

C. Rajagopalachari



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An Illustrious Life

Great statesman and thinker, Rajagopalachari was born in Thorapalli in the then Salem district and was educated in Central College, Bangalore and Presidency College, Madras. Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari (10 December 1878 - 25 December 1972), informally called Rajaji or C.R., was an eminent lawyer, independence activist, politician, writer, statesman and leader of the Indian National Congress who served as the last Governor General of India. He served as the Chief Minister or Premier of the Madras Presidency, Governor of West Bengal, Minister for Home Affairs of the Indian Union and Chief Minister of Madras state. He was the founder of the Swatantra Party and the first recipient of India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. Rajaji vehemently opposed the usage of nuclear weapons and was a proponent of world peace and disarmament. He was also nicknamed the Mango of Salem.

In 1900 he started a prosperous legal practise. He entered politics and was a member and later President of Salem municipality. He joined the Indian National Congress and participated in the agitations against the Rowlatt Act, the Non-cooperation Movement, the Vaikom Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience Movement. In 1930, he led the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha in response to the Dandi March and courted imprisonment. In 1937, Rajaji was elected Chief Minister or Premier

of Madras Presidency and served till 1940, when he resigned due to Britain's declaration of war against Germany. He advocated cooperation over Britain's war effort and opposed the Quit India Movement. He favoured talks with Jinnah and the Muslim League and proposed what later came to be known as the "C. R. Formula". In 1946, he was appointed Minister of Industry, Supply, Education and Finance in the interim government.

He served as the Governor of West Bengal from 1947 to 1948, Governor General of India from 1948 to 1950, Union Home Minister from 1951 to 1952 and the Chief Minister of Madras state from 1952 to 1954. He resigned from the Indian National Congress and founded the Swatantra Party, which fought against the Congress in the 1962, 1967 and 1972 elections. Rajaji was instrumental in setting up a united anti-Congress front in Madras state. This front under C. N. Annadurai captured power in the 1967 elections.

Rajaji was an accomplished writer and made lasting contributions to Indian English literature. He is also credited with composition of the song *Kurai Onrum Illai* set in Carnatic music. He pioneered temperance and temple entry movements in India and advocated Dalit upliftment. Rajaji has been criticised for introducing the compulsory study of Hindi and the Hereditary Education Policy in Tamil Nadu. Critics have often attributed his pre-eminence in politics to his being a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Rajaji was described by Gandhi as the "keeper of my conscience".

Family Background

Rajaji married Alamelu Mangamma in 1897. The couple had four children — two sons and two daughters. Mangamma died in 1916 and Rajaji took the sole responsibility of taking care of his children. Rajaji's son C. R. Narasimhan was elected to the Lok Sabha from Krishnagiri in the 1952 and 1957 elections and served as a Member of Parliament for Krishnagiri from 1952 to 1962. He later wrote a biography of Rajaji. Rajaji's daughter Lakshmi was married to Devdas Gandhi, son of Mahatma Gandhi. His grandsons include biographer Rajmohan Gandhi, philosopher Ramchandra Gandhi and former governor of West Bengal Gopalkrishna Gandhi.

Early Life

Rajagopalachari was born to Chakravarti Venkatarya Iyengar and Singaramma on 10 December 1878 in a devout Iyengar family of Thorapalli in the Madras Presidency. Chakravarti Iyengar was the *munsiff* of Thorapalli. According to popular folklore, while Rajaji was a child, an astrologer told his parents that their child would have the "fortunes of a King, a guru, an exile and an outcaste. The people will worship him; they will also reject him. He will sit on an Emperor's throne; he will live in a poor man's hut."

Rajaji attended school in Hosur and college in Madras and Bangalore. He graduated in arts from Central College, Bangalore in 1897, and in law from the Presidency College, Madras in 1897. He started practising as a lawyer in 1900. When in Salem, Rajaji showed keen interest in social and political affairs.

