

“K” Plan and King Maker Kamaraj

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Wandering for postings, power and prestige is the nature of every politician in this world. But Kamaraj gave up the posting of Chief Ministership for serving the party and the people. This selfless and sacrificing mind of Kamaraj which made him a popular figure in the national level.

Kamaraj plan or ‘K’ plan was an important attempt which changed Kamaraj as a national leader. ‘K’ plan brought a new change in his life and many incidents were occurred in the national history after it.

K plan of Chief Minister Kamaraj told a decision to the congress president and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on July 1963 that he gave his Chief Minister post for looking after the Congress party works. The voluntary resignation of Kamaraj from Chief Minister post for looking after the party works which created amazement in Nehru. He could not believe his ears. He thought within himself about Kamaraj, “What a great man without having the desire for osting power and prestige”. Kamaraj served nine years as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu who was responsible for the greatest development in agricultural, industrial and educational sectors. So the voluntary relinquish of Kamaraj from Chief Minister Ship made great surprise in Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru, who had great confidence in the sincerity and efficiency of Kamaraj, approved the novel scheme proposed by Kamaraj. This plan was later called after Kamaraj as ‘K’ plan.

ORIGIN OF ‘K’ PLAN

Let us see how was this plan arise in the mind of Kamaraj. In 1962 general legislative assembly election, congress won majority constituencies with great influence. But it had lost 15 constituencies in this election. This created a deep misery in the mind of Kamaraj and a question was arose in him to find the reason. He deeply thought this matter and wanted to make a solution for this. The Congress volunteers under the leadership of Kamaraj had interest in one aim, that is service mind, selfless mind and control.

The behaviour of congressmen was decreasing after congress came into power. Every congressmen wanted to get postings of ministership, postings in panchayat, district and state level. The desire for postings, power and prestige were increased within the party. Kamaraj's mind found that they were the reasons for the weakness of congress party. To remove the feuds, factions and struggle for power and to create new fresh life to congress party, he decided to give up his Chief Ministership. He thought that the top people should set an example by giving up office voluntarily and devoting themselves to party work. Thereby he aimed to renew the Gandhian spirit of service and encourage renunciation of the lure of office. Kamaraj announced his scheme and came forward to give up his Chief Ministership and to devote himself to organisational work.

The 'K' plan was approved by the congress working committee on August 1963 and it announced that all the senior members of the party should voluntarily submit their resignations to Jawaharlal Nehru. The Congress working committee conducted a special session of the all India congress committee on August 9 and 10 in 1963 for discussing various matters. It was the first meeting on All India Congress Committee on the basis of the demand by its members.

Kamaraj kept his views and plan before the congress working committee, the policy making body of the congress party. The All India Congress committee passed a resolution for adoption of 'K' plan on August 12, 1963. Jawaharlal Nehru told that the all India congress committee resolution on 'K' plan was 'unique' in history and added that no other party in any other country in the world would ever dream of passing such a resolution. The opinion of Jawaharlal Nehru, reflected the party's essentially different approach to politics and public life.

The All India congress committee decided that all the Chief Ministers should tender their resignations to the Prime Minister, expressing their desire to dedicate themselves for strengthening the party. Power was given to Prime Minister to use his discretion in the acceptance of resignations and absorb them for the party work. Kamaraj resigned his Chief Ministership of Madras State and 42 other resignations were followed from Ministers and Chief Ministers of States and Unions. Jawaharlal Nehru also voluntarily wanted himself to resign his Prime Ministership. On this occasion Kamaraj remarked that if Jawaharlal Nehru insisted on his resignation, they would withdraw their plan. The congress working committee was also against this resignation and placed the burdening of implementing the 'K' plan on Jawaharlal Nehru.

Jawaharlal Nehru accepted twelve resignations of both Chief Ministers and Union Ministers. They were six from central cabinet which include Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, J. G. D. Ram, Patil, S. K. Gopala Reddy and R. L. Srimalai and six from states, Kamaraj, Biju Patnaik, Gupta, C. R., Mandolai, M. A., Bino-danand Jha and Gulam Mohammed Baskshi.

