Chapter IV

Crystallization of Tamil Nationality in India

The purpose of writing this chapter is to discuss briefly the role played by Tamil parties and groups in highlighting the grievances of and discrimination against the Tamil ethnic group and attitude of the Central Government about these problems. A part of this chapter is also devoted to the various struggles launched by Tamil parties and groups from time to time to protect their culture, to promote their language and fulfill their legitimate aspirations. All this resulted not only in the formation of Tamil nationality but also in its crystallisation.

Tamil cultured renaissance in 19th and 20th centuries had led to a new awareness of distinct Tamilian identity in India. A suspicion was created of all things Northern, Anti-Brahminism and a rejection of traditional Hinduism as an import from the North had found ardent exponents. These 'social jealousies' came to manifest themselves primarily in the relationship between the Brahmin and non-Brahmin in
the South. The Brahmin of South India often socially and psychologically aloof, has retained an exclusiveness of caste orthodoxy. Often combining economic power derived from land ownership with religious authority, the Brahmin further separated himself from the lower castes and increased his control over them. With the modern period, the Brahmin, as the indigenous element of high ascriptive status, was the first to respond to Westernisation. The literary tradition of the Brahmin gave him the initial advantage in Western education, and with the command of English, he entered the colonial administration, gaining a criterion of status in addition to the old, together with new political and economic advantages, further widening the gap between the elite and the mass.

The position of the Brahmin endangered suspicion, in the mind of non-Brahmin, and in the many areas of South India, the sight of Brahmin was considered ill omen. Several communities even observed pollution from the visit of the Brahmin to their village, and 'Parpane Nambakoodati' (Trust not the

Brahmin) has become a saying widespread among the villagers of Tamiland.

For the State of Tamil Nadu, it appears that cultural nationalism has contributed to political integration and political development at least within the state. It has been instrumental in the creation of new elite, politicisation of new groups, and stimulation of widespread political participation. Politicisation of traditional cultural symbol and the caste cleavages has its roots in the politics of the pre-independence period in what was the Madras Presidency. The non-Brahmin movement is a general level given to a group of organisations, individuals and sentiments which ushered in 1920s. There is no secret about the fact that the non-Brahmins of South India have been for the last so many years aware that they were pushed Southward by the Aryans who invaded their land during pre-historic period. They have kept alive their ethnic character and they have always regarded themselves as inheritors of the Dravidian culture and tradition which was superior to what the Aryans brought with them from their original abode between Vogla and Danube. They have been all along

aware that the Brahmins although they claimed to be Dravidians and had learnt and adopted Tamil as their language of daily discourse while preserving Sanskrit as the language par excellence were not an integral part of their society.

A man of the Mali Caste, Jyotirao Phooley in 1873 founded the Satyashodhak Smaj, with the purpose of asserting the worth and dignity of man irrespective of caste. The movement was not strictly anti-Brahmin, but it emphasised the social tyranny of the caste system and fought for its abolition. The organisation never gained power or success, but it was the beginning of a series of movements. In 1914 C.Natesh Mudaliar founded "The Dravidian Home", a hostel for non-Brahmin students. The Home functioned for only two years, but during that time, Mudaliar began the Dravidian Association, with the purpose of advancing non-Brahmin political power. T.M. Nair was elected Vice-President of the Association. The organisation sought to safeguard the political, social and economic interests of the Dravidian people. Its


declared aspiration was the establishment of a Dravidian State under the British Raj—a government of, by, and for the non-Brahmins.

Tamil ethnic group was thus formed in the name of South Indian Liberal Federation. It started Tamil nationalist movement (Dravidian Movement). Its basic objective was to gain political power to uplift the Dravidians. The movement pointed out the relatively inferior status inflicted upon the non-Brahmins in the society by the Brahmins and thereby started the process of mobilising support from the non-Brahmins. This movement found its intellectual expression in the Justice Party which viewed British Rule as the only alternative to Brahmin dominance.

Defining its object as justice for all Dravidians through the establishment of a separate state under the watchful guidance of British rule, Nair (Prominent spokesman of the Justice party) was tempted by the immediate practicalities of securing needed reforms for the betterment of the non-Brahmin community. He saw the movement as national in character. It was his belief that every unit of Indian

Society should develop itself according to its own genius.

