first drafted by N. Venkataraman and submitted to Kamaraj. In a public meeting in Pollachi on March 6th, Karunanidhi said that Kamaraj was against Emergency and expected that the national leaders would be set free at least on the Gandhi Jayanthi Day, which never happened and on the same day, Kamaraj passed away.

But Mrs. Gandhi, on her unity call immediately after the death of Kamaraj, gave a different version. She said that Kamaraj was anxious for the last two months, that "his people should work with us". She spoke in a memorial meeting for Kamaraj, that during these difficult days Kamaraj wanted unity to be strengthened and she hoped that everyone in Tamil Nadu would give their attention to the ambition of his mind. In response to this call some of the members of Congress (0) went and joined the Congress. To that effect the unity call served the purpose. But it reflected the true intention of the departed leader, it is difficult to accept. On 25 January, 1976 the Nation's highest honor 'Bharat Ratna' was conferred posthumously on Kamaraj.

110. Indian Express, 6 October, 1975.
The politics of Tamilnadu between the years 1945 and 1954 witnessed the fall of Rajaji and rise of Kamaraj into leadership position. The characteristic feature of this change was - the replacement of an intellectual leader by a mass leader. It would not be superfluous to say that Kamaraj played a significant role in thwarting all attempts of Rajaji to recapture Congress leadership in Tamilnadu which he had discarded during the Quit India movement and that he was successful in keeping Rajaji in the background as far as Tamilnadu was concerned.

For more than two decades Rajaji was enjoying a unique position in Tamilnadu Congress as an unquestioned leader, head and shoulders above everybody due to his intellectual superiority and experience. By snapping his connections with the Congress during the Quit India Movement, he had made himself highly unpopular particularly among the rank and file of the Congress. After having placed himself for nearly three years (1943-45) outside the pale of the Congress
organisation, Rajaji very much wished to re-enter Congress and regain his old position in Tamilnadu; he could have been successful in his attempt but for Kamraj. His past record as a good Congress leader, his influence over Congress High Command and his own subtle character would have helped him in gaining back his position, but the big stumbling block was Kamraj in all these efforts, to the utter disgust of Rajaji.¹ To the Congress High Command and even to Rajaji himself Tamilnadu would become leaderless without him and so his leadership was something inevitable, that Tamilnadu could not afford to ignore. In the opinion of the Congress High Command, if Rajaji was willing to take back responsibility, it was Tamilnadu that was going to gain first and foremost. Without any open conflict with Rajaji or with Congress High Command, Kamraj saw to it that as far as Tamilnadu was concerned, whatever Rajaji had lost,

¹ "... I fear the province will go into the hands of criminals... intimidation and corruption will be ruling. They do not want one who will not yield to these things and who has public support of his own" - Letter from Rajaji to Vallabhbhai Patel dated 15 November, 1945, Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-60, Vol.2 Ed., Purna Das, Ahmedabad, Shantilal Harjivan Shah, 1978, p. 173.
be had lost once for all. He also proved that Rajaji was not that indispensable as it was presumed and Tamilnadu was capable of providing an alternate leader, like Kamraj, probably more popular than Rajaji and also in his own way efficient in administering the state.

There had been a few occasions in the provincial politics in the past, which brought Rajaji and Kamraj, in conflict with each other—if not directly in an indirect manner. In the provincial politics in the 1930s, Kamraj had been a witness to the conflict of personalities between Rajaji and Satyamurti and Kamraj had been a source of strength to the latter, as his mentor. For example in the year 1931, in the presidential election to the Provincial Congress Committee, there was a kind of gentleman’s agreement between the groups of Rajaji and Satyamurti, that Rajaji would be supported for presidency on the condition that Satyamurti would be made as vice-president. But as soon as Rajaji was elected as president, instead of supporting Satyamurti for vice-presidency, he chose Gounder Vedaswamin Pillai a non-Brahmin, as a candidate, who could defeat the Brahmin Satyamurti. (The Brahmin - Non-Brahmin controversy had already entered in the
... the Congress Party and a Non-Brahmin candidate had a better chance of winning with the support of majority of Non-Brahmins; in fact, by the year 1940, the situation was such that even leaders like Rajaji and Satyamurti did not stand but allowed their own Non-Brahmin supporters to stand for the election. The Justice party had largely been responsible for creating this kind of a situation). To meet this challenge Satyamurti nominated another non-Brahmin, Annapalai Pillai. To put an end to this confusion, a compromise was made whereby both non-Brahmin candidates withdrew their nominations and Satyamurti was made vice-president. Kamraj, much irritated over Rajaji, worked in such a way when electing members for working committee, he packed it with Satyamurti's supporters, so that while Rajaji was its president, the executive committee was in the hands of Satyamurti. The misunderstanding between Rajaji and Kamraj had its starting point in this context.