Kamaraj plan was then interpreted in different ways. It aroused much criticism within India and abroad, among the ruling and opposition parties. Some suggested that Jawaharlal Nehru in order to eliminate some unwanted and unpopular ministers from his cabinet, used or misused the plan. According to Morarji Desai the plan was particularly aimed to deprive him out from the Prime Minister post after Jawaharlal Nehru.

Many people criticised this plan firmly that the acceptance of these resignations had political background. Because in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat parliament election was held in three

constituencies. The congress party failed in all the three constituencies. Many congress working committee members thought that the compulsory deposit scheme and gold control Act of finance minister Morarji Desai were the reasons for the failure of congress party in that election. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to decrease the strictness of that scheme and Act. But he afraid himself that Morarji Desai did not accept to correct this scheme and Law. So Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the resignation of Morarji Desai and appointed T.T. Krishnachari. Jawaharlal Nehru brought some changes in compulsory deposit scheme and gold control Act. Some critics argued that Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the resignations of Morarji Desai and S.K. Patil to reduce their strength and influence in cabinet.

B. Gopala Reddy made an agreement with United States of America in order to keep a high power transmitter in India. This agreement involved high criticisms in parliament. Educational minister Srimali received bad name for compelling Hindi language in unwanted states. Jagajeevanram had the central minister for 17 years from 1946 to 1963. Many members had decided to appoint a young Harijan leader in the place of jagajeevanram. Many critics considered these were the reasons for the acceptance of their resignations.

Jawaharlal Nehru did not want to accept the resignation of Lal Bahadur Sastri. But Lal Bahadur Sastri replied that senior leaders should set up a model to others, and adamantly compelled Jawaharlal Nehru to accept his resignation.

Everyone knew the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru used ‘K’ plan on ministers to show everyone should give responsibility and obedience to party and they should ready to maintain the discipline within the party. The All India congress committee and congress working committee welcomed the ‘K’ Plan as it gave great success to Kamaraj.

The speech of Kamaraj at the meeting of All India congress committee, was welcomed it with clapping their hands. Kamaraj said to them “The congress leaders should do the party works also. They should not aim at government postings. If they do the government service, they should come forward to the party works also. If the great leaders stay in the government postings only, they will lose the connection and contact with people. If they continue in the government post for longer period, they cannot know the situation and status of people in the country. To avoid these grievances, a congress leader should come forward to serve for party works. In it we can develop contact with the people the congress party will develop in the country.

After the address of Kamaraj S.K. Patil spoke and saying, “All India congress committee gave approval to this decision which was taken by congress working committee. All India congress committee to launch ‘K’ plan as early as possible. Congress party had the great responsibility to relieve Indian people from their slavery bond. After the Independence, congress party took more responsibility to relieve our country from poverty, and socio-economic backwardsness. We have to face every kind of communal riots and other indisciplines in our country. In this difficult situation Indian National Congress have a high responsibility to maintain discipline and regulation in our country. Therefore party discipline, control, regulations and unity are the important factors in our party to fulfill this responsibility successfully. But unfortunately the factional struggle and indiscipline increased within the party, we should prevent this unhealthy activities which are harmful to the growth of party. So we should walk in the path of Gandhiji to achieve these aims.

This situation encouraged the opposition parties to make a “No confidence motion in the parliament against the government of Jawaharlal Nehru for the first time on August 16, 1963. This motion was defeated in the parliament and it expressed that the congress party was no longer monopolistic and Jawaharlal Nehru more the arbitrator of national affairs. The opposition leaders like C. Rajagopalachari, Jeyaprakash Narayanan, S.M. Joshi and V.N. Gadgil severely criticised ‘K’ Plan. They pointed out that “With the exit of top ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru would assume dictatorial powers.

The foreign news and media provided supports to ‘K’ Plan as it gave Jawaharlal Nehru a free hand and fruitful and valuable shake up to the central and state administrations which are obviously suffering from a plethora of old faces and a lack of new ideas. Indian news media wondered at the K plan and showed their worry and fear about the victory of the plan.

