



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 9 | JUNE - 2019



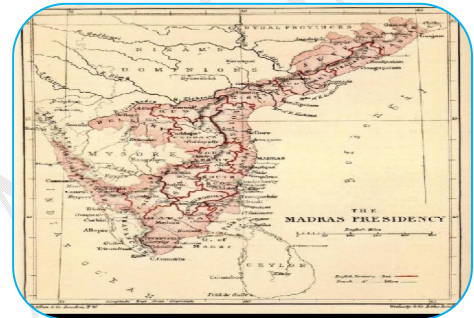
WORKING OF JUSTICE MINISTRY IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY UNDER DYARCHY

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ABSTRACT:

The present paper attempts to highlight the developments in Tamil Nadu due to the rise of Justice Party as a political party during 1921 - 1936. The formation of Justice Party in 1916 marked an important stage in the socio - political progress of the Tamils. The political awakening due to the impact of Western ideas and institutions and the administrative influence for over a century contributed to the emergence of this organisation. The Indian national movement created a different trend in Tamil Nadu politics. When the Brahmins dominated the Indian National Congress, the non-Brahmin leaders took a different attitude. Projecting the socio-economic problems of the backward and depressed classes, the non-Brahmins consolidated their political programme into a parallel movement.



KEYWORDS: Non-Brahmins, Justice Party, T.M.Nair, Theagaraya Chetty, Dravidian , Congress, Governor ,Brahmins.

INTRODUCTION

The emergent non-Brahmins who socially kept aloof and professionally overwhelmed by the Brahmins, sought to liberate from this cultural domination by invoking the pre-Aryan glories of the Dravidians. The Dravidian glory was the other side of coin of non-Brahminism. This cry was the cultural glue that was intended to hold the non-Brahmins together so long as it lasted.¹ During the Home Rule Movement launched by Annie Besant, some prominent non-Brahmin leaders like T.M.Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetty, with the

support of a group of public spirited men, determined to counter the domination of Brahmins in politics. On 20th November, 1916 they organised a conference in Madras and formed a party called South Indian Liberal Federation.² Under its banner P.Theagaraya Chetty issued a 'Non-Brahmin Manifesto' highlighting the grievances of non-Brahmins particularly of communal representation to them.³ In an attempt to propagate the ideals of the new party they started newspapers in English, Tamil and Telugu viz, *The Justice*, *The Dravidian* and *Andhra Prakasika*. Subsequently their party came to be known as the

Justice Party after the name of its English daily *Justice*.⁴ In 1917 a constitution was framed for the party with certain objectives. It aspired to create and promote the educational, social, economic, political, material and moral progress of all communities in South India other than the Brahmins. It wanted to discuss public questions and to make a true and timely representation to the Government of the views and interests of the people of South India with the object of safeguarding and promoting the interests of all communities other than the Brahmins. It decided to disseminate by public lectures, by distribution of

literature and by other means, sound and liberal views in regard to public opinion.⁵

During this time the British Government decided to introduce constitutional reforms in its administrative set up. The Government of India Act of 1919 provided for a dyarchical form of Government in the provinces with two halves - the reserved subjects and the transferred subjects.⁶ Though the Indian National Congress did not accept these reforms, the leaders of the Justice Party considered it as an opportunity to strengthen their political ideas. According to the provisions of the Act of 1919 elections were held in November 1920. The Montagu –Chelmsford Reforms provided the non-Brahmins with the separate representation, they had sought by means of seat reservation in the Madras Legislative Council.⁷ Against the Congress boycott of the elections, the Justice Party captured sixty three seats out of ninety eight seats for the whole Presidency.⁸ In Tamil Nadu, the non-Brahmins won five of the seven non-Muhammadan urban seats and nineteen of the twenty six rural seats. In December 1920 the first Justice Ministry was formed with A Subbarayalu Reddiar as the First Minister and Ramarayananingar and K Venkata Reddy Naidu as ministers.⁹ However, due to ill - health of the former, P. Ramarayananingar (Panagal Raja) took office as First Minister in April 1921. His first and second ministry continued from 1921 to 1923 and from 1923 to 1926. In the second ministry he took A. P. Patro as Education Minister and T. N Sivagnanam Pillai was given the portfolio of Development.¹⁰ As C. Natesa Mudaliar, who was considered as the ‘Father of Dravidian Movement’, was not given a ministerial post, his second ministry had to face the discontent of a group of leaders like C. Natesa Mudaliar, C. Ramalingam Reddiar and T.A Ramalingam Reddiar.¹¹ At this time of growing discontent among the leadership, P.Theagaraya Chetty passed away in April 1925 and this elevated Panagal Raja as the leader of the Justice Party.¹²

