

An Appraisal Of K.Kamaraj

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ABSTRACT

Kamaraj was respected by one and all by the citizens of the country. Kamaraj lived as a role model for those who aspired to become leaders in a country. Kamaraj had demonstrated to the whole world that a leader should live a life of simplicity and work for the common good of people. For some years he was the most powerful individual in Indian politics. Kamaraj should function without any bias towards caste, creed or religion. One should not be a leader of the Government for ever. In a democracy he should pave the way for other eligible people to become the leaders. The opposition parties should be tackled in the most democratic way and they should not be intimidated to toe the ruling party's line. A symbol of stark simplicity and down-to-earth common sense, Kamaraj was in many ways a unique personality who attained great eminence without seeking for it. Kamaraj was the chief minister for nine long years in Madras state. As a Chief Minister, Kamaraj had never interfered in the portfolios of any minister. He used to grasp intricate issues very easily and would make decisions quickly.

Kamaraj believed that the emancipation of the poor and downtrodden in the state could not be achieved by getting a separate state away from the Indian Union. For the first time Kamaraj had brought in a scheme to grant pension to destitute old men and women. He introduced mid-day meals to school children, erected huge dams all over the state, implemented land ceiling Acts and brought in power generation schemes. Kamaraj had exposed to the country how with a very tiny cabinet the interests of the state can be well served satisfying one and all. Kamaraj gave to the people of Madras State a corruption free and well-organized administration with all round growth and development. Kamaraj told them that political freedom was attained to give them economic freedom from hunger and poverty. He wanted to eradicate poverty and unemployment, illiteracy from the society. He had set himself the objective of providing food, clothing and shelter to everybody.

Key words: Kamaraj- Sathyamurthi- Gandhi and Nehru- Swatantra Party- Congress Government- Indira Gandhi- broadmindedness- nationalistic-Noon-meal scheme- Working Committee.

Introduction:

Kamaraj was born to Kumaraswami and Sivakami Ammal on July 15th, 1903 at

Virudhunagar in Tamilnadu. His parents affectionately added the suffix Raja to his name

Kamakshi. He had his earlier education in a local school beginning at the age of five. Kamaraj's life was one of hard work, dedication and devotion to the cause. Kamaraj had started his life from far away Virudhunagar as a poor salesman in a small cloth shop and rose to be the President of the Indian National Congress. His character of head and heart were responsible for the exalted position in which he brings into being himself in the later years of his life. Kamaraj became an All India leader because of his sacrifice, dedication and honesty. He loved the masses with matchless passion, reflecting their urges and voicing their hopes in a manner the country had rarely seen before. His articulacy lay in his general silence, for essentially he was a man of action, not of words. He was last of the galaxy of great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad.

Entry in to Politics

Kamaraj payable much to Sathyamurthi for his farsighted wisdom in identifying his leadership potential and organizing capacity. But for him, the life of Kamaraj would have gone in a different direction. He almost adored Sathyamurthi like God incarnate. Sathyamurthi put Kamaraj carefully through several stages and made him take up to public speaking. He was the understudy of Sathyamurthi and learnt very valuable lessons under his guidance. He taught Kamaraj to move with other co-workers cordially and extremely from the uneducated village worker onwards. Because of his sterling qualities he began to have a mass following of a host of non-Brahmin Congressmen. From the position of an ordinary Congress worker in his early years, he rose to the exalted leadership position in the Congress party. Gandhi had demonstrated to the whole world that freedom could be achieved through non-violent means. Similarly, Nehru demonstrated that socialism could be brought in without class conflict and authoritarianism. In a socialist society men would have ample freedom to live the life of their own without any dictates from the State. Bringing in democratic socialism was the objective of the Congress and concentration of economic power in a few hands could be eliminated through this means without bloodshed. He believed in the

mixed economy and favored government partnership with private enterprise in launching industries.

Secular View:

Kamaraj in the course of his public life never harbored any communal feeling in his bosom. He never gave room to religious fervor nor adhered to the teachings of great saints. In his tour of the villages he used to ask the people whether there was rain, how was the harvest, were the village tanks full, was there enough drinking water availability, were there schools in the villages, whether the children go to school regularly and such other things. Kamaraj never asked the villagers whether they had a temple in their places, whether in the temples the pujas held regularly, who had contributed to the development of the temples etc. Kamaraj believed that religion comes later when common man is content with the availability of basic facilities in life like food, clothing, shelter, education, health, transport etc. Kamaraj had never celebrated any festival like Deepavali, Celestial Weddings and Karthigai. Kamaraj never started any work on any auspicious day. He was secular in his life all along. He had secularism and socialism at heart and followed the footsteps of Jawaharlal Nehru in his path of socialism.

