

KAMARAJ CONFLICT AGAINST OPPOSITION PARTIES

S. Jeyakumar

Research Scholar, Department of History

V.H.N.Senthikumara Nadar College (Autonomous), Virudhunagar

Kamaraj became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu with the expulsion of Rajaji, from the chief ministership of Tamil Nadu¹. Though he was a Brahmin by descend, he was elevated to the chief ministership of Tamil Nadu, considering his capabilities and higher pursuits. However, the major chunk of non-Brahmin population did not relish his ascendancy and waiting for a chance to pull him down when the situation warranted in the form of his new-educational policy, all his hither-to political enemies became virulent and queered against him and atleast deserted their allegiance one after another. In sequence to his decline his political rival and non-Brahmin stalwart K. Kamaraj who assumed power with the blessings of the Dravidian parties and major non-Brahmin sections in the state².

Kamaraj, being a shrude politician, waiting for a chance of getting the throne of Legislative Assembly headship of the Madras state, simply moving the coin by winning the support of congress state committee members one after another which resulted his pre dominance in the Madras State Legislative Assembly as well as the council of state.³

With the tacit support of E.V. Ramasamy Naicker, the leader of the Dravida Kazhagam and other non-Brahmin leaders, Kamaraj assumed power in 1954, after the resignation of Rajaji from the chief ministership.⁴ In view of the D.K. support, Kamaraj did not allow Brahmins in his ministry and kept in tact of non-Brahmin ministry. Consequently, Kamaraj had inducted a dalit Parameswaran, the grand son of Reetmalai Seenivasan in the council of ministry and the allocation of the portfolio of Hindu Religion Endowments to him admist the dissatisfaction of several orthodox Hindus. EVR appreciated the move and even supported Kamaraj that he never participated in any of the caste meetings to his credit.⁵

Due to the Dravida Kazhagam's support, Kamaraj won a thumping victory in the Gudhiatham, bye-election and defeated his immediate communist rival forfeiting his deposit.

E.V.R. argues that Kamaraj promoted the development and education of Tamils. He also proclaimed that if Kamaraj was either defeated or replaced by a Brahmin or even a non-Brahmin stooge of Brahmins, he would not continue the work of the Pachai Tamilan Kamaraj. According to him, "my house was engulfed in fire. There was no water in my house to put off the fire.⁶ But there was water in the well belong to my enemy. If people drew out water from that well to extinguish fire in my house, it would be foolish on my part

¹ Aruna Aladi, *Kamarajar Oru Vazhikatti (Tamil)*, Chennai, 2002, p.31.

² Narasimhan, V.K., *Kamaraj A Study*, Bombay, 1967, p.61.

³ Kaushik, P., *The Congress Ideology and Programme*, Bombay, 1964, p.94.

⁴ Veerasamy, K., *Congress Varalaru (Tamil)*, Madras, 1986, p.43.

⁵ Venu, A.S., *Periar Oru Charithram (Tamil)*, Madras, 1980, p.19.

⁶ *Thanthai Periar's 86th Birthday Commemoration Volume (Tamil)*, Madras, 1964, p.44.

to reject that water as it came from my enemies well. Similarly couldn't oppose Kamaraj merely⁷ because he was congressman. I would support him for his constructive contributions to the building of a new egalitarian educated and enlightened Tamil society. In the 1962, Dravida Kazhagam Conference also, Kuthusi Ramasamy argued that Kamaraj should be voted back to power in the ensuing elections. Periar supported the congress party only in Tamil Nadu as here it was a party of Kamaraj. Subsequently Periar in an announcement in the Kazhagam press Viduthalai said that the members and sympathizers of Dravida Kazhagam could now join congress party formally as Kamaraj congress delivered development and progress to the Tamil people.⁸

