CHAPTER VI

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Rajaji’s Language Approach during 1937-39

The Language problem in Tamil Nadu has become a crucial one for various reasons. The Language Tamil is adored for its antiquity and for its rich literary works. When Hindi, the much younger language to Tamil chronologically, is imposed, the honour and self-respect of Tamils have been questioned.

Among the southern states of India only Tamil Nadu has given vent to the pent up wrath as regarding the imposition of Hindi. The people of Tamil Nadu adore their language Tamil as a chaste one and the cause of their anger is very much hidden in their spirit.

One’s Mother tongue is embedded with the soul and body and flesh and blood. It is a very sensitive issue, which should be handled with the utmost care. Sometimes even great leaders are not in a position to assess the real situation though they expect things good always. Rajaji had fallen into this category. But his integrity, statesmanship and foresight cannot be underestimated.

Learning a language other than one’s mother tongue is not bad or sinful. It is always good. But the imposition of a language on others would definitely
create unquenchable anger among the people. Imposition of any thing comes under imperialism, whether it is internal or external.

During the thirties i.e., between 1937-39 Rajaji was an ardent supporter of Hindi. He thought that it would bridge the gap between the North and the South. He thought also that Hindi, as a Lingua Franca would bring unity among Indians. In this regard he was very much under the spell of Gandhiji who wished that Hindi should be made as the National Language of India.¹

Rajaji during his tenure [1937-39] as Premier of Madras Presidency made Hindi compulsory up to III form in the academic curriculum.² It was for two reasons he supported the imposition of Hindi. One, political the other one unity. He thought that the south Indian participation in the Indian Politics would not be possible if the South Indians did not learn Hindi. ³ He also thought it was necessary for the unity of Indian people.

But no individual can be a spokesperson of the complete masses as regarding self-respect and honour. Rajaji could not transcend the hearts of the Tamils as regarding their language sentiments at that time.

Hindi as a compulsory language challenged Tamil chauvinism. The Tamil literature insists ethics, valour, honour and self-respect. Besides this The Self Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu opposed the imposition of Hindi vehemently. A series of articles were written in protest of Hindi in their organs like KUDIARASU (The Republic) and VIDUTHALAI (Freedom). Anti-
Hindi agitation was led by Anti-Hindi Demonstration Association. The agitation had spread like fire and ended up in a long march from Tirunelveli to Madras.4

E.V.Ramaswamy, otherwise called PERIYAR E.V.R condemned Hindi and its imposition. He spat fire against it. He personally felt that the Hindi language was made compulsory to push back the non-Brahmins in all aspects. He boldly declared that there was no common language of India in the past as there was no united India before the advent of the British.

The Self-respect movement, to which he was associated with, declared that the introduction of Hindi in Madras Presidency was politically motivated to replace Tamil with Hindi.5

The Third Madras Province Conference which was held in Trichy on 26 December 1937, under the Presidentship of K.Subramania Pillai besides passing a resolution on condemning Hindi combined, anti-Congress and anti-Brahmins feelings.6 A conference was convened at Kanchipuram on 27 February 1938 under the Presidentship of K.V. Reddi Naidu, a Justice Party leader to ventilate the protest against the imposition of Hindi. In his presidential address he condemned Hindi as an unrefined alien language not having the capacity to remain as a common National language of India.7

Though the Justice Party and the Self-Respect Movement blamed Rajaji, history presents a paradoxical picture as regarding the imposition of Hindi in
Madras Presidency. The unbiased analysts are of the opinion that it was the
JUSTICE MINISTRY under the rule of Raja of Bobbili the Hindi language
was given importance in the educational curriculum in the Madras Presidency.
The Hindi language was taught in 104 secondary schools mostly run by local
district boards even before the formation of the Congress ministry in Madras
presidency. Justice Party should take the responsibility for the introduction of
Hindi, they say. This fact frees Rajaji from the allegation. But he should have
thought twice before introducing compulsory Hindi for his political vision was
high.