There was another occasion for a greater misunderstanding. When elections were held in February 1937 under the Government of India Act of 1935, Kamraj expected that Satyamurti would stand for Assembly election.

2. Chockalingam, T. C., Kamraj, Madras, Navayuga Pracharalaya, 1965, P. 18
though Satyamurti was already a member in the Central Assembly. Satyamurti intended to contest the election from the University graduates' constituency but he was persuaded to give the seat to Rajaaji by Rajaaji's friends, on an assurance that when the time came for forming a Ministry in Madras, Satyamurti would be included in the Ministry through nomination to the upper House via Legislative Council. (Kamaraj was elected to the Assembly from Virudhunagar Constituency.) On the eve of the formation of the Ministry in Madras, Satyamurti happened to meet Vallabhbhai Patel at Bombay on his way to Delhi and came to know that the Ministry had already been formed by Rajaaji and that Dr. T.S.S. Rajan had been nominated to the Legislative Council and given a place in the Ministry. In keeping out Satyamurti, Rajaaji probably would have thought, it was better for him that Satyamurti remained in the Central Assembly itself and not in his cabinet. Whatever justification Rajaaji might have had, Kamaraj was definitely not happy in the first place, in the manner in which Satyamurti was kept out of Madras Legislature and secondly out of the Ministry. In the following two years, Kamaraj's political strength was at its lowest ebb, since the Assembly was dominated by

Naraj group, and a buck teacher like Kamaraj did not play any significant role even indirectly through Satyamurti. In the subsequent elections to presidency of the Provincial Congress Committee in the years 1933 and 1939, Guthurang and illi and G.R. Ramasamy Reddi were elected respectively, with Rajaji's support. On both the occasions Satyamurti stood for election but was defeated.

The year 1940 was a turning point in the political career of Kamaraj. When elections were held for presidency, Satyamurti proposed the name of Kamaraj and Rajaji's group proposed the name of C.R. Subbiah who at that time was not even a member of the Provincial Congress Committee. Kamaraj offered to withdraw himself, if someone other than Subbiah, (Rajaji's man) was proposed. But Rajaji did not accept it. In the neck to neck fight, Kamaraj won with a margin of 3 votes - 108 to 106.

For Kamaraj the 1940 election had much more significance than just an elevation to the presidential chair. As the first instance, throughout the war years until 1946, as elections were not held, he continued to remain as

president of Tamilnadu Congress Committee. In the second instance it was this position that he gained in 1940 that enabled him to play a master role in overthrowing Rajaji out of leadership as far as Tamilnadu was concerned. Rajaji's ever anxiety to get into the Congress fold and win back its leadership, the Congress High Command's sincere efforts to bring Rajaji back to the saddle, the threat from Vallabhbhai Patel, that the consequence would be serious if Rajaji was kept out and finally Gandhiji's indirect interference in Madras Politics in favour of Rajaji, all only speeded up the process ending unfavourably to Rajaji.

