KAMARAJ AS TAMILNADU CONGRESS COMMITTEE PRESIDENT

After Vaikom Satyagraha Kamaraj became more and more involved in the National movement for Independence. The great success of the Satyagrahis at Vaikom opened new vistas before them. The authoritative regime of the Britishers adopted repressive measures one after another and that added fuel to the already burning nationalist spirit in him. Kamaraj devoted himself fully to the cause of National struggle.

The Swarajists wanted to take part in the elections and enter the legislature. Leaders in Tamilnadu like S. Srinivasa Ayyengar and S. Sathyamoorthy supported the move in 1923. But the Congress Party in Tamilnadu, under the Presidentship of Rajaji, who was the leader of the "No-changers was for the boycott of elections." Kamaraj too, was firm in the decision of the Congress Party and he did not co-operate with S. Sathyamoorthy one of the leaders of the "Pro-changers group in Tamilnadu."

†No channers - a term applied to those who favoured constructive work proposed by Mahatma Gandhi and boycotted council entry.


#Pro-changers were for council entry and bent on wrecking the constitution from within the council.

2 Muruga Dhanushkodi, Kamaraj Oru Charithiram (Madras, 1976), p.36.
In 1925 Kamaraj, had the opportunity of becoming a regional level volunteer from being a local level volunteer. The opportunity came in the form of the flag Satyagraha at Nagpur.

The British Government in India banned carrying Congress Flags through the streets where the Britishers lived in Nagpur. It was opposed by the Congress which planned for a 'Flag March'. To support the movement Congress volunteers were sent to Nagpur from different parts of India. Kamaraj reached Nagpur to take part in the March, along with other volunteers from Virudhunagar. But the plan was withdrawn as an agreement was reached between the Congress and the Britishers.³

The British Government had also banned carrying of arms like dagger, spear etc., by the Indians. This was also opposed vehemently all over India. It was decided to start a 'Sword Satyagraha' in Madras itself. On June 16, 1927 the movement was started.⁴ The Sword Satyagrahis marched through the streets, carrying aloft swords and propagating among the people the inalienable right to bear arms. In this struggle Kamaraj and his friend K.S. Muthusamy of Virudhunagar helped the 'Sword Satyagrahis' by supplying about half a dozen swords specially made for this purpose.⁵

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³ Ibid., p.34.
⁵ Ibid., p.7.
Moreover, Kamaraj operating from Madurai under the leadership of the local Congress leader Somayajulu of Tinneveli, organised an impressive procession called †Pichchuva Oorvalam. 6 This procession turned out to be a grand success. It demonstrated the feelings of the nationalists particularly youngsters who defied the authority of the British. Kamaraj and his friends organised a procession in Virudhunagar before the volunteers could start to go to Madurai. When the procession passed through the streets of Virudhunagar, Kamaraj went along with the procession singing the patriotic songs of Bharathi. 7 The bold demonstration of Kamaraj, brought him into limelight. It gave him district-wide recognition and elevated him to the position of district-level leader and activist in the provincial politics.

Meanwhile the Congress which met at Belgaum in December 1924, under the Presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi passed a resolution to the effect that it could contest and enter the legislatures. 8 After getting the permission of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi,

†Pichchuva Oorvalam - procession of bearers of daggers and spears.
Swarajists in Tamilnadu carried on the election propaganda in 1926. Kamaraj toured the different districts in South Tamilnadu with leaders like Sathyamoorthy and Srinivasa Ayyengar. He and his 'volunteer force' ably carried on election work at places like Srivaikundam, Earal and Nasareth. The service rendered by Kamaraj in the election of 1926 brought him greater recognition as an efficient organiser of the Congress Party.

The year 1927 happened to be another successful year in the political career of Kamaraj. The event was known as the 'removal of Col.Neil statue'. Col.Neil was one of the haughty commanders of the 1857 revolt. The Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Madras District Congress Committee passed a resolution calling for the removal of Neil's statue as it was a reminder of the barbarous and cruel acts committed by him.

The Madras Congress took up the issue and organised a demonstration for the removal of Neil's statue. Somayajulu of Tinneveli was appointed leader of the struggle. Soon batches


of volunteers joined the struggle. They were arrested and given deterrent punishments ranging from one year rigorous imprisonment to simple punishments for a few weeks with fines.  

With the arrest of the frontline leaders of the struggle like Somayajulu and Swaminatha Mudaliar of Gudiyattam, Kamaraj was chosen to lead the struggle in September 1927. For this purpose Kamaraj met Mahatma Gandhi at the residence of S. Srinivasa Ayyengar in Madras and secured his permission. But the struggle was given up in view of the proposed countrywide boycott of the Simon Commission.

However, 1927 was still significant in the political career of Kamaraj. The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Madras under the Presidency of M.A. Ansari. Kamaraj took part in the deliberations of the Congress session. He was responsible for the convening of the 'Indian Republic Movement'.

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†Later the Neil statue was removed to Egmore Museum in 1937 when Rajaji became the Premier of Madras Presidency under the Government of India Act of 1935.

Congress' under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just then returned from his European tour. It was in the Madras session of 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru had the resolution for complete Independence as the goal of Indian National Congress, passed. It was in Madras that Kamaraj and Jawaharlal Nehru met for the first time.

Various organisations such as the Indian National Congress, Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberal Federation condemned the non-inclusion of Indians in the Simon Commission. It was decided by the Indian National Congress in the annual session of December 1927 held at Madras to boycott the Commission. On February 3, 1928 the day of its arrival in Bombay, the Commission was greeted with a National 'hartal'. All the major cities and towns observed a complete 'hartal' and the people were out on the streets taking part in mass rallies, processions and black flag demonstrations.