Rajaji introduced Hindi in 125 secondary schools. The Tamil Chauvnists
and scholars like, Marimalai Adigal, Eezhatthu Sivananda Adigal, K.Subramania
Pillai, Dr.Swaminatha Iyer, Na.Mu.Venkataspamy Naattaar, M.Kadiresan
Chettiar and Ka.Appadurai vehemently opposed it saying that the imposition was
a challenge to the self-respect of Tamils. S.Somasundara Bharati, Marai
Thirunavukkarsu, Thiru.V.Kalyanasundaram and Dr.P.Varadarajulu Naidu joined
hands with them in opposing the imposition of Hindi. They also advised Rajaji not
to pursue his language policy, as it was detrimental to the Tamil people.

As the Justice Party was badly routed in the election held in 1936 for the
Madras Legislative Assembly its influence began to wane. However the
language issue had served E.V.Ramasamy [Periyar E.V.R] as an effective tool
to achieve emotional integration of the Tamils. E.V.Ramaswamy intensified his
campaign against Hindi along with his followers. This had made the opposition party of the Congress ministry to topple it.

Now the Self Respect Movement had turned into anti-Hindi and anti-Brahmins Movement. A Provisional Committee under the secretaryship of K.A.P.Viswanathan was instituted in 1938 in Trichi. On 3rd June 1938, a formal non-violent agitation was launched against the imposition of Hindi.¹¹

Eminent Communists leaders like M.Singaravelu and P.Jeevanandam in Madras State condemned the congress Governments G.O [Government Order] as regarding Hindi, as unnecessary and unwanted and instigative.¹²

The Governor of Madras Presidency Lord Erskin did not favour the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory subject. But he never interfered in the decision of the ministry though he could.¹³

Rajaji’s language policy was totally condemned by E.V.Ramaswamy. He regarded Congress as the bandwagon of Brahmins. His appeal to the Tamils was: “At least now, agitate for the separate Tamil Nadu. Tattoo your hands with the words Tamil Nadu for Tamils”.¹⁴

The anti-Hindi agitation became vigorous and as many as 683 persons including 63 women were put behind the bars, in January 1939.¹⁵ C.N.Annadurai, a thinker, orator and writer, who was young then was arrested for picketing in front of the Premier’s house. In March 1939 around 1273
persons were arrested in the anti-Hindi agitation.\textsuperscript{16} Two provincial leaders Taalamuthu and Natarajan lost their lives in the prison.\textsuperscript{17} Some of the Congress leaders also supported the Anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu.

The \textbf{Fourth Madras Province Tamizh Conference} was held on 27 December 1938, in Madras. The President of the conference Kumara Raja Muthiah Chettiar had unfurled the Tamil flag, which bore the emblem of their ancient Tamil Kings, the Chera, Chozha and Pandya.\textsuperscript{18}

There were uproars in the Assembly and the leaders of opposition vehemently opposed the Government action. The Justice Party, which had 15 members in the Assembly, moved an adjournment motion to question the government on police raids in the office of \textit{VIDUTHALAI} [Freedom] and \textit{KUDIARASU} [The Republic]. The speaker of the House quashed it on the basis of explanation of the government that it was a routine procedure. The Muslims also strongly opposed the compulsory learning of Hindi for they thought that it was a language full of Sanskrit words.\textsuperscript{19}

The Dravidian Parties in the post independence period tried to exploit the language issue for their own political advantages. The Justice Party aroused the sentiments of the Tamil people and made them agitate against the imposition of Hindi. A march from Trichirappalli to Madras was organised to intensify the anti-Hindi agitation.\textsuperscript{20}
The Government of Madras undeterred by the growing unrest in the Presidency decided to handle the situation with an iron-hand by passing the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1938. At Rajaji’s instance, section 7 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act was imposed against the agitators. It was not tolerable even by Congress people and they insisted that the law should be repealed. The Act contained non-bailable section. It was horrible.

Lord Erskine the Governor of Madras Presidency advised Rajaji against the use of this Act saying that its consequences would cause break in his party and it was undesirable for it would bring notoriety. But Rajaji justified his action of using the Criminal Law Amendment Act, though he himself did not like that law. Rajaji thought that E.V.Ramaswamy and his followers could be silenced through this law but E.V.Ramaswamy never yielded to the pressure of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

Rajaji’s appraisal of the situation in Madras during the anti-Hindi agitation in this period made him unpopular. His vision was veiled. As an administrator in this context Rajaji gave more importance to national cause rather than regional cause. This is how we should interpret his action.

