

Factional Politics in the Election of Premier in the Madras Presidency

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Abstract: *Factionalism is a curse to the political parties. Sometimes the factional politics resulted in the failure of the political parties in the General elections. Before Independences Madras Presidency contained. Four linguistic states such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. When the dawn of Independence was visible before that the administration of the Presidency. This resulted in group politics among the Leaders of the four linguistic areas. Rajaji and Kamaraj were at larger heads. In Andhra area T. Prakasam and Gopal Reddy were in two groups. In the meantime there were Leaders such as Pattabhi Shitharamyya and V. V. Giri who were loyal to the High command that is Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Azad. In this paper attempts made by T. Prakasam to become the Premier of the Madras Presidency side lining Rajaji who was a former Premier, a National leader and favorable to Gandhiji and others.*

Keywords: Factionalism, High Command, Premiership, Madras Presidency, Linguistic Area.

Introduction

In 1946 Legislative Assembly election of the Madras Presidency the Congress emerged victorious formed the second Congress Ministry in this Presidency before Independence. Thanguthari. Prakasam of Andhra became the Premier defeating C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar a candidate between K. Kamaraj and Rajaji sponsored by Kamaraj and his group he was not supported by a group in the Congress and also by Rajaji group opposed to Kamaraj. The Group politics which was in vogue in Tamil Nadu assumed a third dimension by the emergence of one more group under Prakasam. From accession of Prakasam's to power till the First General elections in 1952 the power struggle continued unabated within the Congress.

Prakasam who won against Muthuranga Mudaliar faced defeat in the Madras Legislative Congress Party within one year. But he continued for more than two and a half years his relentless fight against Congress Ministries that followed after him. At the same time in the organizational politics too attempts were made by men of Rajaji to oust Kamaraj from the Presidentship of the Tamilnadu Political Congress Committee. In addition to these the Congress faced opposition from other parties like Dravida Kazagam., Dravida Munnetra Kazagam etc...

The Assembly was dissolved on the 1st October 1945.² Fresh elections were ordered but were not completed 31st March 1946. When the first Congress Ministry resigned in October 1939 the distribution seats of the various parties in the Legislative Assembly was as follows:

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Any remaining errors or omissions rest solely with the author(s) of this paper

² Madras Administrative report, 1945-46, Part I the Proclamation issued in 1939 under Sect.93 of the Government of India Act, 1935 was in force till 30th April 1946.

- Congress – 162, Justice – 17, Independents – 10
- European Group – 7, Muslim League – 13,
- Anglo Indian – 2, National democratic Independent Party – Nil,
- Communist – Nil : Total 211.³
- The Elections of 1946 did not in any way alter the following 1939 position.

When the dispute between the Rajaji and Kamaraj groups appeared to be more or less settled, dissenting voices had by no means been silenced. A fair proportion of Kamaraj's supporters appeared to have been against any rapprochement with the Rajaji group.

While the controversy over Rajaji had momentarily receded to the background when the second General Elections to the Provincial Legislature under the Government of India Act, 1935 were held in March 1946.⁴ when the election results were announced for 213 seats out of 215 the party position was this in May 1946:

- Congress – 163, Muslim League – 28, Independents – 7,
- European's – 7, Communist – 2, National democratic – 6, Total = 213.⁵

Speculation was so rife regarding the post of the premier.⁶ When K. Kamaraj was opposed to Rajaji and the High command (All India Congress working committee and the top leaders of the Congress like Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabai Patel etc. are referred as High Command) was in favour of the Rajaji Sardar Vallabhai Patel the Deputy Prime Minister asked Kamaraj to specify his choice.⁷ Kamaraj did not like either Rajaji or Prakasam and his choice was not known then. When the possibilities of Prakasam becoming Premier appeared to be bright the group opposed to Prakasam headed by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya went to Delhi to explain the situation in the Madras Presidency and prevent Prakasam from becoming Premier. They informed the High Command that under difficult conditions that prevailed a proper leader should be chosen and unless that was done the province would go to ruins.⁸