Justice party set itself against all 'negative' methods of passive resistance and non-cooperation, which was subversive to any ordered and stable government. Following a call to arms by Nair in a speech, "Our Immediate Political Outlook", the first conference of the party was held at Coimbatore in August 1917. In December, 1917 a conference of non-brahmins was called and in the first session of the conference party's view on 'Progressive Political Reform' was expressed. It called for a gradual reform toward representative government and made a plea for communal representation in Legislative Councils.

The Justice Party's existence and its pro-British ideology crystallised the political division between Brahmin and Non-Brahmin and defined the relevant social cleavage in pre-independence politics. The emphasis on pride of the Dravidian culture marked, the beginning of politicisation of cultural symbols. The people who started the non-

Brahmin movement demanded an end to what they perceived as Brahmin predominance as a condition for the independence of India. The Justice party opposed the Congress on fundamental ideological and political issues. They defined their political priorities as recruitment of more non-Brahmins into the British Administration, opposition to Brahminism and a general programme of non-Brahmin 'Uplift'. One of the chief characteristics of the Justice party members was their zeal for social reform. Madras had a non-Brahmin Ministry during 1920-26. The Justice Party Co-operated with the Government of India in making dyarchy a success. At the time of 1926 elections, the Justice Party lost to the Congress but again came to power in 1930 when Congress did not take part in election.

But the movement had not reached the people at grassroot level. A new lease of life was given to it by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker who organised the Self-Respect movement in 1925. The Self-Respect Movement, with the express purpose of uplifting the Dravidians and exposing the tyranny of the Brahmins and their dominance in public life, owes its origin

solely to one rebellious individual, E.V. Ramaswamy Naiker (called as Pariyar). The Self Respect Movement, only aimed at removing the control of Brahmins at the social level and sought to wean the people away from the Puranic, ritualistic Hinduism necessitating the presence of Brahmin priests. It considered Brahminism the symbol of all exploitations and the Brahmins the only exploiters. Unlike the Justice Party which preceded it, the movement touched the heart of the lower castes and classes. It really brought about a vertical change among the masses of the people, to whom it spread the message through various cultural outlets. The movement preferred to work outside the political parties at least till 1938, though it campaigned for the Justice Party against the Brahmin Candidates of the Congress in the elections. In 1937, the Congress Ministry of C. Rajagopalachari introduced Hindi as a compulsory subject in Schools. Taking it as an affront to Tamil culture and its rich literary tradition, Tamil patriots reacted with violent protest, and ready to exploit the opportunity, Naicker waved black flags of rebellion in his first anti-Hindi campaign. The agitation against the imposition of

Hindi brought Naicker to the forefront of attention, and inflamed the non-Brahmins against the Ministry. In 1938 while in jail for his anti-Hindi Agitation, Naicker was elected President of Justice Party. He saw the imposition of Hindi as a subjugation of Tamil people which would only be avoided through the creation of Dravidian state. In the Justice Party Convention in December 1938, it was resolved that Tamil land should be made a separate state, loyal to the British Raj and directly under the Secretary of State for India. In 1939, Naicker organised the 'Dravidia Nadu Conference' for the advocacy of a separate and independent Dravidasthan. The demand was again reiterated the following year in response to the Lahore Resolution demanding Pakistan passed by the Muslim League. Naicker gave full support to the scheme for Pakistan and tried to enlist League support for the creation of Dravidasthan.

Finally the Self Respect Movement and the Justice Party were merged in 1944 to form 'Dravida


10. Ibid, pp.9-10.

Kazagham' under Naicker. It took on a militant mass agitational character and vowed not to accept any title from, or office of, the Government and to wear black shirts as symbolic of the down trodden conditions of the Dravidians. At the 1945 conference at Tiruchirapalle, the D.K. adopted a Constitution and took as its symbole a black flag with a red circle in the Centre, the black representing the mourning for the subjected Dravidian peoples, the red for the hope of Dravidasthan. The organisation of the party was to be based upon units in each village, Taluq and district. The object of the D K was proclaimed to be the achievement of a sovereign independent Dravidian republic, which would be federal in nature with four units corresponding to the linguistic divisions, each having residuary power and autonomy of internal administration.