Rajaji’s Language Approach in 1952

Rajaji’s outlook regarding Hindi had changed during the fifties. He proved he was a practical thinker. A true administrator should respect the
popular sentiments of the people and act according to it. Rajaji fits into this category.

He became the Chief Minister of Madras in 1952 and he thoroughly studied the people of the Madras Presidency especially the Tamils and he started endorsing their views. He favoured English in the place of Hindi as far as official communications were concerned. But it should be borne in mind that he was against the imposition of Hindi and not Hindi itself.

Rajaji personally felt that if there were imposition of Hindi in the Madras Province it would be detrimental to the unity of India. He gave priority to the unity and integrity of India.

The Indian leaders used the English language while propagating their political ideas. Only a few leaders spoke in their mother tongue. The English language was a must to mobilise the people of India against the British rule though there were regional chauvinism in the country. After independence Hindi has been made the official language of India and the central Government tried on many occasions to impose Hindi indirectly on the non-Hindi speaking people especially the Central Government employees. Foreseeing this Rajaji changed his language policy and supported English for the betterment of the non-Hindi speaking people.25
Rajaji and Emergence of Andhra Province

When the anti-Hindi agitation was going on in Madras an equally strong movement in Andhra took shape for a separate Andhra state based on the language with the following background.

For a long time, there was a demand for the reorganisation of the provinces of India on linguistic lines. It was contended that the provinces were not created by the British Government on any scientific principle. The question of the reorganisation of Provinces in the British India on linguistic basis came up in the Legislative Council in 1918. It was strongly opposed by S. Srinivasa Sastri, a popular Congress leader in the South. For he feared that such a measure would lead to parochial patriotism and fissiparous tendencies.

The 1920 Constitution of the Congress drafted by Mahatma Gandhi provided for linguistic party units. It was under his leadership that the Congress pledged itself to the creation of Linguistic Provinces.

In 1933 Sri Sankara Nair spoke in favour of separate Kerala Province; his son K.M. Palet moved an amendment to the Andhra Province resolution in Madras Council. C.S. Ranga Iyer, in June 1934, moved and withdrew a similar resolution in the Indian Legislative Assembly.

In June 1937, the demand for a separate Andhra Province gained rapid momentum. Brahmayya in his Presidential address at the Andhra Province
Political Conference called for an early opportunity to agitate over the question of an Andhra Province both inside and outside the legislature.\(^{29}\)

The Telugu leaders dominated when the Justice Party was in power in the Madras Presidency. When Rajaji became the Premier of Madras in 1937, the Andhras preferred their own leaders like Prakasam for leadership. It gave new dimension to regional conflict.\(^{30}\)

Ever since the formation of the ministry in Madras by Rajaji in July 1937 sharp differences arose between those who supported separate Andhra and those who opposed it. Rajaji’s ministry consisted of ten ministers and ten Parliamentary Secretaries. Including the posts of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Assembly and Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Council, the total number of offices was thus 24. Of this ten went to Andhras. In the Cabinet of ten, only three were Telugus. The conspicuous feature was the absence of any members of Bellary, Anantapur, Kurnool, Cuddapah and Chitoor districts in any office. The absence of a minister from these districts created dissatisfaction in Royalasemma and aggravated their ill feeling against the Circars. So there was no unity among the Telugu people to achieve their goal.

**Rajaji’s View on Separate Andhra**

Rajaji was against the formation linguistic states because he felt that they would impede national intercourse and economic advancement. So he was not in favour of raising that issue in the very first Assembly under Provincial
Autonomy. He openly expressed his clear views against such a measure that in the new federation of India linguistic states instead of helping the development of nationalism would create language barrier in the nation.\textsuperscript{31}

Rajaji feared that the growth of state nationalism might result in the incidents of other states being treated like foreigners and might also come in the way of the flow of easy communication between residents of different states because of linguistic difficulties. In a country in which the concept of federation had been newly introduced, such tendency instead of creating national integration might lead to disintegration. Hence Rajaji was for a single Southern State comprising of Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam regions, which alone he thought could retain the political significance of the South.