Early Career

Rajagopalachari was born on 10 December 1878 at Torrapalli in Hasur Taluk of Salem district of the Madras Presidency. The family traced its origin from the Srivaishnava community of Brahmins. His father, Chakravarthi Iyengar was the Munsiff of Torrapalli. He was very keen to impart the best possible education to his son. Rajaji had his early education in Hosur. Later on, he joined the Central College, Bangalore. He took his B.A. degree in 1897 and was sent to Madras to study law. He was awarded the Bachelor Degree in Law in 1899, at the age of twenty-one and commenced his legal practice at Salem.

He was married when he was a student in the Law College. As a lawyer, he did not take him much time to be a prominent lawyer in his region. His income increased day by day. He, now, began to take part in the socio-political activities of his region by addressing several meetings attended by both educated and uneducated people. He was also in touch with the national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, C. R. Das and others. At this point of time, he began to attend the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress where he represented as a prominent delegate from the Madras Presidency.

He was very humble in his statements. He did not make a show of his capabilities. Once he opined thus: 'I have no experience in governing a country. I have some experience in conducting cases in courts. That experience is of no use in governing the country. The habit of speaking for a party is of no use in administration. My twenty years' experience as a lawyer at the war is of no use to me'.

He also did the editing work of *Young India*. He also launched the programme of prohibition in 1928. Indeed his *Ashram* at Pudukalayam became a place of pilgrimage for several people of the region. The Khaddar depot was a useful feeder for the masses.

At the call of Mahatma Gandhi for Non-cooperation Movement, he at first swore not to enter the courts. He also pulled out his two sons in college, according to the boycott of schools and colleges programme, with the help of Mahatma Gandhi, he organised the All India Spinners Association, Allied to it was the Khadi Board. He also established an Ashram to propagate the Gandhian ideology. He asked the people around him to spin Khadi.

He was one of the signatories to the famous manifesto of October 4, 1921, declaring that it was the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the British Government and find some other means of livelihood.

At Salem he made himself busy in public and literary work. He was one of the founders of the Salem Literary Society and very often attended its meetings and participated in the deliberations. Thus, he developed a new social and political ideology which had deep linkage with the life of a common Indian. He did not believe in the caste barriers. He even recommended scholarships to the promising untouchable students.

He was a modest person and lived a simple life. He was a staunch believer in the *karma* theory. He has been called a true *karma yogin*, doing his duty as was assigned to him. He indeed was a practical man and firmly believed in action — an action mostly for the welfare of the masses of our country.

He was a very fine writer. He wrote Tamil books on Socrates and Marcus Auclins, and in English the Mahabharata, the Mayana

and upanishad and fables and short stories. His commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita are regarded as outstanding on the subject.

In the following years, when the Swaraj Party became the dominant wing of the Congress. Rajaji devoted himself to the constructive work such as Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability, the Swadeshi movement and prohibition.

He was also instrumental in evolving the Yervada Pact between the representatives of the Hindu conference and those of the depressed classes.

Indian Independence Movement

Rajaji's interest in public affairs and politics began when he was elected to the Salem municipal government. In the early-1900s, he was inspired by Indian radical Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In 1917, Rajaji was elected Chairman of the Salem municipality. As Chairman of the Salem municipality, he was responsible for the election of the first Dalit member of the Salem municipality. During this time, Rajaji joined the Indian National Congress and entered the Indian independence movement. In 1908, he defended Indian freedom fighter P. Varadarajulu Naidu from the charges of sedition levelled against him. He participated in the agitations against the Rowlatt Act in 1919. Rajaji was a close friend of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai. He was also highly admired by Indian independence activists Annie Besant and C. Vijayaraghavachariar.

When Mahatma Gandhi entered the Indian independence movement in 1919, Rajaji followed him. He participated in the Non-cooperation Movement and gave up his profession as a lawyer. In 1921, he was elected to the Congress Working Committee and served as the General Secretary of the party.

When the Indian National Congress split in 1923, Rajaji was a member of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee. He supported the old guard and opposed the council entry programme of the Swarajists.

Rajaji was one of Gandhi's chief lieutenants during the Vaikom Satyagraha. It was during this time, that E. V. Ramaswamy functioned as a Congress member under Rajaji's leadership. The two later became close friends and remained so till the end despite their political rivalry.

