

**THE CONGRESS (I) PARTY IN TAMIL NADU :
STRATEGIES AND ELECTORAL ALLIANCES
FROM 1977 TO 1991**

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P. KANAGARAJ

**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**

NEW DELHI-110067

INDIA

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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

CERTIFICATE

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ASWINI K. RAY
Chairman

CHAIRPERSON
CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-II,
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY,
NEW DELHI-110067,

Dr. SUDHA PAI
Supervisor

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES-II,
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY,
NEW DELHI-110067,

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P. K. Nayyar

**DEDICATED
TO MY PARENTS**

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ALLIANCES 1977-91**

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INTRODUCTION

Role and relevance of Congress (I) in the politics of Tamil Nadu:

There are number of political parties operating in the politics of Tamil Nadu. They can be classified into two major categories on the basis of their stated political goals, area of political operations and nature of organisational links. They are regional and national parties. The group of parties whose political goals are explicitly the exclusive welfare of Tamil Nadu and whose area of political operations are limited to Tamil Nadu alone and whose organisational structure does not have any links outside the state are called regional parties. The second group of parties called national parties consists of those parties whose stated political goals are the welfare of India as a whole and who organisationally act as local units to major political parties of the country.

These regional parties arising out of religious, regional communal, linguistic, ethnic and other heterogeneties have believed in the cyclical theory of social change, community as the political symbol and community based mobilization as the organisational principle. So there is a wide variety of regional parties but the two parties of Dravidian origin, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam are the most important ones. These two parties share a common history and ancestry. Both arouse out of the apolitical, social movement of Dravida Kazhagam whose ideals

of social egalitarianism. Dravidian identity and rationalism attracted the masses throughout 20th century. .Because of the common heritage, both of them claim to work for the same goals of enhanced state autonomy, continuation of English as link language etc. As both of them compete for the same political goals and social bases they have a very vehemently antagonistic inter-party relationship. In fact the political rivalry between these two organizations dominates the politics of Tamil Nadu thoroughly and in the last two decades only either of them headed the governments in the State.

The second group of parties called National parties also have a number of parties representing diverse, distinct political ideologies. But in terms of political popularity, electoral support base and geographical vastness of that support base only the Congress(I) attracts attention. As other parties like communists and Bharatya Janata Party don't have larger social support, they are pushed to the periphery of the political dynamics of the state.

The Congress (I) Party, though now a considerably weakened force as it accounts for only one fifth of the electorate in the state has its glorious years in the past. Formed initially by the educated, westernised, homogeneous elite of India in the closing decades of century as a kind of organisational bulwark against the professional rivals of European origin, it stood for Indigenisation and Indianisation of British colonial government and administration. But progressively it came to embrace the ideal of national freedom and the Tamil Nadu Unit of Congress acted as an ideal, competent, co-operative, complementary local unit for the

Indian national Congress. Even while the question of decolonisation and national freedom dominated its political discourse and operations, the social issue of Brahmin domination over the social, political, economic life of Tamil Nadu was also taken up simultaneously, rather an unusual phenomenon in those days of Congress politics in the country.

Soon after independence due to a variety of social, political, historical factors the brahmin-Non-brahmin conflict within Congress came to be the primary issue of internal politics of Congress and the Non-brahmin faction led by Kamarajar succeeded in displacing the brahmin factions leadership from Congress. The rise of Non-brahmin Kamarajar coincided with the political disappearance of brahmin in the Congress Party organisation in the state. From 1954 onwards under the stewardship of Kamarajar who matched his pragmatic, political shrewdness with his government's performance, Congress emerged as a strong force in the state's politics and the phase of Indian politics called Congress system was ensured in Tamil Nadu also.

The 1965 language crisis and its controversial handling by the Bhaktavachalam ministry turned the tide against Congress and in the following 1969 elections the undisturbed monopoly of Congress in the state politics was broken by the rising sun of D.M.K. Before Congress made any serious attempt at regaining its lost base more crucial events followed. In 1969 the long standing factional dispute between the organisational and governmental wings of Congress came to the fore and the Party split into two. The Congress (organisation) though a weak force in other states inherited a majority of organisational network and social base

from the undivided Congress in this southern state due to Kamarajar's association with it.

In the 70's Kamarajar begun a serious of political moves aimed at revitalizing party organisation and political popularity but all his attempts came to a nought. The phenomenon of Congress dualism whereby electoral and political fortunes of Congress were adversely affected not by the deeds and words of the opposing DMK but by the fratricidal political rivalry and electoral strategies of existing Congress factions themselves thwarted any Congress comeback in the state .For example when in 1970's the electoral prospects were favourable for a political comeback of Congress (O), the rival Congress (R), ignoring the local leaders and cadre's opposition and resentment entered into an electoral alliance called Left and Democratic Front headed by the state's ruling party DMK with a singular purpose of defeating the rival Congress faction, a move in which it succeeded.

The death of Kamarajar and the subsequent informal merger of Congress (O) with (R), facilitated the emergence.of Congress (I) as the single most important Congress faction in the state. Its emergence meant the end of the structural problem of Congress dualism and the associated fratricidal rivalry. By the dawn of 80's political conditions were favourable for a Congress comeback. But surprisingly no sincere attempt at revitalizing party organization and motivating the cadres was carried out and as a result of which Congress marginalisation in the politics of the State continues.

The National and local compulsions and conditions had prevented the Congress leaders from undertaking any meaningful exer-

cise at recapturing the lost power in the state . As the post emergency elections revealed Congress in the late 70's and eighties had suffered considerable erosion in its social base especially in the politically crucial northern states. As a result of this erosion there was an element of electoral insecurity palpable in the political thought of Congress. Though the Party won the 1980 general elections with the promise of providing "a government that works" yet the electoral insecurity continued to haunt the Party leadership.

The electoral insecurity specially in the northern state was compounded by the position of the Party in the south. The emergence of Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, and Janata in Karnataka and Left Front in Kerala severely affected the poll prospects and political confidence of the Congress Party in south. As its prospects have dimmed in the three southern states it started concentrating its attention in getting maximum number of parliamentary seats from the other state, Tamil Nadu. It understood that its share of around 17 to 20 percent of popular vote though inadequate to capture power in the state can give it considerable space for maneuverability in the context of the fratricidal political rivalry between the near equally matched Dravida organisations. It realised that if it chose to ally with any of these Parties, it could influence decisively the electoral verdict in the state. As it wanted only national Parliamentary seats and not Assembly seats which the local Parties wanted there exist a compatibility of interests. So the Party entered into electoral alliances in the state. From 1971 to 1991 the role and relevance of the Party in the politics of the states

revolves around its electoral role as a partner.

