

## Chapter IV

CHAKRABORTY RAJAGOPALACHARI AND HIS POSITION IN THE  
IDEOLOGICAL CONTINUUM OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.I. I N T R O D U C T I O N

Of all the provinces of British India, the Madras Presidency consisted of four linguistic groups (Tamil, Kannada, Telegu and Malayalam). It stretched from the tip of the Indian Peninsula, Kanyakumari, to half-way upto the eastern coast of Bengal, the Ganjam district of the present day Orissa. Most of the North Indian people spoke one of the several Indo-Aryan languages that had many affinities to the classical Indian language, Sanskrit. By contrast, the majority of the inhabitants of the Madras Presidency spoke one of the five Dravidian languages, the most important of which were Tamil and Telegu languages. Aside from its physical and linguistic separateness, the Madras land settlement at the time of its implementation was also unique in British Indian practice. The characteristic system of the Presidency, however, was to settle much of the land directly with the peasants called ryotwari. This system not only differentiated the Madras Presidency from Bengal, but also along with zamindari tenure of other British provinces. All the three elements .... geographical remoteness and the feeling of isolation, the linguistic differences, and the existence of ryotwari settlement .... contributed to the development of what could be called 'the Madras style' of administration. In many ways, the elements that composed this style were subjective, and <sup>had</sup> much to do with the

special way in which the British administrators in Madras envisioned their work.<sup>1</sup>

According to David Washbrook, "the major connection between the British Government and its subjects in the nineteenth century was through formal administration and, particularly, through the process by which revenue was extracted."<sup>2</sup> The British had brought no new service groups with them into Madras and so were unable to adopt the tried and tested tactics of South Indian statecraft. They had to find the material for their administration from within the existing structure of the Madras society. In consequence, they came to anchor their administration to the dominant peasant elites of the South and to support their higher bureaucrats, who were supposed to relate the peasants to the Raj, with very insufficient force. "The dominant peasants elites over most of South India were of local level culture and used the resources derived from local level from within the locality to maintain their power."<sup>3</sup>

Washbrook further analysed that in comparison to the United Province, where widespread religio-cultural homogeneities underlay the boundaries of the province, or Bengal and Bombay, in which economic linkages tied together the various regions, the Madras Presidency was a peculiar collection of autonomous territories. No inhabitant of Madras could speak his language

to half of his fellows; particular institutions of religion and religious revivalism were relevant only to a small fraction of the population; market connection integrated only small, regional groups of producers and consumers. After Independence, the heterogeneity of the province was rationalised by its partition into five separate provinces. But before Independence, the Presidency was an arbitrary conglomerate held together only by the fiat of an imperial power.<sup>4</sup>

## II. The Brahmin Predominance

The great landholding caste group in Madras were the Vellalas in the Tamil areas, the Balija Naidus in both Tamil and Telugu districts, Kammas and Reddis in the Telugu areas. Both Tamil and Telugu Brahmins also had sizeable landholdings, however. The large landholders and the main peasant groups were all non-Brahmin caste Hindus.

From the early period of British contact with South India, the Brahmins were regarded as the repository of religious and social power and literate skill.<sup>5</sup> As priests at the head of the social order, the Brahmins were independent of the British. As a learned caste, they were more and more indispensable in the government bureaucracy. But their very usefulness and skill aroused mistrust, because they were increasingly in command of large areas of British administration and, therefore, in a position to suit their own, rather than British ends. This

factor was not without effect in the formation of a non-Brahmin party in the second decade of the twentieth century.

In the Madras Presidency, after the 1860s, the Telegu and particularly the Tamil Brahmins, who together comprised 3.2 per cent of the total population, enhanced their position in the society by gradually filling the great majority of administrative and educational positions open to the Indians under the Raj. In Tamil Nadu, the Brahmins maintained their high ritual status while increasing their social and economic position. Split into two religious sects, the Smartha and Vaishnavites, Tamil Brahmins were broken into multitude of sub-castes. About half of them lived in the three districts of Tanjore, Trichinopally and Tinnevelly, where they possessed an unquestioned pre-eminence. In Tanjore, the Brahmin district par excellence, hardly a family among them did not possess land and had some valuable estates.

Tamil Brahmins, and the Aiyars especially, were as famous for their ambition and adaptability as the Chitpavans of Maharashtra. An official manual noted, 'there is hardly a pursuit, literary, industrial or professional, to which they do not apply themselves with remarkable success'.<sup>16</sup> In government services, figures compiled by the Madras government in 1912, illustrate the consistently strong domination of the Brahmins in upper level government services. The distributions of appointments among Deputy Collectors, Sub-judges and district Munsifs show that

Brahmins in 1912 held 82.3 and 72.6 per cent of the posts available to Indians. By contrast, the non-Brahmin Hindus (Vellalas, Balija Naidus and Bairs) held only 21.5, 16.7 and 19.5 per cent of the total appointments. The Indian Christians and Muslims were well behind.<sup>7</sup>

An analysis of the caste distribution among those employed in upper levels of the Revenue and Judicial departments of the Madras Government reaffirms these propositions. 70 per cent of all the successful Hindu candidates in the Madras University Examination between 1876 and 1886 were Brahmins. As education circulated, the Directors of Public Instruction were impressed by the 'the energy with which the Brahmins were endeavouring to keep the lead in higher education throughout the country, and their growing enthusiasm for western knowledge.'<sup>8</sup>

It was the Brahmin predominance, not just the tiny number of Britons who ruled the District Collectorates and the Presidency. In many ways, the Raj itself had always been a truly Brahmin Raj. Both the Company's bureaucracy and the earliest public servants consisted so very largely of Brahmins and to a lesser extent, of Brahmanised members of other communities.<sup>9</sup> The Brahmins were helped by two factors in gaining political leadership. There was a carry-over of traditional respect for the ritualist Brahmin to the new professional Brahmin.

With the beginning of the twentieth century, contradictory pressures began to mount. Those who were in the lower categories of the social ranking, those who felt disenfranchised or deprived of full human dignity by the earlier definitions of social reality began to take steps to correct public perceptions of their place in society. But by then, the damage had already been done. By then, public consciousness of these categories and concepts, as employed by predominantly Brahmin and Brahminised bureaucracy, had become so pervasive and so strong that the entire shape of the political process during the twentieth century was to be profoundly influenced thereby. Indeed, no other single factor had more powerful impact upon the shape of politics in South India during C. Rajagopalachari's lifetime than this fact.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the combination of social advantages was bound to be short-lived and fell to pieces predictably in politics and in civil services. Electoral politics from 1910 onwards came to be based on majority votes and after further extension of the franchise from 1920 onwards, the leading non-Brahmin groups were bound to compete successfully with the Brahmin both at the provincial and district levels. Gandhian politics too depended on organising the masses from 1919 onwards and the Brahmins had no special advantage in this. Similarly, civil service employment with prestige, out of proportion to its monetary worth, could not be the preserve of a minority on the basis of

examinations and the majority groups were bound to demand a larger share of it from 1818 onwards when they became politically effective. This cutting down to size of the Brahmins in politics and in civil service was indeed predictable.

Similarly, the Brahmin eclipse in landownership and general social esteem was equally predictable. For one thing, the average Tamil Brahmin, even at the best of times early in this century, was never a large-scale landowners and indeed very few of them were large-scale landowners in Tanjore or Tirunelveli as they were in Kerala. They were essentially small-scale or medium-scale landowners though almost every Brahmin family owned a little land unlike other high castes which included the landless with the big owners. Brahmin's landownership attained importance for the concurrent reason that he had usually another source of income. Members of almost every landowning Brahmin family were doing some paid work or other, often near their village so that their agricultural savings were ploughed back into savings. This process lasting over a few decades down to the 1920s built up the exaggerated legend of the landed prosperity of the Brahmin. With competition for jobs and with the need to maintain more middle class expensive life standards, the Brahmin landowners were soon coming down the scale. Social esteem began to erode as it was built on the twin foundations of old ritual superiority and the new dominance in the civil services and professions. The

former was challenged by the non-Brahmin social reformers successfully in the new climate of western education, while the latter was challenged by the top non-Brahmin groups as soon as they realised that they had been left behind and they became politically effective enough by 1920 to have their way into the so-called secular and western climate under the Raj.

