

LINGUISTIC POLICY OF DMK FROM 1949 – 1956

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The DMK concentrating on reformative politics in Tamil Nadu during 1949-56. Language strategists are those figures who innovate prudently to promote linguistic interests. As a basic strategy the DMK preached the antiquity and achievements of the distant past of the Tamils. An ethnic group becomes a nationality when it has an image of its collective past and when its members are aware of and responsive to that image. The DMK men used to enter into villages and towns with microphone and amplifiers and create a festive climate by drapery, decoration of red and black party flags, and playing cinema records before they started their sermons. They would tell the people very seriously with all sincerity that the local people were the honourable sons and daughters of those great grand ancestors who lived in affluence and that their ancient rulers were great kings, seamen, conquerors but never intending to rule other people. In a society which believed in untouchability, they went to address the local gathering, they used to dine with the local leaders. In the party, they developed family-like relationships. The leaders were treated as elder brothers. The party men who developed the necessary oratorical talent could exaggerate the prevailing state of affairs. They would shed tears to narrate the sufferings of the people. The cause for this situation was invariably directed to the Congress and the north Indian Aryans. From this, they inferred that only by secession could the Tamil people regain their lost glory. More than twenty-five periodicals propagated the DMK ideology between 1950 and 1965. Though many were short-lived, they did effective propaganda through fascinating writings. Among them, the *Murasoli* still continues. These periodicals uphold not only the party programme and ideas but also the eminence of Tamil language and culture in their own style and presentation. The list of periodicals and editors is as follows:

DMK Periodicals in Tamil (1950-1965)

	Periodicals	Editors
1	Dravidanadu	C.N. Annadurai
2	Nam Nadu	C.N. Annadurai
3	Kanchi	C.N. Annadurai
4	Murasoli	M. Karunanidhi
5	Porval	Kanchi Manimozhiyar
6	Kuil	Bharathidasan
7	Thozhan	A.P. Janarthanam

8	Dravidan	N.V. Natarajan
9	Kathiravan	M. Selvarajan
10	Thamizh Sudar	M.S. Elamurugu
11	Malaimani	M. Karunanidhi
12	Manram	Era. Nedunchezian
13	Puthuvazhvu	K. Anbazhgan
14	Thenral	Kannadasan
15	Thennaham	K.A. Mathiyazhagan
16	Theechudar	C.P. Chittrarasu
17	Theepori	C.P. Chittrarasu
18	Thani Arasu	A.V.P. Asaithambi
19	Sama Neethi	Erode Chinnasamy
20	Mutharam	M. Karunanidhi
21	Arappor	Rama Arangannal
22	Vinthiam	K. Manoharan
23	Thambi	Thillai Villalan
24	Munnetra Murasu	P. Ramasamy
25	Kilarchi	Era. Su. Thangapazham
26	Kanchi	C. Chittibabu

The DMK periodicals were widely read not only urban areas but also in villages. Reading rooms were opened by the volunteers. Posters with catching slogans were specially designed for the DMK. The DMK periodicals were widely read than the DK periodicals during 1960s. However, the DK periodicals such as, *Kudi Arasu*, *Dravidan*, *Viduthalai*, *Pakutharivu* were also read by the DMK men. These periodicals provided rational outlook and criticized the Brahmanism and the policies of the Congress. They glorified the Pongal festival and Tamil scholars. *Thirukkural*, *Silappathikaram* and Sangam literature were glorified. The *Kamba Ramayanam* and *Mahabharatam* were condemned. Their Tamil

propaganda skillfully indoctrinated the illiterate mass. Parodies of the Ramayan, known as *Keemayana*, were staged at the height of the Dravidian Movement. At the request of Periyar, Pulavar Kuzhanthai wrote a counter-epic, *Ravana Kaviyam*, in 1946. The then Madras government banned it in 1948. Annadurai also revealed several illusions created by the Brahmins in his *Arya Mayai*.

Pre-Independence Anti-Hindi Agitations

Hindi was first recommended to be an apt language for official purposes in India by a committee headed by Motilal Nehru in 1928. This move was opposed by people and politicians of Tamil Nadu, since they considered that it would make them second class citizens when compared to that of native Hindi speaking North Indians.¹³ When the Congress party assuming the power in Tamil Nadu, C.Ragajopalachariar led the congress ministry in the Madras Presidency on July 14, 1937. Then he introduced the compulsory study of Hindi in the first three forms of High School.¹⁴ Rajagopalachari emphasized the uniqueness of Hindi as the only language suitable to become the common language of the country.