This study seeks to understand its role as an electoral partner in this period from 1971-1991. Besides the study seeks to attain some clarifications on certain aspects of Congress politics in the state. These are the following (1) Social base of Congress leadership ; while in most of other states Congress is still a upper caste dominated Party how in Tamil Nadu it came to be dominated by backward castes.

(2) Regionalisation: The Congress in Tamil Nadu exhibits some degree of autonomy from its national unit the latest manifestation of which is the resignation of Congress chief from union council of ministers protesting against the central government's inaction over implementing the Cauvery Tribunal's interim order.

(3) Congress marginalisation and electoral strategy : Now that Congress has become a kind of pressure group of election times, how that role affects the politics of the state, party system, etc. in the state. What impact it leaves on the Congress Party organisational cohesion and structure?.

These are the main aspects of Congress politics which will be analysed in the dissertation.

Review of Literature

The existing literature in this area of study can be divided into three groups

- (1) Literature primarily dealing with Congress Politics.
- (2) Literature dealing with Dravidian movement .
- (3) Literature dealing with electoral politics in the state
- (a) Literature dealing with Congress politics :

As the study is to find out the relationship between

Congress and politics in the state, this group of articles and books are the most important ones. Mathew Arnold's "Congress in Tamil Nadu", Myron Weiner's "Party building in a new nation; the Indian National Congress" and Atul Kohli's "Democracy and Discontent : India's growing crisis of governability" are the three important books dealing with Congress politics.

In the book "The Congress in Tamil Nadu" Mathew Arnold deals mainly with two themes. The first theme is the evolution of Congress as a regional political party in the Madras presidency where in the period from 1917 to 1937 Congress witnessed a major transition from the status of a small political club divided along ideological, strategic, factional lines in 1919 to one of powerful organisation with rich experience in both agitational and electoral tactics. The second theme dealt here in this book is the changing relationships between the nationalist movement and colonial system, the change in the relationship from one of total hostility to one of mutual dependence on each other despite the continued hostility is dealt with. The book offers valuable insights into the politics of Tamil Nadu Congress unit though in a limited period (between 1917-37).

Myron Werner in the book "Party building in a new nation: Indian National Congress does not deal exclusively with the state Congress unit but makes use of his analysis Congress politics in the Madurai district to substantiate arguments regarding the process of party building in independent India. The main thrust of his argument in the book is that the Congress party merely intends to adapt itself to the existing social structure to maintain its power base. It does not in anyway intend changing the

social structure. It recruits its political activities from those groups which have local power and influence. It trains its cadres to perform political roles similar to those performed by them the traditional society before there was politics. It manipulates factional, Casteist, Linguistic disputes and uses its influence within administration to win and maintain electoral and financial support. How the Party creates and maintain institutional mechanism to settle organisational disputes its also dealt with in this book.

Atul Kohli's democracy and discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability.

It analyses the growing crisis of governability that the Indian state faces now. The author attributes four interrelated factors as responsible for the governability crisis. They are the changing role of the political elite, weak and ineffective political organisation, mobilization of previously passive groups for electoral competition and growing conflict between contending social groups including the conflicts between the haves and have-nots. In this book the author substantiates his argument with his case study of four Indian districts including Madurai. Here he analyses the growth of Dravidian movement and the corresponding decline of Congress. This book is the only published work dealing with the politics of Congress in Tamil Nadu in the period from 1967 to 1991. So this book offers more crucial insights into Congress politics.

(b)Literature Dealing with Dravidian Movement

These groups of

books deal mainly with the origin, growth, role and place of Dravidian movement in the politics of the state. The main books which fall under the category are Hardgrave's Dravidian movement, Ross Barnett's Politics of cultural nationalism in south India, Eugene Irschik Politics and social conflict in south India : The non-brahmin movement and Tamil separatism, 1916-1929, Spratt's DMK in power.

Though their exclusive concern is not Congress politics they are important in two ways.

(1) They offer valuable knowledge about the prevailing political atmosphere in which Congress was operating.

(2) They analyse the inter relationship between the Dravidian parties and Congress politics on the whole of twentieth century. The impact of Dravidian movement on the internal politics of the Congress and the rise of Kamarajar led non-brahmins within Congress is detailed in these books.

(c) Literature Dealing with Electoral Politics in the State

This group of literature mainly includes article published in both academic and Non-academic journals. The important article were written by "Manivannan", "Suresh", Robert Hardgrave , Satyamoorthi, Duncan Forrester, etc. The Economic and political weekly is another source of rich information about the electoral politics in the state.

These articles provide valuable information on the electoral politics of Tamil Nadu. The role and impact of political alliances in the politics of the state is dealt with in these articles.

Though these books and articles offer valuable information

about the politics of Congress in Tamil Nadu, they suffer from the time limitation. They mostly deal with the politics of Congress till 1970's only. So the dissertation relies heavily on primary sources and current newspapers, magazines for the study about the politics of Congress in the 80's.

CHAPTER II

THE CONGRESS (I) IN TAMIL NADU 1885 TO 1991

(A) FROM 1885 TO 1947: ROLE AS NATIONALIST ORGANISATION

The origin and growth of nationalist movement in the southern presidency of Madras which in the post independence period contributed a major portion of the geographical area of Tamil Nadu differed considerably from that of the other presidencies and provinces. The delayed development of nationalist struggle in the southern presidency is one such point of distinction. While Madras presidency had comparable economic and educational advancement with that of Bombay and Calcutta it witnessed the birth of nationalist struggle atleast a decade later than others. In fact the early nationalist leader Surendernath Banerjee while presenting his evaluation of the state of nationalist struggle in the presidency commented rather disappointingly that it is impossible to hold a public meeting in Madras on a question that was agitating all the rest of India.

The delayed origin of nationalist struggle with conspicuously lessened intensity in the Madras Presidency was essentially due to the nature of emerging elite of Madras in the later half of the nineteenth century. While the elites of both Bombay and Calcutta were socially heterogeneous and occupationally diversified as they sprang from both traditional agricultural landownership and modern occupations like industry and commerce, the modern elite of Madras was socially homogeneous and occupationally agricultural, in other words it was a brahmin elite coming from the agriculturally prosperous brahmin families of Thanjavoor & Trichy districts. This elite was very conservative in belief and convictions. Unlike the elite of Bombay and Calcutta it did not absorb the western values of nationalism etc. It merely used the western education to further its economic and social interests.

While the elites of other presidencies studied and absorbed the modern, western political value like Nationalism, Sovereignty etc., the elite of Madras merely studied these ideals with detached academic interest. Sparrt comments the "the members studies English and read law, political theory and philosophy of Europe but they did so in a more detached, academic spirit and were less influenced by them.²" This nature of Madras elite led to the delayed development of nationalism in Madras.