The whole thing had a start when Rajaji severed his connections with the Congress party in the year 1942 owing to his support to the demand for Pakistan and his critical attitude towards the Quit India Movement. During the turbulent days of the Quit India Movement while his colleagues in the party were all undergoing imprisonment, (Satyaramti died while serving his term of imprisonment) Rajaji was out of the organisation. Out of political conviction, he might have acted that way. But the result was a largely isolated Rajaji in 1945.
The success of the Quit India Movement and the subsequent developments in the national struggle tempted Rajaji to come back to Congress. But the main obstacle came from Kamraj, the Congress President. The Congress High Command felt that rajaji's differences or his actions during the Quit India Movement need not be a permanent bar either to his return to the Congress or taking up the leadership. But Kamraj was most unwilling to restore Rajaji to the leadership out of the way which he had renounced by his own actions. The position of Kamraj (particularly after his recent imprisonment) was in a much more consolidated position, this time with sufficient supporters to back him and Rajaji on his part was fully ripe to be pulled down. Rajaji sought the help of the Congress High Command to get into the Tamilnadu Congress as a first step, before recapturing the leadership. Rajaji's membership to Tamilnadu Congress Committee was restored by All-India Congress President, Maulana Azad, on receiving a letter from Rajaji in August 1946.7

Raja was supposed to have been elected from Firuchengodu. When Kamraj came to know this information through the press, he was completely surprised because as president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, he was not aware of any such election. Much annoyed over Raja's circumstantial entry, Kamraj immediately issued a statement to the press challenging the validity of the election. When the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee met for the first time after the All India Movement in Thirupparankundram, two resolutions were passed, one confirmed the action of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in invalidating the election of Raja from Firuchengodu and the other vested in the Tamil Nadu Congress Working Committee the power to make all arrangements for the forthcoming provincial Assembly election.

The Congress High Command anxious to bring a settlement between Kamraj and Raja, deputed Asaf Ali on 7 December, 1946, to enquire into Tamil Nadu affairs.

8. Ibid, P.38
9. "... The Raja group brought into action all Tamil Nadu methods possible to secure support. Several thousands of rupees were spent,蔓延 were sought to be bribed, jailed, coerced or talked into. The net result was that they could not get a majority in the TNCC for a resolution in favour of Raja."

and sort out the paralysing rivalries within Tamilnadu Congress Committee. Though it was clear indirectly to help Rajaji to extricate him from his present predicament, when he sensed the amount of hostility that existed against Rajaji,11 probably he was himself confused - 'instead of solving the problem, he made it more difficult'.12 He declared the Tiruchennodu election was valid until it was set aside by a duly constituted election tribunal. Before the High Court could take any action towards helping Rajaji, Kamaraj announced that he was appointing a tribunal.

As a step towards settling an end to this controversy, Vallabhbhai Patel interfered and brought Kamaraj and Rajaji to an apparent rapprochement whereby it was agreed by both parties that a parliamentary board responsible for choosing candidates for the ensuing elections would be set up consisting of 8 members including the president and vice-president of Tamilnadu Congress Committee and Kamaraj would nominate 3 members.

10. Letter from Vallabhbhai Patel to Dr. Subbarayan dated 20 December 1946, Ibid, p.177
and Rajaji's members. Though Rajaji agreed to this arrangement, he was handicapped in two ways, first he himself was not on the board and secondly he had only 3 of his men and so he was inadequately represented. As Kamaraj had informed Vallabhbhai Patel that he could not take Rajaji as a member on the board in the present circumstances, Patel had specifically instructed Kamaraj even if it was not possible for Kamaraj to take Rajaji formally as a member of the parliamentary board he might be treated in all respects informally as a member of the board and Rajaji must be provided with a seat in any constituency of his choice. According to Patel "... for the present if these terms were implemented it would serve the purpose... After all the final selection rested with the Central Board... at the time of selection we may call both the parties, hear them, and decide as we like," probably meaning let Rajaji


adjust himself to the present position and when the
final selection came it would be done as he (Rajaji)
vished. Kamraj never followed the instruction of
Patel in the spirit in which it was given. He never
invited Rajaji to the board meeting but 'consulted
before and after the meeting' in a casual way. Patel
much annoyed over this kind of action, took Kamraj
to task and remarked that '... Rajaji could not be
treated as an untouchable by not allowing to sit near
you in the board' and that 'consultations before and
after had no meaning' and that Rajaji had to hear the
arguments and the discussions in the Committee and
must have an opportunity to influence the members of
the Committee by his own presence; he also warned
Kamraj that if he did not carry out the spirit in
which the settlement was made, Patel would have to
take 'strong measures in order to see that it was
fully enforced'