In accordance with the decision of the Indian National Congress, the leaders of Tamilnadu Congress also resolved in


the Legislative Council to boycott the Simon Commission.\textsuperscript{20} When
the Commission visited Madras on February 18, 1929 there was
total boycott and tension prevailed.\textsuperscript{21}

In the same year when the Commission visited Madurai,
the police had made elaborate arrangements to prevent black flag
demonstrations against the Commission members. But George Joseph
and Kamaraj were able to mobilise thousands of volunteers near
Thirumalai Nayakkar Mahal and carry out the demonstration.\textsuperscript{22}
Kamaraj's organising ability became quite evident.

It was in 1930 that Kamaraj once again made his presence
felt. Economic depression, the miserable condition of industrial
and commercial classes, the fixation of exchange value of Indian
rupee against British currency, the plight of industrial workers,
and the reluctance of the British Government to accept the Nehru
report of 1928 led to the launching of the Civil Disobedience
Movement in 1930.\textsuperscript{23}

The Congress Working Committee which met at Sabarmati
Ashram from February 14 to 16, 1930 authorised Mahatma Gandhi

\textsuperscript{20} M.P. Sivagnanam, \textit{Viduthalaipporil Tamizhagam}, Vol. I (Madras,

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, p.186.


to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. Mahatma Gandhi commenced the Historic 'Dandi March' on March 12, 1930 and thus the Civil Disobedience Movement was set in motion. Soon the movement gained momentum. The whole country responded effectively.

In Tamilnadu Rajaji, a close Lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi was incharge of the Satyagraha March to Vedaranyam a salt producing centre in Tanjore District, in the Madras Presidency on April 13, 1930. But he was arrested under Section 74 of Salt Act.  

While Rajaji and other leaders were arrested for Salt Satyagraha, Kamaraj was arrested for enlisting volunteers for the movement. The charges made against Kamaraj were (i) that he was responsible for exhorting an audience of 300 people to enlist themselves as volunteers and (ii) he incited them to proceed to Vedaranyam in thousands to prepare salt in violation of the Section 74 of Salt Act. Kamaraj during the trial did not refute the charges and consequently he was sentenced on June 9, 1930.

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24 Ibid., p.187.
26 G.O.No.2830, Law (General), 8th July 1930.
for two years rigorous imprisonment and was first sent to Central Prison, Thirchirapalli and later shifted to Bellary Alipuram Jail. He refused to come out on parole even to see his ailing Grandmother Parvathi Ammal.

The signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 4, 1931 led to the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement on the part of Congress and an assurance on the part of the British Government to effect constitutional changes so as to improve the political conditions in India. In consequence of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact all prisoners were released. Kamaraj was also released on March 12, 1931 before he could serve his full term of imprisonment.

Lord Irwin was succeeded as Viceroy by Lord Willington who was determined to crush the challenge of the Congress. The attitude of the Viceroy and his official machinery left Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee with no option but to revive the Civil Disobedience Movement.

27 G.O.No.2830, Law (General), 8th July 1930; G.O.No.5181, Law (General), 9th December 1930; Jail slips J.316-626, Unclassified documents (TNA, Madras), pp.622-626.


30 B.N. Pande, Ibid., p.250.

31 Ibid., p.257.
The arrest of Mahatma Gandhi on June 4, 1932 at Manibhawan in Bombay was followed by repressive measures against the Congress and the Congress was declared an Unlawful Association.

Immediately following the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi orders were issued for the imposition of Section 144 in the City of Madras and rural centres prohibiting the holding of meetings and organising processions against the arrest. S. Sathyamoorthy and Rajaji were arrested on January 9, 1932 and the Congress House was seized under Section 3 of the Unlawful Association Ordinance.

In Virudhunagar under the inspiring leadership of Kamaraj there were picketings and processions. The volunteers were inhumanly attacked. In spite of the inhuman atrocities, the volunteers carried on with processions and demonstrations almost daily in Virudhunagar. Realising that Kamaraj was the main force behind the volunteers, the police arrested him on January 10, 1932.

32 Ibid., p.260.
33 Ibid., p.261.
34 Extracts from Fortnightly Reports 1928-37, Vol. 72 (TNA, Madras), p.12.
35 Ibid.
36 All India Congress Committee, File No.35/1932 (NMML, New Delhi).
37 G.O.No.1024, Law (General), Misc. Series, 14th March 1932.
S.K. Chettur, the joint I Class Magistrate of Sivakasi who tried the case, was convinced that Kamaraj had delivered seditious speeches and that he was actively inciting the people against the Government of India. Kamaraj was sentenced to undergo simple imprisonment for one year. It was the second imprisonment and he was sent to the Central Jail, Thiruchnopoly, from where he was transferred to Vellore Jail. This time he served his full term of imprisonment for 1 year i.e., from 10.1.1932 to 9.1.1933. While he was in Vellore Jail he happened to meet Jayadev Kapur and Kamalnath Tiwari involved in the Bagat Singh conspiracy case.

His contacts with the revolutionaries like Jaidev Kapur and Kamalnath Tiwari in the prison at Vellore made the British implicate Kamaraj in a number of alleged conspiracy cases. In the years 1933-34 Kamaraj was accused in inter-provincial conspiracy case. It was known as "Madras conspiracy case". Kamaraj was accused that he and his friend K. Arunachalam conspired together to assassinate the Bengal Governor Sir John Anderson, known for

S.K. Chettur - Later he became Chief Secretary when Kamaraj was Chief Minister of Madras during his third term of Chief Ministership and he bade farewell to Kamaraj when he relinquished office - The Hindu, 3rd October 1963; Virudhai Ramasamy, Thiyaga Veerar Kamaraj (Madras, 1964), p.141.