The brahmins of Thanjavoor, Trichy, Palaghat etc. dominated the emerging modern elite of Madras because they had certain natural advantages over others like their traditional caste status, access to landed wealth generations of involvement in the administration, aloofness from cultivation.³ In their professional and economic advancement very soon they faced the discriminatory attitude of the European middle class of colonial British India. The direct and indirect support of the government to the European middle class induced a new thinking among the members of Madras elite about the desirability and necessity of forming a nationalist organisation to protect their interests. Accordingly they formed Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1884. This Sabha proved to be the forerunner of the Indian national Congress in Madras.⁴ Delegates sent by the Sabha attended the first meeting on Indian national Congress at Bombay in 1885. In 1894 the Madras Mahajana Sabha was affiliated to the Madras Congress committee. Earlier this Sabha conducted the successful meeting of INC in 1888 in Madras.

The politics of Tamil Nadu unit of INC revolved around two important issues in the first four and a half decades of the

twentieth century. These two issues are

- (1) Struggle for national independence
- (2) Brahmin-non-brahmin conflict.

Struggle For National Freedom

The Tamil unit of Indian National Congress assisted with much vigour and enthusiasm its parental organisation in the struggle for independence. Like elsewhere in India, the early period of nationalist struggle in Madras was also dominated by the moderate Congressmen. Their basic demands did not include independence but only moderate ones like granting of more constitutional rights to Indians and the induction of educated Indians in the British Indian administration. This objective of Indianising the British Government and administration was sought to be achieved by the method of constitutional agitation within the four walls of law. They believed that if public opinion is created and organised and popular demands presented to the authorities through petitions, Meetings, resolutions, speeches, the British authorities would concede.

They adopted a two pronged strategy of educating and organising Indian people and persuading the British government and people to introduce reforms along the lines laid down by them. They wanted to appeal to the British people and government because they considered them as some one genuinely interested to change the backward, iniquitous social economic and political structure of India. The nationalist Congressmen of Tamil Nadu to achieve their political goals operated from both official INC and Madras Mahajana Sabha. The true recognition of the nature of the British colonialism and its impact on India's economy, polity

led to the rise of a new group of nationalists who are more radical and aggressive. This group started acquiring more importance at national level after the 1905 Anti-Bengal partition movement. Over the question of expanding the Swadeshi movement into other parts of India they split away from the moderates at the Surat session of the INC in 1907. Overwhelming majority of the Tamil Congressmen⁶ remained loyal to the moderate line and only two of the notable nationalists went over to the extremist side. They were C.Vijayaraghavachari and Rajagopalachary.

For about a decade the Congress was divided between moderates and extremists. These were two main centres of extremism in Tamil Nadu.⁷ The earliest of the two was Salem where Vijayaraghavachari; built up a school of young nationalists imbued with hostility to British rule. Most members of this group were socially brahmins and occupationally lawyers. The second centre of extremism was Madras city where the extremists formed a Clique called Egmore Clique. This group was a mixed one of brahmins and non-brahmins. The Egmore Clique resented the dominance of moderates (who were popularly known as Mylapore Clique) in the professional and political life of Madras. It included people like Kasturirange Iyenger Rangaswamy Iyenger, T.M Nair, C.Sankaran etc.

These extremist Tamil Congress leaders campaigned against both British government and moderate nationalists. They conducted the campaign by using their tactics of Vernacular Oratory, Journalism, Militant Hinduism etc. V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, a native of southern port town of Tuticoren, inspired by the Bengali enthusiasm for the Swadeshi goods and products formed a Swadeshi

steam navigation company in 1906 to break the monopoly of British steamers operating between the port town and Colombo. He also organised a strike at a British owned textile mill in 1908, arousing the hostility of the British government and employers.

Another extremist leader Subramanyam Bharathi, gifted with poetical skill and Tamil oratory composed poems of nationalist fervour to further the growth of national movement. These extremist leaders not only attacked British Colonialism but also moderate dominance of Congress. They wanted to capture the organisational structure of the local Congress unit from the control of moderates.

While extremists became more vigorous in their commitment and more aggressive in their campaign, the moderates remained firmly committed to their idea of constitutionalism. These leaders like Srinivasa Iyer, Krishnaswamy Iyer advocated gradual constitutional reforms. Western education and legal profession had instilled in them a deep respect for constitutionalism. They occupied seats in the provincial legislative council following the Minto-Morley constitutional reforms of 1909. They were disinclined to resort to drastic methods to secure further constitutional progress. They believed that political advancement in India would necessarily be slow and democracy would only gradually percolate down from the western educated to the masses. The British would only be persuaded to yield power by steady but polite constitutional pressure from the educated, that too through co-operation and not confrontation.

At the national level the two opposing factions came to be united at the 1916 Lucknow session of Congress. The national

level reunion of moderates and extremists compelled their counterparts at local level to join together. Though they also got reunited the two groups continued to entertain deep mutual suspicion. Their union between extremists and moderate at the provincial level was achieved largely by the efforts of Annie Besant, the Irish born Congress woman. In gratitude the extremists provided her support to her home rule movement which was started in the war period to extract more constitutional right from the colonial government. ¹⁰ The extremists wanted to capture the organisational machinery of the United Congress party by using Anne Bessant's popularity. But their hopes were belied when Anne Basant house walked out of Congress due to her differences with party leadership over Montegu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919.

The dawn of 1920's witnessed the emergence of Gandhi on the national scene. Describing Khilafat Betrayal and Rowlett-related Jallianwalla Bagh massacre as examples of British insincerity towards the welfare of Indian people he launched his scheme of non-cooperation based on non-violence. This non-cooperation scheme contained the boycott of council as the central feature. The nationalists of Tamil Nadu who were in total control of TNCC favoured strongly council entry and therefore rejected non-cooperation. ¹⁰ Just when it seemed that there are no supporters for Gandhi in Tamil Nadu, Rajagopalachari a Salem lawyer emerged on the political scene and formed the pro-Gandhi pro-non-cooperation group in the state. While in the preceeding decades Congressmen were split on moderate and extremists lines, from now on Congressmen came to be split into pro-entry Swarajists and pro-Gandhi group. Rajaji through a skillful manipulation of Khilafat

agitation gained the support of Muslim leaders for Gandian non-cooperation. At its Trinnelvely session in 1920 the non-cooperation resolution was passed by the state Congress unit largely due to the support of the muslims members to Rajaji. Even in the Calcutta session of Indian national Congress, delegates from Tamil Nadu supported overwhelming Gandhi under the influence of Rajaji.

11
Soon after the Nagpur resolution about restructuring Congress organisational structure the Gandhians in the state adopted the twin strategy of reducing the importance of Madras city, (the base of pro-entry group) in the organisational representation and shifting the headquarters to Trichy from Madras on the pretext of providing more accessibility to mofussal Congressmen. Considerably marginalised by the Gandhian group's maneuverings, the pro-council entry group got gradually weakened .