The Dravidian movement has been instrumental in bringing the people of Tamiland to an awareness of themselves as a community. The D K through its organisational units in every district and taluq in Madras brought the message of Tamil


13. Four linguistic divisions were supposed to be based on Tamil, Telegu, Kannada and Malayalam languages.
nationality to the masses. Through plays presented in even the most isolated village communities, through its voluminous literature and its inflammatory speeches, the movement was able to affect self conscious awareness of the nature of the group as a community through an expression of primordial identification. In so doing, it served to preserve the community and, at the same time, it actually brought it into being as a nationality. As Myron Weiner points out, "The creation of a new community wide association in itself serves to strengthen loyalties to the community.

This very increased militancy and blind opposition to the Brahmins, and because of them to the Congress, to Nationalism, to independence of India and finally to the entire North, spelt disaster for the D K. In 1947, when Periyar refused to recognise the independence of India and wanted to celebrate 15th August as a day of misery and mourning, he alienated a good section of younger workers including C.N. Annadurai. Added to this was his increasing autocracy which in 1949 culminated in the break up of the D K. Annadurai led the break away group to form the 'Dravida Munnetra Kazagham'.


DMK as political party originated from D.K. as a rebel offspring seeking political identity out of a social reform organisation. It signalled a victory of the young rebels over the orthodox hardliners not on any ideological plank but on tactical considerations in regard to such issues as languages and economic dominations, as D K was fighting a lost battle against the main trends of the national stream. In the forties when bouts of nationalistic upsurge were mounting on the British who finally left the country granting her independence, a crisis of identity and viability was tightening its noose around D K. A growing rift between two sections of young rebels (who were prepared to fight their ideological battle within the framework of parliamentary democracy) and the old hardliners who were still captives of the past strategy, finally, surfaced and split the parental organisation with social reformer and nationalist. Annadurai, the rebel chief proclaimed the foundation of the Dravida Progressive Federation or the DMK party. Annadurai (who was affectionately called as 'Anna' meaning elder brother) argued that, if the Indian National Congress took sixty years to replace the British Raj by Aryan rule, Mohammad Ali Jinnah took only six years to win Pakistan. The change augured well for Dravidnadu which could be achieved in
the shortest possible time after independence. However the DMK was in no substantial way different from D K, as it was committed to the same basic goal, Dravidnadu- an independent homeland for the Dravidians.

In the first General Elections in 1952, being insufficiently organised and conscious of the criticism of Periyar, the DMK decided to act as an interest group. It campaigned for the candidates of some local parties as well as independents, in return for their pledge to support and work for the goals of the DMK within the Assembly. The crossing over of the members of these parties to the Congress soon after disillusioned the DMK, of the efficacy of being a mere pressure group. The decision of D K to support the 'Kamraj Congress' as well as the government suppression in 1952-53, led the DMK to decide in favour of directly contesting the election in 1956. The result of this election was a mixed fare for the DMK. It established itself as the second important party in the Assembly (replacing the CPI), winning 15 seats and nearly 15% of the votes cast. It also made its first entry into the Lok Sabha with 2 seats.

However, it was in the subsequent municipal election of 1959 that the DMK really made its mark with the help of its electoral alliance with the CPI. It won control of three of the five largest municipalities of Madras.

In June 1960 the DMK and the 'Now Tamils' organised a joint campaign for the secession of Madras from India for making it an independent sovereign state of Tamil Nadu. They burnt map of India. They proposed that the states of Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Mysore should secede from the Indian Union and form an independent "Republic of Dravida Nad". But this proposal got no support outside Madras. In April 1961 several leading members of the DMK resigned and formed the Tamil National Party under the leadership of D.M.K. Smpath, a member of Parliament. It rejected the DMK proposal and instead advocated a radical amendment to the Constitution so that India should become a highly decentralised federation of autonomous linguistic States, each of which could have the right to secede. Several DMK members of the State Assembly and of Madras Corporation, including the Mayor of Madras, joined the new party. The DMK made heavy gains in the Third General election in 1962. It therefore, intensified its agitation for an independent Dravidian State.
During a debate in the Rajya Sabha on May 1, 1962, C.N. Annadurai, its leader asserted that the people of Southern India were of different stock from those of the North. He alleged that the South had been ignored and neglected by the Union Government.