### III. Justice Party and the Emergence of the Non-Brahmin Politics

Unlike Bengal, Madras was the last province to develop the nationalist political fervour. This is not to say that Madras was immune to the effects of the British rule or missionary educational enterprise. But the cultural renaissance in Madras occurred later and, in many ways, a different quality which occurred in Bengal.<sup>11</sup>

In this most benighted of all provinces, from 1870s onwards, new pressures on the empire and on the southern political economy led to a change in the picture. A new political consciousness came about in the South and modern forms of politics slowly emerged. By 1917, Madras was leading the whole of India in regard to the Home Rule Agitation, communal movements and the demand for regional autonomy. Like many other politicians in India before Gandhiji's rise to power in 1920, Mrs. Besant was faced with the dual problem of expressing her own political feelings and of finding a constituency that

would listen to her. Her most important contribution was that she brought into open the hopes and grievances that were already apparent in the political and social life of the presidency.<sup>12</sup>

The Home Rule agitation and the non-Brahmin movement were the two principal manifestations of this activity, based on new ideas and appearance of new political structures. Madras city, the provincial capital, became the centre of such activity by Western educated Indians and group of men who emerged prominent in business. These men, so it happened, were mostly from the Brahmin community inhabiting certain areas of Madras city, like Mylapore and Egmore. Wealthy and highly educated, they occupied legal and bureaucratic positions. The influence of this small group of men was indeed extra-ordinary. In fact, they came to be referred to as the Mylapore clique.<sup>13</sup>

During the period 1916-1929, the nationalist politicians who belonged to the Brahmin community, the highest caste in the South Indian society, were challenged by a group of non-Brahmins who had then recently began to take an active part in the politics of Madras. The caste conflict between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins in Madras was a projection of the pre-existing social rivalry.<sup>14</sup> There was a belief held by some non-Brahmins that Brahmins were racially different from non-Brahmins, the idea having been posited by some European writers that the non-Brahmins were Dravidians and original civilisers of the

region, while the Brahmins were the Aryan invaders from the North. This led to the view that ...

... the Dravidians had been conquered and culturally suppressed by the Aryans and their institutions supplanted by an imposed Sanskritic Aryan culture and religion and caste system by which non-Brahmins had for centuries been kept in an inferior position.<sup>15</sup>

There were linguistic, cultural and social difference between the two groups, which contributed to the growth of a feeling of separatism.

When the Morley-Minto Reforms made the beginnings of representation, and elections were held under it in the province, it was found that in the quadrilingual province of Madras (Tamil, Telygu, Kannada and Malayalam) that in the small electorate of educated persons one whose caste was more numerous in the electorate had better chance of being elected.<sup>16</sup> The defeat of an otherwise wellequipped candidate in an election where the Brahmins had not supported him is believed to be the immediate occasion for the founding of the great non-Brahmin political party in Madras.<sup>17</sup> In the case of the Justice Party, it was its functions that attracted support, not its attributes.<sup>18</sup>

The formation of the Justice Party was a significant event in Madras. It was an off-shoot of an association called

the South Indian Liberal Federation, formed in 1917 with the declared objective to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the non-Brahmin community in the Madras province. Newspapers, the Justice in English, and the Dravidian in Tamil were started to propagate the party's ideas.

When the Brahmins came to settle in South India, the ancient kings and chieftains, desiring to secure the benefits of yagnas and other religious ceremonies, accorded to them the supreme position in society by reason of their education and scholarship and simple living and high thinking. The Brahmins naturally tried to introduce their socio-religious organisation into Tamil society, and as religious oligarchy and social democracy could not very well mix, it led to conflict.<sup>19</sup> The people of South India could not be organised in terms of the four Aryan varnas as in North India, and social jealousies began to manifest themselves in the relationship between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmin caste groups in the South. Combining land-ownership and religious exclusiveness, the Brahmins with their earlier English education began to get into office under the Raj in urban areas. They were first to respond to Westernisation, and their literary tradition gave them an initial advantage in this respect. With their command of English, they entered the rank of colonial administration gaining a new criterion of status in addition to their old and new political and economic advantages which further

widened the gap between the elite and the masses.<sup>20</sup>

A counter-elite of these politically articulate and highly educated members of the communities and castes of lesser status and power arose. They felt that the nationalist movement would only strengthen the position of the Brahmin castes, the non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency allied themselves with the colonial regime seeking protection of their position and neutralisation of power differences in the population. The non-Brahmin elite also gradually came to take interests in the education of their communities.

The Justice Party consisted of rich businessmen and seasoned politicians and was led by P.T.Chetti as a powerful group in opposition to the Brahmin stronghold. Since nearly 98 per cent population of the Madras presidency comprised of non-Brahmins, they had a feeling of distress that a very small minority of Brahmins should have become so influential as to hold the most of the public offices in Government. The non-Brahmins realised that the success of the Brahmins was largely due to their ancient literary traditions and consequent skill to pass examinations. The Brahmins accused the non-Brahmins leaders of weakening the cause of the Home Rule by showing their loyalty to the British rulers.<sup>21</sup>

However, without mentioning E.V.Ramswami Naicker and his Self-Respect movement, the description of the non-Brahmin

movement would remain incomplete. E.V.Ramswami Naicker, who was affectionately addressed by his followers as Periyar (revered elder) was a radical social reformer. First of all he was a freedom fighter. His participation in the freedom struggle dates back to 1920s. He campaigned and participated in the Non-cooperation movement and was jailed for picketing in front of toddy shops in Erode. He was elected as the President of the Provincial Congress Committee in 1924. For offering satyagraha and defending khadi, he was jailed many times by the British.

His protest at Vaikom against the ban on the use of roads around the big temple by members of untouchable castes gave confidence to the untouchables to protest and fight for equality. It was followed by the Gurukulam dispute at Madras. The Gurukulam, and orphanage run by a Brahmin Congressman and financially supported by the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, had separate dining facilities for the Brahmin and non-Brahmin inmates. Periyar protested against this practice in the orphanage. When his protests went unheeded, as the provincial Congress President he stopped funds to the Gurukulam. It is well recorded that over both Vaikom protest and the Gurukulam affair, Gandhiji took an opposite stand. He supported the status quo rather than change sought by Periyar. As a result, funds for the Gurukulam were obtained from other source with the support of C.Rajagopalachari. Subsequently, Periyar left the

Congress Party and found his Self-Respect Movement, a social reform group to free Tamilians not only from the British but also from the hegemonic upper castes and Brahmin ideology.

Through his Self-Respect Movement, Periyar continued to oppose caste and gender inequalities, superstitions and various other religious practices which legitimised social oppression. He tried to develop Dravidian cultural alternatives as against hegemonic Brahminical culture.

#### IV.. ... C.Rajagopalachari's Entry into the Indian National Congress ...

Chakraborty Rajagopalachari started his legal career in Salem and became popular. He took interest in social work. However, it was his profession which fully engaged him till 1910. All the time he kept himself abreast with political developments. It was in 1906 that he heard about Gandhiji's work in South Africa. He also kept himself in touch with Tilak and enlisted himself as a member of the Indian National Congress. In taking this decision, he was guided as much by his own patriotism as by the sobering influence of some of his friends who shared his feelings. He was also inspired by the example set by Sir C.Vijayaraghavachari who had been present at Bombay in 1885 and taken an active part in the deliberations of the first session of the Congress.

In December, 1907, C.Rajagopalachari participated in the Surat session of the Congress. It was a historic session. The cleavage between the moderates and the extremists had widened. There was little room for any compromise. C.Rajagopalachari remained true to the tenets set down by Tilak. He got an opportunity to take up the cudgels against the moderates. In the Congress session at Madras in 1908, the organisers instructed that only those Congressmen who agreed to give an undertaking in writing that they fully endorse the policy of the moderates should be allowed to attend the session. It was a dictat which aimed at stifling all dissident views. The situation seemed intolerable to C.Rajagopalachari and his friends. After careful deliberations, C.Rajagopalachari drafted a pamphlet, dealing the inconsistency in the stand of the moderates.

C.Rajagopalachari instinctively felt that the induction of the Justice Party into the body politic complicated the situation in the Madras Province. He agreed that the Brahmins had cornered many of the coveted posts and professions. But this was not due to any determined effort on the part of the Brahmins to keep out other communities. By extending the benefits of education to more and more people, C.Rajagopalachari felt that the imbalance could be removed. What was obnoxious to him was the effort made by the leaders of the Justice Party to identify the Congress as a party of Brahmins.