But from 1925 to 1927 the pro-entry group regained its supremacy once the Gandian chief Rajaji resigned over the issue of Congress interfering with the social dynamics of the state. He opposed the Congress resolution against any discrimination on the basis of caste in the intra-party politics. The Swarajists who entered legislature did not perform well and it was said about their performance that it is not the Swarajists who captured legislative but the legislation which captured them.

The entry and rejection of Simon commission again brought the focus back to Gandhians. On the national scene Gandhi started his Dandi March in 1930 followed by civil disobedience movement. In Tamil Nadu the Gandhian chief Rajaji undertook a salt march from Trichy to Vedaranyam. This march modeled on Dandi march had

the same objectives of displacing the Swarajists from the organisational supremacy at the local level and more importantly of mobilising the people, in favour of gandhian mode of agitational politics against colonialism.

While civil disobedience movement was in progress realising that mass mobilization holds the key to the success of any form of struggle the Gandhians in the state undertook extensive measures to mobilise masses. They rightly understood that even though salt march of Rajaji was successful it had inherent limitations as not all people of all parts of the state can be mobilized effectively. So they adopted two more strategies (1) mobilization on liquor issue (2) Harijan mobilization for temple entry.¹²

The issue of liquor provided the scope for a socially broader and geographically wider movement than salt Satyagraha. So they organised innumerable hartals, demonstrations, picketings to force the government to implement prohibition. Secondly on the issue of Harijan mobilisation they focussed on the emotive but crucial issue of right of entry into temple. Rajaji abandoned much of the dithering he showed over the untouchability issue during the 1920's and campaigned how for the entry for harijans into temples. He persuaded Subhrayan to introduce a bill favoring the entry of harijans into temple. Though this harijans entry mobilization evoked strong opposition from conservative elements for Congress yet it proved crucial in earning the support of harijans. The civil disobedience movement was dropped after the Gandhi-Irwin pact and the preparations began for the 1935 act, as with the publication of white paper the general character of the

future provincial and central governments was known in 1934. The Rajaji group now supported legislative participation. ¹⁴ The shift in their stand was justified on the ground that Congress as the ruling party of the future should participate now and gain experience in the art of democratic governance and functioning.

In the 1937 election Congress won majority of the seats in the Madras legislature and Rajaji became the Chiefminister. This government led by Rajaji ruled till 1939 when it resigned, along with other provincial Congress governments over the question of Indian role in second world war. ¹⁵ In the two years it was in power it proved to be a friend of the businessmen, a defender of the rich peasantry, and a patron of hand-spinners and weavers. The weaker classes of society were either subjected to repression like workers or excluded from the benefits of government like harijans.

The forties of the century began with the arrival of Cripps mission and its failure. When Gandhiji gave a call in 1942 for Quit India Movement and Do or Die agitation, Madras presidency positively responded to his clarion call. Agitations, Hartals demonstrations were conducted and the government resorted to ruthless and repressive measures to tackle these agitations. The 1942 agitation saw the record in the number of the arrests made in the entire history of the freedom movement in the state. It's interesting to know that of the arrested persons there was over representation of brahmins and forward non-brahmins. During the course of the agitation even a resolution calling for the formation of national government was also passed. When interim elections were held, Congress came to power in the state. As the day

of Independence drew nearer, the fighting in the party also got intensified.

(B) Non-Brahmin-Brahmin conflict and Tamilization of Congress:1917 to 1947

While like in other provinces and presidencies in Tamil Nadu also Indian National Congress with its agenda of a non-violent nationalist struggle for freedom dominated the politics in the first half of twentieth century, yet here arose simultaneously a non-brahmin movement committed to the objectives of egalitarianism, rationalism etc. Though brahmin domination is an all Indian phenomenon, the emergence of anti-brahmin movement with considerable intensity and magnitude was witnessed only in Tamil Nadu (to some extent in Maharashtra). This is because of the unique features in the social structure of Tamil Nadu in the early part of twentieth century.

The unique feature of the social structure of Tamil Nadu is the steep social distance between brahmins and non-brahmins. The intermediary castes which bridged the gap between brahmins and others and which shared the secular domination along with brahmins like the Lingayats of Karnataka, Nairs of Kerala, Rajputs of North India were absent in Tamilnadu. Their absence meant not only total domination and hegemony by brahmins but their social and cultural exclusion.

When the agricultural castes like Mudaliars, Vellalas~~s~~ belatedly understood the significance of western education for socio-economic development, they started paying more attention to English education. But in their attempt to achieve socio-economic upliftment they faced the discriminatory prejudices and attitudes

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of the already advanced and ¹⁷ alienated brahmins. To protect and further their interest they started forming alliances and political formation. The social and cultural exclusion of the brahmins facilitated the emergence of such alliances which became ¹⁸ an all Indian phenomenon in the post-independence period.

The initial manifestation of such an alliance was seen in the formation of South Indian Liberal Federation which later ¹⁹ officially came to be known as Justice Party. The non-brahmin leaders like Natesa Mudaliar, T.M.Nair, Raja of Panagal etc. started attacking the brahmin domination. As the leadership of both factions of Indian National Congress was overwhelmingly constituted by brahmins, they accused vehemently the Indian National Congress and its nationalist demands as brahminical. They sided with British colonial government as they believed that Home Rule is nothing but brahmin rule and will be more oppressive and ²⁰ exploitative than British Rule.

As the Justice Party's criticism of Congress became more and more vehement, the nationalist non-brahmins felt that a corrective mechanism should be created to counter their attacks. These nationalist non-brahmins understood the validity of Justice Party criticism of brahmin domination of Congress leadership but they couldn't accept their perception that nationalist or Home Rule is more exploitative than British colonialism. So they wanted to form an organisation which will strive for these two apparently incompatible goals of non-brahmin welfare and national freedom.

Even as early as 1917 a non-brahmin wrote in a letter to New India that "although there was no point in keeping brahmins out of a political organisation, there must be some organisation

limited to non-brahmins which would voice non-brahmin opinion within Congress in opposition to the claims of the Justice Party".²¹

Accordingly an exclusive organisation committed to both non-brahmin welfare and national freedom was formed in 1917 under the name Madras Presidency Association.²² This association primarily focussed its attention on the conflict between India and British colonialism yet also supported non-brahmin quotas in the British administration and reservation of seats in the legislature for them. Merton's communal Award was established in 1920 whereby the non-brahmins were allotted 28 of 65 non-Mohammedan general seats against their demand of 40.

