

A Study On Muslims In The Madras Legislative Assembly From 1957-1962

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Abstract

After the Linguistic Re-organisation of State in 1954 the Second Legislative Assembly Election in Tamil Nadu was held on 31st March 1957. The Indian National Congress party won with a majority of seats in the State and the new Cabinet was formed under the Chief Ministership of K. Kamaraj. Out of the total 205 constituencies in the Madras State, four Muslims were elected as M.L.A's. they were Mr. K.S.G Haja Sheriff elected from the Triplicane constituency, Mr. Khadir Sheriff elected from the Arcot constituency and Mr. A.A. Rasheed elected from the Vaniyambadi constituency as candidates of Indian National Congress party. Mr. Jamal Moideen was elected from the Dindigul constituency as the Muslim League member. This paper discusses about the participation and involvement of the legislators in general and the service to the community in particular as the Legislative Assembly members during the tenure 1957 to 1962. This paper highlights the part played by the legislators in voicing the concern of the people.

Introduction

India became republic in the year 1950. As per the newly constituted constitution the first Legislative Assembly elections was held in the year 1952. This was the first election held in Madras State after Indian Independence. After the Linguistic Re-organisation of State in 1954 the Second Legislative Assembly Election in Tamil Nadu was held on 31st March 1957. The Indian National Congress party won with a majority of seats in the State and the new Cabinet was formed under the Chief Ministership of K. Kamaraj. Out of the total 205 constituencies in the Madras State, four Muslims were elected as M.L.A's.

The four Muslim members who were elected in the 1957 were Mr. K.S.G Haja Sheriff elected from the Triplicane constituency, Mr. A.A. Rasheed elected from the Vaniyambadi constituency and Mr.Khadir Sheriff elected from the Arcot constituency as candidates of Indian National Congress party. Mr. Jamal Moideen was elected from the Dindigul constituency as the Muslim League candidate¹. This paper discusses about the participation and involvement of the legislators in general and the service to the community in particular as the Legislative Assembly members during their tenure from 1957 to 1962.

Participation in the Social Welfare discussions

Social Welfare is the means of providing assistance to needy individuals and Families. The types of welfare available to individuals depends upon the country State or region where they belong to. The part played by the legislators in the Assembly is very vital for the provision of welfare to the people of the State.

Mr. A. A. Rasheed on the general Discussions on the Budget for the year 1957-58, tries to make a point that the basic amenities for the villages such as the provision of good roads, schools, dispensary and good drinking water may be provided. And that the construction of dam is started across Palaru River as soon as possible near Vaniyambadi to prevent floods during incessant rains. He also emphasized that the Government shall take over a hospital at Vaniyambadi in order to serve the people nearby. Mr.ManickaveluNaicker the then Revenue Minister replied that necessary steps will be taken to address the matter².

Mr. A. A. Rasheed while talking on the Demand No. XVI- Medical, Etc., expresses his concern over the lack of beds and lack of good treatment for the patients. He even suggests that the Government should open a hospital for the very sick people so that their last few days be spent in comfort. He asked the Government to take over the hospital run by the Corporation of Madras in Chennai. He suggested that the Government should intensify their

Family Planning Programme not just to the upper class but even to the middle class families. He even requests that the salary of the doctors be increased, for dispensaries and hospitals in rural areas are without doctors and nurses. He also requested that the salary of the nurses be increased and that more female nurses maybe appointed³.

Mr. K. S. G. Haja Sheriff on the discussions on The Motor Vehicles (Madras Amendment) Bill, 1957 speaks up on behalf for the convenient transportation of people and goods. He suggested that the Licence Fee maybe reduced to encourage those engaged in this business to ply adequate number of buses and Lorries on road. He viewed that a good system of transportation is vital for the development of the State. While speaking on the subject The Madras Money Lenders Bill, 1957 introduced by the Minister for Revenue which States that it is intended to regulate and control the activities of the class of unscrupulous money-lenders who molest and threaten borrowers, Haja Sheriff suggested that the Government may fix the rate of interests in future. He viewed that the penalties may also be reduced, so it does not threaten those who run this business in a proper way. He opined that Government could even start up institutions that could lend money to the small traders in order to prevent unemployment⁴.

Mr. K. S. G. Haja Sheriff in the discussion of the Governor's address spoke on behalf of the people living in slums who do not get adequate provision. He requests the Government to take up the slum eradication work seriously and that the dwellers have to be rehabilitated⁵. He also spoke for the inconvenience which the people had to face while travelling and also while transportation of goods. He points out at the places where bridges need to be constructed and suggested that proper roads be laid in every village, with main roads connecting them all. He talks about the existing problem of unemployment especially among the educated ones and suggested that the problem can be solved by developing more

and more industries. He suggested that all road problems will be solved if flyovers and some underground subways are constructed at some important areas⁶.