After the working of ‘K’ plan in congress area, the supports and voluntary welcomes were decreased due to many reasons. Because the resignations of chief ministers in states and central cabinet ministers did not give the officers with their full heart. The state reignited chief minister instead of their prestige’s, They did it in their states. Bijupatnayak appointed his disciple Bran Mithras as the chief minister of Orissa. C. Gupta appointed his factional fellow Susethakirubalanias the chief minister of Assam. Competitions and struggles were found within the congress party for selecting chief ministers in states. In Tamil Nadu also R.V. Swaminathan stood in election against M. Bakthavatsalam who was selected by Kamaraj for chief minister post. But Bakthavatsalam became chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

The enthusiasm with which it had been welcomed by the central and chief ministers did not service long. The very purpose of the plan was doubted by some ministers whose resignations had been accepted by Jawaharlal Nehru. In some states this created factional dispute over who would succeed to the vacant seats. C. Subramaniam says that ministers resigned but did not fulfill the purpose for which they did so namely organisational work, mass contact, and construction programme. Since they neglected the important theme of the plan it ceased to be effective. The Kamaraj plan was soon reversed when Lal Bahadur Sastri was taken back by Jawaharlal Nehru as minister without portfolio in February 1964. Nonetheless an indirect effect of the plan was to create a path to project Sastri and Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, in the line of succession.

Whatever be its other effects it undoubtedly elevated Kamaraj to the states of national leader. After the introduction of this plan he was elected unanimously as president of the congress. He was the first national Leader who was shot to fame by his shrewd diplomacy and administrative ability.

Kamaraj chose the date 2 October, the birth date of Gandhi, for his renunciation of the chief minister post. He actually wanted to create a tradition that the leader should not occupy the ministerial post for more than ten years. Kamaraj after his resignation aimed at the revitalization of the congress in Tamil Nadu by taking an extensive tour at the village level. But the introduction of the plan had paved the way for him to the great post of congress presidentship. As a result, his service could not be narrowed to Tamil Nadu alone but was extended to the whole country.

After the resignation from chief minister posting of Tamil Nadu. Kamaraj engaged in

another important matter. The advanced age and declining health of Jawaharlal Nehru was making him think about the future of congress party and the leadership of the country. Consequently Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, the president of west Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, Sanjeeva Reddy, the Chief Minister of Andhra and Nijalingappa, the Chief Minister of Mysore met at Thirupathi on 4 October 1963 to discuss about the future plan of congress party and the problems that faced the country. They also discussed the matter who would be Prime Minister after Jawaharlal Nehru. Third group later changed into syndicate committee and played a dominant role to select Prime Minister after Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the meantime the term of office of the congress president Sanjeevaiah was drawing to a close in 1963. The leaders also discussed this matter among themselves and decided to select whom as the president. They also decided to select the prime minister after Jawaharlal Nehru. They made a decision to select the prime minister after Jawaharlal Nehru. They had a decision that never to choose Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. They wanted to select Atulya Ghosh or Kamaraj as the next All India Congress President. These leaders belonged to Non-Hindi states, later their decision in the Thirupathi meeting came into working in India.

The Congress working committee met at New Delhi on 9 October 1963. Atulya Ghosh was elected as the president of the congress and the working committee approved it unanimously. His unanimous election was announced in the All India Congress Committee meeting at Jaipur amidst the rejoicing of members. Jawaharlal Nehru attributed the election to Kamaraj's reputation, as the chief minister of Tamilnadu for nine years, who had run the government with great harmony between centre and state and ministry and party. He also praised him as the father of Kamaraj plan. Kamaraj was assented by Jawaharlal Nehru as the appropriate person to occupy president chair.

Kamaraj was the third Tamilian man who was elected to All India Congress President post, Salem Vijayaraghava Chariyar (1920) being the first and S. Srinivasa Ayyengar (1926) being the second.

The 68th Indian National Congress Conference was held on 5 January, 1964 at Bhubaneswar in Orissa under the presidency of Kamaraj. He hoisted the congress party flag, received the “Freedom Torch” and handed over to Jawaharlal Nehru. Kamaraj gave the opening speech in which he stated that basic needs of life must be made available to all and that the congress organisation alone could achieve that objective. While the Congress session was going on Jawaharlal Nehru suddenly fell ill, and he was advised to take rest. This was the first time that the congress session was carried on in the absence of Jawaharlal Nehru after independence.

