

## **THE BLACK SHIRT MOVEMENT**

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The Editor\* wanted me to write on "The Black shirt movement". There is no movement. There is no movement at all by that name. Those who are dissatisfied with, and affected by the movement and those who are inimical towards it, named it so. Evidently the Editor has meant the 'Dravidastan Movement'. For it is improper to call a great national movement by the kind or colour or the dress worn by its followers. I won't call the Congress movement 'Khadder Shirt movement'.

The black shirt is worn by us as a symbol of the darkness and degradation in which the Dravidians of this great sub-continent are plunged. It is a symbol of our economic bondage. We of the movement are proud to wear it, just as a true Congressman is proud to wear Khadder. The idea is entirely mine and is not borrowed from any foreign party or organisation. Black is usually associated with death and sorrow. We the Dravidians are worse than the dead. We are shudras. So say the Puranas, Itikasas, Smritis and other Hindu scriptures. Hindu law perpetuates it even to-day. Hindu temples are monuments of this ignominy. Even the Temple Entry Act (of which Congressmen are so proud today) does not allow us to approach the sanctum sanctorum. Our (Dravidian) languages are anathema to the so called Gods! I could cite innumerable examples to show our ignoble and shameful position in society.

In order to indicate to the public and also to remind ourselves of our sorrowful plight in all spheres of life I have prescribed the black shirt as a symbol. Those who wear it are as proud of it as Mr. Gandhi was, when he donned the

South African prisoner's cap on his head. Have not his followers honoured that cap by calling it the "Gandhi cap"?

In spite of the fact that the black shirt is an ordinary symbol the provincial Government chose to ban the so-called 'Black Shirt Movement'. The mistake was pointed out at once to the Government and we continue to wear it even though the ban does not appear to have been removed technically. But I should thank the Government for the impetus given to the black-shirt spirit by imposing a ban on it.

So much for the so-called 'Black shirt Movement'.

It is well known that the Justice Party was founded in 1916 by the two great South Indian leaders, Dr.T.M. Nair and Sir P.Tyagaraya (Chettiar) both of whom had been for a long time in the Congress.

Before the year 1920 the Congress organisation was chiefly concerned with the securing of big jobs for Indians, most of which were in the hands of foreigners. This resulted in almost all the key jobs being filled up by the privileged few. I mean the Brahmins. With a view therefore, to securing equal rights and opportunities for the rest of the communities of South India, and securing political, educational and economic equality for the down-trodden non-brahmin community, the Justice Party was started by the two great leaders. In those days, not even 10 percent of the non-brahmins were educated and not even 5 percent were in government and other public services. And in the domain of politics their influences was almost nil. In the legislatures, in the local bodies and in almost all spheres of life the non-Brahmins were completely neglected. Almost all the lucrative jobs say above Rs.100 were denied to the non-Brahmins, who form 97 percent of the population. High

posts carrying salaries of thousands of rupees per month could not even be dreamt of.

As the result of this, a great community was suppressed in all walks of life, and even the educated and efficient few could not come up. Hence the birth of the South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party).

The Congress was dominated by South Indian Brahmins and also North Indian leaders who knew nothing of South Indian conditions or who willingly ignored the welfare of South Indians. And naturally the Congress turned its attention to the South Indian movement. As the entire press was in the hands of the Congress and the Brahmins and their sympathisers (this holds good even today), a tearing propaganda was carried on throughout the length and breadth of the land insisting that the Justice Party was anti-national and Pro-British. The main reason for such propaganda was the agitation of the Justice party, and not without success, to capture the Government and secure certain high posts in Government. This mischievous propaganda was readily believed by the illiterate masses.

After 1920 the Congress movement threw off its moderate programme (it should be remembered that in pre-1920 Congress conferences the British National Anthem used to be sung) and adopted a virulent, anti-British, non-co-operation ideology. And therefore it was nothing unnatural that the Justice Party, which was wedded to constitutional methods of agitation for securing equal rights in the administration of the country, was decried as an anti-national organisation: In addition to this there was a split in the Justice Party on account of scrambles for ministerial job. Though such splits are an annual occurrence in the Congress Ministries of to-day and not regarded as very serious by the public, it was not so in those days.

To cut a long story short, the emergence of the Swaraj Party, the subsequent defeats to the Justice Party in the elections, coupled with the treachery of a few non-Brahmin leaders brought about the ruin of the Justice Party as a political entity.

