

Decline and Fall of Congress Party in Tamil Nadu (1967 To 2011)

R. GANTHIMATHI

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Post Graduate and Research Department of History,
Women's Christian College, Nagercoil – 629 001.

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627 012, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract : *Political activity in the Madras Presidency began long before the birth of the Indian National Congress, with the establishment of the Madras Native Association in 1852 for the avowed purpose of ventilating the grievances of the people from time to time on perfectly constitutional lines and this was the forerunner and parent of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. It will be remembered that in 1884, when the Madras Mahajana Sabha was started the Indian National Congress had not come into existence. One cannot be sure whether it is the oldest political institution in the whole of India which is still in existence and flourishing, but there cannot be any manner of doubt as to its being the oldest existing political institution in South India. Equally important, this association took the decisive step of creating an all-India organization. The Sabha leaders, when they went on a deputation to Bombay in mid-December 1884, to present farewell addresses to Lord Rippon, exchanged views with Bombay leaders about the desirability of holding annual conferences of representative men from all parts of India. It was on this occasion that the idea of the Indian National Congress was actually mooted.*

Key Words: *Congress, Tamil Nadu, Mahajana Sabha, Policies, Election, Disintegration*

INTRODUCTION

Tamil Nadu is situated in the south-east of the Indian sub-continent. Its physical location in the world map stretches from 8° 5' latitude in the south, 13° 8' latitude in the north and from 76° 15' longitude in the west and 80° 20' longitude in the east. On the north of Tamil Nadu is Andhra Pradesh, on the north-west lies Karnataka and on the west it has a common border with Kerala. The Bay of Bengal on the East and the Indian Ocean on the south are the water boundaries of the region. The Palk Straits separates Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka. Kanyakumari lies at the southernmost tip of Tamil Nadu and the Indian peninsula.

Tamil Nadu erstwhile the Madras Presidency was an administrative subdivision of British India. It contained half the coastline of the entire subcontinent. The Madras Presidency contained twenty five districts including the city of Madras which was treated as a district for administrative purposes. Madras Presidency included the present day Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Malabar region of North Kerala, Lakshadweep Islands, the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh, Brahmapur and Ganjam districts of Orissa and the Bellary, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka. The Presidency had its capital at Madras. It was the largest provinces of British India. It became the Madras Province on 15 August 1947. On 26 January 1950, it was formed as Madras State by the Government of India. As a result of the 1956 States Reorganisation Act, the state's boundaries were re-organised following linguistic lines. The state was finally renamed as Tamil Nadu on 14 January 1969.

Tamil Nadu is the 11th largest state of India. The capital of Tamil Nadu is Chennai. Tamil Nadu comprises of 32 districts. They are: Chennai, Kancheepuram, Vellore, Thiruvalluvar, Salem, Viluppuram, Coimbatore, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Cuddalore, Thiruppur, Thiruvannamalai, Thanjavur, Erode, Dindigul, Virudhunagar, Krishnagiri, Kanniyakumari, Thoothukudi, Namakkal, Pudukottai, Nagapattinam, Dharmapuri, Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga, Thiruvarur, Theni, Karur, Ariyalur, Nilgris and Perambalur. The people of Tamil Nadu speak Tamil.

EARLY CONGRESS ATTITUDE IN TAMIL NADU

Political activity in the Madras Presidency began long before the birth of the Indian National Congress, with the establishment of the Madras Native Association in 1852 for the avowed purpose of ventilating the grievances of the people from time to time on perfectly constitutional lines and this was the forerunner and parent of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

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Among the leading stars of Madras Mahajana Sabha, who attended the first National Assembly at Bombay in 1885, G. Subramania Iyer, the Founder-Editor of 'Hindu' deserves special mention. He had the unique honour of moving the first resolution at this first, national historic gathering.

The presence of a relatively large delegation from Madras at this Congress gathering and the active role that its leaders played in the proceedings did not go unnoticed in the press, for instance, the Tribune wrote, Madras sent the greatest number of delegates all of good education and high social standing they completely enchanted the audience with their liberal views and impressive eloquence.

The marked success which had attended the session of the first Congress in Bombay did not die as soon as it was over. It was truly a stroke of genius which made the place at which the Congress was held, rotate from year to year. No part of India could complain that it was left out, as all important cities of India got their own turn in relation.