The Congress, at least in the Madras Province, had to fight on two fronts. The first objective was to contain the British colonial objectives, and second objective was to nail the Justice Party propaganda against the Congress and to educate the people of the role of the Congress as the true national organisation which brought into its fold all religious and castes and linguistic groups.

In 1919, C. Rajagopalachari left Salem presumably intending to enter into the legal profession at Madras. He had just settled temporarily in the house of Kasturi Ranga Iyengar when Gandhiji came to Madras to survey the potential for a new type of political agitation. As fate had it, Gandhiji ended up as C. Rajagopalachari's house guest and it was in this house that Gandhi had the dream which he credited with inspiring the style of his first mass resistance movement.<sup>22</sup> AS for C. Rajagopalachari, this meeting with Gandhiji changed his life. He left his legal career and joined Gandhiji's movement. By 1920, this very promising lawyer was in jail for civil disobedience.

Unlike most of those who became Gandhiji's lieutenants, C. Rajagopalachari neither travelled nor studied in the West; he did not leave India until Independence. His reception of the western ideas and social practices was always restricted by a dogged, but not uncritical, attachment to the religion of his caste. He was a Hindu nationalist as much as an Indian nationalist.

Why, then, did C.Rajagopalachari leave the Extremist School and follow Gandhiji ? According to David Arnold,<sup>23</sup> first, C. Rajagopalachari believed sincerely in the efficacy of satyagraha, which appeared to him a more practical technique for achieving India's nationalist objectives than either constitutionalism or terrorism. Secondly, he was attracted by Gandhiji's spiritual approach to politics. The moral zeal that Gandhiji injected into his campaigns appealed to C.Rajagopalachari, a Brahmin intellectual in search of a worthy cause. There was a strong conservative trait in C.Rajagopalachari's personality. Whereas many other nationalists shuddered at Gandhiji's rejection of Western society and institutions, C.Rajagopalachari's response was sympathetic. C.Rajagopalachari described in a newspaper article in May 1921 that he had seen the moral and political bankruptcy of the West. It was, he said, in India's interests to free itself from this degeneration. Non-cooperation "is not a mere political device to wrest reform but an urgent necessity if we at all desire to live when the West is drifting into social anarchy. To depend for order and government on the West is nothing but death to us."<sup>24</sup>

Ambition as well as intellectual conviction played an important part in C.Rajagopalachari's conversion. In Madras City, he was not to be a junior partner in the nationalist firm, and he chafed at the political caution and preoccupation with legislature of the elder leaders. On the other hand, Gandhiji deserted by the nationalist and moderates, in turn,

desperately needed a loyal lieutenant in Tamil Nadu. By opting for Gandhiji, when all established politicians were against him, C. Rajagopalachari had a unique opportunity to assume a central position in Tamil Nadu. By temperament, C. Rajagopalachari was reserved and Gandhiji noted his innate shyness in their first meeting in Madras in April, 1919.<sup>25</sup> Other writers have commented that he was too much an intellectual to be a popular leader and that he preferred decision-making behind the scenes to public leadership.<sup>26</sup>

V. C.Rajagopalachari : Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movements.

Although the Muslims constituted only seven per cent of the Presidency's population and only about half of that per cent in Tamil Nadu, and though they were deeply divided between Urdu and Tamil speakers, a vocal Khilafat movement developed in that region by August 1920. The Muslims were split into three political factions, the origin of which dated back to the beginning of the century, but were intensified by the Khilafat issue. A loyalist group centered around the prince of Arcott, had opposed the Lucknow pact of 1916 between the Congress and the Muslim League and formed a short-lived rival to the Muslim League in Madras in November 1917. A more enduring role was played by M.Usman, a relative of the prince Arcott, who entered the Madras Legislative Council in 1920 and

was the main Muslim spokesman in the Justice Party.<sup>27</sup>

A second group consisted of Urdu and Tamil-speaking merchants and businessmen. Its central figure was Yakub Hasan, who had helped to found a Madras branch of Muslim League in 1908 and had been one of the architects of the Lucknow Pact.<sup>28</sup> A third Muslim faction was the most fanatical. Almost entirely composed of Urdu-speaking Muslims, it was led by Abdul Majid Sharar, a fierce pan-Islamist and editor of an Urdu newspaper, Quami Report. Sharar was bitterly dissatisfied of Hasan's collaboration with the Congress as of the Arcott's loyalty to the Raj. He questioned whether Muslims could rely on Hindu sincerity in the Khilafat issue and urged the Muslims to act assertively.<sup>29</sup>

C. Rajagopalachari assiduously cultivated Muslim cooperation with the Congress over the Khilafat. At the Madras provincial Congress Conference in August 1919, he moved a resolution for the release of Ali Brothers. For the Khilafat Day on 17th October, 1919, C. Rajagopalachari undertook to organise Hindu support in Tamil Nadu. At Khilafat meetings in Tamil Nadu he supported Hasan and the moderate merchants encouraging them to cooperate with the Congress and isolating the Sharar faction. By May 1920, Hasan and his associates, with C. Rajagopalachari behind them, were in control of provincial Khilafat Committee.

The Madras Government was no doubt correct in calling the Presidency a backwater of the Khilafat agitation. Except the North Arcott which had a large number of urban population, the Khilafat Committees were as much Hindu enterprise as Muslims. The moderate Khilafat Muslims gave C.Rajagopalachari the numerical and organisational leverage he needed to displace the nationalist leadership.<sup>30</sup>

C.Rajagopalachari's involvement with the Khilafat movement begs question as to how sincere or merely opportunist he was in his relationship with the Indian Muslims. His appraisal of Mohammed in his Jain Diary suggests his sincerity. But clearly there was much that was merely tactical. He used Muslim support in his efforts to win control of the Congress party in the Presidency.<sup>31</sup>

C.Rajagopalachari's political authority in the South depended very considerably on the success of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Yet, C.Rajagopalachari was seriously disadvantaged. In the first place, civil disobedience went very much against the grain of political feelings of the Presidency. C.Rajagopalachari had to carry the party against its own instinctive preference either for the tactics of the Swarajist Party or for the office acceptance. In his Jail Diary, he wrote : "Non-cooperation is not a means to a political end but a Dharma in itself. To abstain from cooperating with wrong

is an absolute duty. This is not simply because thereby we shall evict the Englishmen. It is an absolute duty for all time to refuse to participate in the degradation of one's own people."<sup>32</sup>

C.Rajagopalachari built up a team of loyal supporters in the Tamil Nadu Congress Working Committee, including Dr. T.Rajan, K.Santahanam and E.V.Ramaswami Naicker. Together with the support of the Muslims through the Khilafat movement, the support of those untouchables mobilised by C.Rajagopalachari's prohibition campaign and his attraction to the students, C.Rajagopalachari had a viable, if heterogenous and ephemeral political base in the Presidency. It would be wrong to think of him as just Gandhiji's lieutenant. His was a position of considerable local prestige.<sup>33</sup>

The Congress Party, between the Bardoli decision of February 1922 and the Lahore Congress of 1929, was in the doldrums. With his own release in February 1922 and Gandhiji's imprisonment in March, C.Rajagopalachari took over the role as defendant of Gandhiji's ideas within the All India Congress bodies. He got ephemeral triumph at the Gaya Congress when his views were carried in the Subjects Committee by 203 to 87 and by a majority in the open session. But C.R.Das, C.Rajagopalachari's chief opponent at Gaya, was far too commanding a figure to accept this verdict. Following his defeat at Gaya, he resigned his Presidentship of the Congress,

and announced the formation of a separate Swaraj Party. At the Allahabad AICC meeting in February 1923, a truce was agreed that both parties should abstain from debating their conflicting views on the Council-Entry. Meanwhile, C.Rajagopalachari, in company with Rajendra Prasad, went on fund-raising tour for the constructive programme. C.Rajagopalachari was well aware of the need for party unity, but his efforts to patch up an agreement with C.R.Das at a meeting in Delhi were unsuccessful. At the AICC meeting in Bombay in May 1923, a compromise was reached to the effect that the Congress should turn a blind eye to the electoral politics of the Swarajists. C.Rajagopalachari resigned. He saw the compromise as a fatal indecisiveness.<sup>34</sup>

On February 1922, a small police party with little ammunition fired at a procession of Non-cooperators in an obscure place known as Chauri Chaura in eastern Uttar Pradesh. When their ammunition were exhausted, the policemen took refuge in their outpost. A violent section of the procession set fire to the outpost and hacked the fleeing constables to pieces. In this gruesome enactments, twenty policemen were killed. Gandhiji read of the incident in the morning newspaper of February 8, the day after his rejoinder to the Viceroy. The facts were immediately confirmed in a report that arrived from his son Devdas, who was in Uttar Pradesh and visited the scene.