In the early-1930s, Rajaji emerged as one of the foremost leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress. When Mahatma Gandhi organised the Dandi march in 1930, Rajaji broke the salt laws at Vedaranyam near Nagapattinam along with Sardar Vedaratnam and suffered imprisonment. Rajaji was subsequently elected President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. When the Government of India Act was enacted in 1935, Rajaji was instrumental in getting the Indian National Congress to participate in the general elections.

Madras Presidency

The Indian National Congress was elected to power in 1937 election for the first time in Madras Presidency (also called Madras Province), a province of British India; with the exception of the six years when Madras was in a state of Emergency, ruled the Presidency until India became independent on 15 August 1947. Rajagopalachari was the first Chief Minister of Madras Presidency from the Congress party.

Council of Ministers in Rajagopalachari's Cabinet (15 July 1937 - 29 October 1939):

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Portfolio</i>
C. Rajagopalachari	Chief Minister, Public and Finance
T. Prakasam	Revenue
P. Subbarayan	Law and Education
V. V. Giri	Labour and Industries
Bezawada Gopala Reddy	Local Administration
T. S. S. Rajan	Public Health and Religious Endowments
Maulana Yakub Hasan Sait	Public Works
V. I. Munuswamy Pillai	Agriculture and Rural Development
S. Ramanathan Pillai	Public Information and Administration Reports
Kongattil Raman Menon	Courts and Prisons

On 7 January 1939, Raman Menon died and C. J. Varkey,

Chankath was inducted into the Cabinet. Education portfolio was transferred from Subbarayan to Varkey and instead Subbarayan was given additional charge of Courts and Prisons.

Rajagopalachari issued the Temple Entry Authorisation and Indemnity Act 1939 by which restrictions were removed on Dalits and Shanars entering Hindu temples. In the same year, the Meenakshi temple at Madurai was also opened to the Dalits and Shanars. Rajaji also issued the Agricultural Debt Relief Act in March 1938 to ease the burden of debt on the peasants of the province.

Rajaji also introduced prohibition, and also a sales tax to compensate for the loss of government revenue that resulted from prohibition. Because of the revenue decline resulting from prohibition the Provincial Government shut down hundreds of government-run primary schools. Rajaji's political opponents alleged that this decision deprived many low-caste and Dalit students of their education. Rajaji's opponents also assigned casteist motives to his government's implementation of Gandhi's Wardha scheme into the education system.

Rajagopalachari's rule is largely remembered however for compulsory introduction of Hindi in educational institutions, which made him highly unpopular. This measure sparked off widespread anti-Hindi protests, which led to violence in some places. Over 1,200 men, women and children were jailed for participating in these protests. Two protesters, Thalamuthu Nadar and Natarasan, were killed. In 1940, Congress ministers resigned protesting the declaration of war on Germany without their consent, and the Governor took over the reins of the administration. The unpopular law was eventually repealed by the Governor of Madras on 21 February 1940. Despite the numerous shortcomings, Madras under Rajagopalachari was still regarded as the best administered province in British India.

Second World War

As soon as the Second World War broke out Rajaji resigned as Premier along with other members of his Cabinet to protest the declaration of war by the Viceroy of India. Rajaji was arrested in

December 1940 in accordance with the Defence of India rules and sentenced to one-year in prison. However, subsequently Rajaji differed in opinion over opposition to British war effort. He opposed the Quit India Movement that Gandhi had initiated in 1942 to pressure the British government to grant independence, and instead advocated dialogue with the British. He reasoned that passivity and neutrality would be harmful to India's interests when the country was threatened with invasion. He also advocated dialogue with the Muslim League, which was demanding the partition of India. He resigned from the party and the assembly following differences over resolutions passed by the Madras Congress legislative party and with the leader of the Madras provincial Congress K. Kamaraj.

With the end of the war came in 1945, elections were held in the Madras Presidency in 1946. Kamaraj, the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee backed Tanguturi Prakasam as the Chief Ministerial candidate to prevent Rajaji from coming to power. Rajaji, however, did not contest the elections and Prakasam was elected.