The proud privilege of holding the annual sessions of the Congress was bestowed upon Madras, seven times, in the pre-independence era. Not only did the Congress sessions held in Madras, play a significant role in India's march towards freedom but great leaders of the South like G. Subramania Iyer, Ananda Charlu, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, S. Satyamurti, C. Rajagopalachari, C. Vijayaraghavachari, C. Sankaran Nair and Dr. Annie Besant made a big impact on the all-India political scene. Madras also had the special honour of holding the diamond jubilee session and the first after independence in the south, which raised its prestige equally in India and abroad.

To Madras, is due credit of having discovered several convenient contrivances too the successful accomplishment of the Congress work during the session. Madras was the first to hold the Congress undress a temporary pavilion or "pandal" as it is now called everywhere in India. It was here that the most introduced and the method of collecting funds in drivlets from the mass of the people instead of hundreds and thousands from a few rich individuals was first adopted in this city.

Madras in far south was difficult for delegates to reach but it was one of the best, perhaps, the best organized circle. Except in Madras, no regular system was adopted to ensure the adequate representation of all creeds, classes, castes and interests.

It was at the Madras session of 1887, for the first time an attempt was made to provide some sort of constitution for the Congress. The 1908 Madras session was the first Congress to meet under a convention Born at Bombay, buried at Surat, Congress attained its resurrection at Madras, it was a red lettered day in the history of the country.

As far as the political history of Tamil Nadu is concerned it is entirely different from the political history of India in many aspects. In Tamil Nadu importance was given to social justice than any other matters. The reason was the problem between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The development of this caste politics started from early 20th century.

The South Indian Liberal Federation and the movement of non-Brahmins, which was called the Justice Party came into existence in 1916 under the leadership of Theagarayar, T.M. Nayar and Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar. This Movement insisted the British Government to give adequate representation for non-Brahmins in government jobs, this party got wide support from the non-Brahmins and also it was able to rule the presidency under diarchy from 1920 to 1937.

FIRST CONGRESS MINISTRY - RAJAGOPALACHARI (RAJAJI) MINISTRY, 1937

Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) formed the first Congress ministry on 14 July 1937. The other ministers were: T. Prakasam (Minister for Revenue), V.V. Giri (Minister for Labour and Industries), B. Gopala Reddi (Minister for Local Administration) representing the Telugu districts; P. Subbaroyan (Minister for Education), T.S.S. Rajan (Minister for Public Health), S. Ramanathan (Minister for Public Information), V.I. Muniswami Pillai (Minister for Agriculture and Rural Uplift) representing the Tamil areas; K. Raman Menon (Minister for Courts and Prison) representing the Malabar region and Yakub Hasan (Minister for Public Works) representing the Muslims; V.S. Muniswami Pillai was a Harijan. For the first time in the history of the Presidency, a Harijan was inducted in to the Ministry.

Within the politics at power, Rajaji was challenged on two fronts. He had both to assert authority over Congress and over the Raj. In regard to Congress he had to control his cabinet; the Congress Legislative Party and strike a balance between the claims of the parliamentary party and the Congress Party machine opposition within the local party came from S. Sathyamurthy and S. SrinivasaIyengar and from the Congress socialists. It correspondingly earned Rajaji's displeasure of S. Sathyamurthy's associate, chiefly K. Kamaraj. Although the Congress High Command had greatly assisted Rajaji, soon they came under strain and serious difference of viewpoint emerged between Rajaji and Nehru. Sathyamurthy remained his most formidable rival. Ousted from the Presidency of the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee by Rajaji himself, he found a way back into Tamil Nadu politics through the Corporation of Madras.

Rajaji wished to control the administration in order to contain the growing threat from the Congress, Socialists and the Communists. These ideas were characterized as belonging to the politics of principle. But the ideas of the constructive movement of Rajaji's conservation, could only be exercised if Rajaji contained the pressures of Communalism.