When things were proceeding this way, the Congress
High Command particularly Patel, instructing Kamraj
from above and asking him to make use of Rajaji's
leadership and Kamraj evading and eluding it on his
part, a visit by Gandhi to Madras in January 1946

16. Letter from Vallabhbhai Patel to Kamraj dated
6 February 1946, Cabinet Patel's correspondence,
17. Ibid, p.204
in connection with the silver jubilee celebration of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha and his casual and indirect interference in the provincial affairs brought things to an end. Gandhiji could perceive that there was a strong opposition in the Tamilnad Congress Committee to Rajaji’s leadership. As his own preference was for Rajaji, he wrote on 10 February 1946 a month after his visit, in an article named ‘curious’ in ‘Rasijan’ that there was a ‘clique’ against Rajaji and it was this clique that evidently counted in the official congress in Madras but the masses were devoted to Rajaji. 10 (vide Appendix I)

Kamaraj felt that the reference to a ‘clique’ was a reflection on himself and his colleagues in the Tamilnad Congress Committee. He met Rajaji on 20 February 1946 and asked him to attend the election board meeting the next day. The next day in the presence of Rajaji, Kamaraj adjourned the meeting to the next day (22 February) saying that he was upset by Gandhiji’s statement. 10 The next day instead of attending the


meeting Kasaraj issued a statement to the press resigning from the Tamil Nadu Congress Parliamentary board on the ground that Gandhiji's remarks indicated lack of confidence in him. 20 He also stated that though four of his colleagues felt compelled to quit, he had persuaded them to remain and to carry on the election work, as such wholesale resignations would affect the work. Despite Gandhiji's assurances, Kasaraj stuck to his decision and kept out of the board meeting. The board, still dominated by Kasaraj's supporters would choose only a minority of Rajaji's men. 21 Rajaji understanding that his position had in no way improved due to Kasaraj's resignation, decided to retire from the scene. In his letter to Gandhiji, Rajaji wrote that by resigning he wanted to prove that he was not seeking power 22 but actually he was not allowed to seek power owing to Kasaraj's strong and subtle opposition. As far as Madras was concerned, Rajaji lost his leadership position to Kasaraj. It

was true Rajaji re-entered the scene in 1932 as Chief Minister as a necessary expediency due to the weak position of the Congress Party at that time, but Rajaji’s position was never secure even during that time. By the very fact, that being the Chief Minister he could not keep his own man as the head of the organisation went to prove, how weak his position was. (Dr. Subbarayan, Rajaji’s friend was elected as president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in April 1932 but in December 1932 Kamraj was back again as president since Dr. Subbarayan gave it up).

Kamraj - the kingmaker. Election to the provincial legislature under the 1935 Government of India Act was held in March 1946. The Congress Party swept the polls winning as many as 165 seats out of 205 seats in the provincial legislature.23 (Kamraj was elected to the Assembly from the Anur Aruppukottai Constituency with no opposition). A big question arose as to who should head the ministry if one was formed. In no other province such a difficulty arose as in Madras since all those who headed the Congress

Ministries in the year 1937, were once again elected leaders this time also, and formed more or less the same ministries as they had formed in 1937. In Madras as Rajaji's leadership had already been dismissed, an alternative leader acceptable to the majority had to be found out. The Congress High Command, as in the previous manner was very keen that with his vast experience, Rajaji was the ideal choice to lead and accordingly sent a message on the eve of legislature party meeting advising the Madras Party to elect Rajaji as leader; 24 it had also mentioned if the advice was not acceptable to the majority, let it decide on its own responsibility. 25 When the Congress legislature party met on 12 April 1946, a vote was taken on this issue and Rajaji's leadership was rejected by 146 votes to 36. 26 The All India Congress President Beaumant Lead case with another suggestion that a panel of names could be submitted from which he would choose the leader. This proposal was equally rejected by the provincial legislature,

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid, p.177
a section of the house even feeling that such an attitude of the Congress president was unconstitutional and infringement of the rights of the members of the legislature party. In a telephonic message from London, Asad clarified his position that his directive was 'not mandatory' and he had 'no desire to fetter the discretion of the party to exercise its right to elect a leader'. To Kamayaj, if V.V.Giri was made the leader it would prevent certain embarrassing developments. T.Prahasan had already decided to contest for leadership knowing fully well that Gandhiji was against him due to the 'purse issue'.

