

STAND OF DRAVIDA KAZHAGAM ON DRAVIDIAN NATIONALISM, DRAVIDAN AND DRAVIDA NADU

Article Particulars: Received: 29.03.2018 Accepted: 25.04.2018 Published: 28.04.2018

S. RENO

Ph.D. Part-Time Research Scholar in History, Department of History
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

The Salem Resolution (also known as Annadurai Resolution) adopted after a good deal of preparation of the ground between 1939 and 1944 by a vigorous propaganda by E.V.R. and his colleagues. The slogan 'Tamil Nadu for Tamilians' was first raised in 1938 in protest against the introduction of Hindi in schools. Opposition to the linguistic domination of Hindi was one of the programmes of the Self-Respect Movement ever since its genesis. E.V.R. gave a warning in Kudi Arasu in 1926 that Hindi would develop as one of the dangers confronting the non-Brahmin community and that it would help only religious propaganda by Brahmins.¹ An 'editorial in Kudi Arasu on 20th January 1929 questioned the wisdom of spreading the knowledge of Hindi, a language that had no connection to Tamils and was of no utility, an Aryan language that taught only superstitious legends and customs and the superiority of Brahmins. It commented that English, which was an international language, should be adopted as the link language in India, and condemned the efforts at introducing any language other than English as 'foolish' and 'mischievous'.²

Keywords: Annadurai Resolution, E.V.R., linguistic domination, Kudi Arasu, Dravidian nationalism, linguistic patriotism

Dravidian nationalism was primarily a linguistic reaction to the introduction of Hindi in the south. Soon after the Congress assumed office in Madras in 1937, Hindi was introduced as a compulsory subject in school which provoked widespread protest throughout Tamil Nadu. Maraimalai Adigal, Navalar Somasundara Bharatiyar, and Sivananda Adigal joined E.V.R. in condemning the imposition of Hindi. A. T. Pannirselvam, C. N. Annadurai, K. A. P. Viswanathan, Nilambikai and a great number of leaders led a big mass protest that baffled the government. It is this Hindi policy that gave rise to the slogan 'Tamil Nadu for Tamilians'. The slogan was said to have been first raised by A. T. Pannirselvam at a Tamilian Conference held at Vellore in 1938, and was elaborated by E.V.R. the next day at the conference of the South Indian Liberal Federation.

E.V.R. kindled a sense of linguistic patriotism on a sound self-respect basis that in Tamil there was no place for blind beliefs and it was more cultured than many other languages. It was feared that the introduction of other languages would intrude into the Tamil systems and introduce ideas antagonistic and harmful to Tamilian interest and lead to their further degradation. E.V.R. thought that adoption of Hindi would make the Tamils more and more slavish and should therefore be discarded. Tamil was considered the most desirable language to achieve development, progress and progressive outlook,³ and not that it would work any miracle. E.V.R.'s contention was that it was a conspiracy of Tamilian Brahmins and North Indians to destroy the Dravidian art and culture through Hindi language and impose those of the Aryan and thereby re-establish the *varnasharamadharma* and suppress the *Dravidians* as the Shudras of the *varna* order, degrade the Adi Dravidas as Panchamas and Chandalas, and treat the Christians and Muslims as Mlechas.⁴ E.V.R. spoke at length to explain that Hindi would not only halt the progress of Tamilians but would completely destroy their culture and nullify the progressive ideas that had been successfully inculcated through Tamil in the recent decades. He called upon the people to drive out both Hindi and the North Indians.

The anti-Hindi campaigns and demonstrations were generally described as struggles (*porattam*). They were not only linguistic struggles, but struggles for preservation of Tamil culture, and Tamilian rights. Anti-Hindi campaigns brought together Dravidians from different political parties and united many leaders who had parted on vital policy differences. These

campaigns were described as battles to rouse the feeling of self-respect.