In the AICC meeting held at Calcutta out of 82 non-official resolutions given notice of, the one relating to the separate Andhra Province was favoured by the ballot and was passed by it. It also recommended the Legislatures of Madras and Bombay to take necessary measures for the separate Andhra, Karnataka and other provinces.\textsuperscript{32}

On the basis of above resolution a petition signed by almost all the Andhra legislators was submitted to Rajaji, the Premier of Madras and requested his Government to sponsor the Andhra Province resolution.\textsuperscript{33} What Rajaji aimed at that time was an immediate and undivided emphasis on Indian independence, rather than linguistic reorganization.
Rajaji Facing the Pressure of the Demand on Separate Andhra

Even though the Congress had for a long time been advocating linguistic provinces, the Congress Ministry in Madras had foreseen the possible harm in taking up that subject for governmental action. While hearing the discussion on separation of Andhra Province in the Madras Legislative Assembly, Mr. Sambamurthy, the Speaker of the house made a statement, "I studied the subject (of Andhra Province) with some care and came to the conclusion that under the present Act, the Federal Legislature should come into existence before the creation of any new province could be thought of".34

The Minister for agriculture, V.I. Muniswamy Pillai, a Tamil, on behalf of the government made a statement in the Assembly that the Andhra Province issue could be taken up only after the Federation issue was settled. At the same time Rajaji at Tiruchengodu and T.S.S. Rajan, another Tamil Minister at Rajmundry, spoke in unfavourable terms regarding the constitution of an Andhra Province. Satyamurthi, a prominent Congress leader, was reported to have sympathized with the feeling of separatism among the people of Royalaseema (Andhra State).

On observing the situation Pattabhi Sitharamayya, a prominent Andhra leader, had commented "It appears that the British grant us independence sooner than the Tamil Ministers give us a separate Province".35
To give more stress to their demand, Deepavali the festival of lights, was celebrated throughout Andhra on 15 November 1937 as the Andhra Province Day. The Circar leaders magnanimously came forward for the inclusion of Raoyalaseema in the Andhra University. They even agreed to let the Royalaseema leaders have all that they wanted to win their co-operation for a powerful joint front to achieve Andhra Province.

When the discussion was going on regarding the issue of separate Andhra Province, in the Legislative Party meeting, on 22 March 1938 Rajaji in order to divert the issue suggested that such resolution should seek the redistribution of Madras into Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and, Karnataka Provinces. The South Kanara Districts and some Taluks in other districts like Bellary were the only Kannada areas in the Madras Presidency. In Bombay, there were four Kannada districts. Thus the formation of Karnataka Province was the concern more of Bombay than of Madras. Further the Malabar District was the only Malayalam speaking district in Madras Presidency and the demand for a Kerala Province had not been very strong.

The issue of separate Andhra and larger question of general linguistic redistribution of Provinces in South India were silenced tentatively. Rajaji was thus successful in the postponement of the separate Andhra Province issue. He then toured the Andhra districts starting with Chittor on 4 July 1938. Till then he had not spoken a single word against the British attitude towards the linguistic provinces.36
Andhra Province Issue till 1952

Even though the Congress party and its leaders were very enthusiastic with the linguistic reorganisation of states before independence, they realized that proposition would create many issues after independence. Yet the force of events led a reluctant administration at the Centre to the implementation of that principle. The claim and counter claim made by linguistic groups in the years to follow presented serious problems to the administration of the country.\textsuperscript{37}

Prime Minister Nehru announced on 27 November 1947, that his Government accepted the principle of linguistic provinces. Encouraged by this, the people of Andhra naturally thought that the Andhra Province would be created by April 1948 by an order in Council under section 290 of the Government of India Act of 1935.\textsuperscript{38}