Chauri Chaura hit Gandhi with tremendous force. He felt that through Chauri Chaura God had spoken. Though the

number of arrests had gone upto 30,000, the action, he felt, had to be cancelled. When C.Rajagopalachari learnt of the stoppage of the Non-cooperation movement he felt dismayed and hurt. He wrote :

"I fully realise the gravity of the offence of the mob at Gorakhpur. But inspite of my tenderest and most complete attachment to my master and the ideals he stand for, I fail to see why there should a call for stopping our struggle for birthrights because of such events. The Malabar atrocities were a much greater reason, if Gorakhpur be a good reason. No, I fail to see them from here (in seclusion and without materials, it is true) the logicality of the grave steps taken."<sup>35</sup>

VI. C.Rajagopalachari and Civil Disobedience, 1930-34.

In the years from 1927 to 1929, Gandhiji was the person whose voice was decisive in formulating Congress strategies in meeting the emerging left challenge. The left challenge at this time revolved essentially around the question of what to be the Congress goal .... complete independence or dominion status. To Gandhiji and to most of his lieutenants it was a verbal duel whereas to left wingers it was an essential definition of the Congress creed, and important starting point for the struggle against the British. Gandhiji realised the need to placate the aspirations of the emerging left wing and the

Government in turn realised the need to respond to Gandhian overtures to take the wind out of the leftist sail. There was thus a steady progression from the Calcutta Congress declaration of 1928, to Irwin's ambiguous response of October 1929, to Congress reply in the form of Delhi Manifesto of November 1929 and finally, the declaration of Congress creed as complete independence at the Lahore Congress.

Whereas in defining the Congress creed at Lahore, Gandhiji carried the whole Congress with him, in enumerating the programme of civil disobedience the Gandhian line remained distinct. His choice of salt issue, for instance took the left wing and the conservatives within the Congress by surprise. When at the Lahore Congress of 1929, Gandhiji felt compelled to accept the eventuality of a civil disobedience campaign against the British, he was uncertain still about the exact programme he would follow. Worried by the language of militancy voiced by the radical elements within the Congress, Gandhiji even considered it safer to offer the civil disobedience alone.<sup>36</sup> To Gandhiji, civil disobedience was not purely a political movement. The non-violent defiance of law under certain circumstances was a religious duty to him and was intended to gradually bring moral pressure on the British. The philosophical content of his civil disobedience movement was anathema not only to the British authorities, but also to the majority of the Congress who were taken by surprise, for

instance, by his formulation of 11 points before the mass campaign was launched.

Gandhiji's Dandi March (12 March .... 6 April, 1930) inaugurated the civil disobedience movement. The programmes of civil disobedience that Gandhiji suggested, however, remained controlled so that the basic tenet of non-violence would not be compromised. Apart from breaking salt laws, he suggested the picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, resignation by lawyers and government officials of their posts, and boycott of courts. So far as the programme of non-payment of taxes were concerned Gandhiji was still wary. Already at Lahore he had cautioned that it could be offered only at the final stage of the national fight. While willing to allow non-payment of specific taxes like chaukidari tax for instance, he was hesitant to talk about an agrarian non-revenue campaign.

The Madras Congress leaders surveyed the prospect of civil disobedience in 1930. C.Rajagopalachari had come out of political retirement. The decision of launching the civil disobedience was a body blow to the Madras Swarajist Party. Srinivasa Iyengar resigned as the President of the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee. Gandhiji brought C.Rajagopalachari into line. The Headquarters of civil disobedience in the South India was at Trichinopally and it was from there on April 1930 that C.Rajagopalachari set off with one hundred

volunteers, on his salt march to Vedaranyam .... a point on the Tanjore seaboard. Vedaranyam's assets were convenient salt swamps and Vedaratnam Pillai, a merchant was willing to host a battle.

Ten days before the March, the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee unanimously made C.Rajagopalachari the President. To make the March a success, C.Rajagopalachari's problem lay in turning down the volunteers, not in finding them. He chose with care, enjoining his pledge on each recruit. His ashram supplied the first eight. The eventual regiment .... the hundred gems, as they came to be called .... included a man from each Tamil district, seven youths resigning handsome Bombay jobs, an engineering college lecturer and a railway official, the last two also sacrificing their posts. To the free India of the future the group was to contribute an editor, an ambassador, a union minister and more.<sup>37</sup>

C.Rajagopalachari chose the metaphor of the march to the sea to make illegal salt in order to deliberately violate British laws and to provoke among the Tamil people the idea that their protest was right.<sup>38</sup> This choice was modelled on the Salt March which Gandhi undertook in March, 1930. However, C. Rajagopalachari decided to broaden the meaning of the protest by combining it with that of pilgrimage. It was intended that the members of his group would walk by stages, like pilgrims or soldiers.

Vedaranyam was located on the very edge of Tanjore district which had many sacred spots and was crossed by the most sacred of all rivers in the South India, the Kaveri. C.Rajagopalachari's group of men, almost all of whom were high caste and young, left the inland town of Trichinopally for Vedaranyam on the Tamil New Year's Day. This made the departure doubly auspicious. The Tanjore district had been the centre of Chola kingdom in the eleventh century. The Chola kings were known to have raised great temples and to have made overseas conquest. It is not without some interest that the course of the march to the sea, it was compared to the Digvijaya. Thus the march was an attempt to recreate the Indian political potency.<sup>39</sup>

#### VII      C.Rajagopalachari and Office Acceptance .

During the 1930s, the Congress, while fighting the Raj, faced the great but incomplete transformation of the 1947. This was not just a question of party organisation throttling lower-level spontaneity; what was involved was the gradual establishment of a kind of hegemony of bourgeois and dominant peasant groups over the national movement. The Congress repeatedly aroused expectations and aspirations which it could not satisfy and with the development of leftist challenge through trade unions, kisan sabhas, radical student organisations, Congress Socialists and the Communists, the Right-Left confrontations within the Congress organisation

itself increasingly became an important part of the party's life from the mid-1930s onwards. The disillusionment of the radical middle class youth with Gandhian method of struggle was also contributing significantly to the growth of the Left by the end of the period.<sup>40</sup>

What was now in the mid-1930s was the big increase in their strength through a remarkable shift in their attitudes of men like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and C.Rajagopalachari, the no-changers of the 1920s with considerable stature as rural constructive workers and mass leaders. A partial explanation in some cases might well be the opportunism of middle age replacing youthful ardour. More important was the fact that the twin Gandhian strategies of constructive work and peaceful mass satyagraha seemed to be failing. But relatively few among close Gandhian associates had that amount of patience or idealism, while Gandhiji himself felt acutely threatened by the new Leftist challenge posing for the first time a countrywide alternative mass strategy which was considered unacceptable to the Congress primarily for class reasons.<sup>41</sup>

The months after the Lucknow Congress clearly revealed the foresight of Birla. Jawaharlal Nehru and the three socialists who were Working Committee members (out of 14) became increasingly the prisoners of the Right, without

effective power, yet hindered by their office from frank criticism of the way the Congress was going. Nehru's socialist speeches were made the pretext for a resignation threat on June 1936 by seven Working Committee members headed by Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, C.Rajagopalachari and Kripalani who had drafted their protest letter from Gandhiji's Headquarters at Wardha. Gandhiji then patched up the quarrel but clearly it was Nehru who as usual made the concessions. On the crucial point of Office Entry the rightists got ultimately its way.<sup>42</sup>

The business community had all along been very apprehensive about Nehru's presidentship, but had felt confident that Gandhiji's restraining influence and good deal of nursing would keep Nehru on the right rails all through. They felt relieved that at the Lucknow Congress, Nehru could not go the whole hog, being restrained by the Gandhiji's Group. Birla gloated with satisfaction at the outcome of the Lucknow Congress : "Mahatmaji kept his promise and without his uttering a word, he saw that no new commitments were made. Jawaharlal's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket."<sup>43</sup> Birla, moreover, correctly predicted that in the forthcoming elections controlled by the "Vallabhbhai Group", there was every likelihood of Congressmen coming into office. He considered C.Rajagopalachari's inclusion in the Working Committee as a very significant thing judged in the context

of C.Rajagopalachari's inclinations for working the constitution.