E.V.R. was clear about the concept of a separate multi-linguistic nation, comprising Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada areas, that is, roughly corresponding to the then existing Madras Presidency with adjoining areas into a federation guaranteeing protection of minorities, and religious and linguistic and cultural freedom of the people. The proposition was made with a view to safeguarding the national self-respect of Dravidians threatened by Aryan culture, language, political leadership, business interests, etc. A separatist conference was held in June 1940 at Kanchi when E.V.R. released the map of the proposed Dravida Nadu.⁵ With the promised grant of full self-government after the War, and with the serious problem of Muslim demand for separation, this development posed another threat to the Freedom Movement but failed to get British approval. E.V.R. received sympathy and support from Ambedkar and Jinnah for his views on the Congress and for his opposition to Hindi. They decided to convene a movement to resist the Congress.⁶

This proposition of Dravida Nadu was projected mainly as an economic proposition intended to free this land from becoming a market for other provinces.⁷ In a statement issued to *The Mail* in reply to the journal's comment on the demand for "Tamil Nadu for Tamilians", E.V.R. said in a public meeting held at the Memorial Hall, Madras, on 16th November 1939, "The main object of such a Dravidian state is to prevent the exploitation of the Dravidian land by non-Dravidian people or communities in the social, political, economic and other spheres."⁸ E.V.R. thought that an important ingredient of freedom was to ensure that the wealth of the nation would remain within the nation and not taken out of it.⁹

E.V.R. started a propaganda that the Tamilian had lost his self-respect, rationality, intelligence and rights because he considered himself as a Hindu and that he had forgotten the Tamil culture, civilization and courage as he considered himself as an Indian, Therefore, he said that to regain his knowledge, courage; rationalism, and self-respect, all of which once belonged to him, the Tamilian should forget that he was an Indian or a Hindu.¹⁰ He cited that in government records, they were called non-Muhammadans and not Hindus and Hindu mythologies condemned them as *Dasan*, *Dasyu* and *Shudra*. The Hindu law discriminated between castes and was not uniform. E.V.R. Endeavoured repeatedly to emphasize the degrading status given to them by law and practice and the backward thinking among the masses in order to make them realize the 'barbarian state' in which they were living

Analysing the backwardness of Tamilians, E.V.R. attributed this to a combination of several reasons, as follows. (i) That Tamils had no sense of belonging and were not aware of their own self; (ii) that Tamils had no establishment of their own and therefore were called by negative appellations like non-Muhammadans, non- Hindus, etc. (iii) that Brahmins, Christians and Muslims also claimed to be Tamils; (iv) that there was no distinct Tamilian life-style; (v) that there was no pure Tamil literature without Aryan mixture; (vi) that Tamils had no leader of their own; (vii) that those who were considered as important people and who desired to be regarded so, had no concern about Tamilian society and race and were not concerned about the ill-treatment and degradation meted out by aliens and took no responsibility; and (viii) that the Tamilian had no sense of self-respect and was happy with a few gains obtained by constant demands.¹¹

The Dravidian-Aryan conflict was believed to be a continuous, historical phenomenon that started when the Aryans first set their foot in the Dravidian land. Even a decade before the idea of separation appeared E.V.R. said that, as long as Aryan religion, Aryan domination, propagation of Aryan *Vedas* and Aryan *varnasharam* existed, there was need for Dravidian Progressive Movement and Self-Respect Movement.¹²

Meaning of Dravidian

The multi-linguistic nation proposed to be formed as Dravida Nadu was believed to have its

linguistic unity in belonging to the same stock. What was envisaged was a federation of four linguistic provinces. The binding force, however, was the claim for racial unity. E.V.R. revived a historical past to build a new future when he declared, "In regard to the formation of a separate Dravidian state, it may be pointed out that historical facts, culture, civilization, manners, customs, tradition, etc., of the Dravidians as a whole, made it clear that they form one race and should, therefore, be under their own government." He contended that this proposition did not contain any threat to India's unity.¹³ E.V.R. appealed to the spirit of freedom and self-respect of the Dravidian race to resist imposition of Aryan culture in Dravida Nadu. He regarded this domination as evidence of loss of self-respect and a proof that it was a slave and a savage nation.¹⁴

