

# India-Pakistan Partition Politics in Tamil Nadu: A Review

S. Z. Niazudeen\*

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Sri Vasavi College, Erode, Tamil Nadu, India; niazudeensz78@gmail.com

## Abstract

In the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a good part of the social and political life in history of Tamil Nadu was marked by conflicts arising out of the demand for reservation in officialdom which is termed as Non-Brahmin Movement and at the same time the Muslims also never failed to put their demands of communal reservation which the British encouraged by granting reservations on communal basis that stimulated communalism. The emergence of Muslims as separate political entity with the establishment of Muslim League in 1906 had kindled the growing demand for the communal representation throughout the freedom struggle and as such the period of national movement in India also witnessed the process of communalization which had led to communal tensions and the communal factors had played an important role in the political happenings of the period which ultimately led to the partition of the country in 1947. There is no doubt about that the claim for communal representation was much higher than the demand for independence which ultimately leads to the demand for a separate state on the basis of religion. Mr. Jinnah's influence among the Muslims increased rapidly in the years following the advent of 1935 constitution. The Muslim League grew into a powerful organization with branches all over the country. Tamil Nadu is not an exception to the growing communal frenzy where the political mobilization on religious and caste line had fragmented the masses in to Hindu, Muslim, Brahmin, Non-Brahmin etc. When Jinnah introduced the two nation theory it had its impact on the politics of Tamil Nadu. When views about partition are more popular, there definitely existed silent voice against partition. This paper is a review of the pro and anti partition views that emerged in Madras Presidency.

**Keywords:** Communalization, Communalism, Congress, Muslim, Partition

## 1. Introduction

The political happening of the period of Indian national movement had been shaded by communalism and the political environment was very conducive to it with religions playing an important role in mobilization of mass for political actions. The divide and rule policy adopted by the British had many negative aspects and this policy had succeeded in failing a part of Muslim community in sense of keeping them aloof from the political actions of the Indian National Congress and taking a different stand in the political arena. On the other hand, the demand for communal representation had stirred the politics of the period.<sup>a</sup> The press being the only major source of dissemination of information the communal tensions in north India easily reached the south and we find communal flavor in then which kindled the communal passions of the public in the Madras Presidency. The Tamil region was not an exception to escape the evils of communalization and when it culminated it led to the partition of India during which C. Rajagopalachariar, Periyar E. V. R., Yakub Hassan and many others who played a dominant role in poli-

tics of Madras presidency had pro-partition and anti-partition views which is interesting to note in history of Tamil Nadu.

## 2. Partition Politics

There is no doubt about the fact that communal politics lead to partition of the country when the Muslim League grew into a powerful organization with branches all over the country. The Hindu Maha Sabha (HMS), Arya Samaj, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, Khaksar, Dravida Kazhagam were very active during this period in Madras province. In the same way in Tamil Nadu the Muslim League had grown up. In the Khilafat agitation and Non-Co-operation Movement the Muslim Leaguers co-operated with the Congress and offered satyagraha<sup>1</sup>. But after that when differences arouse in between the Congress and the Muslims League it resulted in the clashes in between them in Tamil Nadu<sup>2</sup>. For the Muslim League and its partition scheme, support came from Mr. E.V. Ramasamy Naicker the then Justice party leader in 1940. The Justice party and Muslim League organised meetings and conferences stressing their separate

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\*Author for correspondence

Nation theory. The prominent leaders of the Muslim League during this period were Mohammed Ismail, Abdul Hamid Khan, Mr. Allapitchai, Mr. Khan Bahadur, R. Kalifullah and Allama Mashriq<sup>3</sup>.

In the process of examining the partition politics the most important and interesting aspect to be taken into account was the stand of C. Rajagopalachariar. (C.R). He in an interview said that partition of the country is like dividing a baby. The interview was published with the header '*Dividing the Baby: Rajagopalachari on Pakistan Demand*'. In the interview he said "I consider it a sign of diseased mentality that Mr Jinnah has brought himself to look upon the idea of one Indian nation as a misconception and the cause of most of our troubles. It is not this conception of one Indian nation but the mischievous concept of two Indian nations that threatens to lead India to destruction, if those who are responsible for it fail to revise their notions in time"<sup>4</sup>. Examining the League scheme of partitioning India even from the 'quasi-tribal point of view' of Mr. Jinnah, C. R. showed it to be quite absurd and impracticable. This was Mr. C. R's comment on the League resolution demanding the partition of India on a religious basis in the course of an exclusive interview to a representative of the Hindustan Times. Analysing the issues raised by the League resolution in his characteristic manner, Mr. C. R said: 'The proposal to divide the country reminds me of the old story when one of the two claimant mothers was quite willing to divide the baby while the other claimant proved her case by agreeing to handing over the baby in entirety''.