Disquiet rather than revulsion characterised C.Rajagopalachari's reaction to the spread of socialist ideas (the first All-India Conference of the Congress Socialist Party took place at Patna in 17th May, 1934). But it was another warning signal that C.Rajagopalachari had to change his political tactics. His signature appeared under a resolution of the Working Committee ;

"Whilst the Working Committee welcomes the formation of groups representing different schools of thoughts, it is necessary in view of loose talks about confiscating private property and necessity of class war to remind Congressmen that the Karachi resolutions as finally settled by the AICC at Bombay in August, 1931, which lays down certain principles neither contemplates confiscation nor advocacy of class war which are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence."<sup>44</sup>

C.Rajagopalachari further said ; "At the same time, the Working Committee is of the opinion that the Congress does contemplate a wiser and juster use of private property so as to prevent the exploitation of the landless poor and contemplates a healthier relationship between Capital and Labour."<sup>45</sup>

On July 14, 1937, C.Rajagopalachari assumed ~~the~~ office as the Prime Minister of Madras ousting his rival, S. Satyamurthi. During his Premiership, C.Rajagopalachari was notoriously authoritarian and even dictatorial in character.<sup>46</sup> Thus the government run by C.Rajagopalachari came in for the greatest attack. The Andhra Provincial CSP Conference passed a resolution in November 1937 condemning the working of the C.Rajagopalachari ministry which was undermining the prestige of the Congress. Listing the "misdeeds", it pointed out that CID surveillance on the socialists workers were continuing, securities for the newspapers were not being retrieved, and more importantly, the Kottapattam case prisoners were not being released, and the socialist Batlivala being arrested and convicted. Moreover, the repeated emphasis by C.Rajagopalachari on Gandhian philosophy of truth and non-violence and wearing of khadi, to the socialists was "the unnecessary and excessive propaganda of ethical principles unrelated to practical politics."<sup>47</sup> The socialists were piqued at being regarded by the ministers no longer "Comrades in arms but as inconvenient nuisance causes."<sup>48</sup> Stating his own defence, C.Rajagopalachari pointed out that the Congress had accepted office after mature deliberations and after great misgivings. Further, although in the past, Congressmen in their propaganda had often spoken of doing away with the government they could not now indulge in such talk.<sup>49</sup> As Nehru explained to Masani, the two different contexts and meanings of the term government

were causing confusion. Nehru cautioned that treating the Congress government as an alien body would render it powerless and push it in the wrong direction. He counselled "friendly but critical appreciation."<sup>50</sup> In its role as government, C.Rajagopalachari's ministry could not do away with the machinery of surveillance and censure, particularly socialists' and communists' activities who were traditionally critical of his conservative policies. But in this event Gandhiji advised to use restraint. He cautioned C.Rajagopalachari that although there was enough evidence against the communist activities, "they were after all fellow countrymen ... they might be misguided but they were not to be weaned by government aid."<sup>51</sup>

The case for which C.Rajagopalachari came in for maximum attack was that S.S.Batlivala, a socialist leader of Bombay who was arrested at Tellichery on October 2, 1937 for an allegedly seditious speech and sentenced to six months simple imprisonment. The Batlivala case was the first instance of a Congressman arrested under the Congress regime and was thus sensationalised. To Nehru, the Batlivala prosecution by the C.Rajagopalachari ministry had shocked the Congress conscience in an unprecedented manner and represented a negation and a reversal of fundamental Congress principles and policy.<sup>52</sup> At the AICC and Working Committee meetings of the Congress at Calcutta in October 1937, socialist members seriously attacked C.Rajagopalachari's action. To Nehru, the Batlivala case carried serious implications in non-Congress states like Punjab and

Bengal where it had become the by-word and standing justification for every repressive activity of the government prevailing there. His suggestion was that the Congress ministries should secure the Working Committee's prior approval before making arrests or instituting prosecutions was, however, turned down by the strong conservative support that C.Rajagopalachari received at the Working Committee meeting. Referring to the Working Committee proceedings at Calcutta, Governor Erskine reported to the Viceroy how Nehru's free attack upon C.Rajagopalachari for the arrest and trial of Batlivala and kindred matters had been countered by Gandhiji who came really violently in support of the Madras Premier and carried the day.<sup>53</sup> Elaborating the conservative point of view, Patel declared, "Civil liberty must have the full scope in the Congress regime. Please note the adjective 'civil' before liberty. The moment you drop the word 'civil', liberty will then mean licence. No responsible government can allow licence or unlimited liberty to the people."<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, defending his position, C.Rajagopalachari wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel :

My dear Vallabhbhai,

Those who have really administrative experience and who are in the thick of present conditions and also are able to envisage the future will, I think, agree with me that the further separation of the judiciary from the executive than what prevail now will weaken us in controlling the

affairs of the country. Our judgements should be free from and not trammelled by catchwords, I am so convinced of this that I consider it, relatively, as one in which we should have freedom of action in the provinces. It is now police administration that will dominate over the magistracy and will purify and liberalise the police.

As regards Mr. Batlivala case, it is unfortunate that certain groups think that Madras is the proper experimenting ground for activities among the labour unions and the rebellion areas. Because this province is made the target of the left-wingers from outside, I have necessarily to be the first in drawing a line of demarcation between liberty and licence, between freedom of opinion and incitement to violence and disorder. I know we may have a crisis over this and I am prepared for it, though I know, sacrifice means the sacrifice of the province. I cannot gather full power in the field of law and order, such I believe I have done in greater measure than in other provinces unless I am able to draw this line.<sup>55</sup>

Yours sincerely

C. Rajagopalachari

Vallabhbhai, supporting C.Rajagopalachari, wrote to him :

My dear Rajaji,

..... The Communists believe that they have got an opportunity now as the Congressmen as in office to have their own way, and unless we are able to control and isolate them, we can not handle any serious question with any hope of success.<sup>56</sup>

Yours sincerely

Vallabhbhai.

The Kottapattam Summer School of Politics and Economy was started on May 1, 1937, by the Andhra Socialist Party. In May 1937, it was banned by C.Rajagopalachari ministry on the ground that it was fomenting communist and revolutionary ideas and some students were taken prisoners. This action caused considerable opposition from the socialist critics of C.Rajagopalachari's ministry. Expressing shock and indignation, Nehru charged the C.Rajagopalachari ministry of being as much as a police ministry suppressing elementary right of free speech and association as the previous government was. In August, 1937, C.Rajagopalachari issued a communique releasing the Summer School prisoners but condemning their activities. Although Nehru took objection to the communique, Gandhiji justified C.Rajagopalachari's stand declaring, "I think it was necessary to draw attention to the fact that the release did not mean the approval of their breach of the offence." Explaining the predicament the ministries often found themselves in, Gandhiji declared, "I fear that often when the Congress is in power it will use language which its predecessors have used and yet the motive behind will be different."<sup>57</sup>

Besides this, C.Rajagopalachari was strongly attacking a political position that the Congress had always upheld, namely, the separation of the executive from the judiciary. On 12th September, 1937, he wrote to Nehru :

My dear Jawaharlalji,

I do not know if you join in the general objection to my attitude against taking up the question of separation between judicial and executive functions as part of the Congress programme.

(1) Whatever changes we may make now will be in force as long as popular government will be in power whether be it Congress or any other persons. Therefore, the question is other grounds than who is in power.

(2) If the magistracy of the districts, who are now automatically under the ministers, are conceived into an independent guild, controlled in effect by session judges and the Chief Justice, all the power we have secured for democracy in regard to the policy and administration of justice will be lost and we will find that we are powerless to help the people to carry out our programme.

(3) I am firmly convinced that the state is one and indivisible. The old idea that the judiciary is an arbitrator between the state and the people cannot be permitted any longer to shape administrative policy.

