

# 100 Years of the Self-Respect Movement (Tamil Nadu)

## Origin & Context

- Started in **1925**, led by **Periyar E.V. Ramasamy**.
- Emerged as an **ideological impulse**: mobilising men & women across castes/classes.
- Goal: **challenge caste hierarchy, patriarchy, and Brahmin dominance**.

## Role of Periyar

- Departed from Indian National Congress (1925).
- At Justice Party conference in Coimbatore, called for **radical non-Brahminism**.
- Launched weekly **Kudi Arasu** to spread Self-Respect ideas.
- Advocated **rationalism, self-respect, women's rights, and anti-caste reforms**.

## Justice Party's Role

- Founded in **1916** (South Indian Liberal Federation).
- Gave platform to non-Brahmins, challenged Brahmin supremacy.
- But limited impact: mainly helped **educated & elite non-Brahmins**, not the masses.

## Radical Reforms & Impact

- Popularised **self-respect marriages** (without Brahmin priests).
- Advocated **women's rights** – remarriage, divorce, right to property, abortion.
- Sought to dismantle **caste-based Hindu social order**.
- Made **non-Brahmin masses conscious of rights**.

## Significance

- Created an **alternative space** for politics beyond Congress and Hindu orthodoxy.
- Inspired **Dravidian movement**, reshaping Tamil Nadu politics.
- Brought **social justice, rationalism, and equality** to the forefront.

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