38 G.O.No.1024, Law (General), Misc. Series. 14th March 1932; Jail Slips J.316-626, Unclassified documents (TNA, Madras), pp.622-626.

his repressive policies against freedom fighters, when he came to Ooty for Summer. The police chargesheeted Kamaraj with supplying two pistols to Arunachalam. Police investigation, however, failed to prove the involvement of Kamaraj. 40 However, the British Government again implicated Kamaraj in another conspiracy case known as "Virudhunagar Srivilliputhur Police Station Bomb explosion case" shortly known as "Virudhunagar Bomb case". It was reported that Bombs were thrown on the night of September 21, 1933 at the Post Office and Police Station buildings at Virudhunagar resulting in an explosion. 41 Nobody was injured. In this case K.S. Muthusamy, Kamaraj, Mariappan and Thirunarayanasamy Naidu were arrested on November 9, 1933. 42 When the case came for trial the local Sub-Inspector Ananthakrishnan refused to give evidence. The Police Superintendent of Sivakasi, Parthasarathy (later became I.G. of Madras) and Thothathari Ayyengar of Madras CID took special efforts to prove the role of Kamaraj in the conspiracy by coercing Venkatachalam to become approver in the case. 43

During the course of the trial of the conspiracy case,

41 _The Hindu_ (Madras), 22nd September 1933; _Dinamani_ (Tamil), (Madras), 4th October 1975.
42 _The Hindu_ (Madras), 10th November 1933; Muruga Dhanushkodi, _Op.cit._, p.49.
the police frequently harassed Kamaraj, his friends and relatives. On one occasion they wanted to search his residence. His mother protested but later allowed the police to search only in the presence of her neighbours. The failure of the English Government to prove charges in the conspiracy cases relieved Kamaraj from the clutches of law; otherwise it would have been difficult for him to continue his work for the cause of the Congress. Though he was acquitted, Kamaraj had to spend a considerable amount of money by selling much of the ancestral property to conduct the case. He was able to retain only his house at Virudhunagar. 44

His role in the Neil statue removal, Boycott of Simon Commission and participation in Salt Satyagraha all gained for Kamaraj a high place in the Indian National Congress. At the age of 28 Kamaraj was appointed member of the All India Congress Committee, the Apex body and the Party Parliament in 1931. 45

The election of Kamaraj to the AICC was a matter of pride and it reflected the steady rise of Kamaraj in the official party hierarchy. The year 1931 was significant in more than one way. From this year onwards Kamaraj became greatly involved in provincial politics. The Tamilnadu Congress was a divided house in


1931. There were two factions in the Tamilnadu Congress. One was led by Rajaji and the other by S. Sathyamoorthy. Rajaji represented the affluent and intellectual section of the Congress in Madras. Sathyamoorthy, on the other hand, was poor and represented the have-nots section of the Congress. The history of Tamilnadu Congress from 1931 to 1942 was one of the history of personality conflict between Rajaji and Sathyamoorthy. In this conflict there were ups and downs on both sides but the final round was won by Sathyamoorthy with the help of Kamaraj.

It is imperative to go into the factors that had brought Kamaraj closer to Sathyamoorthy. It will also be interesting to note why Sathyamoorthy won Kamaraj to his side. To quote Kamaraj "I met Sathyamoorthy first in 1919 when he came to Virudhunagar to address a public meeting". In 1923 Kamaraj met Sathyamoorthy for the second time at the residence of Venkatrama Ayyer of Madurai, when C.R. Das inaugurated the Swarajya Party. He came to be closely associated with Sathyamoorthy during the election of 1926. The simple and humble nature of Sathyamoorthy won the admiration of Kamaraj. Sathyamoorthy in turn was very much attracted by the devotion and dedication and organising ability of Kamaraj. Moreover, Sathyamoorthy being a poor man had to depend on able supporters to

46 Chavi (Tamil Weekly), 8th September 1987.
47 Ibid.
strengthen his own position in the party.

In 1931 Presidential Election to the State unit Rajaji came to an agreement with the Sathyamoorthy faction according to which the post of Vice-President should be left to the choice of Sathyamoorthy's group, if he was allowed to contest the President's post unopposed. 48 Sathyamoorthy's group having no suitable candidate to field, accepted the offer and helped for the smooth election of Rajaji as the President.

After getting elected as President, Rajaji did not keep up his promise. This made Sathyamoorthy and Kamaraj field a candidate for Vice-Presidentship. Sathyamoorthy with the help of Kamaraj got himself elected as Vice-President. 49 The Congress Working Committee was fully dominated by the supporters of Sathyamoorthy, thanks to Kamaraj. In the first round of personal conflict, Sathyamoorthy and his disciple Kamaraj won the game.

In the year 1934, the INC called off the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Congress wanted to take advantage of the new avenues of constitutional change in the offing. It decided to enter the legislatures. The Election of 1934 became a trial of strength

between the Congress and the British rulers. In Tamilnadu, the responsibility of organising the election work was entrusted to Kamaraj and Sathyamoorthy. They gained a phenomenal success and Kamaraj proved that he was a master organiser of party and election work.

In the 1936 election of the TNCC, S. Sathyamoorthy and C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar contested for the post of the President. This time Rajaji supported Sathyamoorthy in getting elected as President. Thus a non-Brahmin was defeated at the instance of Rajaji, a Brahmin, supporting Sathyamoorthy, another Brahmin. This proved the Brahmin domination in the Congress and the influence of caste politics.

However, for Kamaraj it was a good chance. He was appointed as the General Secretary of the Tamilnadu Congress by Sathyamoorthy. This provided him with the rare opportunity to go round with Jawaharlal Nehru, when he toured Tamilnadu in 1936.

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Jawaharlal got a good impression of Kamaraj and he was convinced of the organising capacity of Kamaraj and his devotion to the Congress.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1937, elections were held under the Government of India Act of 1935. As a result of the hard work done by Congress leaders such as Sathyamoorthy and Kamaraj, Congress gained a majority in Tamilnadu. The election results of 1937 clearly showed the strength of the Congress in Tamilnadu.\textsuperscript{55} Out of the 46 seats in the Legislative Council, Congress won 26 seats. Again out of 215 seats in the Legislative Assembly, Congress gained 159 seats. Kamaraj himself got elected from Virudhunagar Constituency without opposition. Virudhunagar which had been a stronghold of the British loyalists elected Kamaraj as the Congress candidate.\textsuperscript{56}

Soon after the General Elections of 1937 were over Rajaji entered the scene and was allowed to form a Ministry. Sathyamoorthy too wanted to contest the election and try his chance to form the Ministry. But at the instance of friends like 'Hindu'

\textsuperscript{54} Chavi (Tamil Weekly), 30th September 1987.