In an equally unilateral way, he announced that the Government would seek to introduce Hindi as a compulsory language for school children in the Madras presidency. One of the Dravidian movement leaders like Periyar criticized that the compulsory Hindi language would affect the Non-Brahmin students of Tamil Nadu. Periyar had a very strong opinion that Hindi is neither helpful to the advancement of knowledge nor to the development of human growth.

Rajagopalachari had to introduce the study of compulsory Hindi in one hundred and twenty five schools from sixth to eighth standards in the Madras Presidency. He had to pledge of two reasons, first, he was committed to implement the congress party's language policy and second, it would be easy to the southerners for getting job at the all-India level. With knowledge of Hindustani, he said that the boys and girls can find employment and opportunities of service throughout India more easily than they do now and could share in the social and public activities all over India. To implement this scheme successfully, the Government allocated an additional sum of Rs.20,000 specially for the salary of Hindi teachers in that year's budget. The Government also published the textbooks for Hindustani class.

The Madras District congress committee passed a resolution demanding that Hindi be made optional. It was proposed by M.P.Sivagnanam, the secretary of the Madras District Committee and supported by some prominent members like P. Gopalarathinam, Parali Nellaiyappar and others. Ananda Vikatan described Rajagopalachari's act on the Introduction of compulsory Hindi in Tamil Nadu as the greatest of all his services.

The mere proposal to introduce Hindi came in for criticism from all sections of the people; the politicians, the academics and the Tamil scholars. The Anti-Hindi movement gained momentum when Tamil scholars cutting across all political and communal difference, came out in the open and expressed their opinions about the harm that Hindi might cause to Tamil language. In Thanjavur, the Karandai Tamil Sangam organised a meeting to protest against the introduction of compulsory Hindi on August 27, 1937.

In the Madras Presidency, many prominent members like Dr.Varadarajulu Naidu, Thiru. Vi. Ka., N.V. Natarajan, George Jacob, P.K.Vinayakam and others opposed the introduction of compulsory Hindi. At Madras, Maraimalai Adigal, a Tamil scholar, addressed an anti-Hindi meeting on October 14, 1937. In his presidential address he gave irrefutable reasons for opposing Hindi in Tamil Nadu. Following his speech, several scholars like S.Somasundara Bharathi, Annadurai, M.C. Rajah, Diwan Bahadur Srinivasan and others spoke on the need for safeguarding the interests of Tamil.

When the provincial Tamil conference was held at Tiruchirappalli on December 26, 1937, Somasundara Bharathi who was Professor of Tamil, Annamalai University said that the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory subject in school was to be condemned. Then the Tamilian Association convened

an Anti-Hindi conference at Conjeevaram on February 27, 1938. M.Krishna Nair inaugurated the conference and remarked that “We hate, condemn and oppose the act of imposing Hindi compulsorily”.

In a discussion in the Legislative Assembly in March 1938, Muthaiah Chettiar made a forceful plea against the imposition of Hindi as a compulsory subject. Justice party leaders like A. T. Pannerselvam, K. V. Reddi Naidu, Uma Maheswaram Pillai, and others also criticized the introduction of compulsory Hindi.¹⁸ The Hindi language imposition was opposed by all sections of the people like Justicites, the Muslim League, the Self-Respecters and the scheduled castes federation.

While arrangements for the Anti-Hindi Movement were in progress, Periyar wrote a series of inflammatory editorials in Kudi Arasu. It urged every pure blooded Tamilian to rise against the Aryan menace. Periyar undertook a tour of the Tamil Districts and he addressed several Anti-Hindi meetings. For example, from August 19 to 21, 1937, he addressed 29 public meetings in Salem district. His speeches delivered at these meetings were published in Kudi Arasu, Viduthalai and Justice which gave an impression that he was the virtual leader of the Anti-Hindi Movement.

During the Anti-Hindi agitation, Rajagopalachari was a law unto himself. He invoked the Criminal Law Amendment Act against Anti-Hindi pickets. When a Boycott committee was formed by the Justice Party in Madras City on June 1, 1938, the Anti-Hindi Movement began to pickup momentum. The first goal of this committee was to picket the private home of Rajagopalachari at Mambalam. In addition, pickets were also established in other places. Picketers who demonstrated in Madras city generally did not live there but were brought into the city by Justice Party organizers. By June 1938, Swami Shanmugasundaram, Palladam Ponnusamy, C.D.Nayakam, K.M.Balasubramanian, C.N. Annadurai and others were arrested in the Madras Presidency.