(4) My view of the situation is that, henceforth, the police will become more judicial in their investigation. In the old order the magistrates were the executives in their judgements. I expect there will be a reversal now.

(5) In any event, the cost of separation is one which we cannot now undertake. We cannot fail to see that the demand of separation is mostly from those classes which stand to gain by recruitment to new posts.<sup>58</sup>

Yours sincerely

C. Rajagopalachari

Lord Erskine, the Governor of Madras, felt happy with C.Rajagopalachari as a big figure belonging to the inner ring of the Congress. To the British King, Erskine gave the following account :

"As to the Premier himself, I get on quite well with him, but he is an odd mixture. He is a relation of Gandhi, whose son his daughter married, and he dresses in much the same manner. He is an idealist and his object in life seems to be to get India back to what it was in the days of King Ashoka. He runs the whole show and if anything were to happen to him we should be all over the place, as he is the kingpin of the entire ministry."<sup>59</sup>

S.Gopal, in his study of Jawaharlal Nehru, assessed C.Rajagopalachari's office years in the following terms :

C.Rajagopalachari, a self-proclaimed political ascetic who, in the twenties, had led the opposition to C.R.Das, Motilal Nehru, and the Swarajists, had now quietly put himself in line for Chief Ministership in Madras and was determined to take office. Enjoying Gandhi's confidence and ignoring Jawaharlal .... C.Rajagopalachari negotiated with Lord Erskine, the Governor of Madras. While he commended office acceptance to the convention of legislators as a means of wrecking the Act, he assured Erskine that .... "there was a real chance to get rid of the Civil Disobedience mentality for good, and it would be a thousand pities if the chance was missed.... In Madras, however, C.Rajagopalachari was a law unto himself. He was too senior in the Congress hierarchy

and too close to Gandhi to be answerable to anybody. He combined a contempt for his colleague in the ministry and the Working Committee with an undue deference to the British Governor .... a man of very average ability. The result was a negation and reversal of fundamental Congress principles and policy."<sup>60</sup>

#### VIII C.Rajagopalachari and the Quit India Movement

After his resignation from his Premiership in October, 1939, the years upto the Independence revealed another trait of C.Rajagopalachari's personality. Following the failure of the Cripps Mission, C.Rajagopalachari made a total break from the Congress and entered into lugubrious relationships with the liberals in an effort to influence the wartime administration of the Raj. He differed with Gandhiji openly and widely at the national level. C.Rajagopalachari came under fire from V.D.Savakar and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar.

In a Convocation address, C.Rajagopalachari made what Pattabhi Sitaramayya called a weighty pronouncement of a highly controversial and heterodox nature on the burning topic of non-violence.<sup>61</sup> In a private conversation in Lucknow, he was reported to have made a rather detailed exposition of his stand in regard to non-violence as applicable to the then political situation. He seemed to have stressed the limitations

of non-violence in the affairs of men. He also made it clear that there should be a national government at the Centre and popular government at the provinces.<sup>62</sup>

When, on 7 and 8 August, 1942, the All India Congress Committee adopted the well-known "Quit India" resolution, C.Rajagopalachari publicly opposed it. He was opposed not only to the launching of mass direct action but also to the leadership's opposition to the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. He broke away from the overriding authority of the principle of non-violence and now began to urge that the Muslim League's demand must be complied with in order to establish an united and common front with the British which they were no longer able to resist.

However, much of C.Rajagopalachari's outlook during this period was conditioned by his being a Southerner. Not only was the South more emotionally caught up in the progress of the War, besides the people of the Madras province represented a majority in Malaya and Burma, but the Japanese threat seemed always more immediate to the Coromondal Coast than elsewhere. Also, a Southerner could adopt a greater detachment towards the predominantly northern predicament of Hindu-Muslim conflict and to the prospect of emergence of Pakistan. However, his political capacity was inadequate for this task.

IX . Gandhiji and C.Rajagopalachari

As analysis of C.Rajagopalachari's political career and social, political and economic ideas would remain incomplete without brief discussion of his relationships with Mahatma Gandhi. Between them existed both personal and ideological relationships. It was under the Gandhian inspiration that C.Rajagopalachari did appear as one of the stalwarts of the Indian National Congress and did engage himself during the 1920s and 1930s in various kinds of constructive activities.

But Gandhiji and C.Rajagopalachari were so different in intellect that they were bound to have disagreements. C.Rajagopalachari was indeed to test Gandhiji's extraordinary talent for reconciliation to the full. Gandhiji reflecting of C.Rajagopalachari after several years of acquaintance, acknowledged the grasp of C.Rajagopalachari's intellect. He wrote :

"C.Rajagopalachari was an acute student of Satyagraha. He began to follow it when it first commenced in South Africa. In my opinion, he knows the science of Satyagraha as no one close perhaps does. And he has tried to live upto it for years. When, therefore, the opportunity for going to jail came to him, he embraced it without a second thought."<sup>63</sup>

During the period of Quit India movement, C.Rajagopalachari had his differences with Gandhiji. He said in a convocation

address at Lucknow University :

"I have worked with Gandhiji these twentytwo years and feel a just pride of having helped him to develop and put into action his principles and methods. Many are the ties that bound me to him. It is pleasure to discover a difference and recognise it as leading to a parting of ways. But prayerfully and in all humility we must *face* a such recognition if it must come...."

We keep our *face* turned steadily in the direction of ahimsa but cannot make the mistake of killing the principle itself by opposing it to commonsense or reality. The defence of India is a case to be treated as an exception.<sup>54</sup> When someone asked Gandhi what was the difference between his attitude and C.Rajagopalachari's, Gandhi replied : "I see the same difference between him and me that there is between chalk and choose."<sup>65</sup>

During this period, Gandhiji said that Jawaharlal Nehru, not Rajaji, would be his successor. In 1927, Gandhiji had spoken of C.Rajagopalachari as his successor. The truth was that, according to Rajmohan Gandhi,<sup>66</sup> Nehru's popularity was wider than that of C.Rajagopalachari. Nehru attracted the youth and the Left in a measure that C.Rajagopalachari could not match. Moreover, having failed to master Hindi despite urgings over the years from Gandhiji, C.Rajagopalachari was not in a position to achieve a rapport with the vast north Indian masses. Gandhiji

realised that the action as a whole was more likely to turn to Nehru than to C.Rajagopalachari. Finally, Gandhiji recognised a philosophical bond, in the broadest sense of the term, between himself and Nehru. Gandhiji said, "He (Nehru) says that ~~he~~ does not understand my language and that he speaks a language foreign to me. This may or may not be true. But language is no bar to a union of hearts. And I know this, that when I am gone, he will speak my language."<sup>67</sup>

Though C.Rajagopalachari attained his greatest height in the years following his discovery of Gandhiji and Gandhiji's discovery of him, during the phase of satyagraha and Non-cooperation struggle, some differences on basic principles of C.Rajagopalachari with Gandhiji were quite obvious : C.Rajagopalachari had unbounded faith in the sovereignty of reason. To C.Rajagopalachari, non-violence was not the law of our being that was with Gandhiji, but an ethic, an instrument of statecraft, one of the arms of the government. C.Rajagopalachari's practice of non-violence had to follow rationalisation and therefore could go only as far as the latter could keep pace with it. If it foundered, his practice of non-violence also must come to a halt.

Once, summing up the point of differences with C.Rajagopalachari, Gandhiji observed : "The difference between you and me is not great, but it is vital, though it seems

small. You want, if you do, power at any price. I have put a limit to the price to be paid, You think if you do that nothing will come if we don't take power. I can say I can afford to wait till it comes at my price, for, I am making progress, however, slight it may be."<sup>69</sup>

#### X. C.Rajagopalachari's Political Ideas

C.Rajagopalachari's political position within the Indian National Congress has already been described. Here, we will touch briefly the main aspects of his political ideas and outlook. Before joining the Indian National Congress, he was a supporter of the terrorist method of agitation against the Raj. After coming in contact with Gandhiji, he converted himself into a Gandhian disciple. The Quit India movement marked a watershed in the political career of C.Rajagopalachari which brought him into conflict with Gandhi and the Indian National Congress in general. Although after Independence, he came to hold several ministerial positions in the Central Ministry and also at the St. Fort George at Madras, ~~but~~ it was <sup>a</sup> short-lived honeymoon with the Congress leaders and the makers of the new India. Nehru's failure to get him elected as the President of India, and subsequently, his souring of relations with the provincial leaders of the Congress at Madras provided him the emotional and personal element of anti-Congress stance, and finally, Nehru's agricultural policies turned him into a bitter critic of the Indian National

Congress which found expression in an elegant manner in the Swarajyya, a weekly journal used to be published from Madras. Though politically it was his swatantratite position which we will deal <sup>with</sup> in another chapter.