27. Ibid, P.178
28. Ibid, P. 179
29. There were complaints against Prahasan that he had collected purses to the extent of about Rs.,80,000. Though Prahasan asserted that such purses were presented to him for personal use for his services, Gandhiji felt that it was morally wrong on the part of Prahasan to have accepted them as it should have gone into the Party's account. Gandhiji's advice to Prahasan was, he 'should retire from the Legislative Assembly and breed over the bad example he has set' - Andrayya Chowdary, G.Prahasan: A Political Study, Madras, V.Abdulla, Orient Longman Limited, 1971, pp.185-186.
Kamaraj probably thought that if Giri stood as a candidate, Prakasa might withdraw his candidature, as Giri was close to Prakasa and also his leadership might find approval with the Congress High Command. But Giri was not in a position to accept the offer, as he had already committed himself to support Prakasa. 

30. Suthuranga Sundarier was finally chosen as an alternate candidate against Prakasa by Kamaraj. 

31. In these moves Kamaraj's stand was that he did not want to support a candidate not acceptable to Gandhi, though he had nothing against Prakasa. By not accepting Rajaji's leadership Gandhi had already been disobeyed once and so he did not want to disobey again by supporting Prakasa. 

32. Prakasa however, won the election by securing 82 votes against 69 votes. 

33. Rajaji and his group consisting of about 29 members abstained from voting and this neutrality on the part of Rajaji was the main reason for Prakasa's victory. Once Prakasa became the Premier and assumed office, Kamaraj had no intention of non-cooperating.

31. Ibid., P.180
32. Interview with H. Bhaktavatsalam by the candidate on 12 August 1960.
with him. He clearly stated that once election was over it would not be in the interest of Congress to continue to fight. 35 But very soon dispute arose between Kamarraj and Prakasam on the very formation of the cabinet. Kamarraj urged Prakasam to choose Radhava Kanon for ministership. But Prakasam chose Raghava Kanon of Rajaji's group. 36 This was the beginning of rift between Kamarraj and Prakasam. Kamarraj also started feeling soon that even in policy making Prakasam was not consulting Congress legislature party before hand but was acting independently. 37 Vehement and open criticism against the Ministry was started by Kamarraj about a month before the annual election for leadership, which was to be held during March 1947. He attacked Prakasam's textile policy which he considered rash and impractical and would result only in non-availability of cloth. 38

37. Interview with K.Karthavatsalam.
38. In order to protest and popularise khadi, Prakasam introduced a new textile policy whereby starting of new textile mills as well as extension of existing mills in the province were prohibited. Prakasam refused to increase the quota of spindles to textile mills also. To Kamarraj, at a time of acute cloth shortage after the War, it was wrong on the part of Prakasam to bring in such a measure in such haste without increasing khadi production first - The Indian Express, 2 February, 1947.
Kamaraj along with Sadasiva Koon and P.S.S. Rajan submitted a requisition signed by about 30 Congress legislators to Prakasan on 13 February 1947 asking the latter to convene the Congress Legislature Party on 16 February 1947 in order to enable them to move a no-confidence motion against him. A memorandum signed by about 114 legislators (including Rajaji's group) was also sent to All India Congress Committee (AICC) in which it was mentioned that confidence in Prakasan's leadership was lost. Kripalani, President of the AICC tried to bring rapprochement between the opposing groups (Prakasan's offer for the compromise was he did not mind who the ministers were as long as he was allowed to remain as Premier). Though the compromise was agreeable to others including Rajaji's group, Kamaraj insisted that Prakasan should go in spite of Kripalani's appeals. Kripalani seemed to have said to Kamaraj '... you are the only person who opposes my compromise'. A No-confidence motion against the ministry was passed on 20 February 1947.