\textsuperscript{55} Extracts from Fortnightly Reports 1928-37, Vol. 72, p.4.

Srinivasan, Sathyamoorthy gave way to Rajaji.\textsuperscript{57}

Sathyamoorthy before leaving for Delhi met Rajaji and he was given the assurance that he could be included in the Ministry, through nomination to the Legislative Council. But Rajaji did not keep up his promise and instead included T.S.S. Rajan.\textsuperscript{58}

It was considered to be a calculated move to leave Sathyamoorthy out of the Ministry. The action of Rajaji was never forgotten by both Kamaraj and Sathyamoorthy.\textsuperscript{59}

The 1940 election to the post of Party President paved the way for the emergence of Kamaraj as the undisputed leader of the Congress in Tamilnadu in the next decades to follow.

Both Sathyamoorthy and Rajaji realised the fact that non-Brahmin tide was rising. Sathyamoorthy to set right his earlier reverses in the party organisational elections decided to field Kamaraj for the Presidentship.

In the election Kamaraj got elected by a difference of three votes. He polled 103, while the other candidate secured 100. By just three votes he defeated C.P. Subbiah the nominee.

\textsuperscript{57} Blitz, 6th May 1972.

\textsuperscript{58} A Gandhite, K. Kamaraj the Shrewd 1903-40 (Madras, 1961), p.17.

of Rajaji. It came as the final blow to the race for power in the party hierarchy; and it heralded the 'Dawn of Kamaraj Era' in the history of Tamilnadu Congress. Sathyamoorthy who was the mentor of Kamaraj happily agreed to serve as Secretary of the TNCC under the Presidentship of Kamaraj. The victory of Kamaraj pushed Rajaji into the background.

Kamaraj's conduct after being elected as President of TNCC was one of masterly politics. He was to nominate a fifteen-member team to the Executive. Kamaraj deliberately included the names of Rajaji's men. It was not out of fear of Rajaji that he did this. On the other hand it was a calculated move to win the support of Rajaji's followers so as to work together in the party. It was also a clever move to isolate Rajaji. It was not in winning friends but winning the enemies over to his side that Kamaraj excelled. That was how he started his bright career of the Presidentship of the TNCC that lasted for nearly 12 years.

The August offer of 1940 was a great set-back for the Nationalist leaders. The appeal made by Congress for the active association of Indians in the formation of Government was turned down by the Viceroy. The hour of struggle came nearer and on

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September 15, 1940, AICC decided to give Mahatma Gandhi the mandate for immediate and appropriate steps to face the crisis. Accordingly Mahatma Gandhi decided in favour of Individual Civil Disobedience.

Under this novel plan of 'Individual Satyagraha' every Satyagrahi being selected by Mahatma Gandhi, had to go to his Congress Committee area, home town or village and inform the Magistrate of his intention to defy the law. He would announce the date, time and place of Satyagraha. He was expected to explain to those present there, not to donate to the War Fund and not to give materials for war. On arrest and subsequent release, a Satyagrahi was to repeat again and again the 'Satyagraha'.

In the Madras Presidency the authorities severely dealt with Congressmen undertaking Satyagraha. T.S.S. Rajan, Sathya-moorthy and Rajaji were arrested. Kamaraj, President of the TNCC, left for Wardha, to secure approval for the list of Satyagrahis from Mahatma Gandhi. But while still on his way at Guntur, police arrested him and seized the list of Satyagrahis from him on December 20, 1940.

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64 Ibid., p.409.
65 Ibid., p.407.
Kamaraj was arrested in December and at the time of his arrest the police could not give the reasons for his arrest. It was mentioned that he was detained under Defence of India rules and kept along with other Satyagrahis and South Indian leaders in Vellore Jail. Later the police chargesheeted him that he had made anti-war speeches and prevented the people from contributing to the War Fund. The Governor of Madras, Arthur Hope made an extensive tour of Tamilnadu to collect for the War Fund. But Kamaraj also made a whirlwind tour of the places proposed to be visited by the Governor for collection of the War Fund and successfully prevented the people from making contribution to the War Fund. It was cited as a major reason for his detention under the Defence of India rules. It was for the third time that Kamaraj experienced the horrors of Jail life.

Kamaraj was released from Vellore Jail on November 3, 1941. While he was still in Jail, with a view to honour him, the Virudhunagar Council had him unanimously elected as the Chairman. Even in 1937, when the Congress captured the Council by defeating the Justice Party, Chairmanship was offered to Kamaraj.

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68 Extracts from Indian Express (1936-47), Vol. 107 (TNA, Madras), p.180; AICC File No.24/1945, NMML, New Delhi, p.46.

69 Interview with R. Gurusamy Nadar at T.Kallupatti, on 8th July 1990.
But he declined it, on the ground that he did not want to restrict himself to local civic work. In 1940 election, when Congress captured all but two seats the offer was renewed for a second time. Kamaraj was elected to the Council though he was in Jail. The Congress Councillors, in majority, elected Kamaraj as Chairman on May 31, 1941 both to show their faith and confidence in him and to shame the Government which had put him in detention.70

Kamaraj was taken to the Municipal Office on March 16, 1942 while the Council was in progress. The Vice-Chairman R. Gurusamy Nadar vacated the chair for Kamaraj.71 Kamaraj expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Council members for reposing confidence in him and electing him as the Chairman. But he explained to them that it would be impossible for him to continue as Chairman in view of his pre-occupations with party work. He pleaded with them to relieve him of the Chairman's post. After glancing through an agenda, he left the Council Hall, leaving the resignation letter with the Vice-Chairman.72 His action shows that Kamaraj did not hanker after post and power.