In the last years of the war, Rajaji was instrumental in negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah. In 1944, he proposed a solution to the Indian Constitutional tangle. In the same year, Rajaji proposed that 55 per cent be the "absolute majority" threshold for deciding whether a district should be a part of India or Pakistan, triggering a huge controversy among nationalists.

From 1946 to 1947, Rajaji served as the Minister for Industry, Supply, Education and Finance in the Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Governor of West Bengal

When India attained independence on 15 August 1947, the British province of Bengal was divided into West Bengal and East Bengal, with West Bengal becoming part of India and East Bengal part of Pakistan. With the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajaji was appointed the first Governor of West Bengal.

Rajaji was disliked by Bengalis for his criticism of Subhash Chandra Bose during the 1938 Tripuri Congress session. His

appointment was unsuccessfully opposed by Subhash's brother Sarat Chandra Bose. During his tenure as Governor, Rajaji's priorities were dealing with refugees and bringing peace and stability in the aftermath of the Calcutta riots. He declared his commitment to neutrality and justice at a meeting of Muslim businessmen: "Whatever may be my defects or lapses, let me assure you that I shall never disfigure my life with any deliberate acts of injustice to any community whatsoever." Rajaji was also strongly opposed to proposals to include areas from Bihar and Orissa in the province of West Bengal.

To one such proposal by the editor of an important newspaper, he replied: "I see that you are not able to restrain the policy of agitation over inter-provincial boundaries. It is easy to yield to current pressure of opinion and it is difficult to impose on enthusiastic people any policy of restraint. But I earnestly plead that we should do all we can to prevent ill-will from hardening into a chronic disorder. We have enough ill-will and prejudice to cope with. Must we hasten to create further fissiparous forces?" Rajaji was highly regarded and respected by Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and the state Cabinet.

Governor General of India

From 10 November 1947 to 24 November 1947, Rajaji served as Acting Governor General of India in the absence of Lord Mountbatten of Burma, who was on leave in England to attend the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Mountbatten's nephew Prince Philip. Rajaji led a very simple life in the viceregal palace, washing his clothes and polishing his own shoes. Mountbatten was so impressed with Rajaji's abilities that when he was to leave India in June 1948 Rajaji was his second choice to succeed him after Vallabhbhai Patel. Rajaji was eventually chosen as the Governor General when Nehru disagreed with Mountbatten's first choice, as did Patel himself. Rajaji was initially hesitant but accepted when Nehru wrote to him, "I hope you will not disappoint us. We want you to help us in many ways. The burden on some of us is more than we can carry." Rajaji served as Governor General of India from June 1948 to 26 January 1950 and was not only the last Governor General of India but the only Indian Governor General of India.

By the end of the year 1949, it was assumed that Rajaji, already Governor General, would continue as President. Backed by Nehru, Rajaji wanted to stand for the presidential election but later withdrew, due to the opposition of a section of the Indian National Congress mostly made up of North Indians who were concerned about Rajaji's non-participation during the Quit India Movement.

Union Home Minister

In 1950 Rajaji joined the Union Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, at Nehru's invitation. In the Union Cabinet, Rajaji served as a buffer between Nehru and Home Minister Patel and occasionally, offered to mediate between the two. Finally, with Patel's death on December 15, 1950, Rajaji was put in charge of Home Affairs, serving as the country's Home Minister for nearly 10 months. He warned Nehru about the expansionist designs of China and expressed regret over the Tibet problem, his views being shared with his predecessor Sardar Patel. He also expressed concern over demands made to establish new linguistically-based states, arguing that they would generate differences amongst the people.

By the end of 1951, the differences between Nehru and Rajaji came to the fore. While Nehru perceived the Hindu Mahasabha to be the greatest threat to the nascent republic, Rajaji held the opinion that the Communists posed the greatest danger to the nation. Rajaji also strongly opposed Nehru's decision to commute the death sentences awarded to those involved in the Telengana uprising and his strong pro-Soviet leanings. Tired of being persistently overruled by Nehru in making critical decisions, Rajaji submitted his resignation on "grounds of ill-health" and returned to Madras.