The Central Government viewed the success of DMK as a vote for secession and creation of Dravidanadu. To overcome this apprehension and also with a view to exposing the true nature of the DMK and reducing its popularity, the Central Government announced in November 1962 an amendment to Article 19 of the Constitution prohibiting secessionist activity by political organisation. Consequently the Parliament adopted in October 1963 the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which (i) enabled Parliament to make laws providing penalties for any person questioning the sovereignty and integrity of the Indian Union and (ii) laid down that a candidate for election to Parliament or a State Legislature would have to undertake oath of affirmation to have true faith and allegiance to the Indian Constitution and to uphold country's sovereignty and integrity. This amendment gave an opportunity to the DMK to give up formally its

demand for separation and instead plead for regional autonomy with as large powers as possible within the framework of the sovereignty and integrity of India and of the Constitution. Much against the Congress hopes, this moderate and compromising stand of D.M.K. leadership did not lead to any disruption in the party or even diminution in its popularity and following. In fact to a great extent the DMK criticism of the Congress rule as a 'dictatorship', and of the amendment as born out of fear of DMK's strength were convincing enough to keep the party growing and even launch very successfully the language agitation in January 1965.

The Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965 made language an all party issue in Madras and showed how the cultural and political impact of the Dravidian movement had spread to all sections of population, going beyond caste or economic frontiers. However the question of Hindi, the language of the north, created a cultural consciousness in the minds of ethnically conscious Dravidian people long back but in late 1964

19. It is widely believed that secessionist demand was dropped on the advice of Rajaji. The step was immensely beneficial to DMK. Besides earning a status of respectability for the party by dropping a widely condemned parochial stance. Annadurai could gain the advantage of support by an astute statesman, like Rajaji, while also winning a sizeable chunk of Brahmin support to its fold. Moreover DMK underlined the fact that being a party affectionate towards the Tamil race and language, it would protect their right only if elected to power
two things in particular aroused once more the old fears of 'Hindi imperialism.' Alarmed at official pressure to replace English with Hindi as steadily as possible grew as Republic day, January 26, 1965 approached. And well publicised moves to introduce Hindi as an alternative medium to English for the UPSC examination in 1965 seemed to confirm the worst fears of the Tamilians.

January 26, 1965, the fifteenth anniversary of the coming into force of the Constitution of India, marked the end of the period in which English rather than Hindi could, according to the terms of the constitution, be used for all official purposes. Inspite of many efforts to assure the non-Hindi speaking people of India to protect their legitimate interests, a bitter agitation was started in Madras. No agitation of similar intensity and scale had been known in Madras, and it demonstrated deep rooted dissatisfaction with the language policy of the Government of India and the mounting strength of some new political forces. Language agitation in India is no new thing and has exercised considerable

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influence over national policy since independence. National leaders may often have deplored the intense emotions which complicate all consideration of question of language policy, but a long series of concessions to popular agitation has tended to encourage further agitation among those who feel that some particular policy threatens their interests. It is to be noted that most previous language agitation, concerned the setting up of linguistic states, but the Madras agitation of 1965 differed in that it involved the question of the official language to be used by government and to an extent it was the status of Tamil in question. This language agitation was compared with the language struggle of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. A series of conferences and conventions were held by DMK in different places and finally it was decided to burn section 17 of the Indian Constitution.