Hence the legislators did their best in impressing upon the Government the various problems faced by people in the society. And requested the Government in the best possible way to improve their welfare measures.

About Taxation

Taxation is the practice of collecting taxes from the citizens based on their earnings and property. The money raised from it is used to run the Government agencies and fund the welfare measures of the Government. But sometimes the system of taxation affects the common man sometimes. It's here where the Legislator plays an important part in reducing the taxes in such a way that it does not affect the common people.

During the discussions on the Governor's address, Mr. A. A. Rasheed talked in favour of the tanners who were levied 3% of sales tax. He said that this has affected them. He requests to exempt the sales tax which can give higher incentive to the traders to export more as well as to earn more foreign exchange. He stresses on the provision of single point levy on the consolidated Bill amending the Sales Tax Act. He requested the Government to waive the tax up to the year 1955. He also wanted the reduction in percentage of sales tax on petrol as people have already been highly taxed on motor vehicles⁷.

When the Demand VII- General Sales Tax and other Taxes and duties Administration were presented on the floor of the Assembly, Mr. M. J. Jamal Moideen asked the Government to exempt sales tax on food grain .He opined that the sales tax as a distress to the people. In system of taxation which is followed in the form of income Tax or the Agricultural Income Tax, a person is asked to pay only when he makes a profit, but in this case of sales tax , they are asked to pay for the sales tax irrespective of whether they make a profit in the

business or not. He pointed out that the system of single point levy or any other sort of levy which is followed by in the foreign countries does not affect the people as its on the luxury goods only. He requested that the system of taxation maybe withdrawn⁸. During the discussions on the Madras General Sales Tax Bill , 1958(L.A. Bill No.6 of 1958) ,he suggested that the tax on the food grains and the perishable articles should be withdrawn . He opined that the people have to be consulted before a system of Taxation is introduced. He stated that the tanning industry is also taxed at the point when the industry tries to soak or tan the skin. But not at the time of sales or purchase of skins. As the skins have to be sold at prices offered by the foreign countries, he requested that the Government may consider in giving some relief to this industry⁹.

Mr. K. S. G. Haja Sheriff on the discussions on the Budget for the year 1957-58, speaks up in bringing down the levy of sales taxes. He wanted all the essential commodities to be brought down so that even perishables may also be included in this reduction, so that it will benefit the people. He wanted the multi-point levy to be reduced to single point levy. He suggested that one single-point tax be levied instead of multiple-points over mercantile and commercial bodies¹⁰. The legislators were able to point out certain important areas where the Government may reduce the Taxes, to benefit the common people.

Administration

An administration of Government means the practical management and direction of the executive department, or of the public machinery or functions, or of the operations of the various organs of the sovereign. It's applied to the whole class of public functionaries in charge of managing the executives in the Government. The legislators when elected become public functionaries destined in working towards the benefit of the people in every way.

Mr. K. S. G. Haja Sheriff expresses his disappointment that the seats given to the commercial community and trade associations have been abolished. He said that the practice of seats given to these institutions have been in practice since 1917. He said that the 70% of revenue is accrued from the business houses. So representations from the community is very much important. He requested that the Government has to look into the issue and reconsider its decision. And also appealed that the present situation may be kept undisturbed and the reservations may be doubled for the community. Mr.K. S. G. Haja Sheriff express his unhappiness as to why the members of the Madras Legislative Assembly should not be eligible to hold any elective posts. He opined that there should not be any sort of distinction from other councillors¹¹.

During the discussions on the subject reform of local administration in Madras State including Madras city corporation, Mr. A. A. Rasheed expresses his views on the various matters like the delimitation of the city into one hundred divisions and that the representatives of the trade and the Chambers of Commerce should be given a chance to represent their grievances in the Council. He suggested to increase the Taxation Appeal committee's power and the revenue minister has to bind by its decision. Herequested to appoint one commissioner for a group of municipalities. And to let the period of Panchayat be five years and that the president of the Panchayat be elected by the elected representatives of the people and suggested that the Mayoral election should be held once in a year. He suggested that the North Arcot District needs to be bifurcated soon in order to attend to the people's needs, without which it almost seems impossible, for it is a vast district¹².

The Government machinery is aimed at serving the people always, but sometimes the Government would have overlooked certain issues in taking certain decisions due to their administrative responsibilities .These M.L.A`s highlighted those issues which were hindering

the progress of the administration whenever they were given a chance on the floor of the Assembly. So they had also played a part in the smooth administration of the Government.