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in the party meeting and another resolution elected U.P. Ramaswamy Reddiar as the new leader. 42 Five Ministers (Shaktavatsalan, Avinashilingam, G. Ramaswamy Naidu, Daniel Thomas and Karunagya) in Prakasan’s Ministry submitted their resignations. 43 Though so obviously a large majority of the Congress members of the Madras Assembly were against Prakasan and in spite of Congress High Command’s advice to give it up, 44 Prakasan tried to hang on, insisting on technical grounds, that a no-confidence motion could not be moved in a Party meeting. 45 When the annual election of the leader of the Congress Legislature party took place on 21 March, 1947, Prakasan was finally voted out, by 118 to 73 votes and U.P. Ramaswamy Reddiar was elected as leader. 46 Prakasan, while explaining in the Assembly the reasons as to why his ministry fell, regretted that the exclusion of one name in his ministry (Kadapa Nenes) brought him all the trouble. 47

42. The Indian Express, 1 March, 1947.
43. Ibid.
47. ‘... That exclusion (Kadapa Nenes) was the cause of a very serious trouble. That became the starting point of my trouble as P.M... Except for that one omission I had no reservation in my mind....that I would have any difficulty in running the administration — Speech by Prakasan in the Assembly, The Indian Express, 27 March, 1947.'
also, as predicted. Prakasam though contested he once again lost to Reddiar by a margin of 27 votes. Reddiar polled 112 votes and Prakasam 94 votes.

Relationship between Reddiar and Kamaraj became very much strained by the end of 1945, and Kamaraj had no intention of supporting Reddiar for the next annual election. Reddiar was tactless in dealing with his colleagues. 'He considered all others as dishonest except himself and also lacked confidence in his colleagues'.

He was also not sympathetic to the rank and file of the Congress workers, who went for favours and issued a circular to the officials not to listen to the demands of the legislators. All these made him highly unpopular. Kamaraj even felt that there was no proper communication between the Reddiar's Ministry and the Congress organisation in the province and in the implementation of the policies. Reddiar's Ministry failed to know the minds of the people.

Kamaraj hence felt that a change of

49. Interview with N. Bhaskaran. 50. Ibid.
leadership was necessary. When Vallabhbhai Patel visited Madras, he well understood that change of Raddiar was brewing in the party and he himself was for replacing Raddiar. (Patel's impression about Raddiar was that Raddiar had a 'ruffian way' and did things in an 'uncivilized manner'). Patel suspected that Kamaraj might have Dr. Subbarayan in his mind as a candidate. As Dr. Subbarayan's son and daughter were communists, Patel felt it would not be proper to have him as Premier. When Patel called Kamaraj and asked him 'whom will you have', Kamaraj, not prepared for an answer at that moment, mentioned Bhaktavatsalam's name. Patel was happy that Dr. Subbarayan's name was not proposed. Kamaraj later informed Bhaktavatsalam that he would have to take up. Two days before the election, Raddiar, who wished to continue for that year also, wanted Bhaktavatsalam to speak to Kamaraj over his re-election. For this Bhaktavatsalam replied that it was better for Raddiar to speak to party workers first rather than to Kamaraj, as he had antagonized many of them. Raddiar, angry over Bhaktavatsalam's advice, retorted '...if I had a will I will make Kamaraj agree to my leadership', though in actuality Raddiar was powerless to do so.

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63. Interview with Bhaktavatsalam.
64. Ibid.
when Kumaraswamy Raja and C. Subramaniam met Reddiar and persuaded him to step down and elect Bhaktavatsalan as leader, Reddiar refused to agree to the election of Bhaktavatsalan (as he was angry with Bhaktavatsalan on the previous occasion). He, however, subsequently agreed to step down in favour of Kumaraswamy Raja.\textsuperscript{55} Kamaraj agreed to this arrangement since he thought he could get the help of Reddiar in defeating Rajaji's candidate, Dr. Subbarayan. Kumaraswamy Raja became the elected leader, getting 16 votes majority over Dr. Subbarayan, the candidate nominated by Rajaji and Prakasa.\textsuperscript{56}