The term 'Dravidian' denoted the same community hitherto referred to as 'non-Brahmin' by the South Indian Liberal Federation. The change was introduced by E.V.R. in order to foster a feeling of oneness among the people concerned. The term was not new. The first non-Brahmin association founded by C. Natesa Mudaliar in 1912 was called the Dravidian Association, the Tamil journal conducted by the Justice Party was named *Dravidan*; and the castes considered untouchables in Madras adopted the name 'Adi- Dravida' in 1921. E.V.R. felt that to denote the community by a negative appellation, 'non-Brahmin' was improper and also that the terms 'South Indian' and 'non-Brahmin' were overlapping. He recalled that the South Indian Liberal Federation at its inception was unable to adopt the name 'Dravidian' due largely to the opposition to it from Andhras¹⁵ and observed that the term 'non- Brahmin' was used for communal representation in jobs and not for the purpose of promoting a feeling of unity. Explaining that a people are generally called after the name of their race or religion, he held that people of southern India were not referred to as Hindus in ancient India.¹⁶ "We reject the name 'Indian' and have adopted the name 'Dravidar' in order to achieve a racial feeling and upsurge. This is not a new creation but recalling a forgotten one. We refer to ourselves as 'non-Brahmin'. Are we vagabonds to add a negative prefix to denote ourselves?" asked E.V.R. and turned against the Justicites who preferred to call themselves non-Brahmins accusing them for their more brahminical habits than Brahmins themselves.¹⁷

E.V.R. appealed to the government to adopt the name Dravidar to denote all the communities other than the Brahmin and to denote the Brahmin as non-Dravidar or Aryan in all the government records. As this was a non-political issue transcending party differences, he appealed to Dravidians in all political parties to use the term Dravidan to refer to this community.¹⁸

The adoption of the name Dravidan to the community and the name Dravida Kazhagam for the party became the subject matter of many public meetings addressed by E.V.R. Much historical study preceded the claims that the ancient name of the land was Dravidam and of the people of that land Dravidar, the name of the original race that inhabited this land. It was pointed out that *Manavadharma Shastra*, the *Ramayana* and many other legends referred to Dravida and most of the legendary and historical battles were wars fought between the Aryan and the Dravidian.¹⁹

When the demand for 'Dravida Nadu for Dravidians' was substituted for 'Tamil Nadu for Tamilians', the connotation of the term Dravidian was considered identical with Tamilian and Dravida Nadu with Tamil Nadu. It was said that the Tamil words *tiru idam* (great place) changed as *tiruvidam* and in course of time as *Dravidam*. Dravidian denoted the ancient race that inhabited India before the arrival of the Aryans.²⁰ Therefore, the term Dravidian was considered synonymous with Tamilian (denoting Dravidian culture in ancient days and referring to a 'race' but not to the modern usage of Tamilian for a 'linguistic group' and referring to all those speaking Tamil including the Brahmins. E.V.R. rejected the blood test for determination of the race as he conceded that there had been racial mixture in the course of years and the Brahmin of Tamil Nadu was not of pure Aryan blood. The test, according to him was culture, habits and ways of life in all of which the Brahmin was distinctly different from the 'non-Brahmin'. The object was to

evolve a society that practised no social discriminations.²¹ The Aryan domination over Dravidians was felt through the imposition of culture and civilization and to get freedom from that culture a battle in the name of race and civilization was considered imminent. The linguistic campaign was part of this cultural fight.²² One of E.V.R.'s research findings was that the conquest of the Dravidian language had been a method of domination ever e the days of the sage Agastya.²³

While eliminating the Brahmin, E.V.R. was willing to include Muhammadans and Christians living in that land as Dravidian as most of them were converts from the native Dravidians "The Dravidians are all those who inhabit these areas and they include Muslims, Christians and depressed classes and all Hindus except Brahmins who call themselves Aryans," declared E.V.R. in 1939.²⁴

