



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

VOLUME - 12 | ISSUE - 3 | DECEMBER - 2022



DAWN OF KUDI ARASU AND ITS EDITORIAL COVERAGE

Dr. S. Varalakshmi

ABSTRACT:

Since the second half of the Nineteenth Century, press activities increased in the Indian sub-continent. The invention of the printing press in various languages helped for the development of the vernacular press activities in India. In Tamil also journals and newspapers came to the surface carrying various subjects. The press covering the political activities became an eyesore to the colonial authority. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 and the Indian Press Act of 1910 suppressed the political press activities and even many newspapers were proscribed on the charges of seditious contents. Many of the nationalist newspapers suffered



much miseries under the implementation of the Press Acts. At that times, there arose two types of the newspaper one type acted for the political independence of the nation and another type for the social liberation of the nation. The nationalist Tamil newspapers, Swadesamitran, India, Desabhaktan, Navasakthi and Tamil Nadu stood for the Swaraj and for the political liberations. As E.V. Ramasamy lost his hope on the Congress and the monopoly of the Brahmin press activities, he came out of the Congress on the issues of Sheranmahadevi Gurgugulam and Vaikom Satyagraha and Communal Representation in the Kanchipuram Conference of the Congress and launched his newspaper, Kudi Arasu. When Kudi Arasu was banned on the ground of spreading communist ideas by the Colonial authority, E.V. Ramasamy started a series of Tamil newspapers to express his rationalist thoughts.

KEY WORDS: Kudi Arasu, E.V. Ramasamy, Brahmins, Non-Brahmins, Varnashrama Dharma.

INTRODUCTION:

Press Activities in Tamil Nadu during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries awakened the Tamils from their socio-political bondage. The spread of Western education, the growth of communication and social awareness created a favorable situation for the emergence of press activities. ¹The Indian newspaper 'Crescent' started by Gazulu Lakshmi Narasu Chetty, was the official mouthpiece of the Madras Native Association. The object of the paper was purportedly to be the improvement of the condition of the Hindus. ²

In 1878 Muthusami Iyer was appointed as the first South Indian judge of the Madras High Court and it was questioned by the European press. In response, a group of Brahmin graduates in the city of Madras launched their own English newspaper, 'The Hindu' under the editorship of G. Subramania Iyer to defend the appointment. ³ Again, Tamil Brahmins, due to their religious affinity and social privilege,

were extremely confident of speaking on behalf of the people through the press.⁴ However, it had aroused the hatreds for non-Brahmin communities and hence they came forward to start newspapers and caste associations to protect their rights. Malayalees had shown much interest in Dravidian Federation activities and started Malayali press like *Kerala Sanchari*, *Keralodayam*, *Malayali* etc. and championed the cause of the non-Brahmins.⁵

On 20th November 1916, the non-Brahmins met at the Victoria Public Hall in the city of Madras and agreed to form a joint stock company called 'South Indian People's Association, Ltd' for the purpose of publishing newspapers in English, Telugu and Tamil for expressing the grievances of the non-Brahmins.⁶ Consequently, in 1917 it published the newspapers entitled *Justice* in English, *Dravidian* in Tamil and *Andhra Praksika* in Telugu.⁷

Subsequently, the non-Brahmin Congress members of Tamil Nadu also formed the Madras Presidency Association on 20th September 1917 to safeguard their rights and E.V. Ramasamy took an active part in this association.⁸ In 1921, the Tamil Nadu Congress session was held at Anamalai, chaired by E.V. Ramasami. Communal representation became an issue between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. E.V. Ramasami condemned *Varnashrama Dharma*, the arbitrary divisions of society into higher castes and lower castes. As the lower castes were branded as 'Sudras', E.V. Ramasamy repudiated the belief in superiority based on the accident of birth.⁹

E.V.R. denounced caste observances, child marriages, untouchability, forced widowhood and attacked the "Laws of Manu". He had underscored that the Laws of Manu were designed to secure the supremacy of the Brahmins and ensure their unquestioned authority. Consequently, on 2nd May 1925, *Kudi Arasu* (People's Government), a Tamil weekly, emerged as the mouthpiece of Self Respect League.¹⁰ It was a weekly published from the Unmai Vilakkam Press at Cutchery Street, Erode under proprietorship of Nagammai. E.V. Ramasami was its editor, and a year's subscription was for three rupees. The length of the paper was 15" by 12" and it had 12 pages.¹¹

In *Kudiarasu*, the editor said that the purpose of this Tamil weekly was to convey his frank views on various socio-political issues, so as to awaken the social conscience of the common man. His goal was to propagate and popularize the concepts of social equality and brotherhood and ultimately to eradicate the caste system. Explaining the reasons for starting this weekly, the editor said that there were many newspapers in the country but they were untrue to their conscience. But E.V.R. determinedly and boldly would express truth in *Kudi Arasu*.¹² In the press *Kudi Arasu*, E. V. Ramasami had strictly adhered to the aims and objectives with which the paper had been started, publishing from 1925 onwards, and published articles criticizing Brahmanical rites and rituals and Puranic Hinduism.