In the third general elections held in November 1926, no single party obtained a majority. The Congress contested in the election and could capture a large number of seats However, the Congress Session at Gauhati did not endorse the idea of accepting office and therefore it did not form ministry. Hence P. Subbarayan, an independent candidate was appointed by Governor Goshen as First Minister with A. Ranganatha Mudaliar and R N. Arogyasami Mudaliar as ministers. The resignation of these ministers on 8th March 1928 once again led to crisis. The Swarajya Party, which earlier extended support to it, now withdrew and moved a no - confidence motion against it. The Justice Party now stood with him and defeated the no-confidence movement. This ministry was backed by E.V.Ramasami and at the request of the Governor, the Subbrayan Ministry extended reception to the Simon Commission. In the next general election of 1930, the non-contest of Congress again helped the Justice Party to gain success. With the resignation of Subbarayan Ministry B. Muniswamy Naidu was sworn in as First Minister with P. T. Rajan and S. Kumarasamy Reddiar as ministers. However, due to internal dissension in the Party the Muniswamy ministry resigned in 1932 and Raja of Bobbili became the First Minister. Though the Justice Party could not secure more seats, the Congress non-acceptance of office made the Rajah of Bobbili to form his second ministry. Nevertheless, with the replacement of the dyarchical system by the Government of India Act of 1935, the Congress was voted to power in 1937.¹³

After assuming power in Madras Presidency in 1920, the Justice Party initiated many social and economic measures for the benefit of the non-Brahmins. As it extended support to the British administration the leaders could carry out their programmes without much obstacles. Yet, the political conflict due to its anti-stance against the Congress policies worked as a counter force all through its ministerial work. Nevertheless, taking advantage of every opportunity, the Justice Party implemented a large number of reforms. The first communal order issued on 16th September 1921 formed a significant step in this connection. In order to distribute the appointments to different communities, it directed the heads of Government departments to classify new recruits in terms of communal groups - non-Brahmins, Brahmins, Muslims, Indian Christians and Europeans and the depressed classes in the ratio of 5: 2 : 2 : 2 : 1.¹⁴ The continued pressure of Justice Party made the Madras Government to concede more favours to its demands, In order to make its efforts comprehensive and definite, the Government again issued another communal order on 15th August 1922. Accordingly every department was required to publish its communal rotation to promotions and recruitments. It further directed that the important appointments in each district should also be

distributed among the several communities.¹⁵ Yet the non-availability of qualified non-Brahmin candidates posed problems in its successful implementation for sometimes. Another important step was the constitution of a Staff Selection Board in February 1924 to supervise appointments on communal lines as per the two Government orders. Starting its work as an examination body, it was transformed as the Provincial Public Service Commission in 1929.¹⁶ In spite of the opposition of the Brahmins and the Congress leaders against these measures, it worked as a very good reform for the benefit of the non-Brahmins.

In the field of education, the establishment of the Andhra University in 1926 and the Annamalai University in 1929 fulfilled the long felt need of the Tamils and the Telugus.¹⁷ It also reorganised the Madras University Act in 1929 and made its functioning more democratic in nature. In the field of primary education, an Elementary Education Council was established in each District. It also issued an order to establish District Secondary Education Board from April 1923 under the control of the District Educational Officer. The Justice Ministry initiated a series of measures to improve the status of women.

The Madras Council adopted a resolution on 3rd August 1921 expressing its desire to get the Age of Consent Bill of H. S Gaur to be passed as a Law in the Central Assembly at an early date.¹⁸ In an endeavour to remove social inequality between the women and men in the educational field, free and compulsory women's education was introduced by the Panagal Ministry. It also extended the right of women to vote and contest in the elections Accordingly S. Muthulakshmi was elected as a member of the Legislative Council in 1926 and became its vice president.¹⁹ Other women leaders of the party were Alamelumangai and Mavalur Ramamirtham. The abolition of Devadasi system under the initiative of S. Muthulakshmi by the prevention of Dedication Act of 1929 formed a very important measure for the benefit of the women.²⁰ Under her initiative the Hindu Religious Endowment Act was amended in February 1929 making much changes in the temple administration. The ministry provided much facilities for the enhancement of the depressed classes in all walks of life. Concessions and scholarships were granted to encourage them in education while agricultural loans were granted to help them to come up economically besides acquisition of lands for house sites.

A survey of the working of Justice Party under Dyarchy would reveal that the Justices adopted regional stand at the time of national movement in an attempt to gain dominance in provincial politics. Its social and economic measures were much beneficial to the non - Brahmin community on the whole. Moreover, the self - respect movement launched by Periyar E.V.Ramasami helped a lot in removing social barriers and restrictions and it worked as a cementing force in the Tamil Nadu politics and social life in the days that had followed even after the collapse of the Justice Party. When the Justice Party declined, Periyar E.V.Ramasami took the leadership of the Party and promoted the interests of the Dravidians. The Dravidian Movement started by the leaders of the Justice Party was nurtured by Dravida Kazhagam and its Periyar E.V.Ramasami and watered well by C.Annadurai and his party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

END NOTES

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