Tamil nationalism hitherto has seldom expressed itself in violence. Both under the British and in independent India the Tamilians have had a somewhat privileged position, partly on account of their reputation for hard work, which has made them much sought after labour, and partly because the standard of education and knowledge of English have been some-

what higher than elsewhere and consequently Tamilians have secured a large share of appointments in government services and education. Perhaps because of this Tamil linguistic feelings has never turned against English, as has happened in other parts of India. English, so far from being a threat to Tamil, is the tool Tamilians use for the advancement and protection of their interests. Accordingly there has been very little pressure to replace English as the medium of higher education in Tamilnad, and it acquired only the suggestion that English was to be replaced by Hindi to provoke a violently adverse reaction, particularly among students but also among the illiterate masses. Those whose personal interests had not been affected by a change of official language were persuaded by the 'Hindi imperialism' as a part of a larger plot by the North to dominate the South culturally, economically, and politically. Students, lawyers, and businessmen, indeed the middle class

22. From 1948-1962 Madras state filled a higher proportion of place in the Indian Administrative Services through competitive examinations than any other state. Madras produced 23.3 per cent of the total entry. Next came U.P. with 16.5 per cent, Punjab with 12 per cent and Delhi with 7.8 per cent. The notable point is that during that time the area of the state shrunk through rearrangement of boundaries. Inspite of this, Madras continued to be a leader in the number of places secured. For details, see The Hindu, April 8, 1963.
generally, saw their interest as tied to the continuance of English as the language of Government and the courts and more particularly as the medium for the Union Public Service Commission competitive examinations.

DMK leadership successfully discovered the importance of 'Glorious Tamil Civilization' and projected "Tamil Cultural Nationalism" and the greatness of the ancient language to impress and mobilise the population of which more than sixty per cent were illiterates. Being a nationalist party the Congress concentrated on strengthening the nationalist spirit for an integrated development of the nation as a whole. Hence a pro-Hindi stand of the party was an inevitable risk. However, the Congress with all its resources made feeble attempts to make use of the emerging linguistic consciousness of the Tamils to contain the DMK. Ultimately the Congress lost the 'language battle' though it was in many respects stronger to the DMK. The leadership of DMK particularly Annadurai had gained experience during the 1938 anti-Hindi agitation. The leadership was convinced that the anti-Hindi stand would be a powerful tool of agitational politics and after a steady spadework for

a decade entered into electoral politics and in the next decade emerged as the ruling party of Tamil Nadu. In the hands of the DMK, Tamil Nationalism became the ideology for mass mobilisation of political demands for a generation. The language issue helped the party to build up a strong base. The Party's election manifesto for 1967 election made pronouncement that the DMK shall strive for the advancement of Tamil language. The main plan of the DMK has been glorification of Tamil language and culture.

The DMK contested the 1967 elections in the backdrop of language agitation. Though the language riot was not the sole reason for the loss of the Congress, it was very much an important factor for the success of the DMK. But simultaneously a change in continuity came about in Tamil Nadu politics. The change manifested itself both in the structure and the organisational dynamics of the electorate. From the structural point of view it was found that 12.5% new voters got enrolled for the 1967 elections. They were born in the throes of Indian independence and were not enamoured of the Congress role in the freedom struggle, they in fact had grown up in a cynical atmosphere where congress, being the ruling party, had been the target of criticism and attack. Most of them were students with percentage of rural background and
this was a resource that Annadurai decided imaginatively to tap from the beginning to reap a rich harvest later. Towards this end, he was ingenious enough to employ his agitational machinery, his own charisma, his gift of the gab and the ever buoyant film lobby in the party. In order to make the bid to power an arithmetical certainly all that it had further to do was to seal the non-congress support from splintering. And towards this end Annadurai could successfully established a rapport with Rajagopalachari, his personal friend, while also proclaiming a positive commitment to the leftist goals. In this way, through a subtle stroke of diplomacy, Annadurai could overcome both the stigma of anti-Brahminism and the condemnation that it was essentially a party of urban bourgeoisie. Anna also proved shrewd in netting votes directly. He did not remain content with a student base but also marked for a disciplined party cadre which could effectively reach the door steps of the villagers. He infact, believed in consolidating whatever little gains had been acquired so that the initial break through vital for success was not wasted but converted into stepping stones for further success. The strategy also brought about unity of

effort on the part of party colleagues which was made possible through common fighting and suffering for a longtime. The base of operation was from urban to rural capturing civic bodies first and then moving through rural rich to the rural poor.