This however did not materialize. The holocausted trauma consequent upon the partition of the country naturally called for immediate attention of the leaders. Nehru told the Constituent Assembly on 27 November 1947 that while conceding the principle of linguistic provinces, “First things must come first and the first thing is the society and stability of India”.\textsuperscript{39}

This sort of statement from Nehru created disappointment and frustration among the Andhras. Along with the Andhras the people of other areas also exerted pressure on Nehru for the creation of linguistic provinces. So Nehru during his visit to Vishakapatnam in March 1948 declared that a
committee would be appointed to consider the creation of linguistic provinces. Accordingly the Dar Commission was constituted. It submitted its report on 10 December 1948, strongly expressing itself against any reorganisation of the provinces exclusively on the basis of linguistic consideration. This report created much uproar in the country especially all over Andhra. The Congress also felt it prudent to take steps to assuage the feeling of the public.

At Jaipur session in 1948 the Congress under the Presidentship of N. Pattabhi Sitharamayya, appointed a High Power Committee known as the JVP Committee to review the position in the light of the findings of Dar Commission. The members of the high power Commission were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitharamayya.

This Committee submitted its report to the Congress Working Committee in April 1949. The report of this Committee was equally cautious in regard to the creation of linguistic provinces. However, it suggested that if in any province public opinion was persistent and overwhelming, the practicality of satisfying the demand must be examined. The Committee finally suggested that beginning could be made with creation of Andhra state provided the Andhras would give up their claim to Madras city. The Congress Working Committee accepted the JVP report on 4 April 1949.

Such a suggestion on the part of the JVP Committee irked leaders from Royalaseema and provoked violent reaction in Andhra. At this juncture
Pattabhi Sitharamayya tried to explain away the provision regarding the city of Madras by stating that non-inclusion of Madras city in Andhra did not mean its inclusion in Tamil Nadu.43

On the contrary the Tamil Nadu Congress and the Government of Madras accepted the report of the JVP Committee without any disagreement. The Congress Working Committee also recommended to the government of India to take steps for the creation of a separate Andhra Province. The Government of Madras also took immediate steps towards the creation of Andhra Province by appointing a partition Committee with Kumaraswami Raja, the Chief Minister of Madras as its Chairman.

While Prakasa, Gopala Reddy, Kala Venkata Rao and Sanjeeva Reddy represented Andhra M.Bhaktavachalam, T.T.Krishnamachari and Madhava Menan represented the non-Telugu areas. But this Committee could not make much progress due to disagreement among the members on the question of seat of the government of proposed new Andhra state. According to Prakasam, the capital and seat of Andhra High Court must be Madras city from where all other work including that of legislature must be carried on.44

But this was not acceptable to the non-Andhra members who wanted the provisional capital of Andhra should be situated within the limits of Andhra Province and its Legislature should hold its sitting there only. This sort of differences that developed among the members of the Committee made the
Government of India not very keen in the creation of Andhra Province. In fact it enabled it to shelve the issue for the time being. So general public of Andhra Pradesh got sore at the attitude of the Congress leaders.

1952 Election and After Math

The disappointed Andhra leaders determined to take advantage of the 1951-52 elections to achieve their long desired goal- Separate Andhra State. The Communist party of India also took the linguistic state issue seriously during the elections. But Rajaji did not like that party to make use of the linguistic state issue in the electoral platform. The election result truly reflected the mood of the people.

The Congress Party secured 165 seats but could not get absolute majority in the first general Assembly and the Communist party securing 62 seats came next to it. T.Prakasam with the help of the Communists and other parties formed the united Democratic Front and claimed for Chief Ministership. At this juncture the Congress Legislative Party met on 27 March 1952 and unanimously elected Rajaji as its leader. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru also accepted the party's decision. The Governor of Madras also invited Rajaji to form the ministry.

Circumstances Leading to the Creation of Separate Andhra Province

As Rajaji was quite opposed to the idea of a separate and unified Andhra state, the formation of his Government created unrest among the Telugu
people. Under this circumstance Swami Sitharam a prominent Andhra leader felt that he should adopt Gandhian technique to achieve the separate Andhra state. For that he launched fast unto death but nothing came out of this measure.47

Potti Sriramulu, a disciple of Swami Sri Sitharam tried his best to bring unity among the Andhrites. He also started fasting in front of the Secretariat for the immediate formation of Andhra state. But, he died after fifty-eight days of fasting in December 1952. In addition to this, there were fifteen other martyrs who sacrificed their life for the cause of the Andhra state.

