

## **DRAVIDA NADU**

**S. Sheela**

*Ph.D. Research Scholar*

*Reg. No. 19122211082009*

*Pearl Research Centre for History, Culture and Tourism*

*St. Mary's College (Autonomous)*

*Thoothukudi*

*Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.*

### **Introduction**

Dravida Nadu was also the name of a Tamil language publication started by C.N. Annadurai.

Dravida Nadu is the name of a hypothetical “Sovereign State” demanded by Justice Party led by E.V. Ramasamy and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) led by C.N. Annadurai for the speakers of the Dravidian languages in South Asia. Initially, the demand of Dravida Nadu proponents was limited to Tamil-speaking region, but later, it was expanded to include other Indian states with Dravidian-language speakers in majority (Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Karnataka). Some of the proponents also included parts of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Orissa and Maharashtra. Other names for the proposed sovereign state included “South India”, “Deccan Federation” and “Dakshinapath”.

### **Characteristics and Precursors**

At the 14<sup>th</sup> Confederation of the *Justice Party* held in Madras in 1938, rules and regulations, or precursors of a *Dravida Nadu* were adopted. The objectives were defined as to attain *Purna Swaraj* and complete control for *Dravida Nadu* in social, economic and industrial, and commercial fields to liberate *Dravida Nadu* and Dravidians from exploitation and domination by non-Dravidian foreigners to acquire for the citizens of *Dravida Nadu* without discrimination on account of caste and class and inequalities arising there from, in law and society, equal rights and equal opportunities; to remove from the Dravidian people the sense of difference and superstitious beliefs existing in the name of religion, customs and traditions and unite them as a society of people with a liberal outlook and intellectual development, and to get proportionate representation in all fields till the achievement of these objectives and until the people who have a sense of caste, religious and class differences

cooperate with the party in full confidence and goodwill.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Periyar also stated that “Self Respect should come before self-rule”.

The characteristics of the separate *Dravida Nadu* was described by E.V. Ramasamy as the area then comprising Madras Presidency; system of passport to enter the state; duty on goods from other provinces and entry with permit; demarcation of boundaries according to the needs and convenience of *Dravida Nadu*; and continuing an existing system of defence till grant of full independence.<sup>1</sup> He also assured religious freedom to Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and others within this area. On the same accord, the separation of religion and politics was a part of this leaving religion as a matter of individual belief. It was made clear that the political movement should not be used for religious propaganda.

### **Justice Party**

In December 1938, the Justice Party Convention passed a resolution stressing Tamil people’s right to a separate sovereign state, under the direct control of the Secretary of State for India in London.

In 1939, E.V. Ramasamy organised the Dravida Nadu Conference for the advocacy of a separate, sovereign and federal republic of Dravida Nadu. In a speech on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1939, he raised the slogan “Dravida Nadu for Dravidians”, which replaced the earlier slogan “Tamil Nadu for Tamils”.<sup>1</sup> In 1940, the South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party) passed a resolution demanding a sovereign state of Dravida Nadu.

E.V. Ramasamy 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, including religious, linguistic, and cultural freedom of the people. The proposition was made with a view to safeguard the national self-respect of Dravidians threatened by Indo-Aryan culture, language, political leadership, and business interests.<sup>1</sup> A separatist conference was held in June 1940 at Kanchipuram when Periyar released the map of the proposed *Dravida Nadu*. With the promised grant of full self-government after World War II, and posed another threat to the Indian Freedom Movement. However, it failed to get British approval. On the contrary, Periyar received sympathy and support from people such

as Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his views on the Congress, and for his opposition to Hindi. They then decided to convene a movement to resist the Congress. By the 1940s, E.V. Ramasamy supported Muslim League's claim for a separate Pakistan, and expected its support in return. In an interview with the Governor of Madras, Jinnah, the main leader of Muslim League, said that India should be divided into four regions: Dravidistan, Hindustan, Bengalistan and Pakistan; Dravidistan would approximately consist of the area under the Madras Presidency.<sup>1</sup> Jinnah stated "I have every sympathy and shall do all to help, and you establish Dravidistan where the 7 per cent Muslim population will stretch its hands of friendship and live with you on lines of security, justice and fairplay".

In July 1940, a secession committee was formed at the Dravida Nadu Secession Conference held in Kanchipuram. On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1940, the Tiruvarur Provincial Conference resolved that Dravida Nadu should be an independent state (*thani-naadu*). The proponents of Dravida Nadu also sought to associate and amalgamate Tamil Islam within a supposedly more ancient Dravidian religion, which threatened the Islamic identity of Tamil Muslims, some of whom had earlier supported the demand for a sovereign Dravida Nadu movement.

In August 1941, E.V. Ramasamy declared that the agitation for *Dravida Nadu* was being temporarily stopped. The reason cited was that it was necessary to help the government in its war efforts. The agitation would be renewed after the conclusion of the war. Even though the agitation for *Dravida Nadu* was being stopped, the demand was very much intact.<sup>1</sup> When the Cripps Mission visited India, a delegation of the Justice Party, comprising E.V. Ramasamy, W.P.A. Soundarapandian Nadar, Samiappa Mudaliar and Muthiah Chettiar, met the members of the *Cripps Mission* on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1942, and placed before them the demand for a separate Dravidian nation. The demand was rebuffed by Cripps, who told them that such a demand would be possible only through a resolution in the Madras legislature or through a general referendum. In August 1944, E.V. Ramasamy created a new party called Dravidar Kazhagam out of the Justice Party, at the Salem Provincial Conference. The creation of a separation non-Brahmin Dravidian nation was a central aim of the party. In 1944, when E.V. Ramasamy met the Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar

to discuss and join initiatives, Ambedkar stated that the idea of Dravidistan was applicable to entire India, since “Brahminism” was “a problem for the entire subcontinent”.