Thus the Andhra group politics also played its role in the Madras Provincial politics. As in Tamilnadu in Andhra there were two groups one led by Prakasam and the other by Pattabhi Sitaramayya.⁹ In the Telugu region owing to the strength of Prakasam's personality the selection remained as a grievance for Sri Kamaraj Nadar and his followers. Just about the time were Mr. Asaf Ali was on his way to Madras members of the APCC were travelling to Rajamundhry for one of the most sensational meetings that was held there. Some of the members of the W.C of the APCC who were in the Amroli Jail made up their minds about Rajaji in consultation with the Tamilnadu people. They went a step further and formed plans for eliminating Mr. Prakasam from "It was thought that a solution was found for the troubles in Tamilnadu. Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Madras and his remarks about the clique in Tamilnadu house Madras Politics. After release from Jail they placed themselves under the leadership of Dr. Pattabhi and at one of the meetings

³ Ibid, 1945-46, Part II.

⁴ F. R. Home Pol, D. O. No. P4-5, 31st March 1946.

⁵ Mar, 1945-46, Part II.

⁶ F. R. Home, Pol. D. O. P 4-6, 8th April 1946.

⁷ Durga Das, Editor, Sardar Patel's Correspondence – 1945-50, Vol. III, Ahmedabad, 1972, p.2.

⁸ Madras legislative Assembly Debates, 1946, Vol. IV, pp.1016-1019.

⁹ For a detailed study of the Andhra Congress Group Politics – see K.V. Narayana Rao, Emergence of Andhra Pradesh, (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Madras, pp.345-353; Letter from K. Varadachari to the President, T.N.C dated 3rd March 1947, AICC File No.C.L.74/1946-NMML

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in the APCC they got a clique accepted by the General body for constituting the Pro-parliamentary Board which was packed with anti-Prakasamites. Very soon thereafter, a huge agitation started in the Andhra State against this rump and in consequence of it, Mr. Prakasam had to convene another meeting of the APCC for undoing the mischief. All that happened just after the Tamilnadu controversy arose and there was no time to arrange for a similar intervention by the C.H.C. for taking advantage of the good offices of Mr. Asaf Ali in the Andhra affairs also. But often the tumultuous scenes in the meeting of the apcc and outside thousands of people who gathered at Rajamundhry from all parts of Andhra Country Mr. Prakasam was able to achieve small concession from the working committee to the effect that the Parliamentary Board should make selections of candidates to the legislature in consultation with a representative nominated from each DCC in the province. Except for this small concession the mischief remained and the Pattabhi group were unable to make their selection and they submit the same to the Parliamentary Board” to the Madras Provincial Assembly was not so problematic as they were in Tamilnadu. Among the Legislators 20 Tamilnadu men from Andhra were against Prakasam and about 30 Tamilnadu men of Rajaji’s group were also opposed to him.¹⁰ So totally 50 members opposed.

It was under these circumstances that the leader’s election total M. L.C. P. had to be held.¹¹ When B. Gopal Reddy an opponent of Prakasam from Andhra invited Sardar Patel to be present at the Leadership election, he expressed his inability to come to Madras and suggested that the proper course would be for the leaders of the three regions of Andhra, Tamilnadu and Kerala to put their heads together and come to some acceptable decision.¹²

The Congress High Command had given up the idea of making Rajaji the Premier though he had withdrawn from the contest. Sardar Patel expressed his desire in a letter addressed to Gopal Reddy.

“It is unfortunate that in the scramble for power there has been no unity and there is no leader who can command the confidence of all groups. Rajaji’s absence has left a vacuum and there seems to be no one who can take his place. We can only hope that Madras will not make a sorry exhibition when the Cabinet Mission has come to India to discuss the question of transferring full responsibilities”.¹³

Prakasam, Madhava Menon and K. Kamaraj, the Presidents of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, Kerala Congress Committee and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee were summoned by a Telegram on 4th April 1946 to New Delhi for consultations.¹⁴ After inviting them Sardar Patel sent a Telegram to Rajaji also inviting him to come to Delhi for settling party leadership issue.¹⁵ In a separate letter addressed to V. V. Giri. Patel openly expressed his desire in favour of Rajaji and at the same time expressed his own doubts about selection of Rajaji.¹⁶

On 9th April in the night the Leaders met Gandhi who talked to them in general and to Prakasam in particular. He advised Prakasam to be out of the contest. He was advised even not to accept a Minister’s post if offered. On 10th April, Gandhi particularly sent for Kamraj and

¹⁰ A. I.C. C. File No. CL. 74/46, N. M. M. L.