Thus the DMK owed its victory in the 1967 Assembly elections partly atleast to its alliance with the Savatantra party with which it had an informal understanding in the previous elections, and the Muslim league, the Left Communists and the Praja Socialists. It also showed that the efforts of the DMK in mobilising the masses especially in segments and regions which had not been previously exploited by the Congress and DK had born fruit.

Once in political office, the DMK took steps to consolidate its position and implement some of its important promises. The administration and especially the police force went through clearing operations; black marketing and hoarding in foodgrains was checked; food prices especially of rice were brought down; economy in administration was brought about, minister's salaries were cut to half and land rent on dry lands was abolished.

The DMK government was very much assentive on the question of the autonomy of the
states under the Indian Federalism. The party seeks to justify its demand for more autonomy for the states on the ground that the state governments are closer to the people and only after the state government take over these powers from the centre would they be able to serve the people in a manner expected of them. The DMK's objective was to achieve real and meaningful autonomy within the constitutional framework. It initiated steps for reviving the provisions of the federal constitution and insisted on with the Centre for giving a legal form to Nehru's assurances on the language issue. It sought to 'Tamilise' the higher education system as well as administration. In August 1969, it even appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Rajamannar, to suggest measures necessary to augmenting the resources of the state and to secure the utmost autonomy of the state without prejudice to the integrity of the country. The Rajamanar Committee submitted its report in 1971 and the recommendations made by it evoked a lot of discussion. The major recommendations included readjustment in schedule VII of the Constitution to transfer residuary powers to the states; repeal to Article 249 and modification of

Article 252; repeal of Article 200 and 201 and reorganisation of Finance Commission and Planning Commission.

In September 1970 DMK convened a 'State Autonomy Conference' in Madras, and its leader, V.B. Raju, M.P. criticised Delhi's attitude in trying to administer state's subjects, holding the states as its debtors and using its financial strings to control them. Various other regional parties, including the Akali-Dal were invited to attend the Conference. The Conference did not make much headway in that autonomy was desired but the extent of autonomy could not be defined. The attitude of DMK was most far-reaching which other could not endorse. And in 1971 again, the Chief Minister Karunanidhi said that the separation of Tamil Nadu from the Union of India would become unavoidable. Madras demanded for separate flag in 1970. Here it may be mentioned that at that time the congress was a minority government at the Centre, and needed the support of DMK, MPs. The tentative alliance between DMK and Congress (R) ended in 1971. Meanwhile, the internal strife in DMK got intensified when M.G. Ramachandran framed charges against M.Karunanidhi the

presented a memorandum to the central government. Ramachandran formed All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kuzgham (AIADMK), a break away group of the DMK. It has projected itself as the real custodian of Tamils. It defeated DMK in 1977 assembly elections.

In the March 1977 elections to Parliament, the AIADMK which had an electoral alliance with the Congress and the CPI won 18 out of 20 seats it contested, whereas the DMK won only one seat. In the Assembly election of June 1977 it won an absolute majority with 129 out of 234 seats and became the ruling party. In 1980 Lok Sabha elections AIADMK won 2 seats with 25.4 per cent votes while the DMK secured 23.4 per cent votes and 16 seats. In December 1984 Lok Sabha elections AIADMK in alliance with the Congress(I) won all the 12 seats it contested out of a total of 39 whereas the DMK won only 2 out of 27 seats it contested. In March 1985 Assembly elections the AIADMK once again secured 133 out of 234 whereas DMK got just 20. M.G. Ramachandran remained the leader of AIADMK and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu till his death in 1987. After his death the party suffered a setback because of conflict between two factions.

within the party. Consequently in 1989 Assembly elections AIADMK lost power to DMK led by K. Karunanidhi. The DMK government of Karunanidhi was dismissed by the Chandrashekhar's Samajwadi Janta Dal minority government in 1991 on the alleged failure to deal with LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) militancy. In 1991 the unification of the splinter groups in the AIADMK under the leadership of Ms. Jayalalitha, returned to power and recognition of M.G.R. formula as a bridge between the Congress (I)-AIADMK alliance brought AIADMK back to power.