Never a majority among non-brahmins, the Madras Presidency Association was disbanded after the establishment of Merton's Award. Though it was in existence only for three years the Madras presidency Association became historically important as it initiated the process of Tamilization or regionalisation of Congress in Tamil Nadu a process by which the Congress party in Tamil Nadu came to acquire certain unique features like non-brahmin dominance in leadership, Tamilised ideals etc.²³

✓ In the decade of the 20's the non-brahmin-brahmin conflict became more and more intensive and over the issue of brahmin domination and discrimination in the party some of the non-brahmin leaders of the party walked out of Congress. The most important of all such leaders was the general secretary of Congress unit in Madras E.V.Ramaswamy, E.V.Ramaswamy who became nationally famous by conducting the Vaikom Satyagraha in Kerala for the entry of lower caste into temple preached modern values

of rationalism,egalitarianism etc. Becuase of that fact he always uncomfortable in the Congress of conservative brahimin domination. He protested against the discriminatory practices of Congressman run "Gandhi Ashram" at Cheran Mahadevi in Southern Tamil Nadu. Ramaswamy brought this issue of brahmin discrimnation to the notice of Gandhi. As Gandhi refused to take any action he walked out of Congress with a vow to destroy it and ironically one off spring organisation of the Dravidian movement which he founded defeated Congress in 1967 elections.²⁴

In the thirties the brahmin-non-brahamin conflict begun together more strength behind the factional struggle between Rajaji and Satyamoorthi, the brahimin Congressmen Satyamoorthi, disgusted by the way in which he was outsmarted by his rival Rajaji began cultivating a group of young, talented Congressmen. Two of his closest followers were Anamalai Pillai and Kamarajar the non-brahmin from south Tamil Nadu.²⁵ With their help Satyamoorthy was able to defeat the rival faction in the 1931 TNCC elections.This victory is seen as an important landmark in the early political career of Kamarajar by his autobiographer.

The non-brahmin leaders especially Kamarajar exploited to the hilt one particular change that has taken place in Congress in the 30's. Due to the Coimbatore resolution of Justice party more and more non-brahmin joined Congress with aims of swamping the brahmins out of Congress. This non-brahimin exodus proved useful for the emerging non-brahimin leaders like Kamarajar.

Towards the end of 30's the Congress chiefminister Rajaji's decision to make Hindi as compulsory language sparked off massive demonstrations led by E.V.Ramaswamy. The massive opposition and

rather stubborn attitude of the chief minister enabled the non-brahmin leaders to acquire more and more influence. (Since 1937) whenever the Dravidia Kazhagam conducted any demonstration, agitation etc. against any issue like Hindi imposition, casteist educational scheme in 1952 the non-brahmins within Congress got benefited and therefore strengthened against the brahmin faction led by Rajaji. Throughout the forties the brahmins-non-brahmin conflict within Congress acquired more and more importance and due to the negligible demographic strength of brahmins, the non-brahmins gradually undermined their supremacy.

(C) FROM 1947 TO 1967 -II PERIOD OF CONGRESS SYSTEM.

In the two decades after independence the politics of Madras unit of Congress exhibited two significant features. They are (1) Dominance of non-brahmins in leadership.

(2) Dominance of Congress in the state's electoral politics.

(A) Non-brahmin dominance of Congress:

The brahmin -non-brahmin conflict which had originated during the independence struggle came to an end in this period. The revolting non-brahmins were successfully able to establish their control and supremacy in the party. From 1946, the year of interim elections to 1954, the year of Kamarajar's rise to Chief Ministership, this struggle between Kamarajar led non-brahmins and Rajaji led brahmins dominated the politics of Congress.

Immediately in the post-independence political scenario the Madras unit of the Congress party faced the uphill task of integrating divergent regional and caste interests within a geographically vast and linguistically heterogeneous state and the Madras

Congress legislature Party itself was a reflection of this diversity. With the combination of the brahmin-non-brahmin and the Tamil-Telugu divisions led to rampant factionalism followed by a period of ministerial instability.²⁷ From 1947 to 1952 the Madras state saw four Congress ministries. Alliance-making and alliance breaking between different groups revolved around the twin factors of caste and region. The regional factionalism determined the alignment of forces in the beginning. T.Prakasam, the later day "lion of Andhra" was chosen as the chief minister initially and he was brought down by the other linguistic faction. From then onwards the brahmin-non-brahmin factionalism started playing a decisive and determining role in the election and eviction of a chief minister.

After T.Prakasam the Tamil non-brahmin Ramaswamy Reddiar became the chief minister as he was backed by the Kamaraj led non-brahmin group. As he increasingly showed signs of independence, the "Kingmaker" Kamarajar engineered his removal with a vote of non-confidence in the Congress legislature party in 1949. The succeeding chief minister Kumaraswamy Raja, a Tamil non-brahmin had to resign in 1952 due to his electoral defeat in the first general elections. In his place the brahmin leader Rajaji was appointed as the chief minister as he enjoyed the confidence of not only Tamil brahmin faction but also the support of Telugu members of Congress legislature party.

The creation of Andhra Pradesh and the territorial addition of some areas to it from Madras state automatically removed one of the two major factors of factionalism in Congress. The non-brahmin-brahmin cleavage remained now the only source of faction-

alism in Congress party. The indigenization and localization of politics brought about by the state reorganisation increased the power and position of the non-brahmin leader Kamarajar who was politically opposed to the chief minister Rajaji. The non-brahmin leader waited for an opportunity to dislodge his rival from chiefministership.

The opportunity came in 1952 in the form of the educational policy of the Rajaji government. The government brought out a proposal for universal primary education. The proposal envisaged a shift system for two reasons. Firstly by adopting shift system the government can minimize expenditure needed for achieving universal primary education as no more additional teachers and infrastructure like buildings were not needed. Secondly, the shift system will also enable the children to study as well as work in their traditional occupations, as more free time will be available. But this feature attracted widespread condemnation. This second feature of the whole scheme whereby the government showed its appreciation of imparting the skill in the traditional occupation of the family to the children was vehemently criticised by the Dravidian movement leaders. They condemned the proposal as a conspiracy of the brahmin chief minister to perpetuate the non-brahmin backwardness by teaching them only their hereditary occupation and depriving them of modern education by shrewd methods. The extensive agitation launched by Dravidian leaders helped the non-brahmin faction of Congress and facilitated the quick rise of Kamarajar to chief ministership.

After becoming the chief minister, Kamarajar adopted a three pronged strategy to consolidate his position against the lurking

brahmin opponents within the party and the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam outside the party. His strategy consisted of three features. They are (1) Induction of non-brahmins leaders and parties into Congress.

(2) Informal, reciprocal alliance with Dravida Kazagham.

(3) Provision of better administration and governance.