At the Dravidar Kazhagam State Conference in Tiruchi in the 1940s, prominent Tamil leader C.N. Annadurai stated that it was necessary to divide India racially to prevent “violent revolutions” in future that according to him had been prevented due to the British occupation of India.<sup>1</sup>

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1947, the separatist Tamil leaders celebrated the “Dravida Nadu Secession Day”. On 13<sup>th</sup> July 1947, they passed a resolution in Tiruchirapalli demanding an independent Dravida Nadu. On 16<sup>th</sup> July, Mahatma Gandhi expressed his opposition to the demand. Also in 1947, Jinnah refused to help E.V. Ramasamy to help create a Dravidistan. When India achieved Independence in August 1947, Periyar saw it as a sad event that marked the transfer of power to “Aryans”, while Annadurai considered as a step towards an independent Dravida Nadu, and celebrated it. Over the time, disputes arose between the two leaders. They fell out after Periyar anointed his young wife as his successor to lead the party, superseding senior party leaders.

### **Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam**

In 1949, Annadurai and other leaders split up and established Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Annadurai was initially more radical than Periyar in his demand for a separate Dravida Nadu. In highlighting the demand for *Dravida Nadu*, the economics of exploitation by the Hindi-speaking, Aryan, Brahminical North was elaborated upon. It was contended that *Dravida Nadu* had been transformed into a virtual market place for north Indian products. And, thus, Annadurai explained that to change this situation, a separate *Dravida Nadu* must be demanded.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 1940s, E.V. Ramasamy spoke along the lines of a trifurcation of India, that is dividing the existing geographical region into *Dravida Nadu*, *Muslim India* (Pakistan), and *Aryan Land* (Hindustan). In public meetings that he addressed between March and June 1940, he projected the three-nation doctrine as the only solution which could end the political impasse in the country.

In 1950, E.V. Ramasamy stated that Dravida Nadu, if it comes into being, will be a friendly and helpful state to India. When the political power in Tamil Nadu shifted to the

non-Brahmin K. Kamaraj in the 1950s, EVR's DK supported the Congress ministry. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Dravida Nadu proponents changed their demand for an independent Dravida Nadu to an independent Tamil Nadu, as they did not receive any support from the non-Tamil Dravidian-speaking states. Periyar changed the banner in his magazine *Viduthalai* from "Dravida Nadu for Dravidians" to "Tamil Nadu for Tamils".<sup>1</sup>

### **Decline**

The reorganisation of the Indian states along linguistic lines through the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 weakened the separatist movement. In June-July 1956, the founder of Kazhagam, E.V. Ramasamy, declared that he had given up the goal of Dravidistan.

However, by this time, DMK had taken over from DK as the main bearer of the separatist theme. Unlike Khalistan and other separatist movements in Republic of India, DMK never considered violence as a serious option to achieve a separate Dravida Nadu.

DMK's slogan of Dravida Nadu found no support in any state of India other than Tamil Nadu. The non-Tamil Dravidian speakers perceived the ambitions of the Tamil politicians as hegemonic, ultimately leading to the failure of the Dravida Nadu concept. C. Rajagopalachari, the former Chief Minister of Madras State and a Tamil Brahmin, stated that the DMK plea for Dravida Nadu should not be taken seriously.

### **Resurgence**

In the 1980s, a minor militant organisation called Tamil Nadu Liberation Army revived the demand for Dravida Nadu, when the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) was sent to Sri Lanka.

In 2017, when the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a notification banning the sale of cattle for slaughter, Twitter users from the Kerala state (where beef dishes are popular) protested by trending the hashtag # Dravida Nadu. The hashtag also received support from Twitter users in Tamil Nadu. The major national political parties refused to support secessionist sentiments. In early 2018, Telugu Desam Party MP Murali Mohan expressed his dissatisfaction over the Union Government's supposed neglect towards South Indian states and warned that South India would form a separate country, if the

issue persisted.<sup>1</sup> Further, when several heads of South Indian states expressed dismay over the Union Government's arrangements of tax revenue distribution to various states. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader M.K. Stalin expressed his support for a sovereign Dravida Nadu state, should all the other South Indian states ever share the same notion.

### **Conclusion**

The movement for Dravida Nadu was at its height from the 1940s to 1960s, but due to fears of Tamil hegemony, it failed to find any support outside Tamil Nadu. The States Reorganisation Act 1956, which created linguistic states, weakened the demand further. In 1960, the DMK leaders decided to delete the demand of demand of Dravida Nadu from the party programme at a meeting held in the absence of Annadurai. In 1963, the Government of India led by Jawaharlal Nehru, declared secessionism as an illegal act. As a consequence, Annadurai abandoned the "claim" for Dravida Nadu – now geographically limited to modern Tamil Nadu – completely in 1963.

### **End Notes**