Madras State

In the 1952 elections, the Indian National Congress was reduced to a minority in the Madras state assembly, and a coalition led by the Communist Party of India won most of the seats in the state. Though Rajaji had not participated in the elections, the

governor Sri Prakasa appointed him as the Chief Minister after nominating him to the Madras Legislative Council without consulting either the Indian Prime Minister Nehru or the ministers in the Madras state Cabinet. Rajaji was able to prove his majority by luring MLAs from opposition parties to join the Indian National Congress. Nehru was furious and wrote to Rajaji that "the one thing we must avoid giving is the impression that we stick to office and we want to keep others out at all costs." Rajaji, however, refused to contest a by-election and remained an unelected member.

Council of Ministers in Rajagopalachari's Cabinet (10 April 1952 - 13 April 1954):

Minister	Portfolio
C. Rajagopalachari	Chief Minister, Public and Police Affairs
A. B. Shetty	Health
C. Subramaniam	Finance, Food and Elections
K. Venkataswamy Naidu	Religious Endowments and Registration
N. Ranga Reddi	Public Works
M. V. Krishna Rao	Education, Harijan Uplift and Information
V. C. Palanisami Gounder	Prohibition
U. Krishna Rao	Industries, Labour, Motor Transport, Railways, Posts, Telegraphs and Civil Aviation
R. Nagana Gowda	Agriculture, Forests, veterinary, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Cinchona
N. Sankara Reddi	Local Administration
M. A. Manickavelu Naicker	Land Revenue
K. P. Kuttikrishnan Nair	Courts, Prisons and Legal Department
Raja Sri Shanmuga Rajeswara Sethupathi	House Rent Control
S. B. B. Pattabirama Rao	Rural Welfare, Commercial Taxes and Scheduled areas

The Changes

Ministers belonging to Bellary and Andhra constituencies (Naganna Gowda, Sankara Reddi, Pattabirama Rao, Sanjeevayya and Ranga Reddi) stepped down on 30 September 1953, a day before Andhra split to form a separate state. The portfolios of Agriculture, Forests, Fisheries, Cinchona, Rural Welfare, Community Projects and National Extension Schemes were handed over to M. Bhaktavatsalam on October 9, 1953. Jothi Venkatachalam was made minister for Prohibition and Women's Welfare. K. Rajaram Naidu became the Minister for Local Administration. C. Subramaniam was given the additional portfolios of education, information and publicity. V. C. Palaniswamy Gounder was put in charge of Veterinary, Animal Husbandry and Harijan welfare.

During Rajaji's tenure as Chief Minister, a powerful movement for a separate Andhra State comprising the Telugu-speaking districts of the Madras State, gained foothold. On October 19, 1952, an Indian independence activist and social worker from Madras named Potti Sriramulu embarked on a fast unto death demanding a separate Andhra state for Telugu-speaking people and the inclusion of Madras city in it. Rajaji remained unmoved by Sriramulu's fast and refused to intervene. Sriramulu eventually died on December 15, 1952 after fasting for days triggering riots in Madras city and the Telugu-speaking districts of the state. Initially, both Rajaji and Prime Minister Nehru were against the creation of linguistic states but when the law and order situation in the state grew worse, both were forced to accept the demands. Andhra State was created on October 1, 1953 out of the Telugu-speaking districts of Madras, with Kurnool as its capital. However, the boundaries of the new state were determined by a commission which decided against the inclusion of Madras city in it. Though the commission's report suggested the option of having Madras as the temporary capital of Andhra State for the smooth partitioning of the assets and the secretariat, Rajaji refused to allow Andhra State to have Madras even for a day.

On May 31, 1952, Rajaji put an end to the rationing of sugar.