Apart from his Swatantra position, C.Rajagopalachari's political ideas and actions could be roughly separated into two broad outlines, viz., Gandhian and conservative. His Gandhian outlook and ideas had been discussed elsewhere, so we will devote here his conservative ideas. Though not opposed to gradual change, C.Rajagopalachari was against the elimination of all traditional restraints and the hierarchy of guidance, and he opined that if the traditional restraints were abolished from society, there will be nothing to keep the humanity together in an orderly cohesion. Without moral restraints, he insisted, there will be no force that will hold the structure of the society together. The notion that secular government and democracy can be a substitute for religion is a moonshine, opined C.Rajagopalachari. According to him, ~~the~~ religion was the basis of civil society and source of all good and comfort. Unless religion and values issuing from it are preserved under the guidance of the elite, there will be no hope for the world, or any part of it, in the dangerous condition that have come into being as a result of technical advance. Thus, C.Rajagopalachari bemoaned that the present situation is going towards a breakdown of authority and

tradition and towards godlessness and proletarianism. Thus he exhorted the present generation to arrest that trend as much as possible, and he opined that evolutionary forces do work irresistibly, but man's place in the evolution is to work intelligently to modify, resist and correct natural trends.

C.Rajagopalachari's political outlook was greatly influenced by his Brahmin background and upbringing. Thus, while taking the oath as the Governor General of India he told, "I am an Acharyya and I should not be emotional, but in the lives of the Acharyyas also there may be occasions when free escape of emotions is like a purifying bath. And this is one such occasion."<sup>71</sup>

While, as the Governor-General of India, the Governor of West Bengal, and as a Swatantra leader, he took the role as a teacher and preacher, Unlike Gandhiji or Jayaprakash Narayan, who even after Independence continued their critical outlook about political authority, in the case of C.Rajagopalachari, we find a complete change of his earlier attitude towards political authority. Thus, before Independence, C.Rajagopalachari as a non-violent Gandhian follower sought to justify disobedience, defiance and imprisonment against the Raj was 'Dharma' ; while to placate, to obey and to maintain the bureaucratic structure of the Raj was itself the greatest a-Dharma. He completely

changed this stance after Independence. Thus, he explained before the audience of the Benaras Hindu University Convocation, that the process involved in the attainment of the freedom through the methods of disobedience have left behind certain less desirable results, along with the attainment of the object. These results, according to him, like the incidental harm done to the body when anyone take drugs for the cure of a serious disease, have to be corrected by convalescent discipline, by an effort and determination amounting to religious fervour and faith. After employing this simile, he advised the audience to throw away the habit of disregarding law and authority that had been a legacy of the Raj period. Instead, he exhorted that, "We must restore the unqualified reverence for the state that was cultivated by our ancients, the reverence for law and discipline is equivalent to the reverence for Dharma and that was insisted upon in the old days. In fact, we want a revival of feudal manners and chivalry, but in terms of modern democracy."<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, C.Rajagopalachari supported modern democracy that had been adopted in Independent India, but not for its intrinsic values and revolutionary ideals, rather, he supported it on a quite conservative standpoint. He supported the Western democracy in India against socialism. Thus, he said, that Indian should trust democracy to ensure just distribution and not to look to the class struggle for salvation. Class struggle,

according to him, means hatred, fouling of atmosphere, unhappiness for all and submission to the crudest type of tyranny and the end of it. The delays of democracy are very much better than the violence and hatred of class struggle.<sup>73</sup>

Now let us analyse C.Rajagopalachari's political outlook from <sup>a</sup> theoretical standpoint. By and large, C.Rajagopalachari endorsed the Gandhian belief that civilisation consists not in multiplying of wants but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants. Similarly, he also said that "high thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life, based on speed imposed upon us by mammon worship."<sup>74</sup> However, to understand the full range of C.Rajagopalachari's conservatism, it is necessary to go beyond this posture. A second point of view which is reflected in C.Rajagopalachari's assertion <sup>is</sup> that he, like Gandhiji, believes that machinery has its place. And he, like Gandhiji, is an enemy of the machine when it becomes the master and man becomes its slave.

Planned economy and cooperative life cannot be effectively achieved, asserted C.Rajagopalachari, if it depends on more authority, however, powerful. For achieving it, there must be a generally accepted culture which will act as a law from within, to assist the law imposed from outside. Unless there is the help of culture, more material planning culminates in fraud and corruption.<sup>75</sup>

Interpreting the same theme, C.Rajagopalachari asserted that ; " Properly designed and placed on a spiritual basis, a regulated economy need not to be inconsistent with individual satisfaction and individual seal. The restraints and habits of mind are required to be developed for altruistic action which must flow from faith and inner conviction."<sup>76</sup>

If the question is put : how the 'culture' and 'spirituality' can be secured, C.Rajagopalachari ~~was~~ not free from apparent contradictions on this point. He defined 'culture', as 'essentially the prevailing pattern of joyous restraint accepted by the people.'<sup>77</sup> He linked it to the maintenance of dharma, or moral duty, which is an organic growth and should not be treated as mere Indian superstition or eccentricity.

## XI Conclusion

Thus, finally, taken together, according to H.L.Erdman,<sup>78</sup> C.Rajagopalachari's emphasis on restriction of wants, on minimising dislocations, and the need to sustain culture through the family and the jaati, and the like, he would go far toward maintaining the status quo in India. In this sense, Erdman opined that C.Rajagopalachari was fundamentally conservative, which he freely admitted, without invoking dogmas. And C.Rajagopalachari drew himself close to the messiahs of backwardness. It may be a consolation, opined Erdman, that C.Rajagopalachari eschewed traditional justifications for supporting traditional institutions, practices and values.<sup>79</sup>

Notes and References

- 1 Irschick, Eugene F. ; Politics and Social Conflict in South India ; The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929, OUP, 1969, p.4.

Irschick further explained, "From the early period of the connection with southernmost part of India, Madras was considered to be an administrative and cultural backwater, far removed from the headquarters of the East India Company of Bengal and later from the Government of India at Calcutta and afterwards Delhi. Almost from the beginning, therefore, the Madras politicians and civil servants learned to depend on their own resources and this implied a certain limitation of their political and administrative horizons. At the same time, there arose in the Madras Presidency, and particularly in the city of Madras, a small but influential group of men who maintained a pan-Indian perspective and tried to connect Madras public life with that of Bengal, Bombay and the rest of India. It was from this group that the founders of the Indian National Congress came, and it was they who sought to counteract the feeling that Madras was gravely imposed upon the rest of India."

- 2 Cf. Karl Marx ; "The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave-labour, and one based on wage-labour, lies only in the mode in which surplus labour in each case is extracted from the actual producer, the labourer." Marx, Karl, Capital : A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Reprint, 1984, p.209.
- 3 Washbrook, D.A. ; The Emergence of Provincial Politics ; The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920, Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, p.330.
- 4 Ibid., p.14.
- 5 Irschick, E.F. op.cit., p.19.
- 6 Seal, Anil. The Emergence of Indian Nationalism ; Competition and Collaboration in later Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p.97.