Language

Language plays an important role in effective administration of the State. A common Lingua Franca is very much needed for people's unity and development of the State. A common language is a very effective in communicating rules and regulations of the State to the people. But when a foreign language is imposed upon a State, it results in total destruction of the entire system of Government.

On the discussions on the Governor's Address Mr. A. A. Rasheed suggested that a round table conference has to be convened in order to solve the language problem and to maintain peace in the State. He said that the greatest heritage of the British regime was the introduction of the English Language and it has a unifying force. It was used by the leaders to rouse the masses during the freedom struggle. In the case of Hindi it has limited vocabulary and literature. And it's not a common language. He pointed that all Indian Languages must become common Lingua Franca of India. He suggests that the Government should take it real slow and await the results of the present steps before dropping the law entirely¹³.

The Legislators never shied away from criticising the Government policy's whenever it affected the people. The Muslim legislators later in the ensuing years also vehemently opposed against imposition of Hindi in the State.

Education

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. one of the primary function of the Government is to enact laws and make decisions to provide proper education for its citizens. It's the duty of the

legislator to ensure the Government is going towards the direction for the development of the State.

Mr. A. A. Rasheed talking on the subject general discussions on the budget for the year 1959-1960, gave his views on the field of education, he explained the need for workmen trained in technical field than men educated in arts or humanities. He also pointed out that Muslim students are being discriminated and denied student scholarships even after producing the income certificates. He was worried about the quality of education and suggested that more technical and professional colleges be opened. He further Stated that the Government should not be hasty in the introduction of regional language as medium of instruction. He advocated for free education and that it should be made compulsory also. He pleaded to the Government to open more technical courses, particularly commercial courses¹⁴.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the backbone of our Indian economy. It's the main source of food production in the State. It's the responsibility of the Government to take steps to improve the agriculture in the State.

During the general discussions on the budget for the year 1959-60, Mr. A.A. Rasheed was very much concerned regarding the increase in prices in the State. He points out that as there is increased production in the State, the price has to be low. He raised questions about the chemical fertilisers that are so badly wanted by the farmers and requested the Government to speed up work on the Neyveli Project. He stressed on the importance in improving poultry farming and sheep farming. He then goes on to mention about the price hike in eggs and mutton. He says that even though mutton is not being exported anywhere, there is a subsequent increase in its price and it has to be controlled¹⁵.

He was very much concerned on the problems faced due to lack of rain and rise in prices of food grains. He States that the price hike may be due to the hoarding of food grains which he suggests should be banned by the Government. He requested that the scheme of irrigation and agriculture needs to be introduced at places where the food production is low and that would help in solving the food problem. He then points out the surplus lands they have and suggested that they could put to good use¹⁶. The legislators shared their ideas and experiences towards the development of agriculture and betterment of food production in the State. They also expressed their concerns over issues which affected agriculture and requested the Government to take steps to eradicate it.

Conclusion

The Muslim Legislators made most use of the opportunities given in the floor of the assembly. They did their best in pointing out the various areas where the common people were affected. They requested the Government in various occasions wherever they can to express their views and ideas. Even though they were not part in effecting change, they expressed their views for the common good. They had a secular outlook in their approach and highlighted issues which affected the society as a whole irrespective of the party which they belongs. They did not show any religious affinity while showing their concerns for the people in the floor of the Assembly.

¹Who's who 1957, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 34- 128.

² Finance Department Budget Discussions for 1957-58, 2nd July 1957, Finance Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 255-256.

³Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report. , Volume no. IX, 19th March 1958, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp.200-202.

⁴Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report. , Volume no. VII, 12th November 1957, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 45-112.

⁵Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report. , Volume no. XXXIII, 10th August 1960, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 308-311.

⁶Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report. , Volume no.I, 26th April 1962, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 310-312.

⁷*Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report.* , Volume no. XVII , 7th February 1959, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 302-304

⁸ Finance Department Budget Discussions for 1957-58, 8th July 1957, pp. 121-123.

⁹*Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report.* , Volume no. XVIII, 10th February 1959, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 62-65

¹⁰ Finance Department Budget Discussions for 1957-58, 8th July 1957, pp. 125-126.

¹¹*Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report.* , Volume no. XIV, 10th September 1958, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp. 582-583.

¹²Op.cit., Volume no. XVII, 7th February, pp. 301-303.

¹³Op.cit., Volume no. XXXIII, 10th August 1960, pp.299-302.

¹⁴Op.cit., Volume no. XLII, 22nd March 1961, pp.331-332.

¹⁵*Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report.* , Volume no. XX, 5th March 1959, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp., 388-391.

¹⁶*Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report.* , Volume no. XXVI, 10th December 1959, Madras Legislative Assembly Department, Fort St. George, Madras-9, pp.422-424.

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