The characteristics of the separate Dravida Nadu, were described by E.V.R. as: (i) the area then comprising Madras Presidency; (ii) system of passport to enter the state; (iii) duty on goods other provinces and entry with permit; (iv) demarcation of boundaries according to the needs and convenience of Dravida Nadu; and (v) continuing existing system of defence till grant of full independence. He also assured religious freedom to Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and others within this area.²⁵

E.V.R. assured that the legitimate rights and interests of non- Tamilian minority would be protected and safeguarded in the Dravidian state. His object was to end the 'great evil' of a single minority community using political power, social position and economic advantages to the detriment of the Dravidians who were 'practically reduced to the position of minorities'.²⁶

As the characteristics of Dravidians were described, the concept of 'alien' was also evolved in course of time. All those who did not belong to their race, linguistic group and community and those who did not regard them, as equals, and who were exploiting them and treating them as inferior people, and regarded them as unfit for education and administration, and all those different from them in customs and habits and in their style of living and all those living beyond the boundaries of Dravida Nadu were declared by E.V.R. as foreigners.²⁷

To Conclude, several journals propagated the new ideals of Periyar E.V.Ramasami on Dravidian Nationalism, Dravidian and Dravida Nadu. -*Kudi Arasu* from Erode, *Viduthalai* as the official daily of the party from Madras, *Dravida Nadu* as a weekly from Kancheepuram with C. N. Annadurai as Editor, *Dravidian* , a weekly from Madras under the editorship of N. V. Natarajan, and *Tamil Ulagam*, a weekly under the editorship of T. M. Parthasarathi. C. N. Annadurai spoke and wrote a great deal on the Dravidian ideas of Periyar EVR. An organization by name Dravidian Writers' Association was formed for the welfare of the writers of the Dravidian movement and for the growth of their journals. The editor of *Viduthalai*, S. Guruswami, was the President of this body and B. Selvaraj, editor of *Kadiravan*, was the general secretary.

References

1. Kudi Arasu., 7 March 1926.
2. Ibid., 20 January 1929.
3. *Moli-Eluthu* ('Language-Script'), Periyar's lecture at Pachaiyappa's College, Kudi Arasu Pathippagam, Erode, 1948, p. 15.
4. Periyar EVR, *Hindi Por Murasu* ('Hindi - the trumpet of war').
5. Justicite, 21 October 1944; the Mail, 20 November 1939; Kudi Arasu, 9 June 1940.
6. Kudi Arasu, 28 January 1940.
7. Ibid., 2 December 1944.
8. Justicite, 21 October 1944.
9. Vidutalai, 18 April 1951.
10. Kudi Arasu, 17 September 1939.
11. Ibid., 27 November 1943.
12. Aanamuthu, V., (ed.), *Periyar EVR Cintanaigal*, Vol. I, Trichy, 1974, pp. 465-466.
13. The Mail, 22 November 1944.

14. Kudi Arasu, 6 July 1946.
15. It was said that the rich zamindars from Andhra regarded themselves Aryan and were brahminized in their way of life.
16. Aanaimuthu, V., (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p. 545.
17. Kudi Arasu, 9 December 1944.
18. Viduthalai, 18 September 1946.
19. Periyar EVR, *Mozhi Araichi* (Linguistic Research), Nallavar Padippakam, Erode, 1948, pp.22-25.
20. Periyar EVR, *Arivin Ellai*, (Tamil), Vidutalai Publication, Chennai, 1948, pp.2-4.
21. Viduthalai, 18 September 1946.
22. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1950.
23. Periyar EVR, *Moli Araichi*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
24. The Mail, 20 November 1939.
25. Kudi Arasu, 2 December 1944.
26. The Mail, 20 November 1939.
27. Kudi Arasu, 6 July 1946.