Introduction of non-brahimin leaders and parties into Congress:

Realizing the necessity and desirability of expanding the social support base of Congress especially amongst non-brahmins so that his position will be safeguarded from the threat posed by the brahmin leader Rajaji, Kamarajar inducted backward class leaders and parties into Congress. He turned his attention towards the backward caste of Vanniyar Kula Kshatriya who were mostly agricultural labours concentrated in the northern districts.

The Vanniyar caste then was represented by two political parties Tamil Nadu toilers party and common weal party. In the 1952 legislative elections the two parties won a combined share of 25 seats. Due to the insistence of Kamarajar the chief minister Rajaji inducted Mani Kavelu Naicker into the cabinet thus earning the common weal party's support. After he became the chief minister Kamarajar inducted the Tamil Nadu Toiler's party leader Ramaswamy Padayachi into the cabinet. These two inductions consolidated the position of Kamarajar against the brahmin opponents as these non-brahimin leaders remained, in gratitude the loyal supporters of Kamaraj.

Congress-DMK Alliance

The second strategy adopted by Kamarajar was the informal alliance with Dravida Kazhagam based on mutually beneficial relationship. Kamarajar needed the support of Dravida Kazhagam for consolidating his position more against the Dravida munetra Kazhagam than against brahmin faction inside his party. The fact that the social base of Dravida Kazhagam, the less prosperous but raising non-brahmin castes is the same to which he has to appeal to strengthen his position within the party induced him to seek and accept the support of D K. Moreover Kamarajar was considerably sympathetic to the social objectives of D K. He also recognised the contribution of Dravida Kazhagam in his rise to chief ministership . Because the Dravida Kazhagam undermined the influence and hold of Brahmins by its continued criticism of the brahmin hegemony of the Congress politics in the state enabling him to raise.

In the second General election Ramaswamy urged his followers to support Kamarajar saying "Since Kamarajar has done his best to serve Tamil Nadu, since he has changed the Acharyar's (Rajaji's) educational system designed to perpetuate the caste system, since he has sincerely thwarted the formation of Dakshina Pradesh, since he offered many jobs and benefits on Tamils and since DMK and brahmins are trying to oust him from power, it has become the duty of Tamilians to support Kamarajar and his followers in the elections".

In turn Kamarajar as chief minister always prevented the policemen from taking any strong action either against the lead-

ers or cadres of D.K. Though he outwardly denied that he is soft on DK and DK is supportive of him, he never refused their support. He refused to comment when Ramaswamy described that Kamarajar himself came and asked for the support of D.K.

These two strategies of Kamarajar i.e. induction of non-brahmin leaders into Congress and informal Congress-D K alliance led to the alienation of brahmin from Congress. The brahmins and other upper castes walked out of Congress in protest against such strategies. Their departure took place in two stages firstly after and because of the induction of Kamaswamy Padachaji when the Vanniyar's were given more importance and attention in Congress, the old leaders representing higher castes walked out to form Congress Reforms Committee and later the Indian National Democratic Congress. In the 1951 elections they won 19 seats.

Secondly the brahmin faction led by Rajaji walked out of Congress over the question of Congress-DK alliance, and formed Swatantra party which merged with INDC later. The Swatantra party in its quest to dislodge Kamarajar from power sought an alliance with Forward block, a Thevar party. This Forward block party led by the popular Muthuramalinga Thevar dominated the politics of southern districts-where Thevars and Nadars have caste clashes. As Kamarajar belongs to Nadar caste the Forward block was against him but the alliance between Swatantra and Forward block did not last long and their attempts to undermine Kamarajar also did not become successful.

Development Programme

The chief minister understood that inspite of the support of Dravida Kazhagam and the weakened opposition of Swatantra, his

own political popularity could be sustained over a long period only by bringing socio-economic development. Accordingly he launched several developmental programmes in the state. During the period of Kamarajar's chiefministership of the state there was all round development in the state. In fact Tamil Nadu became one of the best administered states by 1967. In the key areas of education, health, agriculture, industry, electricity etc. the state witnessed substantial progress during this period.

Dominance of Congress in State Politics

The chief minister Kamarajar through his triangular strategy of induction of backward class into Congress, informal alliance with DK and socio-economic developmental policies ensured not only the success of non-brahmins within the party but also the dominance of Congress in the politics of the state. The Congress dominance of Indian politics in the period between 1951 to 1967 has been appropriately described by Rajni Kothari,³³ as Congress system and by James Manor as multiparty system with single party dominance. The state also witnessed the same degree of Congress dominance. The comparative analysis of the electoral performance of Congress and the major non-Congress party from 1951 to 1967 brings out the impressive dominance of Congress in Tamil Nadu. In all the election from 1952 to 1962 Congress has won and there is a vast difference in the electoral performance of Congress and other parties. (see table 1)

TABLE I

CONGRESS AND ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE 1952-63

YEAR	CONGRESS Seats	% of Votes	MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY Seats	Votes
1952	133	35.5	17	10
1957	150	45.3	15	14.6
1962	139	46.14	50	27.10

1967 Elections and Congress Rout

The dominance of Congress in the politics of Tamil Nadu ended with its electoral defeat in the 1967 legislative elections where it lost power to DMK. While Congress won 49 seats the DMK won 142 seats. Though Congress had lost power in around eight states in the 1967 elections its loss in Tamil Nadu was a bit shocking as Tamil Nadu under Congress rule was one of the better administered states of India. Apart from the often explained factor of Dravidian mobilizational strategy and ideology there are three other factors which had led to the defeat of Congress in the State. They are :

- 1) Electoral alliances against Congress
- 2) National language crisis
- 3) Impact of developmental policies of the Congress.

Electoral Alliance Against Congress

The "Congress system" of 1951-67 was a multiparty system with single party (Congress) dominance". The very dominance of Congress on the political and electoral scene of India was primarily due to the divided nature of the opposition. The fragmented opposition enabled Congress to win majority of seats in the parliament as well as state legislative assemblies with minority of popular vote. Though various parties and leaders realised the disadvantages of the divided nature of the opposition parties, it is only in the 1967 elections a concrete strategy was adopted where by an anti-Congress alliance was formed. In 1966 at the Thanjavoor-Trichy regional conference of DMK the formation of a united front to defeat the Congress in the state was supported by the important leaders of DMK like Annadurni and Neduecheyan. At the same meeting an alliance of the Swatantra, DMK and Muslim league was envisaged. Though there was opposition to the inclusion of the right wing Swatantra into DMK group yet it was included . By December the same year the DMK announced constituency-wide adjustments with four opposition parties-the Swatantra , Muslim league, communists and the Praja socialists. The alliance contributed significantly to the electoral defeat of the Congress in 1967 as it lost its earlier advantage of fighting a divided, weakened opposition.