On all these occasions of electing the leader of the Legislature Party, Kamaraj proved clearly how influential he was in pulling down ministries and installing new ministries and rightly earned the reputation as king-maker. Particularly from 1947 onwards Tamilnadu Congress organization was completely in the hands of Kamaraj, his position unassailable. In the annual elections to Tamilnadu Congress Committee all attempts by Rajaji's group to replace him by other members proved failures and he continued to remain as head of the

\textsuperscript{55} Interview with Bhaktavatsalan.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
organisation throughout, until he became the Chief Minister in April 1954. (There was only a short break in the year 1952). His hold over most of the legislators of Tamilnadu was such that without his support no one could become the Premier. In electing the leader of the legislature every year Kamaraj’s choice was final. To put it in the words of Dr. T.G.G. Rajan, ‘... the new leader by name Kamaraswamy Raja has been chosen ... O.P.S. in spite of his efforts could not continue. Kamaraj Nadar was a deciding factor and his pull was the strongest ... Raja may prove nice and good. But the deciding factor in the cabinet happens to be Kamaraj Nadar’. 87

Kamaraswamy Raja was the last Premier of Madras under the Government of India Act, 1936. The new Republican Constitution conferring universal adult franchise on Indian people came into existence on 26 January 1950. The first General Election under the new Constitution was held in March 1952. The result of the election was not very comforting for the Madras Congress Party. It suffered serious reverses securing only 153 seats in a house of 375 and emerged as a minority party. (Kamaraj was elected as a member of Central Legislature). The opposition was in no way better, as it was made up of more than half a dozen

splinter groups with Communists-69, Kisan Ranadour Praja Party-35, Socialists-13, Krishikar Lok Party-15, Tamilnadu Collective Party-19, and Common weal Party-3. There were as many as 63 independent candidates whose future party alignments remained unpredictable. 58 (The parting of Prakasan, T. Vivekanathan and other Socialists from the Congress, the critical food situation etc., affected the Congress party considerably and weakened its political strength). Prakasan now leader of the Kisan Ranadour Praja Party, with the initiative of Communists formed United Democratic Front (U.D.F.) with 168 members and claimed that the U.D.F. had the absolute majority and asked the Governor, reasonably enough, to invite him to form the Government. 59 Kamraj was not averse to giving a chance to opposition parties, as he probably thought the opposition parties were so desperate that their coalition would not last long. 60 But several interests inside the Congress party, and the Governor Sri Prakasa as well, did not relish setting up a Communist dominated Ministry at the very outset of the State's career under the

59. Ibid, p.42
60. Ibid, p.41
new Constitution. After hectic politicking and after
Kumaranayakaja having declined the offer, Rajaji living
in retirement after a varied career since 1946 as Central
Minister, Governor of West Bengal and the first and last
of the Indian Governor-General was brought in as a saviour
of the situation.

As a precautionary step, Rajaji wanted an assurance
from Kamraj that he would not oppose his leadership.
Kamraj’s reply was, he would not oppose Rajaji if the
party wanted him as the leader. He had also told Rajaji
that his own stand was that, the party should not come
forward to form the Government, hence he did not mind
who was elected as leader. At the same time Kamraj did not
relish the way in which Rajaji regularised his anonymous
position through nomination to the upper house with the
help of Governor.61 Rajaji justified his backdoor entry
that if he had to stand in an Assembly Constituency he
would represent only that particular constituency but being
accepted as a leader in a House consisting of about 150
members he represented all their constituencies. (Old
age was also quoted by Rajaji as one of the reasons for

62. Copley, A.M., The Political Career of C.Najagopalasahari,
P.266.
not standing in an election and get elected himself to the Assembly). Soon after the formation of his Ministry the U.D.F. began to crack up, leaving Rajaji safe at least for the present.

