

History, Identity, and Herstory: A Simultaneous Reconstruction and Deconstruction of the Dravidian Movement

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In the scholarly work surrounding the Dravidian Movement in Tamil Nadu, India, none seems to focus on the particular experience of the upper-caste woman's. This paper attempts to document this narrative. Based on the memories of five upper-caste women through a series of telephonic interviews conducted between August - September 2015, the study attempts to discover their remembered history, or rather, their 'herstory' of the Movement, and locate their understanding of it. Their narrative draws on their experiences between the period of 1933 - 1967. Working with their memory is not simple, because: a) their memories are constructed, not just through lived experience, but through the narrative and textual experiences that they have engaged with afterwards; thus, the study attempts a symptomatic reading of their memories. b) the researcher is a native Tamil-speaker.. The sample contains the researchers relatives. Drawing on the framework of Pandiyan, Chakravarti, and V. Geetha, the investigator looks at the existing history of the genesis of the Movement - the creation of the Tamil identity through the framing of the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin, the Aryan and the Dravidian identities. Then, contextualise this framing of identities in the memories that were articulated by the interviewees, who broadly remembered the movement along three lines - i) protests against Brahminical Hinduism; ii) language protests - particularly, protests against Sanskrit; iii) the class struggle that they remember to have been the underlying cause. Ultimately, their lived experiences and memories are framed by their own identities, and thus, the study attempts to draw on their memories of growing up as women, framed within V. Geetha's history of the inherent women's struggle in the Movement.

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