Due to the understanding of Periar and Kamaraj, many congressmen expressed their discontentment over the close rapport between TNCC and Dravida Kazhagam individually and collectively. Kamaraj stated that it was his considered view that Brahminism and anti-Brahminism were condemnable and derogatory to human rights and hence should be eschewed.⁹ According to Kamaraj "The major responsibility of all the society conscious people was to eradicate the evil of the invidious caste structure and to promote equality. Dravida Kazhagam and Periar were active participants in the social missions. Again Kamaraj stated that it would be an act of indiscipline if he had participated in a meeting of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and not Dravida Kazhagam.¹⁰ In the district congress committee the absolved secretary firmly told that the nationalization of congress and rationalist regionalism of Dravida Kazhagam as his two eyes and with emotions of gratitude called Kamaraj as "Periar in Congress Clothes".¹¹

Swantra and Dmk Parties

The Swantra Party was formed in Madras in 1959 by Rajaji so as to provide political articulation to the political interested groups like forciar of free enterprises and All India Agricultural federators. It was visualized as an embodiment of political opposition to the socialism oriented congress party.¹² According to Rajaji, Swantra means a 'self employed life free from interference of ignorant officialdom'. The formation of the party consolidated the already deepening friendship between Periar's Dravida Kazhagam and Kamaraj Congress. In Tamil Nadu, it was a political medium of Brahmins against the alliance between Periar and Kamaraj. The identification of the Brahmins with swantra party was a conscious one.¹³ It cut across their boundaries of class, occupation, income, education and generations. Whether he was a mirasdar or a servant in the coffee shop, college educated or relatively unlettered, an orthodox elder or a progressive young man, the Brahmins should feel it to be loyal to the Swantra Party.

⁷ Ibid., p.46

⁸ Veerasamy, K., Collected works of Periar, E.V.R., Chennai, 2005, p.33.

⁹ Ibid., p.36.

¹⁰ Singaram, DMK Relationship between leaders and members, New Delhi, 1966, p.61.

¹¹ Sathianathan, The Dravidian Movement in Tamil Nadu and its Legacy, Madras, 1982, p.61.

¹² Veerander Gorg (ed) Election and Politics in India, New Delhi, 1988, p.74.

¹³ Subramanian, P.S., Kamaraj A Symbol of Indian Democracy, Bombay, 1966, p.74.

Following the appeal of the party, the party's official weekly 'Swarajya' and sympathetic journals Kalki were subscribed by most of the Brahmins¹⁴ who largely attended the party meetings and conventions. Through the Vanniyar Party Tamil Nadu toiler party" led by Ramasamy Padayachi merged with the Swatra Party in the beginning, later it withdraw from the party from the political alliance in protest against Brahmin ascendancy in the Swantra party.¹⁵

Dravida Kazhagam considered the Swantra Party as the manifestations of Brahmin anger against the Kamaraj. Hence, Periar criticized the fundamental principles of Rajaji about liberalization, anti-statism as Brahminical devices to secure the welfare of the Brahmins and to undermine the non-Brahmin development through governmental patronage. In 1959, Periar said that, "Rajaji, so far had utilized the existing - political parties to achieve the interest of Brahmins.¹⁶ He made use of all political parties, Communist party of India, Indian National Democratic party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam for furthering Brahmin welfare. As Kamaraj could not be defeated by these political powers, Periar had started his own Swantra to achieve that purpose." He advised Rajaji, to name the party as Brahmin welfare party or Tamil welfare abolition party.¹⁷ Again he attacked Swantra Party as counterfeit party arguing that object of the counterfeiters were to deceive the people and as the Swantra had the same objective to deceive the Tamils it should be renamed as counterfeit party.

Swantra DMK Alliance

When the third election to the Tamil Nadu state assembly approached, Swantra and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam began alliance negotiations. Rajaji who had always condemned strongly the anti-Brahmin stand of DMK now began to understand the beneficial implications of an alliance with DMK to unseat the congress in the state.¹⁸ He justified such an alliance by arguing that the DMK had abandoned its communal bias. His supporters claimed that due to the persuasion of Rajaji, the DMK jettisoned its anti Brahminism and separation.