Democracy and Socialism

The twin principles of democracy and socialism were dear most to his heart. Kamaraj wanted the private sector and the public sector joining hands for a healthy cooperation and partnership. Kamaraj was against monopolies and excessive concentration of wealth in a few hands. Kamaraj had evolved a pragmatic approach to industrialization where the private sector should be free to operate without restraints. Kamaraj had observed that there was a plenty of room for the private sector to grow in India. He had favored liberalization of controls to help increase production. He wanted that the state governments should be encouraged to start medium sized industries as public sector projects in their respective areas. Kamaraj had supported the idea that the public sector should compete with the private sector

to increase their efficiency and competence. However, basic and large scale industries should be run by the government as the private sector did not have the wherewithal to run such giant enterprises. The government alone would be capable of systematically and methodically establishing basic industries and find the needed capital for the same. Kamaraj had agreed with Nehru that instead of placing much reliance on foreign aid, India should be self reliant as far as possible to avoid exploitation by foreign powers.

Leadership Quality:

The socio-political developments that were happening in Tamilnadu enabled an ordinary base level worker like Kamaraj to become a leader on his own like Gandhi, Nehru, Sathyamurthi, Periyar and Annadurai. Kamaraj was the product of his times. As an individual he had made sterling contributions to the body politic of the country. Kamaraj gave a new direction to freedom struggle by the force of his own personality. The era in which he lived was heralded as Kamaraj era. He had played a key role during the freedom struggle. Kamaraj had also contributed for the social and political development in the Madras State. During his times Kamaraj had to contend with an intellectual giant, Rajagopalachari. Even though he was not endowed with all the intellectual accomplishments that Rajagopalachari had, he was able to face him. Satyamurthi had reared him as his understudy and had taught him all the nuances of the political game that Rajagopalachari was playing. He was surrounded by men who were devoted to him in whom he had supreme confidence.

King Maker

Kamaraj had played the role of king maker two times by electing Lal Bahadur Sastri and then Indira Gandhi. Both these selections, of course, did not serve his ideology of collective leadership. When Jawaharlal Nehru had passed away, many had thought that was the end of the Congress and the country. Kamaraj then stepped in and elected Lal Bahdur Sastri by the consensus method for the first time and Indira Gandhi for the second time. While Lal Bahadur Sastri tried to assert the authority of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi

staged an open revolt and broke the Congress into two. By her populist policies she was able to carry the whole chunk of the mass base that Kamaraj had. Even then Kamaraj was unfazed and unmoved by these setbacks because he believed in the people and confident of himself. Kamaraj rose from the rank of a mere party worker in an obscure part of the country and had attained exalted positions which a democracy can afford.

Whenever he had ascended to a post, critics wrote him off commenting that he would be a failure at that level. Kamaraj had proved his skeptics wrong and was able to achieve remarkable success in any position he was entrusted with. Kamaraj was the President of the Tamilnadu Congress Committee for more than a decade. Kamaraj had kept the gigantic party machinery in a fittest condition. Kamaraj had conducted the affairs of the party smoothly and efficiently. When Kamaraj became the President of the All India Congress Party he had commanded such an authority that only such of those who could have his confidence could become Chief Minister of any state. Kamaraj showed to the entire world that by peaceful means, the power can be transferred from one to another.

Economic and Political Philosophy:

In his ideas on social and economic developments Kamaraj had a mixture of Gandhian political thought and the political philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru. He believed in rapid industrialization and technological advance so that there would be plenty of employment opportunities to eradicate poverty and unemployment. Also, if the officials pleaded inability to manage the costs of the projects and suggested abandoning it Kamaraj would accept none of them. Kamaraj was not in favor of nationalization for its own sake. He was apprehensive of the misdemeanours being perpetrated by the public sector institutions. He was in favor of Government regulation than public ownership and management of enterprises. While in opposition Kamaraj never spared the DMK Government for its false promise of three measures per rupee which mislead the gullible people. He had brought to light the commissions and omissions of the Government and brought out a five point charter

of demands viz., implementing prohibition, reducing the prices of essential commodities, measures to provide employment, and relief to agriculturists and weavers.

Kamaraj in the later years was attracted to the economic philosophy of Nehru. Like Nehru he was wedded to the principle of democratic socialism. He believed in planned economic development. He used to spell out his social, economic and political philosophy in his speeches. He wanted to eradicate poverty and unemployment, illiteracy from the society. He had set himself the objective of providing food, clothing and shelter to everybody. Through economic planning he wanted to provide jobs to the jobless. He was hell bent on removing the economic disparities that were prevailing in the society. He was a votary of peaceful means to achieve all these objectives. Kamaraj always had pined for the downtrodden people. He told them that political freedom was attained to give them economic freedom from hunger and poverty.