71 Interview with R. Gurusamy Nadar at T.Kallupatti on 8th July 1990.
In reality great tasks were before him. In 1942, the burden of conducting the 'Quit India Movement' in Tamilnadu fell on his shoulders, as he was the President of the TNCC.

After the failure of the Cripp's mission in April 1942, the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha from July 6, 1942. The epoch-making resolution demanding the British to Quit India was passed on July 14. The pressure from the International Community to meet the demands of Indians for Independence did not meet with success. Hence the final decision on the 'Quit India' call was to be made by the AICC which met at Bombay for this purpose. The Bombay session of the AICC endorsed the July 14 resolution of Wardha on August 8, 1942. Mahatma Gandhi congratulated the AICC when the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority and exhorted the people to plunge into the struggle with the determination either to "Do or Die".

The leaders who attended the Bombay session of the AICC, started dispersing, with the decision to carry out the resolution. The Government had already prepared a list of the leaders to be arrested with the instructions where they were to be arrested on their return from Bombay. Kamaraj too attended the Bombay

74 Ibid., p.39.
session as a delegate along with a team of 30 members which included Sathyamoorthy, C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar and M. Baktha-
vatsalam.76 Having known the intention of the police, Kamaraj did not want to get arrested before he could take the message of the Bombay Congress to all the districts and local leaders. He planned in a masterly way and avoided being arrested at the earliest. His return journey from Bombay and his plans to deceive the police reveal his resoluteness to fight against the British.

Kamaraj on his return travelled with N.Sanjeeva Reddy of Andhra. Realising that Sanjeeva Reddy could be arrested before entering the borders of Andhra, Kamaraj left Sanjeeva Reddy and travelled alone. On the arrest of Sanjeeva Reddy at the entry of Andhra, Kamaraj came to the conclusion that he too would be arrested on his reaching Madras. So he decided to cut short his travel to Madras and alighted at Arkonam. There he found a large number of policemen waiting for the arrival of Congress leaders. However, Kamaraj escaped arrest at Arkonam because the police stationed there, were not aware of the fact that Kamaraj's name was included in the list. Further he got down from train on the other side and covered his face with a towel and left for Ranipet by bus. He went to the house of Kalyanarama Ayyer,

a veteran patriot around 10'0 Clock in the night. 77

When Kalyanarama Ayyer heard the knocking at the door, he feared that he was to be arrested by the police. To his surprise, when he opened the door, he found Kamaraj. They discussed what should be done to spread the message throughout Tamilnadu hoodwinking the vigilance of police. 78

The immediate problem for Kalyanarama Ayyer was to find a safe place to hide Kamaraj from the eyes of police. As Kalyanarama Ayyer himself was a District Congress Committee member, there was the danger of his house being searched at any time. Ayyer took Kamaraj to a secluded place, a garden belonging to Janob A.B. Mohammad Sulaiman, a leading leather merchant. Janob Sulaiman readily came forward to provide shelter to Kamaraj. When posed about the consequences of accommodating conspirators against the Government, Janob Sulaiman spontaneously stated that he would face whatever might come. Kamaraj stayed at Ranipet till the next evening and distributed the programme of the Quit India resolution. 79

The next day, Ayyer arranged for a taxi from Vellore and


78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.
went upto Kaniyambadi and got into the train. They took tickets to Tanjore. On reaching Tiruvannamalai station, where the train stopped for a few minutes, they looked for a Congressman. On finding no Congress worker, they got hold of a teacher and through him the copies of the programme were sent to the Party office at Tiruvannamalai.

At Villupuram again they found a large contingent of police stationed to arrest any Congress leader who might alight from the train. On seeing the police force, Kamaraj withdrew himself into the compartment covering himself with a blanket. Kalyanarama Ayyer met some newspaper salesmen and distributed the copies of the programme.

The next morning they got down at Tanjore station and managed to escape from the eyes of the police. After meeting the local Congress leader T.R.V. Narayanasami and the workers, they left for Trichy by train. Again it was a problem for both Kamaraj and Kalyanarama Ayyer to escape from the police. Kamaraj got down on the other side and hiding his face with a towel and tucking up his dhoti like a villager, passed through the crowd unnoticed by the police. He went straight to the house of the local leader M.S. Rangasamy by a jutka (horse drawn cart). After meeting a few workers in the residence of Rangasamy, Kamaraj left for Madurai with Kalyanarama Ayyer by a car.
That night Kamaraj met the local leaders and workers and informed them of the programme. P.S. Kumarasamy Raja joined him at Madurai. Both of them left for Virudhunagar after giving proper instructions to Kalyanarama Ayyer to tour Tinneveli, Salem and Coimbatore districts. But, for want of funds Kalyanarama Ayyer returned to Ranipet after visiting Rameswaram. No sooner did he return to Ranipet, than the police arrested Kalyanarama Ayyer and kept him in detention under the Defence of India rules. 80 He was first remanded at Walajah and later detained in the Central Jail, Vellore. 81

Before reaching home in Virudhunagar, Kamaraj met Ramachandra Reddy a local Congressman of the neighbouring village. He went to his house in the night by a cart provided by Ramachandra Reddy and evaded arrest. The next day, on August 16, 1942 he sent message to the local police of his arrival and that he was ready to be arrested. 82

The local police took him into custody and sent him to Vellore Jail on August 17, 1942. He was later shifted to Amrodi Jail, where the principal, provincial and all India workers were

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81 G.O.No.2775, Public (Confidential) Miscellaneous, 8th September 1942.
kept under detention. For three years Kamaraj was under detention and it was the last term of his prison life. He was released on June 30, 1945 along with other All India leaders. 83

It was only because Kamaraj spread the programme on his return from Bombay, the 1942 'Quit India Movement' gained momentum and there was mass participation in Tamilnadu. Though all leaders were arrested on August 9, 1942 Kamaraj by calculating moves and with a keen sense of determination passed from one place to another spreading the message and eluding the ever vigilant police. The success of the 'Quit India Movement' in the Tamil districts can thus be attributed to the effective leadership of Kamaraj. Reacting to the Quit India resolution, the British Government came down heavily on the Congress organisation and its volunteers. 84

