

The moment Tamil Nadu was born



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November 1 is a red-letter day in the annals of Tamils for it marks formation of a state for Tamils (Tamil Nadu) as Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala were carved out in a reorganization of states on linguistic lines. The attainment of the goal of separate state for Tamils has a long history of struggle brimming with sweat, blood and tears.

Congress zeal

During the days of freedom struggle, the all-India Congress was planning the structure of a future India. The idea of forming states

on linguistic lines was discussed at the Congress conferences right from 1905. That was why the Congress welcomed the British move to carve out Bihar (1912) and Odisha (1936) from Bengal. However, some Congress leaders and Annie Besant did not welcome the separation of states on linguistic lines. The Congress Maha Sabha, though, had been welcoming happily since 1920 the concept of re-organization of states on linguistic lines.

The Congress conference held in 1927 extended support to the move to make Andhra, Sindhu and Karnataka function as separate states. The party had the perspective that reorganization of states on linguistic lines would help in the growth of the culture and heredity of the people of the respective states. At the Lucknow Congress conference in 1928, a committee led by Nehru welcomed the concept of re-organizing states on the linguistic lines.

A stance that turned upside down

However, after coming to power in the country, Nehru took a stance contrary to his earlier one, giving no support to the linguistic based states. He paid more attention to the ideal of making India a secure and stable country. The Linguistic Provinces Commission or Dhar Commission, set up by the government in 1948, had also not recommended formation of states on linguistic basis.

Nonetheless, the people in South did not accept this recommendation. The Telugus started agitating, pressing their demand to create Andhra Pradesh. Likewise, voices for 'Samyukta Kannada' led by Nijalingappa began reverberating. The

Malayalees rallied behind T.K. Narayana Pillai and Panampilly Govinda Menon, raising their demand vociferously to create a united Kerala spanning Kanyakumari to Kasaragod. The president of the Kerala Congress Kelappan wanted to include in the united Kerala the Tamils living in the southern parts of Travancore Princely State and so went on a campaign trail to woo the Tamils with the help of Congress activists.

Against this background, at the meeting of the Nagercoil Congress Committee on Nov. 11, 1945, Kelappan proposed a resolution in support of the united Kerala, which was seconded by the committee secretary Sivan Pillai and other Tamil members. However, member of the executive council P. S. Mani spoke eloquently about the need to link the Tamil areas of Travancore to Tamil Nadu, provoking a barrage of opposing voices. Walking out of the meeting in a huff, Mani mobilized the youth supporting his viewpoint and floated the Travancore Tamil Congress which, later, turned into the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress.

As a precursor to the integration of lands speaking a single language, the union government changed the Travancore-Cochin princely states into a single-rule province. But the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress was up in arms, demanding linking the Tamil areas of Travancore to their homeland. The union government and all-India Congress intervened, dishing out a promise through Kamarajar that “the Tamils’ sentiments will be respected when states are carved out on linguistic basis.”

Finally the Nehru government yielded to the back-to-back agitations, agreeing firstly to the formation of Andhra Pradesh which was born in 1953, consisting of all Telugu districts in the Madras Presidency as also the Hyderabad princely state. Inspired by the birth of Andhra Pradesh, Kannadians and Malayalees

raised their voices vociferously for their own separate states. The union government, in turn, set up the Fazal Ali Commission (States Reorganization Commission) which had three members including K. M. Panikkar, Nehru's friend and Malayalee at that. Interestingly, Panikkar had been hailed by the Malayalees and print media for his steadfast promise to set up the united Kerala spanning Kanyakumari to Kasaragod.

In these circumstances, a new government led by Socialist Party leader Thanu Pillai was formed in Travancore-Cochin. Thanu Pillai reacted harshly to the demand for delinking the Tamil areas from Travancore.

Escalating uprising

Meanwhile, the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress, which feared that its demand would not be fulfilled, tried to launch an agitation which all parties in Tamil Nadu except the Congress supported. M. P. Sivagnanam, leader of the Tamilarasu Kazhagam, visited the agitation venue now and then and supported the stir.

In those days, the Tamils living in Devikulam and Peermedu suffered a great deal under the Pattom government in Kerala. So, as part of a fact-finding exercise, leaders Nesamony, Chidambaram Nathan and A. A. Razak went to those areas, braving the 144 prohibitory order and got arrested. The Tamils launched an agitation in south Travancore, Devikulam and Peermedu

against the government. Their agitation was supported by Communists and the DMK. Jeeva frequently visited the venue of agitation and encouraged the fighters. Anna, who spoke at a

meeting in Nagercoil on July 30, 1954, thundered, "I am ready to go to jail along with M.P.Sivagnanam and Jeeva, participating in the agitation."

Meanwhile, Kunchan Nadar declared August 11, 1954 as Day of Tamils' Liberation. An unprecedented rally was taken out in south Travancore. A surging crowd assembled in Nagercoil. The government unable to tolerate the heat of the mounting agitation ordered police firing which claimed the lives of seven Tamils in Marthandam and four Tamils in Pudukkadai.

Tamil Nadu born

The Faizal Commission, at long last, submitted its report to the government. When the report came up for discussion in Parliament, Nesamony dwelt at length on the just cause of the Tamils. But the union government did not pay heed to his arguments.

On the contrary, at the instigation of the Malayalee leaders, a prosperous part of Sengottai containing 95 per cent of Tamils was linked to Kerala and similarly, the Tamils lost Devikulam and Peermedu. Malabar, part of the Madras Province, was annexed to Kerala. As the Tamils could not get the northern parts of Tamil Nadu, the TAMILARASU Kazhagam and the security committee there continued their agitation. As a result, the Tamil-dominating areas of Tiruttani and Chittoor were linked to Tamil Nadu in 1959.

The Madras state sans the regions of Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada became Tamil Nadu on November 1, 1956. A new Tamil Nadu was born in the land owned by the Tamils. It was Anna, who

captured power in 1967, who removed the name of Madras state and officially re-christened it as Tamil Nadu.

Translated by V. Mariappan.