Administration

When Kamaraj succeeded Rajagopalachari as the Chief Minister of Madras State, the substitution was carried without any rancor or animosity. Kamaraj had formed the Government three times between 1954 and 1962. His ministry was not only small but also non-communal in its composition. He wanted to include efficient and earnest men loyal to the cause of the people to be the ministers. He was astute enough to include all the members of the Rajagopalachari cabinet and became a model for all of India by having a smallest cabinet anywhere in the country. Kamaraj had exposed to the country how with a very tiny cabinet the interests of the state can be well served satisfying one and all. Kamaraj gave to the people of Madras State a corruption free and well-organized administration with all round growth and development. Under his stewardship the party men were well disciplined and behaved like a well oiled unit. His administration became a model for other states to follow. Kamaraj used to make an objective assessment of the situation and tried to balance real forces. Kamaraj never had bothered to please somebody at the cost of others or wielded his power to

demonstrate his authority over men and matters. While in office he made facilities to enable the poor and downtrodden to live comfortably well by providing free education to everybody, trying to bring in a socialistic pattern of society, providing a corruption free government.

For the first time Kamaraj had brought in a scheme to grant pension to destitute old men and women. He introduced mid-day meals to school children, erected huge dams all over the state, implemented land ceiling Acts and brought in power generation schemes. When Kamaraj was in office the industrial development in Madras state had flourished and he restricted the domination of private individuals in educational programmes. As a Chief Minister Kamaraj had never interfered in the portfolios of any minister. He used to grasp intricate issues very easily and would make decisions quickly. If the rules did not allow for a welfare scheme being implemented he would like to change the rules for the good of the common man. He had never worn a wrist watch nor maintained a diary. Kamaraj would have everything in his mind and remember them and would participate in the engagements without fail at the appropriate time. From the day when he was an ordinary congress worker to the day when he began to hold the high office he had lived a simple and frugal living. Kamaraj never groomed any heir for succession after him.

National Unity

Kamaraj believed that the emancipation of the poor and downtrodden in the state could not be achieved by getting a separate state away from the Indian Union. On the contrary he believed that economic emancipation of poor and lowly would be possible only when the country threw away the shackles of slavery and attained political independence from the British. He was totally against secessionist ideology and politics. When E.V. Ramaswami Naicker went on to speak that Kamaraj was carrying out all his programmes and policies Kamaraj quickly dissociated from Periyar by stating that he did not share E.V. Ramaswami Naicker's anti-Brahmin animus. Kamaraj also firmly criticized the basic tenet of the Dravida Kazhagam for a separate and independent Dravidanad in strongest terms. During

1950s the complexion of the Indian political scene had changed. Old leaders who had sacrificed for the freedom of the country had passed away or were not willing to join politics. Younger elements who had not suffered during the freedom struggle and who could not appreciate the spirit of the freedom movement joined politics in large numbers. Kamaraj did not come to power as a result of any succession process. Kamaraj was the chief minister for nine long years in Madras state. Yet he had not acquired even a house for himself and he lived in a rental house. The car he used was donated by his friend and he was away from succession politics, communal politics and politics based on religion. He had followed only national politics.

Conclusion:

Kamaraj was respected by one and all by the citizens of the country. Kamaraj lived as a role model for those who aspired to become leaders in a country. Kamaraj did not come in life using his community background as a ladder. Kamaraj looked at the problems the country was facing not with a doctrinaire approach. Kamaraj did not do any particular favor to his community. Till last he had served the nation. However circumstances did not keep him happy in his last days. Kamaraj was feeling unhappy over the events that were taking place in the government and the Party during his last years of his life. He died during the days of Emergency. He was very much perturbed that leaders of eminence had all been arrested under the emergency. Kamaraj had demonstrated to the whole world that a leader should live a life of simplicity and work for the common good of people. Kamaraj should function without any bias towards caste, creed or religion. One should not be a leader of the Government for ever. In a democracy he should pave the way for other eligible people to become the leaders. The opposition parties should be tackled in the most democratic way and they should not be intimidated to toe the ruling party's line. Those who were opposed to a leader should be embraced and won over rather than subjugating him by tyrannical means. A symbol of stark simplicity and down-to-earth common sense, Kamaraj was in many ways a

unique personality who attained great eminence without seeking for it. For some years he was the most powerful individual in Indian politics.

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