The Congress was declared an illegal organisation. All meetings and processions were banned. Congress offices were seized and locked. The property of the Congress was taken by the Government and its functions were prohibited. The public reacted swiftly to the call of Mahatma Gandhi. There was mass revolt. Communications were dislocated. Railway and Police stations were

83 Jail Slips J.316-626, Unclassified documents (TNA, Madras), pp.622-626; Fortnightly Reports 1945, dated 9th July 1945 (TNA, Madras).
set on fire. For more than a week normal life in cities like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmadabad, Bangalore and Amritsar was completely paralysed. Students, workers, shop-keepers and even house-wives marched through the streets defying ban orders, and shouting slogans. The British adopted repressive and inhuman measures to suppress the mass movement which prompted Jawaharlal Nehru to write "... only naked force remained as the symbol of authority".

The imprisonment of great leaders and their long term of Jail life were serious matters of concern. On 28th March, 1943 Sathyamoorthy passed away, and Kamaraj lost his friend, philosopher and guide. He was left alone without anyone to guide him in the struggle for independence.

Another notable development in the Tamilnadu political scene was the exit of Rajaji. His critical attitude to the 8th August 1942 resolution of AICC and his support to the demand for separate Pakistan had enraged the rank and file of the nationalists. Even the press in South India attacked Rajaji's attitude. Hence, expecting a threat of disciplinary action by TNCC, Rajaji resigned his membership from the Congress Party and from the Legislative

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87 Excerpts from Fortnightly Reports 1942-44, Vol. 74, pp.47 and 50.
After the release of Kamaraj his relationship with Rajaji became strained. There were constant efforts by the supporters of Rajaji to bring the two leaders together. N. Annamalai Pillai of Tiruvannamalai took the lead in this attempt. Both the leaders met at the residence of Rajaji. Rajaji suggested that he and Kamaraj should tour together to dispel the misgivings that they were not on good terms. Realising that his supporters would not be enthusiastic about such a tour, though formally agreed to such an idea, Kamaraj postponed such a tour on one or other pretext. Kamaraj left for Virudhunagar stating that he would return after a week for the tour with Rajaji. While at Virudhunagar, to his surprise Kamaraj came to know from the press report that Rajaji had been elected to the Tamilnadu Provincial Congress Committee from Tiruchengodu. This readmission of Rajaji into Congress without the knowledge of TNCC organisation or its President created a wave of protest among the rank and file of Congressmen in Tamilnadu. This event further widened the breach between the two leaders of the province.

Kamaraj convened the workers Conference at Thiruparan-

88 Ibid., p.56.
89 Ibid., p.32.
90 Ibid., p.33.
kunram in 1945 to devise ways and means of re-organising Congress machinery which remained unorganised for three years from 1942 to 1945 because of the Quit India Struggle. It was attended by supporters of Rajaji too, like N. Annamalai Pillai, B. Pattabi Sitaramayya and L.N. Gopalasamy. Even Rajaji was invited. Though Rajaji was in Madurai, he did not attend the Conference.

The workers' Conference at Tiruparankunram badly mauled Rajaji and disapproved of his election to the Provincial Congress Committee through Tiruchengodu Taluk Committee. The Resolution No.7 of the Conference stated the anti-Congress work of Rajaji during 1942-45 and even expressed disgust over the attempts by the influential section of the higher ups in the Congress to impose his leadership on the Tamilnadu Congress.

The High Command deputed Asaf Ali, Member of the AICC Working Committee to promote a settlement and enquire into the

91 AICC File No.17/1945, Memorandum presented to Asaf Ali by T. Chidambabharathi, Chairman, Reception Committee of Thiruparankunram Workers Conference 1945 (NMML, New Delhi).

92 AICC File No.29/1945, Copy of Memorandum Submitted to Asaf Ali by the Members of the Tamilnadu Congress Committee (NMML, New Delhi).

93 Ibid; AICC File No.26/1945, Memorandum to the AICC Incorporating the Resolutions of the Tamilnadu Congress Workers' Conference at Thiruparankunram (NMML, New Delhi).
Tiruchengodu election. Asaf Ali received number of telegrams and letters before he reached Madras against the election of Rajaji.

Asaf Ali staying at Connemara Hotel, Madras, held the enquiry on the basis of the record of the TNCC. Before leaving Madras, he pronounced that only an election tribunal was competent to declare whether the election of Rajaji to TNCC from Tiruchengodu was valid or not.

Immediately Kamaraj came out with the announcement of the Constitution of an Election Tribunal. Events, however, moved towards a compromise. Kamaraj wisely formed an Election Board with some nominees of Rajaji. Sardar Patel accepted on behalf of the Congress Central Parliamentary Board, the proposal made by Kamaraj to constitute the Election Board in consultation with Rajaji. The Board so constituted consisted of Kamaraj and Vice-President C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar and three members of Kamaraj group and three members of Rajaji group. Kamaraj received the compliments of the High Command. He pleased the High Command but in the process he was careful in asserting his rights.

94 Indian Express (Madras), 19th December 1945.
96 Indian Express (Madras), 22nd December 1945.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Indian Express (Madras), 29th December 1945.
The defeat of Rajaji, despite the support extended by the High Command once again proved that Kamaraj used mass mobilisation as a weapon. The Thiruparankunram workers Conference thus proved Kamaraj to be the leader of the masses.

After 1945, Kamaraj's rise to power was very smooth and assured. There were many factors which promoted him to the first place in the Provincial Congress. Rajaji's exit from the Congress in 1942 made him unpopular, despite the support extended by Higher ups on the National scene.  

Further Kamaraj knew every worker at the district, town and village level and his hold on the second and third line of leadership in Tamilnadu was an aspect unequalled by any other leader of the Congress. His great strength was that he adopted party work as his full time occupation, while all other leaders had some personal business. This made him in the eyes of the people the sole leader of the organisation.  