In the meantime, at Tiruchirappalli, Periyar, Alagirisamy, R.Tirumalaisamy and others including Muslims met and chose one hundred and one suitable volunteers for the Anti-Hindi march. They started the march from Tiruchirappalli on August 1, 1938. The Justicites and the Tamil cultural organisation stood in the forefront in extending all possible help to the marchers and they arrived at Madras on September 11, 1938. Towards the end of November 1938, Periyar, was arrested for his speech at Madras and sentenced to one year imprisonment. But on medical grounds he was released in May 1939. By this time, sporadic demonstrations were continued by the common people and students. Severe steps including firing were taken to suppress the riot, two died of firing. In the end of January 1939, thousand and two hundred people were arrested, of whom thirty six were women had been convicted as a result of the Anti-Hindi agitation. The Anti-Hindi agitation ended only.

Three-fold Protests in 1953

In 1953, Annadurai directed the DMK to undertake three protests: Condemning Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, for describing as ‘childish nonsense’; the tarring of Hindi letters on railway station boards by DK and DMK activists Against C. Rajagopalachari, the then chief minister of Madras State, for introducing a new educational system that indirectly encouraged traditional caste-based occupations called Kulak Kalvith Thittam; and Against renaming of Kallakkudi against Dalmiyapuram as the name Dalmiyapuram symbolised north Indian domination. Along with other prominent persons, Annadurai was sentenced to three months imprisonment in this protest.¹⁷

Post-Independence Anti-Hindi Agitations

When India became a republic with its own constitution in 1950, the constitution had given special status to the Hindi language, which was to gain official status after 15 years in 1965. This move was regarded with anxiety by students in Tamil Nadu.¹⁸ Speaking of making Hindi as official language of India, Annadurai said It is claimed that Hindi should be the common language because it is spoken by the majority. Why should we then claim the tiger as our national animal instead of the rat which is so much more numerous? Or the peacock as our national bird when the crow is ubiquitous?¹⁹ In view of continued threat to impose Hindi, the DMK held an open-air conference against Hindi imposition at

Kodambakkam, Chennai in August 1960, which Annadurai presided over. He gave black flags to leading functionaries, to be shown to the President of India during his visit to the state. Sensing an uprising, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru assured in the Parliament that English would continue to be the official language of India, as long as non-Hindi speaking people desire. DMK gave up the plan of showing black flags and Annadurai appealed to the Union Government to bring about a constitutional amendment incorporating the assurance.²⁰

With no constitutional amendment done, Annadurai declared 26 January 1965, the 15th Republic Day of India and also the day the Constitution, which in essence enshrined Hindi as the official language of India, came into practice, as a day of mourning. This move was opposed by the then Chief Minister of Madras State, Bhakthavatchalam, as blasphemous. Hence Annadurai, who by then had been trying to shake off the secessionist image of his party, declared 24 January as a day of mourning. He also replaced the slogan of the protests to 'Down with Hindi'; 'Long live the Republic.' Nevertheless, violence broke out on 26 January, initially in Madurai which within days spread throughout the state. The elements contributing to the riots were not instigated by DMK or Leftists or even the industrialists, as the Congress government of the state suggested, but were genuine frustrations and discontentment which lay beneath the surface of the people of the state. With violence surging, Annadurai asked the students to forfeit the protests, but some DMK leaders like Karunanidhi kept the agitations going.²¹

Romesh Thaper narrated full account of 1965 agitations. Reports had been pouring into Nanda's Home Ministry suggesting that the anti-Hindi stir in the South was not confined to the usual DMK circles, that the demonstrating students, drawn from all sections, reflected the general sentiment of the towns in the South, Economic and other frustrations were seen as feeding the anger of the demonstrators. Independent observers claimed that the Bhaktavatsalam ministry was isolated and that Kamaraj was being compelled to disassociate himself from the Hindi policies of the Centre. These very accurate assessments were, however, dismissed by Nanda and his experts, even described as an attempt to panic the government. Shastri, unwilling to take a position contrary to the powerful Hindi lobby, accepted the Home Ministry's view that a detailed explanation of the language policy would be enough to isolate the mischief-makers. No one at the Centre insisted on visiting the affected areas in Tamil Nadu. The fact that Chief Minister Bhaktavatsalam was busy discouraging Shastri's plan to send Nanda to explain the Centre's policy was not interpreted as proof that the Congress writ was no longer valid in Madras. Cowardice dictated that only South Indian leaders visit South India. And T. T. Krishnamachari, in the midst of budgeting, was ordered to ferret out the facts even as the army moved in to prevent a total collapse of law and order.