2. National Language Crisis

The anti-Hindi agitation organised by the Tamil Nadu

Students Anti-Hindi agitation council and the repressive measures adopted by the government in tackling it also contributed significantly to the electoral defeat of Congress. In accordance with the provisions of the Article 313 of the Indian constitution the central government decided to implement Hindi as the national language from January 26, 1965. This decision evoked strong opposition and widespread agitation in Tamil Nadu. The political consciousness of the state regarding the national language had been already created and sustained by the Dravidian movement since 1930's. When the decision to implement Hindi was announced there was widespread demonstration against it in which almost all segments of the society like traders, farmers etc, participated.

The Bhaktavachalam led Congress government of the state attempted to solve the crisis by adopting repressive measure. The agitation described as the most violent riot since the Quit India movement witnessed the arrest of ten thousand people and material damages upto ten million rupees apart from the massacre of seventy people.

This agitation of 1965 was utilised by the DMK and the discontented people of the state voted for DMK enthusiastically.

Iniquitous Impact of Developmental Policies

Though the performance of Congress government in the state since 1950's was very impressive, the impact of their developmental policies was not uniform but iniquitous. While policies were beneficial generally to the state as a whole, some sections of the population benefited more than the others, thus becoming a major source of popular discontent. The Congress leader C. Subramaniam who was a minister in the defeated Congress

ministry himself accepted that the policies of the Congress had unequal impact on different section of the society. For example rural electrification is one such point. The impressive performance of the government in this spare of rural electrification is benefited only the economically developed groups and individuals. The rural poor got nothing out of it and became alienated from the Congress Party.³⁶

Ross Barnett brings out another dimension of the relation between Congress developmental policies and its electoral defeat of 1967. He says "many whose lives were objectively improved because of Congress policies become critical of the Congress government because their horizons and expectations had been expanded and their political and social consciousness raised.³⁷ This gap between the expectations of the people and the inadequate pace of development during Congress government also led to the alienation of the people. Though the performance of Congress government was comparatively better than other states, it was clearly below expectations of the people. The resultant discontent also worked against Congress in the 1967 election.

1967 - 91 PERIOD OF CONGRESS MARGINALISATION

Though congress lost the 1967 parliamentary and legislative elections in the state due to the combination of ethnic, economic, political cultural factors, as explained above in the immediate post - election period it was seemingly determined to recapture its lost glory and power . But significant changes at the national and state level of the congress party curtailed the effectiveness of its attempts to capture power and ensured the continued exclusion of congress from the echelons of power on the

state st. George Fort.

In 1969, the longstanding struggle between the organisational and governmental wings of the ruling congress which was simmering ever since the new Prime minister started asserting her authority and independence of judgement over the dictates and directives of the congress organisational leaders came to the fore over the question of choosing the congress candidate for the presidential election³⁸. This factional struggle for supremacy was deliberately provided with an ideological colour and orientation whereby the prime minister was projected as a leader committed to the socio-economic modernisation and development and the organisational leaders as protectors of feudal vested interests.

The prime minister led faction was christened as congress (R), R standing for ruling and the organisational leaders led faction as congress (O) where O stands for organisation. The ruling congress inherited the parliamentary majority of Congress members of Parliamentary and social base at the national level from the undivided party.

But in Tamil Nadu, because of the charismatic Kamarajar, Congress (O) inherited the state unit's organisation, headquarters and preponderance of mass support from the undivided congress.

Though congress (R) mustered the support of majority of Congress members of parliament yet the government lost its majority because of the split. The prime minister wanted to save the government by seeking and acquiring the parliamentary support from smaller parties. The ruling party of Tamil Nadu with its

numerical strength of around 25 was one such party from whom prime minister sought support. For the prime minister, DMK seemed to be an automatic and natural choice as an informal understanding or alliance with it will not only give her the much needed majority in parliament but also enable her to undermine the popularity and prestige of the factional rival Kamarajar in the state. In the 1971 elections congress entered into an electoral alliance with DMK along with other smaller parties. This seven party alliance was named as Left and Democratic Front. The distribution of seats and constituencies among the partners of the alliance was grossly discriminatory. The ruling congress was allotted only nine out of the 39 Lok Sabha seats in the state and was totally excluded from the legislative seats. This patently discriminatory and humiliating poll arrangement was accepted by the Prime minister even when the cadres and local leaders protested against. The opposition of cadres and local leaders were brushed aside by the central leadership bent upon safeguarding its national level interests even if it meant sacrificing the state unit. This electoral arrangement of 1971 later unfortunately became general strategy of the congress in almost all the elections whereby to secure national level benefits the local interests of Tamil Nadu congress unit were sacrificed.

While ruling Congress allowed itself to be dominated by DMK the congress (o) continued to maintain its determined opposition to the ruling DMK. The chief of congress (O) Kamarajar continued to nurse his hopes of making congress (o) as the viable alternative DMK in the state.

Disillusioned with his own party leaders outside the state

he led the local unit into virtual independence from its national body. The performance of his party in the 1971 election where it won around 35 % of the popular vote strengthened his resolve to capture power back in the state.

The impressive performance of congress (R) in the parliamentary elections of 1971 enabled it to capture power at the centre on its own, without the support of smaller parties. Due to this majority the prime minister broke her alliance with DMK. She wanted to forge a united Congress front along with Congress (O) to oppose the domineering attitude of DMK. The virtual independence of the state unit of congress(O) earlier achieved by Kamarajar provided the congenial atmosphere to the emergence of such a front as it will enable her to pose a strong challenge to DMK in the state without any association with the national leaders of congress (O). An united Congress front was formed by the two congresses in the 1972 Assembly elections of Pondicherry , the satellite of Tamil Nadu. The impressive performance of the united front in the elections confirmed the ability of the congress factions to face and defeat the DMK if fought united together. But hopes of such an united front were destroyed by the continued mistrust and mutual suspicion between both factions.

The chief of congress(O) Kamarajar died in 1975 the and immediately congress(R) sent an open invitation to the Congress(O) leaders and cadres to rejoin it . At the Trichirapalli meeting of Congress (O) , a resolution for the merger of both congress factions was passed. But the President of congress(O) in the state Ramachandran, backed by the central leaders rejected all such moves and suspended from the party those who had taken

part in the meeting.

But he couldn't prevent the gradual erosion in the support base of his faction. Ultimately overwhelming majority of the leaders and cadres of congress(O) joined congress(R) in the state. The nature of organisational structure of congress(O) induced such a quick merger of the party with congress(O). The party organisation under Kamaraj generally meant not a formal party structure but rather having a loyal individual in a position of power. Soon after his death the element of loyalty collapsed and the leaderless party men chose to go to congress(R).⁴⁰

In the 1977 parliamentary elections the ruling congress was defeated by the Janata party which was formed just before the election by the amalgamation of five ideologically and organisationally different parties.