Further his Jail life from 1942 to 1945 in Amrootti made him develop contact with different provincial leaders. He had acquired a grasp of the National politics and problems. This touch of National outlook fetched him more dividends and he rose to the position of undisputable leader in the Congress at the Provincial

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100 AICC File No.18/1945 (NMML, New Delhi).
The power and position of Kamaraj was so well established in 1946 that he was prepared for a gentle tiff even with Mahatma Gandhi. In January 1946, Mahatma Gandhi came to Madras to preside over the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of "Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha". His arrival was kept as a secret and the actual place of his landing was known only to the police and Rajaji. Kamaraj was not informed of Mahatma Gandhi's arrival in Madras. But he came to know the place of Mahatma Gandhi's arrival through a Press reporter and proceeded to Ambathur just before the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi. He garlanded Mahatma Gandhi first in the capacity of the President of the TNCC, much to the annoyance of those who had kept the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi a secret.

Later when Mahatma Gandhi made a tour of Tamilnadu he was accompanied by both Rajaji and Kamaraj. Mahatma Gandhi came to know of the political situation in Tamilnadu, particularly of the opposition to Rajaji in getting back the leadership of TNCC. On his return, he wrote an article in the Harijan on February 10, 1946 in which he referred to 'a clique' against Rajaji, preventing him from gaining leadership. Kamaraj felt that the reference to

'clique' was a reflection on himself and his Executive, and immediately issued a statement resigning from the Tamilnadu Congress Parliamentary Board. It was stoutly opposed by many elder Congressmen from Tamilnadu and they declared that they would go on a fast unless Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the term 'clique'. P. Varadarajulu Naidu, an old admirer of Kamaraj and veteran Congressmen wrote to Mahatma Gandhi not to intervene in the internal affairs of Congress in Tamilnadu. Realising the truth behind the matter, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to P. Varadarajulu Naidu in a post-card, "All right I will do so. I shall not interfere in the Nadars' affair". The whole thing was over and this episode further highlighted the strength of Kamaraj in the TNCC.

In May 1946 again in the organisational election Kamaraj came out victorious. Rajaji and his supporters fielded S. Ganesan for the Presidentship of the TNCC. Kamaraj won the election by securing 152 votes against 90 votes polled by his opponent. This election further proved the fact that he was the undisputed leader of Tamilnadu Congress. His towering personality was such that after two years there was no one to oppose Kamaraj in the Presidential Election held at Coimbatore.

Another notable feature of the study of the political career of Kamaraj, from 1946 to 1952 was the key role that he played as the king-maker in the Madras Provincial Politics. In the 1946 election, Congress swept the polls and in the legislature of the composite Madras Presidency, Congress won 164 seats out of 215.\footnote{Extracts from Fortnightly Reports 1945–50, Vol. 75 (TNA, Madras), p.27.} Kamaraj himself was elected to the Assembly from the Sathur-Aruppukottai Constituency without opposition.\footnote{V.K. Narasimhan. Op.cit., p.37.} The success was also due to the fact that the major opponent Justice Party was in a moribund condition since 1939.

The problem that came up after the success of the Congress Party was the choice of a leader. In other Presidencies, the leaders who led the Congress Ministries during 1937 returned to power. Only in Madras there was opposition to the return of Rajaji to Power. But the Central Leadership of the Congress was keen on bringing Rajaji back to head the Ministry. Even a message was sent to the Provincial Congress by the AICC President on the eve of the election of Legislative Party leader with the approval of Mahatma Gandhi to elect Rajaji as its leader.\footnote{Ibid., p.37.} To avoid difference of opinion T. Prakasam, Madhava
Menon and Kamaraj, Presidents of the Provincial Congress Committee of Andhra, Kerala and Tamilnadu respectively were summoned by the High Command to ensure the election of Rajaji.

The Party, however, was in no mood to listen to the advice of the High Command. When the name of Rajaji was proposed, it was defeated by 148 votes to 38. The High Command thereupon wanted a panel of names to be submitted to the Centre to make the choice. This proposal was rejected by the Congress Legislature Party which again met on April 23 to elect its leader. To accommodate the wishes of the Central Party Organisation, Kamaraj supported C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar against T. Prakasam. But Rajaji, having failed in the race for leadership, observed neutrality along with his followers. This led to the victory of T. Prakasam, a candidate not favoured by Mahatma Gandhi. On the other hand, Kamaraj proved that he was faithful to the Party and devoted to Mahatma Gandhi by woking against T. Prakasam. Of the two contenders T. Prakasam and C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, the former got elected by 82 votes to 69.

But soon difference of opinion arose between Kamaraj and Prakasam over various issues. Kamaraj wanted to include Madhava Menon, President of Kerala Congress Committee, in the Cabinet. But

110 Extracts from Fortnightly Reports 1945-50, Vol. 75 (TNA, Madras), p.32.

111 Ibid.
Prakasam accommodated Raghava Menon of Malabar area, who belonged to the pro-Rajaji group. Over many issues there was difference of opinion between Prakasam and other leaders. As a result, there was opposition to the Prakasam Ministry. In March 1947, Prakasam was voted out of power and he tendered his resignation to the Governor on 14th March 1947.\footnote{Extracts from Fortnightly Reports 1945-50, Vol. 75 (TNA, Madras), p.32.}

When the election to the leader of the Legislative Party came up again, on March 21, 1947 Omandur P. Ramasamy Reddiar was elected as the leader, thanks to the support extended by Kamaraj.\footnote{Ibid., p.22.} Again in 1948 when the election of the leader of the Congress Legislative Party came up, T. Prakasam contested against Omandur Ramasamy Reddiar. Kamaraj supported Ramasamy Reddiar. Andhra members like N. Sanjeeva Reddy and Kalavenkata Rao extended their support to the candidate sponsored by Kamaraj against T. Prakasam. So Ramasamy Reddiar was re-elected with the support of Kamaraj.\footnote{Chavi, Sivagamiyin Selvan (Madras, 1974), p.48; T.S. Chokkalingam, Op.cit., (Madras, 1955), p.78.}

Ramasamy Reddiar was a simple and straightforward man. He would not comply with the request of Congressmen who approached him for special concessions. So under mounting pressure Reddiar had to be replaced. When the election of the leader of
the Congress Legislative Party came up in 1949 Kamaraj fielded P.S. Kumarasamy Raja. He was opposed by P. Subbarayan, with the support extended by Rajaji and T. Prakasam. Thanks to the political skill of Kamaraj, P.S. Kumarasamy Raja got elected and continued as the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu till the Republican Constitution was implemented in 1952.  

