசத்திற்காக வெளியாகும் இரண்டு கடிதங்களை வெளியும் வெளியும் குற்றம் சாட்டியிருப்பதாகவும் சொல்லி கைது செய்தனார்கள். "சூ. அரண்" பிரகாசத்தையும் பதிப்பாளருடைய தேழர் ஈ. ர. கண்ணம்மாள் கைது செய்யப்பட்டதும் பெரிதும் உற்

ஈ. வெ. ரா. 7-வது தடவை  
கைதியான முழுவிபரம்.

"புரட்சி" காரியாலய சோதனை.



தேழர் எஸ். ஆர். கண்ணம்மாள்.



தேழர் ஈ. வெ. இராமசாமி.

சாகத்தோடு தேழர் ஈ. வெ. ரா. அவர்களோடு உடன் சென்றது குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது.

தேழர்கள் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி, எஸ். ஆர். கண்ணம்மாள் அவர்கள் கைது செய்யப்பட்டதும் மாலை 5-30 மணி சரில் கோவைக்கு அழைத்துச் செல்லப்பட்டார்கள். சப் இன்ஸ்பெக்டரும் இரண்டு போலீசும் நெடுக்காண்டி பிளம்' திக் ஸ்தலம்' திரே கம் பார்ட்மெண்டில் கோவைக்குப் போய்த் தக்காக சென்றார்கள்.

அன்று இரவு கோவை சரில் வே க்ட்டுவனிலிருந்து ஏராளமான போலீசும் ஜவான்களோடு பன்னில் தேழர்கள் ஈ. வெ. ரா. அவர்களையும், ஈ. ர. கண்ணம்மாள் அவர்களையும் டவுன் போலீசின் கட்டுக்கு அழைத்துச் சென்ற காவலில் (Look up) வைத்திருந்தார்கள்.

மறுபின் கைது செய்யுமாறு ஜில்லா கைட்டர் மிஸ்டர் G. W. வெலன் I.C.S. ருன்பு ஆர்செய்தனர். அவர் அவர்களை ஜவானி மாதத்திதேவையரிமையில் வைக்கும்படி உத்திரவு பிறப்பித்தார்.

தேழர்கள் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி, ஈ. ர. கண்ணம்மாள் சூயி இருவருக்கும் கோவை சென்ட்ரல் ஜெயில் காவலில் வைக்கப் பட்டிருக்கின்றார்கள். கண்பாகம் பல்போய்ப்பார்த்து வருகிறார்கள். தேழர் ஈ. வெ. ராமசாமி அவர்கள் ஏழாவது தடவையாக இம்சமயம் கைது செய்யப்பட்டிருக்கிறார்கள்.

1921-ம் வருடம் கலம்பர் மாதத்தில் மது கிலக்கு பிரகாசத்திற்காக கைது செய்யப்பட்டு— தண்டனைபடைத்தும்— 1924-ம் வருடம் மே மாதத்தில் திருவாய்க் சமீபத்தானத்தில் தீண்டாமையில்லக்குகாக செய்த சத்தியாக்ஷ சகிப்போலில் கைது செய்யப்பட்டு தண்டனைபடைத்தும், அதுவிடமிருந்து வெளியிலிருந்து அதை வருஷம் கலம்பர் மாதத்தில் மது கிலக்குகாக செய்த சத்தியாக்ஷ கைது செய்யப்பட்டு திருவாய்க் புரம் ஜெயில் காவலில் தண்டனை அனுப்பித்தும், மீண்டும் 11-9-25-ல் தன் பிரகாச காதத்தில் சாது திரேகமயல் பேசினதால் சரேட்டில் கைதியாக்கப்பட்டு

தொடர்ச்சி 12-ம் பக்கம் பார்க்க.

R. No. "PAHUTHARIVU" தனிப்பேதி கிள் ஒரு அரு

# பகுத்தறிவு

ஒளித்தொலை வொய்யம் மருத்த உள் நா 5-0-0.  
கிளியா. ஈ. வெ. சத்யாசம் வெளி நா 6-0-0.

1934 L. சரோஜ, மல-190 ஆவணியர் 18-உ. (2-0-1934) மல 2.

## இனம்! சத்தாதாரங்கு இனம்!

அருமையான புத்தகங்கள் இனம்!

தமது "பகுத்தறிவு" பத்திரிகைக்கு செட்டிப் பதம் 1-உ-யிற் குத்து அட்டோர் 1-உக்குள் முன்பணம் மனியார்டில் அனுப்பி புத்தக தாதாராய்ச் சேருதிருவர்களுக்கு 8 அரு கிளியுள்ள அடியில்கண்ட புத்தகங்களில் எது இஷ்டமோ அதை இவ்வமைய புத்தகங்களுக்கு அனுப்பிக்கொடுக்கப்படுகின்றன.

கைவல்யம்	0-2-0
இந்தியாவின் குறைபாடு	0-2-0
இராமாயண ஆராய்ச்சி (அபேக்ஷைமகம்)	0-8-0
மாதர் சுதந்திரம் or பெண்மக்கள் பெருமை	0-8-0
லெனினம், மதமும்	அரு 4
பொதுவுடமைத்தத்துவம்	" 3
போல்ஷிவிக் முறை	" 1
கடவுளும் பிரபஞ்சமும்	அரு 4
சோஷியலிசம்	" 3
இலங்கை உபநியாசம்	பை ரு 0-8-0
சமதர்ம உபநியாசம்	" 6

மாணேஜர், "பகுத்தறிவு", ஈரோடு.

ஈ. வெ. கிருஷ்ணசாமி அவர்களை ஆசிரியராகக்கொண்டு பெரியார் ஈ. வெ. ரா. அவர்களால் 26-8-1934-ல் துவக்கப்பட்ட 'பகுத்தறிவு' வார ஏட்டின் கிதழ் 2-ன் முகப்பு அட்டை

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10/6/1933

#### 2. **Chintamani**

August 1924

December 1924

**September** 1924

#### 3. Dravidanadu

1/8/1947

25/9/1949

#### 4. Femina

April 23, 1992.

July 1996 (Anniversary Issue)

May 8, 1996

August 15, 1997

5. The Hindu

April 12, 1939

May 15, 1995

6. Jaganmohini

October and November, 1932

January, 1936

January, 1937

February 1937

7. Kalki

All issues from January 1941 to May 1946 and January 1950 to August 1953.

8. Kudi Arasu

2/8/1925

6/10/1925

3/1/1926

26/9/1926

31/7/1927

7/8/1927

25/8/1927

20/11/1927

3/6/1928

24/2/1929

1/1/1933

29/10/1933

13/1/1935

6/6/1937

26/11/1939

**9. Manqai**

July 1993

**10. Mangayar Malar**

May 1993

**11. Pagutharivu**

Volume 3, Issue 6.

**12. Puratchi**

26/11/1933

10/12/1933

17/12/1933

29/4/1934

20/5/1934

27/5/1934

10/6/1934

17/6/1934

**13. Viduthalai**

6/6/1946

11/10/1948

14/10/1951

**14. Woman's Era**

October 1, 1991

March 1, 1992 (Special Issue)

March 2, 1992

June 2, 1992 November 1, 1992 (Special Issue)

November 2, 1992