In 1942 in a sharp twist from earlier stand Mr. C.R. supported the division of the country. On April 24, the Madras Legislature Congress Party passed a resolution acknowledging the claim of the Muslim League for separation and this resolution was popularly called the Madras Resolution. Mr. C. R., the then Tamil Nadu Congress leader in May 1942, stated that in order to avert the communal antagonisms and internal feuds among the Hindus and Muslims, an amicable settlement must be made with the Muslim League by the Congress on the question of dividing India. This statement created bitter criticisms among the congress leaders themselves. The HMS opposed it tooth and nail. In Madras an urgent meeting of the working committee of the HMS was held at which Mr. C. R's proposals were condemned vigorously. About 9 members of the HMS staged a black flag demonstration at the central station at Madras when Mr. C. R. arrived after his talks with Gandhi and Jinnah. Gandhi had approved of the plan for re-solving the Indian communal deadlock and it was also placed before the then President of the All India Muslim League, Mr. M. A. Jinnah.

Jinnah's proposal for the partition of India had also been strongly criticized by the left wing<sup>5</sup>. Mr. Jinnah's Scheme for the partition of India continued to engage the attention of the press in the Madras province. Except the Self Respect Papers and the Urdu press opinion was decidedly against the scheme. The self respect press worked to further divide India so as to create in the South a distinctive area for the Tamil Dravidian population.

A section of Urdu press was also doubtful about the wisdom of dividing India. Some of the Muslim papers, on the other hand strongly advocated the scheme, while still other feel doubtful whether, in the face of the opposition of the Hindus, lack of union among the Muslims and the possible refusal on the part of the British Government to accept it, the scheme would come within the range of practical politics<sup>6</sup>. The prolonging of the period in coming to a settlement on the subject of communal representation and other issues between the Congress and the Muslim League gave ample scope for Mr. Jinnah and his group to utilise it in favour of the partition scheme. The Muslims of Madras on the basis of their religion, unaware of any consequences that were going to take place and knowing very well that they were not going to get any benefit except the creation of a muslim state, supported the scheme of partition.

It is worth mentioning here that in examination of the records it was felt that propaganda of the press was much more at that time than the issue itself. The nationalist press continued to condemn the partition scheme by All India Muslim League. It may be noted in this connection that all the Muslim dailies in Madras i.e., *Almae*, *Musalman*, and *Azad Nowjawan* were the adherents of Mr. Jinnah<sup>7</sup>. A part from this the E. V. Ramaswami Naicker's demand to a separate state for the Dravidians was gaining prominence during this period. For instance in speeches at Conjeevaram some leaders pleaded for a separate Dravida Nad composed of Bengal, Andhra, Maharashtra, Tamilnad and Malabar with each of the component parts a separate province<sup>8</sup>. The Justice party organized Dravida Nad Conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> June at Conjeevaram<sup>9</sup>. The rising Tamil nationalism was felt during this period and the Dravidastan movement was gaining momentum. The Muslim League and the Justice Party under E. V. Ramasamy Naicker continued to work together closely. Justice party leader Sri E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, while addressing the South Arcot District Muslim League Conference, supported the Pakistan Scheme and urged the partition of South India in favour of the Dravidians. As earlier mentioned it was in the Madras All India Muslim conference Jinnah openly supported the Dravidasthan. He said "... particularly in the land of ours there is another nation Dravidasthan (cheers). This land is really Dravidasthan. Three percent of the high castes by skilful maneuvering and by skilful methods of electioneering have secured majority rule. Is this democracy? (voices: No, No, Shame, Shame). Therefore I give my fullest sympathy and my fullest support to the non-Brahmin (Cheers). I say the only way for you is to come to your own life, according to your own culture language and ideology. I have every sympathy for you. I shall do all I can to establish Dravidasthan and we Muslims will stretch our hands of friendship and live with you on line of equality, justice and fairplay (applause). The coming of Jinnah had a tonic effect on the protagonists of the Dravidastan theory<sup>10</sup>. The Two Nation Theory of Jinnah further encouraged and promoted demands of separation.