- 7 Irschick, E.F., op.cit., p.13. Cf. .... The Brahmin Intellect, like that of all orientals is acute, but I do not see any reason .... in the past or present .... to believe it is of a high order. They are quibblers with words, not scientific men; their powers of observation are very small, they have hardly any originality, and can see nothing that what immediately concerns them .... Their acuteness, in appropriating European shibboleths had raised them into a position like what Mrs. Mill occupied in J.S.Mills thoughts .... There is no class that is so hostile to the English .... It is one of the great misfortunes of our administration that we should have already made such men our masters to a great extent, and that we are going to a still further extent in the same course.
- Letter from A.Duverre, Collector of Tanjore, to Sir James Caird, dated July 8, 1879, cited in E.F. Irschick, op.cit., p.20.
- 8 Seal, Anil, op.cit., p.103.
- 9 Frykenberg, Robert, An Introductory Essay on the Political Career of C.Rajagopalachari, included in C.Rajagopalachari: Gandhi's Southern Commander by A.R.H.Copley, Indo-British Historical Society, Madras, 1986, p.6.
- 10 Frykenberg, Robert, op.cit., p.7.
- 11 Irschick, E.F., op.cit., See Introduction.
- 12 Ibid., p.27.
- 13 Muthuswamy, M.S., K.Kamraj : A Socio-political Study, Tamil Nadu Academy of Political Science (Madras, 1988) p.23. The Mylapore and Egmore Cliques ; Between the 1890s and the 1916 the struggle for the control of the modes of patronage system was central to the development of provincial politics. The almost conspiratorial nature of political life to Madras city led to the formation of specialised political groupings designed to extract and distribute patronage. One of the most celebrated of the groupings was popularly known as the "the Mylapore clique" after the suburb in which most of its prominent members lived. It was composed of a succession of lawyers and administrators who were on close personal terms, who met regularly in each other's houses, put forward some demand in the Congress, the Press and on the

streets and aided each other in seeking office. Each generation in Mylapore picked its successors and brought it up through its favour. Permanently in opposition to the Mylapore clique were a group known as to the contemporaries as the "Egmore Clique". They were even less homogenous and existed only as counterweight to Mylapore. At the centre of the clique sat C.Sankaran Nair.

- 14 Irschick, E.F., op.cit., See Introduction.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Bhaskaran, R., Sociology of Politics .... Tradition and Politics in India, (Asia Publishing House, Bombay) 1967, p.43.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Baker, C.J., Politics of South India, 1920-1937, (South Asian Studies, Cambridge University Press) 1976, p.323.
- 19 Hardgrave, H.L., The Dravidian Movement (Popular Prakashan) Bombay, 1965, p.11.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 The Hindu, December 20, 1916.
- 22 Gandhi, M.K., An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, (Penguin Books) 1982, p.413. Thus Gandhi wrote ; "The idea came to me last night in a dream that we should call upon the country to observe a general hartal. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight, and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let the people of India, therefore, suspend their business and on that day and observe the day as one fasting and prayer .... C.Rajagopalachari was at once taken up with my suggestion. Other friends too welcomes it when it was communicated to them later. I drafted a brief appeal. The date of the hartal was first fixed on 30 March, 1919, but was subsequently changed to 6 April ....
- 23 Arnold, David, The Congress in Tamil Nadu ; Nationalist Politics in South India 1919-1937 (Manohar) 1977, p.38.

- 24 Ibid., p. 50.
- 25 Ibid., p. 53.
- 26 Ibid., p. 56.
- 27 Arnold, David, op.cit., p. 68.
- 28 Ibid., p. 70.
- 29 Ibid., p. 78.
- 30 Copley, A.R.H., op.cit., p. 108.
- 31 Ibid., p. 124.
- 32 Ibid., p. 160.
- 33 Ibid., p. 178.
- 34 Ibid., p. 209.
- 35 Rajagopalachari, C., Jail Diary, A Day to Day Record of Life in Vellore Jail in 1920, (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), Bombay, 1891, p. 69.
- 36 Som, Reba, Differences within Consensus : The Left and Right in the Congress 1929-1939, (Orient Longman) Hyderabad, 1995, p. 112.
- 37 Gandhi, Rajmohan, The Rajaji Story I, (Bharathan) 1978, p. 202.
38. Irschick, E.F., Gandhian Non-violent protests : Rituals of Avoidance or Rituals of Confrontation ? Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXI, No. 29, July 19, 1980.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India 1885-1947, (Macmillan) 1983, p. 271.
- 41 Ibid., p. 274.
- 42 Ibid., p. 279.
- 43 Birla to Thakurdas, April 20, 1936, cited in Reba Som, op.cit., p. 179.
- 44 Copley, A.R.H., The Political Career of C. Rajagopalachari : A Moralistic in Politics 1937-56, (Macmillan) 1978, p. 80.

- 45 Namboodiripad, E.M.S., Nehru ; Ideology and Practice, (National Book Centre) New Delhi, p.133.
- 46 Ibid., p.87.
- 47 Som, Reba, op.cit., p.206.
- 48 Ibid., p.206.
- 49 Madras Political Conference ; Rajagopalachari's opening Address, File PL 3/1937, Pt.II, AICC, NMML, cited in Reba Som, op.cit., p.207.
- 50 Jawaharlal Nehru to Masani, July 24, File PL3/37, AICC, NMML, cited in Reba Som, op.cit., p.207.
- 51 Gandhi to M.Desai, March 24, Patel Mirofilms, Reel 21, NAI.
- 52 Som, Reba, op.cit., p.207.
- 53 Ibid., p.208.
- 54 Bombay Chronicle, December 31, 1937.
- 55 Rajaji Papers, National Archives of India.
- 56 Gandhi to Nehru, August 8, 1937, Vol.25, NMML.
- 57 Rajaji Papers, NAI .... Ironically, during the 1950s, C.Rajagopalachari wrote reversing his earlier stand ; Minimum government and maximum freedom for the individual decentralised responsibility instead of centralised planning and concentration of authority, and a moral revolution in stead of legislative compulsion, the inner law taking place the external policemen, leading to a gradual transformation of personal ownership into trusteeship for the community .... Congress Statism or Gandhian Way ? Swarajyya, Marchil, 1961.
- 58 Gandhi, Rajmohan, The Rajaji Story, 1937-1972 (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) Bombay, 1984, p.8.
- 59 Gopal, S., Jawaharlal Nehru ; A Biography, Vol.I, 1889-1947, OUP, p.230. During Rajagopalachari's Premiership E.M.S. Namboodiripad was the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and he wrote to the President of the Indian National Congress ;

Sir, this is to draw your attention to a very serious state of affairs obtaining in our districts in the matters of policemen's behaviour towards Congress Committees and to the Ministry itself. Rajaji said several times that if there are grievances, Congress workers should go to him, not agitate outside. But we find that there are no relief when we approached him. I feel if this sorry state of affairs is not immediately put to an end, Congressmen will be put in a dilemma." Rajaji Papers, NAI, New Delhi.

- 60 Namboodiripad, E.M.S., Nehru : Ideology and Practice, National Book Centre, New Delhi, p.122.
- 61 Ibid., p.123. During this time, C.Rajagopalachari commented : As everyone knows, greater attention was directed to the propaganda that was to follow in determining who was to blame, than to a settlement of the issue itself. Great use was made in this connection of the irrelevant fact that Gandhi's pacifism would not permit him to take part in any war. This had nothing to do with the policy of the Indian National Congress for immediate intentions. Vide C.Rajagopalachari, Reconciliation : Why and How .... A Plea for Immediate Action. (Hind Kitabs) Bombay, 1945, p.13.
- 62 The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.22, p.155.
- 63 Gandhi, Rajmohan, The Rajaji Story : 1937-1972, op.cit., p.76.
- 64 Ahluwalia, B.K. and S.Ahluwalia, Rajaji and Gandhi (Allora Publications, New Delhi), 1978, p.122.
- 65 Gandhi, Rajmohan, The Rajaji Story, Op.cit., p.77.
- 66 Ibid., p.77.
- 67 Pyarelal, "Rajaji : Gandhi's Alter Ego", Swarajyya, December 11, 1977, p.13.
- 68 Masani, M.R., Against the Tide, (Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd.), 1983, p.338.
- 69 Rajagopalachari, C., Swarajyya, May 27, 1961.
- 70 Chatterjee, Bimanesh, Thousand Days with Rajaji (Orient Paperbacks), 1975, p.61.

- 71 C.Rajagopalachari's Address at the Benaras Hindu University Convocation on 3.12.1948, cited in Documents on Indian Political Thought, Vol.II, edited by A.Appadorai (OUP, 1970), p.381.
- 72 Ibid., p.359.
- 73 Rajagopalachari, C., Gandhiji's Teachings, Swarajyya, (Special Number, 1963), pp.41 & 44.
- 74 Rajaji's Speeches, Vol.I, p.108.
- 75 Ibid., p.198.
- 76 Rajagopalachari, C., Our Culture, op.cit.
- 77 Erdman, H.L., The Swatantra Party and Indian Conservatism, (Cambridge University Press, 1967), p.91.
- 78 Ibid., p.93.

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