Kudi Arasu, had edited editorial news on party affairs, resolutions of district and state conferences of the non-Brahmins and Self Respect League interpretive articles on untouchability, caste system, women's empowerment, education and political issues. It published the speeches of E.V.R., his tour programmes and his presidential addresses at district and provincial political conferences.¹³ It allotted two to four pages for advertisements. The advertising columns had a touch of originality that reflected the needs and demands of Tamil society. The writing style was simple and the printing was legible.

Since its inception, *Kudi Arasu* had attached great importance to the editorials. The editorials created a strong impression in people's minds and shaped the opinions of thousands of readers and provided a great change in their social and political life. The editorials issued a powerful call for social change and awakened the downtrodden people.

In providing opinion, *Kudi Arasu's* role was obviously limited to the comments it made in editorials. The editorials mainly dealt with anti-Brahminism, communal representation, the fight against untouchability, the eradication of child marriage and widowhood, the abolition of the Devadasi system and brothels, inter-dining, inter-caste marriages, self-respect weddings, temple entry, etc. The same views were reflected in the correspondence columns. News coverage correlated with editorial columns in news reports. *Kudi Arasu* advocated the principles of criticizing existing religious beliefs and ideas with unmatched reason and logic. All the old established customs were met with total condemnation.¹⁴

For a long time it seemed that newspapers were mainly produced for men and ignored women. But *Kudi Arasu* paid close attention to the needs of women. The editor had encouraged female journalists like Neelavathy and Ramamirthammal to publish their articles. Its regular contributors to the articles were Kyvalya Sami, Sami Chidambaranar,

Pandit Muthusami, Kovai Ayyamuthu and K.M. Balasubramaniam and their writings dealt with social reform and explained how to bring about social change.¹⁵

Since 1930 *Kudi Arasu* had published many articles on communism and socialism. On the economic front, the articles aimed at the cancellation of all national and private debts and called for the nationalization of all assets. It wanted to improve the conditions of the workers and peasants of the land, assuring them seven hours of work and an increase in wages. It had published articles which interpreted and explained the culture of Tamils embodied in the Sangam classics and ignited Tamil nationalism.

Thus, *Kudi Arasu* Press, in its determined effort to eradicate social evils, published articles, editorials, news columns, and forcefully advocated the cause of annihilating traditional and unacceptable evils. E.V.Ramasami. through his indefatigable principles, left no stone unturned in his mission. The role of *Kudi Arasu* was highly sought after by the general public, especially non-Brahmins, and was the mainstay of later generations' welfare measures.

END NOTES

1. Arnold, David , *The Congress in Tamilnad, Nationalist Politics in South India,1919-1937*, New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1977,p.17.
2. *Unmai* (Tamil Monthly), Madras :15 April 1991,p.8.
3. Kuppasamy , R., and Supputhai, M., *Re-visioning Colonial India: Repressive Measures of the British Government in Tamil Districts of Madras Presidency (1905-1945)*, Erode: Pallavi Sri Publications and Mass Communication Private Limited 2013, p.40.
4. Rajaraman, P., *The Justice Party, A Historical Perspective , 1916-37*, Madras : Poompozhil Publishers, 1988, pp.55-58
5. Nagoorkani, P., *Justice Ministry and Social Measures in Tamil Nadu, 1921-1930*, M.Phil Dissertation, Madurai : Madurai Kamaraj University, 1988, p.46.
6. Irschick, Eugene, F., *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and tamil Separatism ,1916-1929*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969,p.47
7. Rengaraju, G., *Colonial Design and Dravidian Awakening in Tamil Nadu*, Chennai: Pavai Publications, 2006, p.59
8. Visswanathan, E.Sa., *The Political Career of E.V. Ramasami Naicker*, Madras : Ravi & Vasanth Publishers, 1983, pp.22-23
9. E.V.R., *Untouchability (History of Vaikom Agitation)*,Chennai : Periyar Self Respect Propaganda Institution, 1999,pp.1-2.
10. Udhayasankar, I., *Periyar E.V. Ramasamy : Communal Justice and Social Recognition*, Chennai : Academy of Public Affairs, University of Madras, 2006 p.62.
11. Iraiyan, A., *Italalar Periyar*, (Tamil)(Journalist Periyar) Chennai : International Institute of Tamil Studies, 2005, p.15.
12. *Kudi Arasu*, 2 May 1925,p.3.
13. Iraiyan, A., *op,cit.*, pp.68-69.
14. *Ibid.*, pp.47-51.
15. *Ibid.*, p.16.



Dr. S. Varalakshmi