In the chaos of partition politics nationalist Muslims continued to be on the side of Congress. In 1940 the popular voice that rose against the partition scheme in Tamil Nadu was that of Mr. Yakub Hassan Sait, the former minister in C.R.'s cabinet. In a letter to prominent Muslims through press he spoke about the danger of the Two Nation Theory. A move to mobilize nationalist Muslims who were outside the Muslim League had been started in an effort to bring about a settlement between Hindus and Muslims as well as between both of them and the Government. Yakub Hassan Sait also suggested for holding a conference of nationalist Muslims either at Allahabad or Delhi<sup>11</sup>. Mr. Yakub Hassan said: "There are surely hundreds, if not thousands, of clear-sighted Muslims outside the Muslim League who take a more rational and patriotic view of Indian politics and whose minds are not clouded with communal narrowness, prejudices and mistrust of others. The circle of such broad-minded Muslims is not necessarily confined to the four corners of the Congress. They feel distressed over the unnatural and anti-national situation that has been created owing to the misguided, reactionary policy of a few leaders. They are sure to rally round any movement that is set on foot to counteract the reactionary propaganda of the Muslim League." Mr. Savarkar, the President of HMS visited Salem during 1940. The first Tamil Nadu conference of HMS was held at Salem on March 23-24, 1940. In spite of the fact that Salem had been a place of acute communal tension between Muslims and Hindus, the meeting and procession passed off peacefully. Mr. Savarkar made several speeches in Salem and Madras in which he sought to arouse the communal sentiments of Hindus here, which he seemed to consider insufficiently developed. He bitterly attacked Mr. Jinnah's proposed partition of India.

In 1942, when the Congress launched the Quit India Movement there was violent mass upsurge in the Madras Presidency. Only few Muslims when compared to the Non-cooperation movement supported it. But at the same time many nationalist Muslims had went to jail in support of the Quit India Movement. We may take those Muslims who participated in the Quit India Movement as anti-partitionists. Alla Pitchai, who had always wanted the Madras Province Muslim League to cooperate with the Congress, chose to leave the League in 1943 unable to do anything about the increasing support for Pakistan within the party. He was to become a staunch opponent of the two-nation theory of the League<sup>12</sup>. Another leader Basheer Ahmad Sayeed was also not reconciled with the idea of Pakistan. Jamal Mohamed was practically out of politics during this period, though openly he did not oppose the partition plan, surely he will not be in favour of partition for he stood always for union.

Mr. Jinnah had acknowledged the contribution of the Muslims of the minority province to the Pakistan movement. Taking into account the minority position of the Muslims in Tamil Nadu, the partition movement could not have been so strong without the support of the DK of E.V.Ramansamy Naicker. Already the big bang was blown by C. R., and E. V.

Ramasamy in favour of the partition. The cultural differences that separated the Tamil and Urdu speaking co-religionists can't be perceived as causing political divisions because the larger determinant of Muslim politics had always been dominated by their religion. Though the Muslims who owe allegiance to factions outside the League certainly run into several thousand but are not formidable enough in any way to challenge the League's established position. Their presence in the Congress, DK had however only saved them from miseries of the dangerous communal politics in Tamil Nadu. When a call was given for the boycott of Independence Day by the DK, the Muslim Leaguers of Madras convincingly remained aloof from the Dravidian politics and adopted a spirit of cooperative tendencies. The Muslim Leaguers and the Congress Muslims soon adopted themselves to the new trends of post Independent politics. But still a fear psychosis remained among them, which had been easily eliminated by the traditional religious amity of this region. Sir Mirza Ismail<sup>13</sup> was strongly opposed to the division of India. Even as of October 31, 1947, he was pleading in a signed article in *The Hindu* for a reunion of India and Pakistan. He said: Partition has given the word Freedom a new meaning-freedom to hate, to burn, to murder and to loot, but this freedom... has not yet inspired you to truth and act intelligently...partition was an error, but it need not be an irremediable error. Yesterday it was accepted grudgingly and by many with distrust<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. Conclusion

Throughout the freedom movement the communal politics had created a situation in which the Muslim Leaguers attacked their own Muslim brethren in the Indian National Congress. We find that there existed pro-partition and anti-partition views blooming during this period with culmination of communalism. A move to mobilize nationalist Muslims who are outside the Muslim League is understood to be evolved in an effort to bring about a settlement between Hindus and Muslims as well as between both of them and the Government. Mr. Yakub Hassan (Former Minister of Madras) had taken the first step towards this and in expressing his views on the 'Two Nation-Theory' in a Letter to prominent Muslims speaks about the danger of the Two Nation Theory. Dr. Savarkar bitterly attacked Mr. Jinnah's proposed Partition of India in the First Tamil Nadu Conference of Hindu mahasabha that was held at Salem on 23rd and 24th March 1940. A resolution strongly protesting against the attitude of Mr. M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim League on the question of dividing India into Hindu India and Muslim India and characterizing the same as retrograde step was passed by the South Indian National Muslim Association. A section of Urdu press was also doubtful about the wisdom of dividing India. However, to the question who is responsible to the partition? It might be Mr. Jinnah, the British, Nehru, communal riots and the views differ but above all the answer is the communal politics which is responsible for all nuisance and partition.

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