INTRODUCING HINDI

Congress Government was the first to impose Hindi in Madras provinces. C. Rajagopalachari introduced teaching of Hindi in the schools. This move was immediately opposed by Justice Party. The opposition to Hindi came first from the Tamil districts and Tamil academics. They were later joined by K.V. Reddy Naidu, Pannir Selvam and RamaswamiNaicker. After his entry into the Anti-Hindi Movement, Naicker dominated it completely. An Anti-Hindi League was formed. Naicker's Tamil papers Vidutalai and Kudiarasu acted as unofficial organs of the League. When the agitation became well-organised it was assisted by the Justicitesand to some extent also by the local leaders of the Muslim League. The agitation which lasted three years was multiface hike fasts, conferences, marches, picketing and protests. The Anti-Hindi Agitation continued. It did not subside even after the resignation of the Congress ministry in October 1939. Members of the Justice Party, who were not satisfied with the release of the anti-Hindi prisoners, threatened more vigorous action unless compulsory Hindi was dropped.

In 1937 elections, the Congress Party come to power under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari. He introduced teaching of Hindi in the schools. This move was immediately opposed by Justice Party. The opposition to Hindi came first from the Tamil districts and Tamil academics.

The Second World War began on 1 September 1939. India was included on 3 September without consulting the legislative bodies. Rajaji tendered the resignation and appeal to concede the demands of the Congress and thereby make it possible for Indians to collaborate in the war efforts.

POLICIES OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

After independence, the first General Election was held in 1952 and the Congress Party did not secure adequate majority in Tamil Nadu. It got only 152 seats out of 375. With the help of Commonweal Party and other Independence, the Congress Party formed the ministry under the chief ministership of C. Rajagopalachari in 1952. Kula Kalvi Thittam was an attempt at education reform introduced by the INC Government of the Madras State led by C. Rajagopalachari in 1953. It became controversial and was accused of being a casteist scheme to perpetuate the caste hierarchy. The discontent is triggered among the Congress legislature members forced the resignation of Rajaji as Chief Minister. In 1954, K. Kamaraj succeeded him and he continued as the Chief Minister till 1963. As Chief Minister Kamaraj removed the family vocation based Hereditary Education Policy. He strove to eradicate literacy by introducing free and compulsory education up to the eleventh standard.

Major irrigation schemes were planned during Kamaraj's period. Dams and irrigation canals were built across upper Bhavani, Mani Muthar, Aarani, Vaigai, Amaravathi, Sathanur, Krishnagiri, Pullambadi, Parambikulam and Neyyar. Industries with huge investments in crores of rupees were started in the period. Later he became the President of All India Congress and Mr. M. Bhakthavatsalam succeeded him. In his period Anti-Hindi agitation, scarcity of rice, etc. took place throughout the state. So the Congress Party lost its name badly among all the sections of people. Among all, the problems between 'haves' and 'havenots' increased in the state.

Since 1962, the DMK occupied a prominent place in the political history of Tamil Nadu. In 1957 General Election, the DMK Party for the first time contested and got 15 seats. In 1962, it sat as the main opposition party in the Legislative Assembly by getting 50 seats.

DEFEAT OF CONGRESS PARTY IN 1967 GENERAL ELECTION

In 1967 general election, the people of Tamil Nadu rejected Congress Party. The party for the first time post power or lost majority in a number of states across the country. On the otherside the defeat of the Congress candidates were entirely due to the lack of leadership after Kamaraj plan and some important and popular leaders resigned from the position. Even Kamaraj's resignation from the chief ministership was a great set back to the Congress party from 1963. Everywhere groupism, factionalism and interpolitics prevailed. The leadership after K. Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu was unable to give a stable administration. The Congress party could not get a strong and popular leadership to guide people. The DMK made a strong opposition to the special status being given to Hindi and against "Hindi imposition". In protest against the introduction of Hindi as the official language of the country, state-wide anti-Hindi demonstrations and burning of effigies of the 'demon Hindi' were made by DMK.

In Madras, Chief Minister M. Bhaktavatsalam staged rally of the Chief Ministers of the non-Hindi states to support a joint fight for permanent statutory bilingualism. But the language agitation extended across the state and was strongest in some old Congress strongholds like Madurai, Tirunelveli and Coimbatore. The agitators' sentiments helped DMK's growth in these regions, nevertheless the DMK gained from the agitations and drew their main inspiration from the party's encouragement. Besides, most of the agitators joined a new generation of second rank DMK leaders. Under such a situation the Chief Minister announced that there was no change in the language followed in the State and English would continue.