Kamaraj gave his presidential address. He pointed out the various aspects and objectives of congress policy, narrated the history of the socialistic goals of the congress and hailed “Democratic Socialism” as the goal of the congress, “We hope he added “we shall also be able to establish a socialist society without class conflict.”⁴¹ He made an appeal to all those who had faith in the ideology of socialism and democracy to come together in the common task of building a new society on the basis of this ideology, instead of filtering away their energies in small groups and organisations.⁴² Regarding steps

to revitalize the organization, he declared there should be village congress committee in every village and it was the best medium of mass contact. He called upon the congressmen to practice the virtues of Mahatma Gandhi in public life and be in touch with the masses. He requested the state government to do well on the social welfare measures like free education, free health care, creation of more employment opportunities, agricultural development and old age pension. He requested all congressmen not to magnify their differentiations and not encourage open criticisms. He welcomed all the socialist minded leaders and people to join in congress party.

After the Bhubaneswar congress meeting Kamaraj decided to renew his relationships with the people of India. He went for a whirlwind tour of the rural areas of Punjab, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra, Mysore etc. The aim of the tour was creating awareness among the people about the programmes and policies of the government and to seek their support for the attainment of democratic socialism. He also took steps for an extensive tour in Tamilnadu to renew his relationship with the masses, he visited all places, met all the congressmen and addressed on public platforms. He visited 300 places, travelled 2000 miles and met one crore people and addressed on an average 20 meetings a day. This made contacts between a leader and the masses and converted him to be a Mass leader.

Jawaharlal Nehru died on 27 May 1964. A Herculean task was fell on Kamaraj's shoulder to select the next prime minister of India. Many thought that parliamentary democracy would perish and military dictatorship would be established in India after Jawaharlal Nehru following a war of succession. Growing regional and personal jealousies and disintegration were seen at that time. However, due to the shrewdness and approach of Kamaraj in national affairs, helped him to prevent such crisis in India.

Kamaraj thought that it was very important to arrive at a consensus with the members of congress party related with this matter. The congress working committee gave legal power to Kamaraj to arrive at a consensus between the members of congress. Many names such as G.L. Nanda, Jegajeevanram, Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, T.T. Krishnamachari, Jeyaprakash Narayanan and Kamaraj were suggested for the selection of prime minister postings. Kamaraj again used his genius for the selection of this dignified post by conducting an consensus method instead of contest method. Kamaraj met the chief ministers of the states, congress members of parliament and other working committee members personally and collected their option on this matter. Finally the four name such as Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gulzarilal Nanda and Indira Gandhi were considered as eligible for this post. Indira Gandhi who was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru was not prepared for a contest and prime minister post on that time. The syndicate was not in favour of Gulzarilal Nanda who was the home minister who had a willingness to contest in for prime minister post. But he had less support among the members of congress. The real contest was opened between Lal Bahadur Shastri and Morarji Desai, Biju Patnaik of Orissa, D. Sanjivaiya, former All India congress committee president, Mohanlal Sukhadhi, chief minister of Rajasthan and Jegajeevanram were the supporters of Morarji Desai. But Shastri was well known in congress party and known for his humble and loyalty to the party. Kamaraj cleverly handled this situation and met Morarji Desai on 1st June, 1964 and made him to withdraw from the contest. Though Morarji

Desai was disappointed he accepted it for the sake of party discipline.

On 2nd, June 1964, after Kamaraj's introductory speech LalBahadur was proposed by Gulzarilal Nanda and Moraji Desai seconded it. The emergence of collective leadership and the concept of consensus gave great courage to the congress. It was an approach contributed by Kamaraj at a crucial time for the nation as well as the Indian NationalCongress.

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

After the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, Kamarajrealised the need for the joint activities of congress party and ministry in affairs. So he emphasised the idea ofcollective leadership ie., close connection between the prime minister and the party president.ButLalBahadurShastriwantedtobeanindependentofpartycontrol.He began to ignore Kamaraj even as he finalized the list of his cabinet. Shastri did not consultKamarajevenintheselectionofhiscabinetministry.Kamarajfeltthatpolicy matters should be thoroughly discussed in the working committee before taking the important decisions. He also stressed that the government and party should periodically review the action taken on policy decisions. Since such review would enable the government to understand the reasons for its failure and success. But Shastri was not in favour of this review which might incur open criticism from the party. In solving the root crisis in 1965 and on the language policy he differed with Kamaraj. This resulted in the resignation of Subramniam and Alagesan, C.V. who were the Tamil ministers of the union ministry. On the advice of Kamaraj however, they withdrew their resignations and werereinstated.

