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K.KAMRAJ : FROM THE POSITION OF THE TAMIL NADU CONGRESS COMMITTEE PRESIDENT TO THE CHIEF MINISTER OF THE MADRAS STATE

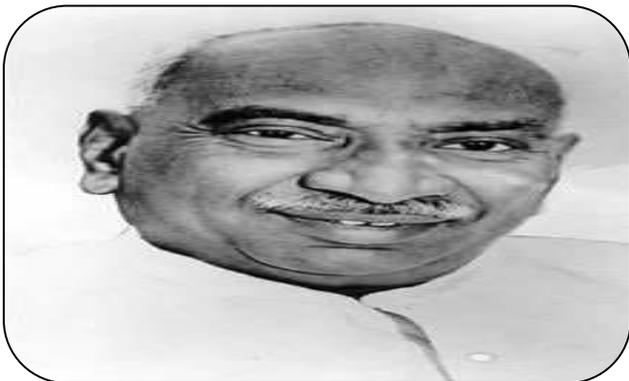
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Abstract :

Kamaraj was the renowned congress man and veteran nationalist. Even when Adi Sankara and Pattinathar refused to give up the motherly relationship, Kamaraj for the sake of his mother country set aside even his attachment to his mother. As a freedom fighter he was imprisoned for a period of nine years, for twelve years he was the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee; for five times he was a member of the Legislative assembly; for four times he was a member of the Parliament; for nine years he was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu; for five years he was the President of the All India Congress Committee; twice he selected the Prime Ministers of India, Lal Bahadur Sastri and Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Being a voracious reader he read many life sketches of different eminent leaders and



his regular reading of newspapers, by listening to the lectures of prominent national leaders he became a great scholar and pragmatist. By his own personal traits, diplomatic skill he solved crucial problems such as the communal issue. It is apt to analyze the pathway of K.Kamaraj from the position of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He became the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in 1940 at the age of 37. All his life career was mainly dedicated to politics.

Key Words: President, Chief Minister, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Kamraj, Sathyamurthi, Rajaji, Congress, Madras State, Bhaktavatsalam, Minister.

INTRODUCTION :

Kamaraj was capable of proving his abilities as the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President. Diplomatically he appointed the supporters of Rajaji and was clever enough to gain the support of Rajaji. By doing so Kamaraj proved that even enemies should be brought to one's side for proper functioning.¹ When Gandhiji announced his individual *Satyagraha* in 1940, Kamaraj refused to give war fund and war materials to the British. At this juncture, Kamaraj was arrested at Guntur while he was returning from Wardha on 20th December 1940.² As a reason for his detention it was told that Kamaraj prevented people from offering any war fund to Arthur Hope, the Governor of Madras.³ Even before his release from the Jail on 3rd November 1941, the Virudhunagar Municipal Councilors elected Kamaraj on 31st May 1941 as the Chairman of that Municipality. On 16th March 1942 Kamaraj went to the Municipal

Office and after glancing the agenda he resigned his post on the ground that it would be impossible for him to continue as Chairman due to his party activities. He left the meeting hall after handing over the resignation letter to R. Gurusamy Nadar, the Vice Chairman.⁴ This shows that Kamaraj never aspired for any power or post. He looked at everything in a broader perspective with a foresight.

As President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, he involved in the Quit India Movement launched by Gandhiji in 1942. Kamaraj on his return from the All India Congress Committee Session held at Bombay, cleverly escaped from the arrest mainly to make the District Congress Committees to know about the programme of the Quit India Movement.⁵ With the assistance of Kalayanarama Iyer of Ranipet, Member of the North Arcot District Congress Committee, Kamaraj executed his plans and reached Madurai. Then at Virudhunagar after providing necessary instruction to the workers, he informed police that they could arrest him. He was accordingly arrested on 17th August 1942. After being in detention for three years at Amroli and Vellore Jails, Kamaraj was released on 30th June 1945.⁶ Kamaraj by his calculated moves was able to make Tamil Nadu to know about the Quit India Movement activities. While Kamaraj was in the jail on 28th March 1943, his political mentor Sathyamurthi passed away. Kamaraj had to shoulder the entire politics of Tamil Nadu single handedly even by facing the strained relationship with Rajaji⁷ and even in constituting the Election Board in a compromising way.⁸ By maintaining his own status, he pleased Rajaji and won the compliments from the Congress High Command. In 1945 Kamaraj in an assured way obtained an unshakable position in the provincial politics. He stood by his pragmatic policies and practical approaches to the problem.

Since party work was his full time occupation his unequal memory, his shrewdness and right decisions at appropriate times enabled him to be the role leader of the Congress organization.⁹ His power and position enabled his sympathiser P. Varadharajulu Naidu to make even Gandhiji to keep away from the politics of Tamil Nadu and Gandhiji himself agreed not to interfere in the affairs of Kamaraj.¹⁰ In the 1946, election also Kamaraj won and became the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.¹¹ This was another turning point in his life and political career.

In the 1946 election Congress won 164 seats out of 215.¹² Kamaraj was also elected to the Assembly from the Sattur – Aruppukottai Constituency unanimously.¹³ T. Prakasam who became the Chief Minister had to resign on 14 March 1947.¹⁴ Hence Omandur P. Ramasamy Reddiar assumed charge as the Chief Minister due to the support rendered by Kamaraj.¹⁵ Since Ramasamy Reddiar, refused to comply with the requests of the Congressmen, he was removed from power and P. S. Kumarasamy Raja became the Chief Minister with the support extended by Kamaraj and continued in that post till 1952.¹⁶

Kamaraj supported Pattabhi Sitta Ramayya in the election for the post of the All India Congress Committee President.¹⁷ This victory rendered great benefits to Jawaharlal Nehru in maintaining the political status in the Indian States. In addition to the above, Kamaraj was able to maintain the Congress Party in tact in the provincial and also at the All India level.