Rajaji as Chief Minister displayed a characteristic combination of skill and calculated recklessness. His modified Scheme of Elementary Education (which was introduced from the academic year 1953) and contemptuously known as 'Kala Kalvi Thittam' (caste based education) in Tamil, made him highly unpopular and made him throw away to the winds the political advantage that he had gained recently. The main features of the Scheme were school hours for children of the elementary schools were reduced from 8 to 3 hours per day. Pupils were divided into two batches, each batch working for 3 hours alternately in the forenoon and afternoon. During the other half of the day according to Rajaji, children could learn the traditional occupations of their parents, particularly at the village side where parents were unwilling to send their children to schools because they needed their services for grazing cattle etc. These arguments provoked opposition from members belonging to communities which in the past had received no education at all.

Rajaji's problem was to take such steps as to attain
universal primary education within ten years, according to the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India. Since the finance was limited he probably thought that by two shifts the problem of bringing all the children to school could be solved immediately. Instead of calling his scheme a drift system he brought in other arguments. Opposition parties particularly V.V. Ramasamy Naicker, leader of Dravidar Kazhagam who had been a bitter critic of Rajaji's return to power spearheaded a campaign against this scheme, (Probably with the tacit approval of Kamraj) alleging that it was an attempt by 'the subtle intellect of a clever lawyer—that Rajaji was, to perpetuate the caste superiority and the educationally privileged position of the brahmins'. 63 Opposition developed within the Congress party also. 64

Kamraj did not direct the agitation against the scheme openly but as the head of the Party organization instead of defending Rajaji he restrained himself from supporting him. 65 In fact with Kamraj’s approval Varadarakajulu Naidu started collecting signatures from the Congress

63. The Hindu, 4 August, 1963
64. Maraimalai, V. K., Kamraj – A study, Bangalore, Poesia Industries, 1966, P. 67
65. Interview with N. Kalyanasundaram, Member of Parliament, by the candidate on 18 January 1961.
legislators against Rajaji and sent to Celbar. Thus Kamaraj was behind the activities that developed in Tamilnadu Congress to pull down Rajaji.

With the formation of Andhra Pradesh, as a separate State in October 1953, the residuary Madras State became virtually a Tamil speaking State except for Calabar. The Congress Party in Madras no longer suffered from a precarious majority in the Assembly and members of the Congress Party who had no particular loyalty to Rajaji felt that Rajaji had outlived his role and so the Education Scheme came very handy for replacing Rajaji’s leadership.

Sensing the unfriendly atmosphere of the Party, Rajaji decided to quit. He desired G. Subramaniam to get elected as leader. But the predominant opinion in the party however was in favour of calling upon Kamaraj to take up the leadership. At the meeting of the Congress Legislature Party on 31 March 1954, Kamaraj was elected as leader, defeating Subramaniam by 93 Votes to 41. Though Kamaraj was not keen on becoming Chief Minister he accepted the leadership because of the pressure of party members who felt that he alone could lead the Party in the circumstances created by Rajaji’s exit. He explored with some friends the

possibility of his remaining the leader, while some one else could function as Chief Minister, but Nehru was firm that the elected leader of the Party alone should act as Chief Minister. His main hesitation, probably was he might not be able to fulfill the wishes of many of his supporters who were either aspirants after ministerial office, or who might seek other favours from him. To prevent such embarrassments beforehand, he made it clear to his supporters that he would take up the Chief Ministership only, if he had an assurance from them, that he would be free to form his ministry according to his likes, and no legislator would come to him asking for favour. Kamaraj was perhaps the only Chief Minister in India, who had the courage to impose such a condition on his supporters.

He was sworn in as Chief Minister on 13 April 1954 on the Tamil New Year's Day. He remained as Chief Minister for three consecutive terms, from the year 1954 to 1965, totally for nine years. There had been doubts whether a person without a sound, formal education and who knew only a little English (which he had learnt during his imprisonment during 1942-45) could comprehend and decide wisely on complex questions of economic and social policies. When Kamaraj laid down office nine years later, Madras not only

69. Ibid.
70. The Hindu, 14 April 1954.
retained its reputation as one of the best administered states but topped other States in certain fields like education, industry, power etc. Through clean administration and determined efforts Kamraj was able to achieve all these things.