In the meanwhile, Kamaraj's term as party president was rearing its end, and many in the party wished his re-election. Even the prime ministerShastri liked the continuance of Kamaraj, inspite of their differences. Since most of the leaders wanted the extension of term, the AICC working Committee wanted to amend the resolution, that was passed on October 24, 1964 which prevented the All India congresscommittee presidentandsecretariestoholdofficeformorethanonetermof 2 years. The congress working committee met at Bangalore on July 1965, and decidedtomodifytheHydrabadresolutionsoastoenablethepresidenttoholdoffice for anotherterm.

Morarji opposed this amendment which was proposed by the working committee.Becausehethoughtsuchamendmentswouldweakentheparty'srulesand its command over members. The second term of office in AICC raised the prestige and honour of Kamaraj. Kamaraj was the only person to be elected to the post consecutively in the history of the congress afterindependence.

The Indo-Pak war that broke out in 1965 again brought a national crisis. Kamaraj went to the border to raise the morale of the soldiers. Kosygin the Prime MinisterofUSSRtooktheinitiativeasamediatorctoendthearbypreparingground for peace talks at Taskant in USSR on 4 December, 1965. The famous Daskant Agreement was signed between LalBahadurShastri and president Ayubkhan of Pakistan. After this agreement Shastri died on 11 December 1965 due to a heart attack.

With the end of the eighteen months prime ministership of LalBahadurShastri, the country was once again confronted with the problem of choosing a successor, Kamaraj faced a

second challenge. The future and fate of the party and nation was in his hands. Many members of the congress working committee and the chief ministers pushed him to take the prime ministership. But Kamaraj declined the offer because the next general election was only a year away and it would necessitate work which he considered most important, "I am not for power but for the party.

To choose the successor to Lal Bahadur Shastri was both easier and more complicated for Kamaraj than choosing Jawaharlal Nehru's successor. It was more complicated because the atmosphere for consensus was not clear and it was difficult to choose from a field of equals like Nanda, Desai, Indira Gandhi, Jeggajeevan Ram and Chavan. Kamaraj analysed and assessed the merits and demerits of these contenders and concluded that Indira Gandhi was the right person for the post of Prime Minister. Kamaraj discussed this matter with the working committee. But the committee did not accept it at first. Kamaraj explained that why he favoured Indira Gandhi. Being the daughter of Nehru and having been with him for long, she knew the political situation well as could manage the affairs with tact and skill.

Nijalingappa, S.K. Patil, Krishna Menon and Veteran Congress leaders like P.C. Sen warned Kamaraj that she would one day turn against them all. But Kamaraj convinced them and made them support Indira Gandhi. On 19 January 1966, the election was held, Indira Gandhi was elected by 365 votes to 169 votes. Kamaraj's genius and diplomacy was exposed for the second time to the whole world.

Kamaraj had received invitations from many world leaders to visit their countries after Shastri's death. However, due to the domestic situation, he was not able to visit their countries. After establishing a firm government under Indira Gandhi, Kamaraj decided to visit U.S.S.R. He was accompanied by Venkataraman, the former minister for industries in the Tamil Nadu and Reddi, permanent Secretary of the All India Congress Committee. Kamaraj was the first party leader of a non-communist party from a non-communist country to visit USSR. From the Soviet Union he went to East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. He received unprecedented reception in all these countries. He also visited Ceylon and Malaysia in 1953, for the purpose of studying the problems of Indian settlers in those countries.

Kamaraj was silent and pragmatic, had expressed his horror at the declaration of emergency. "I am shocked to hear that leaders have been arrested throughout the country. This state of affairs is not good for the nation..... such an event has no parallel even under the British rule. I feel that I have been left in the jungle blind folded.

The declining health of Kamaraj was further affected by the arrest of his colleagues and close associates throughout the country. In Tamil Nadu though Kamaraj was spared, many leaders of opposition parties were arrested. He felt strongly that he had miscalculated in making Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister in 1966. He died of massive heart attack on 2 October, 1974, on the birth day of Gandhi.

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