In the 1952 election the Congress won only 152 seats out of 375 seats. After great difficulty, with the support of K. Kamaraj, Rajaji formed the Ministry on 10th April 1952.¹⁸ But due to his community based educational reforms, Rajaji became unpopular and resigned his Chief Ministership on 25th March 1954.¹⁹ In the Congress Legislative Party meeting held on 31st March 1954, Kamaraj was elected as the Leader of the Legislative Assembly by defeating C. Subramaniam. Though Kamaraj was a Member of the Parliament, he resigned the Post. He contested the by-election held at Gudiyatham Assembly Constituency on 1st August and became a member of the Madras Legislative Assembly.²⁰ This victory made him to form the ministry on 13th April 1954.²¹

Thus the ordinary Congress volunteer K. Kamaraj within a span of three and half decades rose to the position of the Chief Minister of Madras by his dedicated political activities. His strenuous efforts and dedicated

services to the Congress Party, paved the way for him to serve the Tamil society by his welfare and reform measures. In that regard too Kamaraj imprinted his caliber as an indelible one. With forethought and looking at the future he approached all the problems. His plans were dynamic and useful from for the State of Madras

Kamaraj, the Chief Minister

He was the Chief Minister of Madras State from 13th April 1954 to 2nd October 1963 for three terms spread over a period of nine years.²² On 13th April 1954 Kamaraj took the oath of office.²³ To have good control, to avoid extravagance, to concentrate on earnest services and to avoid competition and enviousness, Kamaraj formed his ministry with only eight ministers including him and it was the smallest ministry formed in any State of the vast democratic Indian subcontinent.²⁴ His victory in the Gudiyatham Assembly Constituency was a remarkable one.²⁵ His victory was even hailed by opposition party newspapers and he himself was appreciated as *Kula Kolundhu* and *Gunalan*.²⁶ As soon as Kamaraj assumed charge, he pointed out that he had taken up that post mainly to redress the grievances of the poor. As a practical socialist, Kamaraj pointed out that only hard work done alone will relieve people from poverty and the wealth should be distributed to all instead of getting dumped in a single hand.²⁷ He practiced what he preached. He constituted the State Development Committee in 1955 to review the schemes and projects undertaken by the Government and also to avoid administrative delay and redtapism.²⁸

Under Kamaraj Plan, to strengthen his political party, Kamaraj volunteered to resign from the chiefministerhip of Madras State on 2nd October 1963. M. Bhaktavatsalam one among the members of the Ministry of Kamaraj succeeded Kamaraj as the Chief Minister of Madras on 3rd October 1963.²⁹ After his tenure of office as Chief Minister from 1963-1967 there became a drastic political change in the Madras State. The Congress Government was routed out from the Power and Dravida Munnetra Kazahgam (D.M.K.) replaced it due to the majority gained in the 1967 general election. So it will be appropriate to have an analysis about Bhaktavatsalam and his ministry. Further though his period of office as Chief Minister was only for a short period of four years it was full of events which were derogatory to the Congress. As such it is essential to have an analysis about his activities and service as Chief Minister.

Before knowing his role as Chief Minister the analysis of the life sketch of Bhaktavatsalam will be beneficial as fitting prelude to the study. Further while Kamaraj formed his first ministry in 1954, he was the Minister of Agriculture, Social Development Scheme and Workers Welfare. Then he had an opportunity to put forth his idea into practice. In the second (1957) and third (1962) Ministries of Kamaraj he was maintaining the portfolios such as Home, Police, Courts, Prison, Prohibition, Finance, Education, Labour Welfare and Charitable Institutions and as such he had a sound knowledge and experience as an administrator.³⁰ He was not only able to understand the needs of the people but was also able to gain grounds in the politics of the State. That, too, warrants an analysis of his early life.

To conclude, the way Kamaraj as the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and as the Chief Minister of the Madras State was able to meet the challenges posed by a gigantic intellect as that of Rajaji in Tamil Nadu demonstrates that he was endowed with precisely those qualities that marked him out as a leader among his men, though he lacked certain commonly accepted qualifications there for. Indeed, it was his long apprenticeship under Satyamurti and his steady growth as a Congress leader in the Madras Province that laid the foundations for his success as Congress Chief Minister and then as Congress President. He was also lucky to collect around him men who were devoted and loyal to him and in whom he confided, and on whom he depended. Kamaraj was instrumental in bringing about a change of direction in the political and social history of Tamil Nadu and showed how a common man could successfully lead the people on right lines. He was not just a straw in the wind, blown up and down by the gusts of social and political winds, but he was one who influenced the course of the winds of change and himself profoundly responded to the demands of that change, without allowing

himself to be helplessly swept off his feet in the process. Kamaraj was a unique political personality who, despite his various acknowledged handicaps and disqualifications, rose to the highest levels of leadership not only in the State but at the national level. What was more, he made a success of himself in any position in which he happened to find himself. He raised from the lowest rank as a mere party worker, and steadily attained higher and higher positions, by dint of his peculiar and uncommon characteristics and personal qualities. At every stage of his elevation to a position of responsibility, whether as President of the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee, or as the Chief Minister of an important State like Madras, and as the President of the Indian National Congress, he belied the forecasts of those who genuinely doubted his ability to do justice to the office he was called upon to occupy and was able to come out with flying colours.

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