Thus, on more than one occasion, Kamaraj proved to be the king-maker. During this period, he played no significant role in the debates of the House, but his hold on the Legislators was so much that they repeatedly elected the candidates of his choice as the leader of the CLP.

The role of Kamaraj in the organisational election of the Party at the Centre also deserves notice. In the AICC election of 1948, Pattabi Sitaramayya and Purusothama Das Tandon contested for the Presidentship. Tandon was a severe critic of Nehru. Hence Kamaraj wanted to support Pattabi Sitaramayya so that the position of Nehru could be strengthened. He made hectic tours over different parts of South India and ensured the victory of Pattabi Sitaramayya which helped Nehru in many ways.

In the First General Elections of 1952 under the new constitution, Congress sustained a heavy blow. It was reduced to a


116 Ibid., p.51.
minority with only 152 seats in a House of 375. Half of the seats were won by other parties like the Communists (59) Kizon Mazdor Party (35) and the Tamilnadu Toilers Party (19). 117

Kamaraj had been the undisputed leader of the Congress in Tamilnadu for over a decade and was responsible for the campaigning in Tamil districts. He was deeply affected by the defeat of the Congress candidates. Six of the Ministers in Kumara- samy Raja Ministry including the Chief Minister were defeated. Yet the results had shown that no party was in a position to form a Ministry. But at the initiative of the Communists a United Democratic Front was formed and they claimed absolute majority to form a Ministry. 118

Kamaraj opined that the United Democratic Front should be allowed to form the Ministry as he predicted it would soon break away. But the leaders like T.T. Krishnamachari and Ramnath Goenka wanted Rajaji to be invited to head the Ministry. 119 He was their only hope to meet the growing Communist danger and to retrieve the position of the Congress Party. Rajaji was willing to accept the offer but he wanted Kamaraj's opinion. Kamaraj met Rajaji and assured him of his help. Thanks to the

118 Personal Interview with M.A. Manickavelu Naicker at Madras, on 17th November 1983.
co-operation extended by Kamaraj, Rajaji Ministry was sworn in on April 10, 1952. His first move was to invite M.A. Manickavelu Naicker of the Commonweal Party to join the Ministry. Thereupon the United Front of the opposition broke down.

Soon after Rajaji's assumption of Power, Kamaraj resigned his Presidentship of TNCC owning responsibility for the defeat of the Congress.

Kamaraj gave way to Rajaji to make Rajaji have his President for the effective co-ordination between the Party and Government.

On his resignation, Kamaraj was replaced by P. Subbarayan as the TNCC President. However, the responsibility of heading the TNCC was too much for him that he laid down the office at the end of the year. Kamaraj was once again elected President of TNCC unanimously on December 26, 1952. Thus the two leaders, Rajaji as leader of CLP and Kamaraj as President of TNCC, came together for the good of the organisation and Government.

Rajaji proved to be an efficient administrator and he

120 Personal Interview with M.A. Manickavelu Naicker at Madras, on 17th November 1983.

123 Ibid., p.52.
managed the food crisis and countered the Communist menace. His tenancy reforms gave a new deal to the farm labourers though it earned the displeasure of the Mirasdars.\footnote{124} But by the reforms affected by him in the field of education, he incurred the wrath of not only the Congressmen but the people in general.

His new elementary education reform was termed as the "Kulakalvi-Thittam" in Tamil, meaning caste based education. It was thought that it would give an opportunity for the village children to help their parents in their traditional profession. According to the system, children were to attend school for half a day and to learn the occupation of the parent during the rest of the day. EVR the bitter critic of Rajaji's return to Power, spearheaded a campaign against the scheme. It was alleged that it was an attempt to revive the caste superiority and privileged position of the Brahmins.\footnote{125} The agitation gained momentum. Kamaraj had been critical of the scheme and wanted Rajaji to withdraw it. There was mounting pressure in and out of the Congress Party. As the time for annual election of CLP leader came nearer, there was a move to remove Rajaji from office. Sensing this Rajaji decided to quit.\footnote{126}

\footnote{125} Ibid., p.46.
\footnote{126} Ibid., p.47.
But Rajaji wanted C. Subramaniam to be elected as the leader of the CLP. However, the predominant opinion in the Party was that Kamaraj should take up the CLP leadership. At the meeting of CLP held on March 31, 1954 Kamaraj was elected as leader defeating C. Subramaniam by 93 votes to 41.\textsuperscript{127}

Then Kamaraj was representing Srivilliputhur Parliamentary Constituency in the \textsuperscript{†}Lok Sabha. He decided to enter the Legislative Assembly through election and he accordingly got elected from Gudiyatham Assembly Constituency, where By-election was held on August 1, 1954.\textsuperscript{128} Kamaraj took oath of office as the Chief Minister on April 13, 1954 (Tamil New Years Day).\textsuperscript{129} He surprised every one as usual by including C. Subramaniam and other Ministers of Rajaji’s Cabinet.\textsuperscript{130} Thus the political career of Kamaraj starting from a volunteer of the Congress in 1920 reached its peak at the State level as the leader of the CLP Party in 1954, a reward for his hard work and dedication.

\textsuperscript{128} G.O.No.1087, Public (Election), 15th July 1954.
\textsuperscript{129} G.O.No.520, Public (Special), 13th April 1954.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{†}Lok Sabha - The lower house of the Indian Parliament.