### ***SPLIT WITH CONGRESS***

Between 1923-26 those of us who knew the ins and outs of the Congress move, I mean a few non-Brahmins including me, had to leave the Congress. But I didn't join the Justice Party immediately. I was a nationalist to the core. But I agreed with principle of communal representation which was the bedrock of the Justice Party. Even as a staunch Congressmen and no-changer, and a strong lieutenant of (now His Excellency the Governor General of India) Mr.C. Rajagopalachariar, I was fighting for communal representation and equality of rights and privileges. I even made the Madras Congress Party accept this principle and set apart 50 percent of places for the non-Brahmin communities. I and other nationalist non-Brahmins started the Madras Presidency Association and made this Association also accept this principle. Besides this I also started the Nationalist association which included not a few Brahmin nationalists, and made this too accept this principle of communal representation.

All this I say in order to emphasise my ardent belief in this principle being the only practical way for the upliftment of the non-Brahmin community. How I brought a resolution for the acceptance of communal representation at the provincial Congress conference at Conjeevaram and how it was ruled out by the President and how I walked out of the Conference along with my friends, are all too well known to bear repetition here. I was then the Provincial Secretary and had been the President of the Provincial Congress Committee twice before. If in spite of my responsible position in the Congress, I was treated so badly, how could

anyone with an ounce of self-respect remain in Congress any longer? So I had to sever my connection with the Congress after having served in it for ten years and having made many sacrifices, including the jail-going of those days. This resulted in the birth of Self-Respect Movement.

Now about the great national organization of South India, I mean the Dravidar Kazhagam. The old South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as the Justice Party of which I was elected leader in 1938 assumed this new historic name as a result of the resolution passed at the Annual Confederation held at Salem in 1944. the movement was given a new orientation by virtue of the well-known Self-Respect Movement(of which I am the founder)merging in it.

The Dravidians have a distinct origin in society, their languages are independent and belong to separate class. The terms 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' are not my inventions. They are historical realities. They can be found in any school boy's text book. That the Ramayana is an allegoric representation of the invading Aryans and the domiciled Dravidians has been accepted by all historians including Pandit Nehru and all reformers including Swami Vivekananda. My desire is not to perpetuate this difference, but to unite the two opposing elements in society. I am not a believer in the race theory as propounded by the late Nazi leader of Germany. None can divide the South Indian people into two races by means of any blood test. It is not only suicidal but most reactionary. But the fundamental difference between two different cultures, Aryan and Dravidian cannot be refuted by any one who has closely studied the daily life, habits and customs and literature of these two distinct elements in South India.

The Dravidian movement is essentially a socio-religious organisation whose aim is to reconstruct society on a

humane and rational basis. It wants to destroy caste root and branch. It does not believe in easy doses or injections! It is all out for the amputation of the diseased limb. It wants to bring together all Dravidians irrespective of political or religious affiliations. Though its ultimate aim is to destroy religions as popularly understood and practiced, it is not so virulently anti-religious as is represented by the interested few.

The Dravidians in the first place had the title shudras (born of prostitutes) conferred on them by the so called high caste.

The Dravidian Movement does not stop with this socio-religious revolution. On the economic side, the movement wants to cut itself away from the north, I mean the Central Government. The South should not be exploited by the north. It should not be bartered away to the Birlas, Goenkas, Tatas, Dalmias and Hirachands. We, who belong to the South, should not rest satisfied with the mere change of masters.

When I say that we should not allow ourselves to be dominated by the North, I do not mean that Dravidistan when it comes into being, will be a thorn in flesh of the North. We can be even more friendly and helpful than Ceylon and Burma. A separate independent State for the South would merely mean economic self-sufficiency and independence.

South India had been a separate State up to the time of the British occupation. Even Akbar and Asoka dared not interfere with the independence of the South. We have about 1500 miles of sea coast; plenty of forests, a net work of rivers, and enormous underground wealth. And our manpower is incomparable in skill and efficiency. Are we not proud of having lent to the North, a Governor General, a

couple of Finance Ministers and last but not least, the first commander-in-chief?

The proposed Dravidasthan or Dravida Nadu can in no way be worse than a Switzerland, a Ceylon or a Burma. If these small stretches of land could be separate independent countries, why not we with a vast area of about 1,25,000 Sq.miles and six crores of people and plenty of natural resources?

The Dravidasthan movement is not a communal organisation. It is a national movement. It is only an attempt of a great historic people to throw off the their age-long social and religious bondage and to cut off the two-century chain put on its feet by a foreign bureaucracy.

- *Editor of the Hindu, Madras*

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