In spite of the fact that AIADMK has come into power in Tamil Nadu, the situation has not changed. The AIADMK is also a splinter group of the DMK and talks about Tamil identity. With these two local parties (DMK & AIADMK) nearly equally popular, it is easy for the central leadership to balance and register its presence. It also suggested that the political elite in Tamil Nadu is really concerned more with effective power, than with parochial identity. It has, however, become very much clear that over a period of time, the politics of Tamil Nadu has moved far away from the mainstream of political currents by way of political parties and personalities. Even if some of its original planks and causes are no longer
that volatile or valid, the role of cultural factors like castes and language still very much dictate the dominant role of regional parties in Tamil Nadu.

But since 1977 the two parties DMK and AIADMK aligned themselves with the Janata Dal and Congress party to come in power in the state. In this way these parties have created factions in Tamil Ethnic group, consequently the Central Government responded to them by way of either announcing accommodative decisions or restoring to supressive measures, but this did not effect the raising of Tamil demand by both the parties.

The point which I want to highlight is that inspite of factionalism and periodic alliance of AIADMK with Congress and DMK with Janata Dal and Left Front, both the parties have tried to outsmart each other by raising the Tamil national question time and again, each party blaming the other of being an agent of Centre and ignoring the interests of Tamil ethnic group. Karunanidhi's implicit sympathy and support to LTTE is well known. On many occasions Ms. Jayalalitha relations with Congress were strained basically on this question. There is section of people in Tamil Nadu, who support Tamil Struggle in Srilanka and want a similar type of struggle for self-determination in
Tamil Nadu. In brief it can be said that the struggle of the Tamil people from 19th century till today has crystallised Tamil nationality in this State. It can be fairly said in today’s context that the Indian Tamils are a nationality like any other nationality.

In view of the common linguistic and community identity between the Tamils of the two countries, any communal or linguistic outburst in one country has repercussions in the other. The Tamil Sinhalese riots of Ceylon in 1958 became a cause of deep concern to the leadership of some of the political parties in India particularly in Tamil Nadu. The 1961 language riots, 1981 and 1983 ethnic violence in Sri Lanka also evoked sharp reaction in Madras. In 1965 when Tamil Nadu was engaged in a violent agitation against Hindi as the official language of India the Federal Party leader SJV Chelvanayakam identified the struggle with the resistance to the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka.

All ethnic and non-ethnic political parties of India played their role in Tamil question in Sri Lanka. The level of participation varies from party to party in accordance with the state politics.

of Tamil Nadu. Among Indian political parties the DMK played a significant role in the Tamil question. The DMK mobilised public opinion in Madras in favour of the Tamils when the language riots broke out in Sri Lanka in 1958. The Working Committee of DMK in Tamil Nadu, issued statements to extend its sympathy to Sri Lankan Tamils and appealed to the political leaders of Sri Lanka to restore order and peace in the island. The committee also condemned the indifference of the Government of India on this issue and its failure to protect the Indian Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka.

The DMK which was emerging as the main opposition party in Tamil Nadu in the late 1950's strongly expressed its views on the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka. This party projected itself as the custodian of the entire Tamil race living in the other parts of the world. The DMK became the vanguard of the Dravidian ethnic movement and held out the image of Tamil identity and nationalism. The DMK party established a reasonable working relationship with


the Tamil federal party in Sri Lanka. It continued to show its interest on the issue after it became the ruling party. It asserted, that being Tamils they had the right to share the sufferings of their brethren in Sri Lanka. While expressing his awareness on the limitations of a state in this problem, Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of DMK government justified the state's concern by indicating the procedure of 'Bengalis' sympathy and support towards the fellow Bengalis of Bangladesh during the 1971 crisis. Thus the Tamil Nadu government was likewise bound to bring to the notice of the centre, the sufferings of the Tamils in the island state.