¹¹ M. L. A. D. 1946, Vol. IV., p.34.

¹² Sardar Patel’s correspondence, Vol. II, p.3-4.

¹³ Ibid, T. S. Chockalingam, Op. Cit., p.39-41.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.4-5.

¹⁵ Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. III, p.5.

¹⁶ Ibid, Vol. III, pp. 1-2 and 7.

MadhavaMenon and discussed with them at length.¹⁷ When he advised them to have Rajaji as the Leader both of them expressed their difficulties in accepting him as the leader. Then Gandhi advised them to have Pattabhi Sitaramayya as the leader to which they were agreeable. Next day on 10th April they met Sardar Patel and recounted what had happened.

The reason for Gandhi against Prakasam is this was a complaint against Prakasam that he had used public funds for his own benefits¹⁸ and therefore he should not be even Minister.¹⁹

They informed Gandhi that Pattabhi Sitaramayya could be elected only with the co-operation of Rajaji's group.

On April 11th, when the Leaders again met Sardar Patel, he advised them to go to Moulana Abulkalam Azad, the President of the All India Congress Committee to take instructions from him. When they met him on the same day his advice was that the M. L. C. P. should take Rajaji and his team including Prakasam and that it was also the desire of Gandhi and Sardar Patel. This advice was at variance with Gandhiji's.²⁰

The Congress President Azad, Gandhi and Sardar Patel came to the conclusion that the Rajaji Ministry which functioned in 1937 should be returned. They also felt that bribery and inefficiency could be brought under control only if Rajaji assumed office.

Before his meeting with the Leader Azad had sent a telegram asking the members of the M. L. C. P to select Rajaji as Leader and had also stated in that telegram that it was agreeable to Gandhi and Sardar Patel. Azad had carefully stressed the point that the above recommendation was only advisory and not mandatory.²¹

When Prakasam realized fully well that the High Command was not in favour of him he expressed his willingness to work with Rajaji if Rajaji was acceptable to the Legislature party.²² Prakasam was eliminated by the High Command and Rajaji was not liked by Kamaraj group. Then the third candidate Dr. Pattabhi was acceptable to High command and the Kamaraj group. If Rajaji's group also supported him his chances of becoming Premier were bright. K. Kamaraj met Rajaji and sought his help for electing Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Rajaji refused to help Pattabhi.

“Everybody is anxious to see that a proper selection is made but there seem to be enormous difficulties and the one man who could run the show with efficiency and integrity is not likely to be selected for various reasons. The Andhras have made a dead set against him. The Malabar people also seem to be opposed and Tamilnadu is divided. The Andhras are united in opposition only but are divided amongst themselves in finding a substitute”.

Since Rajaji did not support Pattabhi Sitaramayya he did not contest. Pattabhi withdrew from the contest openly allowing others to contest.²³

The M. C. L. P met on the 18th April 1946 at Madras to consider the suggestion of the Congress High Command.²⁴ The only business on the agenda was the consideration of the advice given by the High Command favoring the election of Rajaji as Leader of the M. L. C. P. V. V. Giri was elected Chairman of the meeting. An appeal to the High Command by inviting and

¹⁷ T. S. Chocklingam, Op.Cit., p39-41.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.39-41.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ S. P. C., Vol. III, p.16-17.

²¹ S. P. C., Vol. III, p.16-17.

²² F. R. Home, Pol., P. O. No. P. 4-7-20 APRIL, 1946.

²³ T. S. Chockalingam, Op. Cit., p102-105.

²⁴ The Hindu, 19th April 1946; T. S. Chockalingam, Op.cit., p.102-105.