After the announcement of the Chief Minister, the police arrested C.N. Annadurai, N.V. Natarajan, V.R. Nedumchezian, M. Karunanidhi, Ambil Dharmalingam and K. Rajaram in preventive custody on the night of 25th January 1965. On the next day knowing the arrest of the leaders some Tamil patriotic youths like Veerappan and Chinnasami of Tiruchirappalli district, Sivalingam and Ranganathan of Madras and Sarangapani of Mayavaram gave their lives by burning themselves for the cause of Tamil and Muthu of Keeranur and Shanmugam of Viralimalai took poison and died.

Following the language agitation clashes held between the Congress and DMK volunteers on 28th January 1965, the Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri appealed to the people of Madras to end this Anti-Hindi agitation. On the other hand students were also afraid of their own future because of the increase of Hindi speakers in the Central Government services. When the students planned to meet Chief Minister in regard to this issue, permission was refused to them and they were insulted. The college students made series of agitations before the Legislative Assembly. The students were treated barbarously by the police and hence the student agitation became rigorous in the state, a well-organised Students' Agitation Council had been formed, with branches all over the state.

In Madras the DMK launched a state-wide movement of student protest against the proclamation of the Government of India. Added to this the student's strikes also drew attention on the long standing resentment against northern Brahmin domination of Tamil language and culture. All these incidents sparked fear among the educated and the unemployed that introduction of Hindi as national language would further diminish their chances of securing appointment in the Central Government public services.

The Chief Minister brought forth the advantage of learning Hindi and said that if they learn Hindi, they could get jobs anywhere in the country. But the students considered the compulsory study of Hindi as an unnecessary burden to the students of Tamil Nadu, as it would be of no use to the average Tamilian and they thought that Tamil would become a dead language in course of time if Hindi was made the official language of the Indian Union.

Immediately the youth wing of the Congress Party, All India Students Federation of Communist Party of India, Socialist Students Organization of Praja Socialist Party and Progressive Students Union in Marxist Left channeled the energies of students into a united agitation. On behalf of their occupational language interests the students wing of the DMK took the lead by organizing strikes in the universities over a variety of issues, but they were not different from the pre-succession pattern.

The city college students who were the supporters of the DMK proposed to hold a public meeting in the city. On the other hand the Indian Student Congress passed a resolution condemning it by observing mourning with the DMK and requested the school and the college students not to participate in the agitation. In Madurai the students took out a procession to protest against the imposition of Hindi. The Urban District Congress Committee office was attacked by the students. Some of the students in the procession were attacked by Congress persons and pandals were burnt in front of the District Congress Committee office.

The police resorted to firing on the Annamalai University students and a student named Rajendran, final year B.Sc. Mathematics, succumbed to police firing and another student Nedumaran, final year B.Lit. was seriously injured in this incident. Immediately on 3rd February 1965, the Tamil Nadu students Anti-Hindi Agitation Council was formed which passed a resolution against the Chief Minister M. Bhaktavatsalam.

SPLIT OF CONGRESS PARTY

The Congress Party had a major split in 1969 at the national level. One faction was headed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram, C. Subramaniam and others. The other group was headed by S. Nijalingappa, S.K. Pail, Atulya Ghosh, K. Kamaraj, Morarji Desai, M. Sanjeeva Reddy, and others. This split had affected the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu. The Congress (O) under the leadership of K. Kamaraj was stronger than the Congress Party (R). Later it was called the Congress (I) headed by R.V. Swaminathan, C. Subramaniam and others in Tamil Nadu. At the state level there was no strong leaders in the Congress Party. They had groupism and each one was rival to other group which was a great loophole of the Congress Party and at the same time it was an advantage to the regional parties. Caste politics is a powerful weapon in the state politics.

CONCLUSION

The eminent rulers of Congress Party due to their difference of opinion came out of the Party. This led to the emergence of new parties from the mother party. Thus the party disintegrated into various petty parties. About six parties emerged due to factionalism in Tamil Nadu province. They are Tamilaga Rajiv Congress, Tamizhaga Munnetra Munnani, Tamil Manila Congress, Congress Jananayaka Peravai, Tondar Congress and Tamil Nadu Indira Congress. This disintegration from the mother party attributed towards the decline of Congress Party in Tamil Nadu.

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