When congressmen questioned Rajaji for taking the help of parties like DMK to defeat congress, Rajaji remarked rather pungently the Lord Rama has taken the help of Hanuman, a monkey to defeat Ravana, Periar reacted strongly to this callous remark and said that Rajaji had in a daring display of Brahmin arrogance had equated Kamaraj with Ravana.¹⁹ Besides, Rajaji disguisedly referred Kamaraj by the word black crow during the electoral speech in Marina Beach. Periar appealed the Tamils that it was the fundamental duty of the Tamils to protect Kamaraj. Rajaji had teased DMK with his statement of being a monkey.

¹⁴ Rajmohan Gandhi, *Rajaji Story, 1937-1972*, Bombay, 1972, p.63.

¹⁵ Ramasamy, E.V., *Dravidian - Aryan Truth*, Madras, 1938, p.89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.64.

¹⁷ Spratt, P., *DMK in power*, Bombay, 1970, p.59.

¹⁸ Gopalakrishnan, M.S., *Periar, Father of Tamil race*, Madras, 1992, p. 109.

¹⁹ Gopanna, A., *Kamaraj Oru Sahaptham*, Tamil, Madras, 2003, p.61.

Rift in the DMK Party

E.V.K. Sampath, one of the founder leaders of the DMK party opposed the shifting stands of DMK party on the controversial issue Dravida Nadu. He also opposed the enormous influence exercised by the film personalities over the decision making apparatus of the party. The film based group lead by M. Karunanithi, M.G. Ramachandran and S.S. Rajendran actively mobilized support against the Sampath group.²⁰ In January 1961 in the general council meet at Vellore brought out a no confidence motion against the chairman Sampath. Finally he had resigned from the party and waged a new party called Tamil Nationalist party. Subsequently, the party merged with the Congress party along with Kannadasan.

On seeing the economic growth of the state and the flawless regime of Kamaraj, the Dravidian parties, couldn't raise their fingers against him. Though they criticized certain issues, such as inflation and price rise of essential commodities, that could not be withstood for want of proper spirit from the people. Hence, till the administration of Kamaraj, 1967, all the opponents, particularly the Dravidian parties, Swantra and Communist slow down their voices against Kamaraj and Congress party and after his resignation from 1963, only vociferously criticized the congress party and influence the people to a great extent.

End Notes

1. Aruna Aladi, *Kamarajar Oru Vazhikatti (Tamil)*, Chennai, 2002, p.31.
2. Narasimhan, V.K., *Kamaraj A Study*, Bombay, 1967, p.61.
3. Kaushik, P., *The Congress Ideology and Programme*, Bombay, 1964, p.94.
4. Veerasamy, K., *Congress Varalaru (Tamil)*, Madras, 1986, p.43.
5. Venu, A.S., *Periar Oru Charithram (Tamil)*, Madras, 1980, p.19.
6. *Thanthai Periar's 86th Birthday Commemoration Volume (Tamil)*, Madras, 1964, p.44.
7. *Ibid.*, p.46.
8. Veerasamy, K., *Collected works of Periar, E.V.R.,* Chennai, 2005, p.33.
9. *Ibid.*, p.36.
10. Singaram, *DMK Relationship between leaders and members*, New Delhi, 1966, p.61.
11. Sathianathan, *The Dravidian Movement in Tamil Nadu and its Legacy*, Madras, 1982, p.61.
12. Veerander Grog (ed) *Election and Politics in India*, New Delhi, 1988, p.74.
13. Subramanian, P.S., *Kamaraj A Symbol of Indian Democracy*, Bombay, 1966, p.74.
14. Rajmohan Gandhi, *Rajaji Story, 1937-1972*, Bombay, 1972, p.63.
15. Ramasamy, E.V., *Dravidian - Aryan Truth*, Madras, 1938, p.89.
16. *Ibid.*, p.64.
17. Spratt, P., *DMK in power*, Bombay, 1970, p.59.
18. Gopalakrishnan, M.S., *Periar, Father of Tamil race*, Madras, 1992, p.109.
19. Gopanna, A., *Kamaraj Oru Sahaptham, Tamil*, Madras, 2003, p.61.
20. Nannan, *Periar Kanini, Part-I*, Chennai, 1996, p.39.

²⁰ Nannan, *Periar Kanini, Part-I*, Chennai, 1996, p.39.