The DMK during its tenure of office as the ruling party of Tamil Nadu, advocated the cause of the Indian Tamils as it did earlier while in opposition. However, its expressions were milder than its earlier one. As an opposition, DMK's responsibilities were limited while making a scene in any political situation in India or Sri Lanka. But being a ruling party, the DMK was not only responsible to the people of Tamil Nadu, but also answerable to the Union Government at the centre. Hence the DMK's concern would

34. Patriot, April 7, 1975.
be to protect its electoral gains and find ways to be in power without jeopardising its position on the racial issue. At the same time, the party did not wish to abandon totally its projection as the real custodian of the Tamil race. It was rather an ambivalent situation in which the DMK tried to maintain a balance between its racial appeal and the responsibility of an elected government. The DMK government was fully aware of the fact that the issues involving the Sri Lankan Tamils were an internal matter of the island despite its concern and sympathy over their welfare. It used the issue to pressurise the centre for the grant of more powers to the state.

After the poll reversal in 1977, the DMK continued to support the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka with vigor. The DMK organised one day strike to condemn the attacks on the Tamils in Sri Lanka in August 1977 communal violence. It handed over a memorandum to the Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka. Its Chief, Karunanidhi told the processionists that it was the duty of the people of Tamil Nadu to protect the rights and interests of Tamils wherever they live in the world. The DMK protested against the 1981 and 1983

35. G.Palanithurai, K.Mohanasundaram, op.cit. p.76.

ethnic violence in Srilanka.

The other champion of Tamils, the All India Anna Dravida Minnetra Kazgham (AIADMK), a breakaway group of the DMK after becoming the ruling party in 1977 did not openly support the separate Eelam demand. When the Sri Lankan Tamil leader Amirthalingam spoke about their problem in the fifth Tamil language Research conference at Madurai in 1981, it did not evoke any sympathetic approval from the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran. Instead the Chief Minister objected the reference and pointed out that the conference should not be used to advocate the political ideology of any individual. However, it does not mean that AIADMK became anti-Tamil. Rather it maintained a cautious approach. When the problem became acute by the nature and intensity of violence, the AIADMK government acted in accordance with the situation. When the 1983 riots broke, the state government organise to total bandh in the state on 2nd August to express its anguish and support to the suffering Tamil population in Sri Lanka. It also requested the government of India to focus the issue.

37. Ibid January 9, 1981.

The Congress party initially viewed the Tamil question an internal matter of Sri Lanka. But when the Tamils were subjected to repeated communal violence, the public opinion in Tamil Nadu was perturbed and was inclined to support the Tamil cause. It evoked a strong feeling of support of Tamils irrespective of party affiliations. The Congress also reflected this emotion of the Tamil people in Tamil Nadu. The position of the state Congress was rather ambiguous. On the one hand it wanted to make it clear that it was not apathetic towards Tamils, and on the other hand it could not afford to criticise openly the Centre's policy towards Tamils. The Congress being a ruling party both at the Centre and in the State (before 1967), played its cautious role as a guardian of constitutional provisions at the Centre and a custodian of Tamils in the State and the state government passed the resolutions against the wishes of Central Government towards the Tamil issue (Srilankan).

Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister was categorical in denouncing the atrocities committed on

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39. *Ibid* July 28, 1983,
Sri Lankan Tamils in 1981 and 1983 and had warned the Srilankan government at a numer of times. However, it was Rajiv Gandhi who dropped food supplies and other materials in the North-East of Srilanka, violating the sovereignty of Srilankan airspace. All that time entire Tamil population in Tamil Nadu as also the two Tamil parties DMK and AIADMK acclaimed this decision of the Indian Prime Minister. But the signing of Rajiv-Jayawardene Accord was as a setback to the Sri Lankan Tamil supporters in Tamil Nadu particularly after the IPKF waged a virtual war against the LTTE. It was only when V.P. Singh became the Prime Minister that DMK leader Karunanidhi persuaded him to withdraw the IPKF which he did.

The point which I want to emphasise is that besides DMK and AIADMK, the Champions of Tamil ethnic population in Tamil Nadu and North-East of Sri Lanka, the Government of India was also forced to take position in case of the struggle of Srilankan Tamils. The role played by the two Tamil parties of Tamil Nadu in highlighting and the Tamil nationality question in Tamil Nadu is quite obvious but, they did support the Tamil struggle in Sri Lanka, shows their concern for Tamil ethnic group and perhaps for a wider Tamil Eelam comprising of Tamil Nadu and the North-East of Sri Lanka, through quite implicitly.