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accepting Rajaji's leadership was made by Rajaji's group.²⁵ When votes were taken on the question of accepting or rejecting the advice of the High command the Party decided to reject the advice by 148 votes to 38. Thus the meeting expressed its opposition to Rajaji becoming the Premier.²⁶

After adjourning the meeting to 19th April, the result of the meeting was communicated to the High command by telegraphic message.²⁷ After realising the trend of opposition to Rajaji becoming Premier. M. A. Azad requested V. V. Giri to select more than one person for leadership and send the names to them for final selection.²⁸ Next day on 19th April the question of election of a panel for leadership was placed before the party and was rejected.²⁹

By this time a controversy arose with regard to a press report in which Gandhi was reported to have stated that the M. C. L. P. was free to elect any Leader it liked and he had no objection to Prakasam or anybody being elected Leader. Sivanthi B. Adityan a Congress Member on the basis of this reference requested Gandhi to allow the M. C. L. P. free choice in electing the Leader.³⁰ Gandhi denied the above press statement and informed through press that he had said nothing of the kind to anybody but he had written a private letter to Prakasam which Prakasam was at liberty to publish.³¹

Rajaji's men who failed to secure a majority in the M. L. C. P. reacted in a different way. From a report of the Chief Secretary it is seen that disgusted Rajaji men made an abortive of bringing together all persons in Tamilnadu who had faith in Rajaji's leadership.³²

The members of the M. L. C. P were having a plan if M. A. Azad still insisting upon the submission of a panel of names for the selection of a leader the names of Prakasam and Muthuranga Mudaliar were mentioned as likely choices of the party Giri would step in only in case Prakasam declined to stand for election.

Now let us see why Muthuranga Mudaliyar was chosen as a candidate against Prakasam. During all this controversy the Andhra Group headed by Gopala reddy, Venkata Rao and Pallam Raju also resisted any attempt to bring in Rajaji and the attempt to submit any panel of Leadership to the High Command. The Andhra group then prevailed upon the Kamaraj group to set up a candidate for leadership against Prakasam. Kamaraj accepted the suggestion and set up Muthuranga Mudaliar as a candidate against Prakasam.

Azad sent a telegram on 22nd April 1946 to Giri in which he had stated his view point,

Considering the present situation in Madras Legislature, I think it would be helpful if the party is given a chance of voting for more than one name. That was why I did not say in my telegram whom the party must elect. However if the party wants to vote for one name only it can certainly do so. Please take sense of the Party and apprise me of it.³³

Since both the High Command and the Andhra Group opposed Prakasam's Premiership. Kamaraj decided to set up Muthuranga Mudaliar for the leadership of the Assembly who was to

²⁵ The Hindu, 19th April 1946.

²⁶ S. P. C., Vol. III, P. 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ 27. Ibid., p. 8-9.

²⁹ The Hindu, 20th April 1946.

³⁰ S. P. C., Vol.III, p. 14.

³¹ Ibid, p. 10; The Hindu, 20th April 1946, The Liberatore, 21st April 1946.

³² F. R. Home, Pol. D. O. No. p. 4-7.

³³ The Liberatore, 22nd April 1946.

some extent acceptable to many. Everybody thought that having known Gandhi's views regarding Prakasam, the Rajaji group would support Muthuranga Mudaliar.³⁴

When the election to the leader of the M. L. C. P. was held on 23rd April 1946, K. R. Karanth of Karnataka proposed the name of Prakasam this proposal was seconded by N. Nagappa. The name of Muthuranga Mudaliar was proposed by Kamaraj and was second by Madava Menon of Kerala in this election to the M. L. C. P. 29 M. L. P. C. members belonging to Rajaji group remind neutral that is they did not support either Prakasam fold 82 votes and Muthuranga Mudaliar fold 62 votes if Rajaji group supported Muthuranga Mudaliar the election of Prakasam would not have taken place. So the neutrality of Rajaji group resulted in the victory of Prakasam even though he was neither acceptable to High Command nor to other Andhra group nor to Rajaji group nor Kamaraj group.

When Prakasam sought the advice of Sardar Patel regarding formation of the Ministry, Patel in a letter to Prakasam refused to advice the names of Ministers. He informed that no more reference should be made to the High Command.

To such an extent the High Command was angry with the stand of Prakasam.

In the History of Madras Presidency. It is a part of the party politics in Madras Presidency.

³⁴ T. S. Chocklingam, Op.Cit., p. 41.