He followed it by abolishing control over food supplies on June 5, 1952. He also introduced measures to regulate the functioning of universities in the state. In 1953, Rajaji introduced a new education scheme known as the Modified System of Elementary Education according to which, schooling hours for elementary school students were reduced to three per day. The students were expected to learn the family vocation at home during the remainder of the day. This scheme was sharply criticised and evoked strong protests from Dravidian parties. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam dubbed the scheme as *Kula Kalvi Thittam* or Hereditary Education Policy and attempted to organise massive demonstrations outside Rajaji's house on 13th and 14th July 1953. The rising unpopularity of the Rajaji government forced K. Kamaraj to withdraw his support to Rajaji. On March 26, 1954, Rajaji resigned as President of the Madras Legislature Congress Party thereby precipitating new elections. During the elections held on March 31, 1954, Rajaji fielded C. Subramaniam against Kamaraj. But Subramaniam could garner only 41 votes to Kamaraj's 93 and lost the elections. Rajaji eventually resigned as Chief Minister on April 13, 1954, explaining that his decision was caused by poor health.

Formation of Swatantra Party

Rajaji left the Indian National Congress and along with a few other dissidents, organised the Congress Reform Committee (CRC) in January 1957. K. S. Venkatakrishna Reddiar was elected President. The party fielded candidates in 55 constituencies in the 1957 state assembly elections and emerged as the second largest party winning 13 seats. The Congress Reform Committee also contested 12 Lok Sabha seats during the 1957 Indian elections. It was converted into a full-fledged political party and renamed as the Indian National Democratic Congress at a state conference held in Madurai on September 28-29, 1957.

On June 4, 1959, at a meeting held in Madras, Rajaji, along with Vaidya and Minoo Masani, announced the founding of the Swatantra Party.

In 1956, Rajaji resigned from the Indian National Congress and formed the Congress Reform Committee along with some of

his followers. He came to an understanding with his former adversary, Forward Bloc leader U. Muthuramalingam Thevar, in forming an anti-Congress front. The two parties contested the elections jointly. In September 1956, the Congress Reform Committee was renamed the Indian National Democratic Congress. In July 1957, Rajaji created the Swatantra Party. He attacked the license-permit Raj, the complex post-World War Two bureaucracy introduced by Nehru's government that regulated business activity, fearing its potential for corruption and stagnation notwithstanding public support for Nehru's government. He wrote in his newspaper *Swarajya*.

Encouraging competition in industry and giving incentives for higher production are good for the public as well as for the private interests. I want an India where talent and energy can find scope for play without having to cringe and obtain special individual permission from officials and ministers, and where their efforts will be judged by the open market in India and abroad.... I want the inefficiency of public management to go where the competitive economy of private management can look after affairs.... I want the corruptions of the permit-license-raj to go.... I want the officials appointed to administer laws and policies to be free from pressures of the bosses of the ruling party, and gradually restored back to the standards of fearless honesty which they once maintained.... I want real equal opportunities for all and no private monopolies created by the permit-license raj.... I want the money power of big business to be isolated from politics.... I want an India where dharma once again rules the hearts of men and not greed.

Prominent individuals affiliated with the Swatantra Party included K. M. Munshi, Prof. N.G. Ranga, Minoo Masani, H. M. Patel, V. P. Menon and Maharani Gayatri Devi, Queen of Jaipur.

Beginning in the early-1960s the Congress base in Madras state began to erode. The decline was partly due to the entry of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam into the political arena, and partly due to increasing corruption in the Congress. Rajaji capitalised on the weakness of his adversary and strengthened the Swatantra Party.

Rajaji criticised India's use of military force against Goa. Referring to India's acts of international diplomacy, he said that

India "has totally lost the moral power to raise her voice against the use of military power."

Anti-Hindi Agitations in Tamil Nadu

After independence the Indian government had declared in its Constitution that Hindi was to be the official language of the country, along with English, but because of objections in non-Hindi areas had allowed for a fifteen-year period for the requirement to be phased in. From 26 January 1965 onwards, Hindi was to be made the sole official language of the Indian Union and people in non-Hindi speaking regions were compelled to learn Hindi. This was vehemently opposed and just before Republic Day, severe anti-Hindi revolts broke out in Madras State. Rajaji reversed his earlier position in support of Hindi and took a strongly anti-Hindi stand in support of the protests. On 17 January 1965, he convened the Madras state anti-Hindi conference in Tiruchirapalli. He angrily declared that the Part XVII of the Constitution of India which declared that Hindi was the official language should "be heaved and thrown into the Arabian Sea."