In this atmosphere, the Cabinet met to approve the text of the broadcast which Shastri was to deliver that evening. Despite the clarifications and the belated retort to the Nehru Formula, C. Subramaniam, Chagla and Sanjivayya attempted to persuade their colleagues that the situation had moved beyond clarifications and assurances, that in the absence of Nehru there was a lack of trust in the declarations of the central government, that some kind of statutory guarantee should be promised to assuage feelings in the non-Hindi speaking regions and to prepare the way for serious rethinking. This intelligent and rational plea was not only scoffed at but the irresponsible Mahavir Tyagi was permitted to make a near-hysterical counter-attack.

Shastri and Nanda, it is reported, sat in stupefied silence as Tyagi, declaiming in Shudh Hindi, demanded that for a change the interests of the Hindi-speaking peoples should be considered, that the rebels in the South should be shot down, and that if the Southerners wanted to go they could go. This performance, coming as it did after the victory calls outside of Deputy Education Minister Bhakt Darshan and Shastri's earlier assurance that Hindi's imposition would be speeded up, created a critical situation within the Cabinet which adjourned without any censure of Tyagi and his henchmen.

C. Subramaniam, in a highly distressed state, decided within half an hour of the Cabinet meeting to send in his resignation, that is, before Shastri's scheduled broadcast. Unfortunately, the news leaked out even as Shastri spoke over All India Radio and the impression was created in local political circles that Subramaniam, joined by Alagesan, was acting in a thoroughly opportunist manner, almost giving a head to the revolt in the South. Within hours the report was circulating that the South Indian ministers were resigning in a bloc, that Shastri was about to resign too.

By the morning of February 12, the situation in Madras had deteriorated further and the violent agitation threatened to spread to the adjoining States. Krishnamachari had spoken over Madras radio, but to no effect. The demand for statutory guarantees, was gathering force, even in the Cabinet. The Cabinet meeting in the morning was interrupted by Indira Gandhi, back from a tour abroad, who declared that she was flying to Madras to investigate the situation, a decision taken in the teeth of opposition. At last, someone from the North was getting to grips with the problem; an observer, perhaps not incorrectly, described her as the only man in the Cabinet.

By now, that is within 12 hours of his broadcast, Shastri was in retreat. He, however, maintained that a change, in the official language policy, even an amendment of the Official Language Act, should be handled by the Chief Ministers. A meeting to consider the question was fixed for February 23, Mahavir Tyagi visited Subramaniam, presumably to explain his conduct. Chavan made clear that his sympathies were with Subramaniam. Indira Gandhi declared emphatically in Madras that Hindi could not be pushed at the risk of disintegrating- India, for the original motivation behind the policy was only to strengthen the integration of the subcontinent.

Even as the Students' Action Committee called off its agitation, the specialists in double-think got to work. Encouraged by the TTK report that the situation in the South had been exploited by disruptive and subversionist groups, that it was merely a law-and-order problem, the myth was spread that the left communists were behind the violence. This ludicrous attempt to play politics made no impact, not even in Congress circles, or it is well-known that this section of the communists is weak in Tamil Nadu. Indeed, had there been active participation by the left communists, the disturbances would have spread rapidly to adjoining Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Soon, the Hindi lobby was at work, pointing to the dire consequences of a surrender to the South, collecting signatures to a petition which insisted on the carrying through of approved Hindi policies, and implying that a law-and-order situation could be created in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Coupled with this campaign was the demand that Subramaniam's resignation be accepted, Subramaniam who is now the ruling party's most effective link with the angry South.

The so-called Congress leftists remained surprisingly quiet in the Capital, even those who are now described as atom bomb leftists. The CPI under Dange, true to form, was conducting an anti-US demonstration on Viet-Nam developments as the revolt sharpened in the South. The PSP, too, was nowhere on the scene. Only Lohia and his lieutenants clapped and convinced that these troubles would help end Congress rule.

The wise words of President Radhakrishnan during the crisis, with which he highlighted the failure of political leadership and warned against attempts to rule without a consensus, were drowned in the headlines of the daily newspapers which were content to emphasise his obvious denunciation of violence. And to top it off, the demonstration of solidarity by various Congress chieftains around the fasting Vinoba Bhave added the macabre touch. India, it seemed, was back to normal. The fiery passion of the South had made a profound impact on the North.

True, the militant Jan Sangh and the RSS refuse to face the facts and have now raised the bogey of English being imposed on the North. True, the DMK has scored heavily and at the expense of Kamaraj and his friends. True, fears are being generally expressed about the possibility of secessionist movements between now and the next General Election in 1966-67. On February 22, the Anti-Hindi

Agitation Council called off the agitation and stated regrets that their peaceful nonviolence agitation had been taken over by anti-social elements.

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