As a result, the situation in Andhra became very tense and the government of India appointed the Justice Wanchoo commission to report on the matter.48 He toured Madras Province and wherever he went the slogans of “Madras Manade” (Madras is ours) of the Andhrites rented the air. So he suggested to Nehru that Madras should be the capital of Andhra for the time being. But it was strongly apposed by Tamil Nadu Congress Committee members like M.P.Sivagnanam, Bhaktavachalam, T.Chengalvarayan and others on the ground that it would increase the animosity between the Tamils and the Telugus.49

Rajaji who was once against the separation of Andhra now desired for it immediately, because he thought that it would decrease his rivals in the Madras Assembly, especially the Communists. Accordingly the Andhra state Bill, 1953
was passed in the Madras Legislature and recommended to the Parliament for its consideration. On the strength of Rajaji's advice Nehru discarded Wanchoo's report. Prakasam also gave up his claim over Madras city. Separate state of Andhra was formed excluding Madras on 1 October 1953.50

N.Ranga Reddy, Dr.M.V.Krishna Rao, Dr.R.Nagagowda, N.Sankara Reddy, S.B.P.PattabhiRama Rao and D.Sanjeevayya resigned their posts with effect from the forenoon of 1 October1953, as a result of the formation of the new state for the Telugus and the transfer of certain areas to Mysore.

The Impact of Creation of Separate Andhra Province

After the formation of Andhra Pradesh, position of Congress became strong in the truncated Assembly, which commanded a majority in the Assembly. At the same time the strength and position of non-Brahmin force became strong under the leadership of K.Kamaraj who became the TNCC President after sending out Dr.Subburayan, a pro Rajaji man.

The creation of a separate Andhra Pradesh raised the question as to whether Rajaji would be allowed to continue as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party in the residuary Madras state. 51 Rajaji decided to convene a meeting of the Legislature Party belonging to the residuary state in the third week of September to seek its decision on his continuance as leader and informed Nehru accordingly. But he replied that it was not necessary and wanted Rajaji to wait.
Meanwhile Kamaraj pressurised Rajaji to convene a meeting to decide the matter. Rajaji also agreed to convene it in December. But the Congress Legislature Party carried signature campaign against Rajaji in November itself. A memorandum with the signature of some 40 members of Legislative Assembly was sent to Nehru. Though Nehru supported Rajaji, the political development in Madras state forced him to resign as the Chief Minister.

Thus we find that the formation of Andhra state brought an end to his administrative career. However, it gave an impetus to the supporters of the idea of linguistic States and ultimately Prime Minister Nehru made a statement in Parliament on 22 December 1953, to the effect that a Commission would be appointed to examine "objectively and dispassionately" the question of the reorganization of the States of Indian Union "So that the welfare of the people of each constituent unit as well as the Nation as a whole is promoted". 52

Every thing went on well according to the wishes of the Telugu people and finally the Andhra state had been carved out on linguistic lines in Independent India. The present state of Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956 with the disintegration of the Hyderabad state and the merger of Telengana region.
END NOTES


3. The Mail, Madras, 5 October 1937.


5. Kudi Arasu, 19 September 1937.


7. Kudi Arasu, 6 March 1938.


9. Ibid.


11. The Mail (Madras) 4 June 1938.

   The Hindu (Madras) 4 June 1938.


   Jananayagam, February 1938.


15. Kudi Arasu, 3 March 1940.


17. Kudi Arasu, 19 March 1939.

18. Kudi Arasu, 1 January 1939.


28. **Article XX of 1920 Constitution**.


32. **The Indian Express**, 1 November 1937.


34. **The Hindu**, 24 August 1937.


38. **Draft Constitution of India, Prepared by the Drafting Committee**, Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 1947, pp.159.


51. *The Hindu*, 1 August 1953.