1967 Elections

In 1967 the fourth general elections were held in Madras state. At the age of 89, Rajaji worked to forge a united opposition to the Indian National Congress by forming an alliance between the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Swatantra Party and the Forward Bloc. The Congress party was defeated in its first defeat in Madras in 30 years as the coalition led by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was elected to power. C. N. Annadurai became Chief Minister of Madras state, serving from 1967 to 1969. During this period he changed the name of the state to Tamil Nadu and introduced reforms in the administration. Annadurai died in 1969 and was succeeded by M. Karunanidhi.

The Swatantra party also did well in elections in other states and to the Lok Sabha, the directly elected lower house of the Parliament of India. It won 45 Lok Sabha members in the 1967 general elections and emerged as the single largest opposition party. It was the principal opposition party in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. It formed a coalition government in Orissa. It also

had a significant presence in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. In the mid-1960s it won nearly 207 legislative assembly seats all over India, compared to 153 for the Communists, 149 for the socialists and 115 for the Jan Sangh. But the Party started to disintegrate after the death of Rajaji. It finally merged with Charan Singh's Bharatiya Lok Dal in 1974.

Later Years and Demise

In the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, Rajaji organised a united right-wing opposition to Indira Gandhi. The opposition once again created a major impact as it had during the 1967 elections. However, the Indian National Congress government was left unscathed and its majority had considerably increased compared to the 1967 elections, in large part because of the impact of Gandhi's *Garibi Hatao* anti-poverty programme. In his later years, Rajaji was opposed to the repeal of prohibition in Tamil Nadu by the Karunanidhi government. As a result, the Swatantra Party withdrew its support for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam during the 1972 state elections and Rajaji strongly opposed some of the government's policies.

By November 1972, Rajaji's health began to decline. On 17 December 1972, a week after celebrating his 94th birthday, Rajaji was admitted to General Hospital with uraemia, dehydration and urinary infection. At hospital, he was visited by Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, V. R. Nedunchezhiyan, V. V. Giri, Periyar and other state and national leaders. Rajaji's condition deteriorated in the following days as he frequently lost consciousness. Rajaji died at 5:44 p.m. on 25 December 1972 at the age of 94. His son C. R. Narasimhan was beside him at the time of his death reading to him verses from a Hindu holy book.

Contributions to Literature and Music

Rajaji was an accomplished writer both in his mother tongue Tamil as well as English. He was the founder of the Salem Literary Society and regularly participated in its meetings. In 1922, he published a book *Siraiyil Tavam* (Meditation in jail) which was a day-to-day diary about his first imprisonment from 21 December

1921 to 20 March 1922.

In 1916, Rajaji started the Tamil Scientific Terms Society. This society coined new words in Tamil for terms connected to botany, chemistry, physics, astronomy and mathematics. At about the same time, he called for Tamil to be introduced as the medium of instruction in schools.

In 1951, Rajaji wrote an abridged retelling of the Mahabharata in English, followed by one of the Ramayana in 1957. Earlier, in 1955, he had translated Kambar's Tamil Ramayana into English. In 1965, he translated the Thirukkural into English. He also wrote books on the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, Socrates, and Marcus Aurelius in English. Rajaji often regarded his literary works as the best service he had rendered to the people. In 1958, he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for Tamil for his retelling of the Ramayana - *Chakravarti Thirumagan..* Rajaji was one of the founders of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an organisation dedicated to the promotion of education and Indian culture.

Apart from his literary works, Rajaji also composed a devotional song *Kurai Onrum Illai* devoted to Lord Krishna. This song was set to music and is a regular in most Carnatic concerts. Rajaji composed a benediction hymn which was sung by M. S. Subbulakshmi at the United Nations General Assembly in 1967.

