History of the Demand for Dravida Nadu

What is the issue?

The recent statement of an MP from Tamil Nadu that if the central government did not give greater autonomy, there is a chance to revive the demand for a separate state, has spurred controversy.

What parties/platforms were involved in the concept of Dravida Nadu?

- **Justice Party** - The South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as Justice Party was founded in 1917 by Sir Pitti Theagaraya Chetty, Dr T M Nair, and Dr C Natesa Mudaliar
- It was the first to raise the flag of anti-Brahminism, and oppose the caste system that put Brahmins at the top of the social hierarchy.
- In 1920, the Justice Party won the first legislative council elections held under the Government of India Act, 1919, and formed the government.
- The Justice Party remained in power until 1926, and then from 1930-37.
- **Self-Respect Movement**- Periyar was the founder of the Self-Respect Movement (1925) and was anti-caste and anti-religion.
- He advocated major social reforms, including equality for women in society, and supporting birth control for women for their health and well-being.
- He also opposed the domination of Hindi and emphasised the distinct cultural identity of the Tamil nation.
- He envisaged an independent Dravida Nadu, comprising Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada speakers.
- **Dravidar Kazhagam**- In 1938, the Justice Party and Self-Respect Movement came together.
- In 1944, the new outfit was named Dravidar Kazhagam.
- DK was anti-Brahmin, anti-Congress, and anti-Aryan (North Indian), and launched a movement for an independent Dravida nation.
- During the anti-Hindi agitations in 1938, Tamil scholars including Maraimalai Adigal and Somasundara Bharathi, at a public meeting held on Marina beach raised the slogan Tamil Nadu Thamizharukke (Tamil Nadu is only for Tamils) for the first time.

How was the idea of an independent Dravida Nadu weakened?

- **Post independence-** In 1949, Annadurai split from Periyar due to ideological differences, and his DMK joined the electoral process.
- The DMK's platforms were social democracy and Tamil cultural nationalism, but Annadurai was silent on Dravida Nadu.
- **Linguistic nationalism**- The Linguistic Provinces Commission (S K Dhar Commission) set up in 1948 argued against a linguistic basis of reorganisation of states, as it could lead to further division.
- In 1952, the freedom fighter Potti Sriramulu died at the end of a 56-day hunger strike

undertaken to demand a separate Telugu state.

- In the face of intense public anger, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru announced an intention to create a separate Andhra state.
- In 1953, the States Reorganisation Commission was constituted under Justice Fazl Ali, K M Panikkar, and H N Kunzru which favoured the linguistic division of states based a balanced approach.
- The States Reorganisation Act, 1956 redrew the boundaries of states along linguistic lines, and created the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore and Kerala in southern India.
- In the process, a major demand of the linguistic movements was fulfilled, and the idea of an independent Dravida Nadu was weakened.

How did the demand for Dravida Nadu evolve after 1960?

- DMK dropped their demand for a separate Tamil Nadu in 1962, in the wake of the Chinese aggression to show solidarity in facing an external threat with a unified face.
- Also, 16th Amendment to the Indian Constitution was passed in 1963, which placed a demand upon every Member of Legislature or Parliament to pledge him/herself to uphold the unity and integrity of the Indian Union.
- Since 1967, the preservation of Tamil culture and language has been a major focus area of successive state governments.
- The state opposed the three-language formula in 1966, and has continued to protest the introduction of Hindi in education.
- The demand for Dravida Nadu was gradually replaced by a demand for greater autonomy in education and cultural practices.

References

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