Legacy

In 1954 while Richard Nixon, then Vice-President of the United States, was undertaking a nineteen-country Asian trip he was lectured by Rajaji on the consuming emotional quality of nuclear weapons. They discussed spiritual life, particularly reincarnation and predestination. Nixon filled three pages of notes recording what Rajaji told him, claiming in his memoirs thirty-six years later that the afternoon "had such a dramatic effect on me that I used many of his thoughts in my speeches over the next several years."

While on a tour to the United States of America as a member of the Gandhi Peace Foundation delegation, Rajaji called upon American President John F. Kennedy in the White House in September 1962. Rajaji explained to Kennedy the dangers of embarking on an arms race, even one which the US could win.

At the end of the meeting President Kennedy remarked "This meeting had the most civilizing influence on me. Seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision, clarity and elegance of language".

E. M. S. Namboodiripad, a prominent Communist Party leader, once remarked that Rajaji was the Congress leader he respected the most despite the fact he was also someone with whom he differed the most. Periyar, one of Rajaji's foremost political rivals remarked that Rajaji was "a leader unique and unequalled, who lived and worked for high ideals". On his death, condolences poured in from all corners of the country. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India remarked:

Mr. Rajagopalachari was one of the makers of new India, a sincere patriot, a man whose penetrating intellect and moral sense added depth to national affairs. His analysis, his anticipation, his administrative acumen and his courage to steer an unpopular course if he felt the need, marked him as a statesman and made an impact on the national history at several crucial junctures. He had held the highest positions and lent distinction to every office.

– *Swarajya*, 27 January 1973

Rajaji was regarded as a pioneer of social reform. He issued temple entry proclamations in the Madras Presidency and worked towards the upliftment of Dalits. He played a pivotal role in the conclusion of the Poona Pact between B. R. Ambedkar and the Indian National Congress and spearheaded the Mahabal Temple Entry in 1938. He was a staunch advocate of prohibition and was elected Secretary of the Prohibition League of India in 1930.

When elected as Premier of Madras Presidency, he introduced prohibition all over the province. Prohibition was in vogue all over the province until its removal by M. Karunanidhi over thirty years later. Rajaji was also an active member of the All India Spinners Association.

Rajaji is also remembered for his literary contributions, some of which are considered modern-day classics. He also frequently wrote articles for *Kalki* and his own journal *Swarajya*.

Richard Casey, the Governor of Bengal from 1944 to 1946, regarded Rajaji as the wisest man in India. The best possible tribute to Rajaji was from Mahatma Gandhi who referred to him as the “keeper of my conscience”.

Criticism

Despite the fact that Rajaji was considered to be one of the most able statesmen in the national arena, his provincial and then, state administrations are believed to have fared badly. Critics opine that he completely failed to gauge the thoughts and feelings of the masses. His introduction of Hindi and the Hereditary Education Policy have been the target of extensive criticism. His anti-reactionary stance during the Quit Indian Movement and his “C. R. Formula” angered most of his colleagues in the Indian National Congress. Alluding to Rajaji, Sarojini Naidu, who was never on good terms with him, once remarked that ‘the Madras fox was a dry logical Adi Shankaracharya while Nehru was the noble, compassionate Buddha’.

Although Rajaji’s popularity at the regional level fluctuated greatly, it is believed that he was able to exercise his stranglehold over provincial politics mainly because he was favoured by national leaders as Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. Critics feel that when the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee K. Kamaraj and a majority of the provincial leaders turned against him in the 1940s, Rajaji clung on to a position of influence in regional politics through support from his colleagues at the Centre.

Rajaji has always been the archetype of the Tamil Brahmin nemesis of the Dravidian movement. Deeply religious and a pious Hindu and follower of the Vedas and Upanishads, he was accused of being pro-Sanskrit and pro-Hindi, a stigma which Rajaji found difficult to erase despite his vehement protests against the imposition of Hindi during the Madras anti-Hindi agitations of 1965. He was also accused of attempting to heavily Sanskritise Tamil vocabulary through the inclusion of a large number of Sanskrit words in his writings. His Hereditary Education Policy was seen as an attempt to reinforce Varnashrama dharma. His Indian nationalist and anti-secessionist leanings formed the inspiration for Periyar’s coining of the term “Brahmin-Bania combine”.