The ruling congress had to sit in the opposition now after being in power uninterruptedly for three decades primarily due to emergency related atrocities between 1975 - 77. This first ever electoral defeat of the Congress at the national level brought to the surface the volatile factionalism within the party and it underwent another split. In this split of 1978 like the earlier split of 1969 the Indira faction inherited the social and organisational strength.

The rival group led by Brahamananda Reddy conducted a vigorous and aggressive campaign to capture the organisational and social base of Congress in Tamil Nadu. It appointed Alagasen as the president of the state unit of congress. The Indira group appointed Moopnar as state unit president. The Reddy faction in

its aggressive campaign concentrated its focus on two significant issues namely Brahmin hegemony and northern exploitation of south. Reddy was sought to be portrayed as a non-Brahmin Southerner fighting for the welfare of non-Brahmin and southern states against the northerners and Brahmins (Indira Gandhi).⁴¹ This decision to paint the Indira group as anti - non- Brahmin as well as anti-south was a politically shrewd one as these two issues are sure to induced strong support in the state because of the political history of the state in the recent past.

The confusion regarding who represents the real congress was cleared after the mini - convention called by the leader of Indira congress Moopanar. In this convention most of the congress members of the parliament from the state, members of the legislature, presidents and other office bearers of congress committees at district, taluk and town levels attended. This democratic convention called by Moopanar elected him as the state congress president. The Indira group defeated the Reddy group with Moopanar's election and Reddy group disappeared from the scene not only in the state but also from the country.

By the dawn of 1980's the Indira congress came to be established as the most dominant congress group in the state, notwithstanding the continued existance of various other groups and individuals without any organisational or social strength, professing to adhere to the ideals and goals of congress and Kamara-jar . This emergence of Indira Congress as the overwhelmingly important congress group in the state ended the period of congress dualism in the state. From 1969 to 1977 there were two congress factions - congress (R) and congress (O) and from 1977

to 1979 there were two factions congress (I) and congress(Reddy) . This dualism proved to be an important factor in thwarting any sincere attempt to bring back congress rule in the state as the faction attempting a comeback has to fight not only opposite Dravidian groups but also its own fraternal rivals. So the prospects for a congress comeback appeared very bright at the dawn of 80's with the end of congress dualism.

But there was no sincere attempt on the part of the Indira congress to come back to power in this state. The central leadership of congress adopted certain strategies which instead of bringing Congress to power have contributed to the continued exclusion of Tamil Nadu congress unit from power in the state. The congress unit in Tamil Nadu suffers from two serious drawbacks and as long as these two problems are not paid attention to by the central leadership of the party the future of congress in the state will always be bleak. These two drawbacks are :

(1) Organisational incoherence and decline.

(2) Shortsighted policy of electoral alliances.

(1) Strategy of electoral alliances :

As stated earlier, the congress (R) entered into a blatantly discriminatory poll arrangement with DMK under the banner of left and democratic front to fight the 1971 elections force by the exigencies of survival. But what was thought as policy intended to tide over the immediate crisis in the 1969-71 period unfortunately came to be permanently adopted. The major congress faction, the congress (I) followed a particular electoral strategy from 1977 to 1991 which had severe implications for its local units fortunes. It entered into alliances

with either the DMK or ADMK so that a majority can be assured for it in the 40 parliamentary seats which Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry accounted for. This strategy had its price in the form of sacrificing the state unit's interest as congress had to play a second fiddle to the alliance partner in the state. This strategy plays a crucial role in maintaining the weakened nature of congress in the state.

Organisational degeneration

Though the shortsighted strategy of electoral alliances contributed to the continued political wilderness of congress in the state, it is only of secondary importance. The primary factor for the weakened nature of congress party in the state is the decline and degeneration in the organisational structure of the party. Rampant factionalism, hypocrisy, sycophancy etc. keeps the party out of power.

The decline in the organisational structure of the party started immediately after 1971 elections. The victorious prime minister and congress president injected distortions into the structure of the party to procure her own political security both in the party and government. Since it was the state leaders who had challenged her between 1967 and 1969, she was determined to prevent the emergence of new independent centres of power in the party. She centralised power in the party by restructuring the party organisation. State leaders were no longer allowed to build an independent local base in the countryside or in the party. They were nominated and dismissed at her own will. She was the source of power within both the party and government. The

state units of the party were made subservient to her authority and intra party democracy was scrapped. Under this stifling climax of personalised, centralised power the local units of the party began to get atrophied with such a strategy.

Mrs. Gandhi succeeded in reducing the threat to her power and position from the party leaders but in the process weakened the organisational structure of the party. The trusted, experienced organisational leadership was replaced and substituted by loyal friends as source of advice for the prime minister. Because of this centralisation of power and stifling of Intra-party democracy like Congress units in other states in Tamil Nadu also suffered.

The element of loyalty not organisational experience and ability determined who would occupy positions of power in the state unit. The central leadership chose and nominated the state unit president Karupppiah Mooppanar holds the distinction of being the last Tamil Nadu congress president who was democratically elected by the congress workers in the mini convention of 1978. In the whole of 80's the appointment to the presidentship of the state unit was offered merely due to the confidence and proximity of the local leaders with central leadership. Such a nominated president chose the criterion of loyalty in appointing his subordinates. Mobilisation of masses around party platform was not the duties they were expected to perform. But making arrangements wherever a party dignitary visits etc. were the political tasks expected to be performed by them. In this loyalty and sychopency dominated climate, the organisational structure of the party became ineffective and the result is the continued weakness of congress in

the state.

This status of marginalisation of Congress was not sought to be challenged and altered by the party leadership. More than that, the party leadership itself adopts strategies and tactics precipitating the continued exclusion of the party from power.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER III

STRATEGIES AND ELECTORAL ALLIANCES OF CONGRESS (I) IN TN :1977 TO 1991

A) ELECTORAL ALLIANCES AND TAMIL NADU ELECTIONS

The instrument of electoral alliances as part and parcel of the electoral strategies of political parties to achieve popular mandate in the electoral battles of the state, is seen ever since the first General Elections of 1952. They had and have been an inalienable feature of the electoral battles of Tamil Nadu. In the evolution and role of this strategy of electoral alliances there are two distinct phases. They are:

(1) 1952-1977 period of anti-Congressism.

(2) 1977-1991 period of Congress partnership.

I. 1952-1977 period of anti-Congressism:

The young Indian nation after its independence in its pursuit of socio-economic development and modernisation adopted liberal parliamentary form of political system based on the geographical mode of electoral representation. The essence of this geographical representation system is its notion of equality of franchise and constituency size. It functions on the procedural principle of counting of heads rather than with the principle of ideological accommodation of interests. All socio-political arguments of the heterogeneous Indian society are contrived to be solved by the numerical majority of a political party in the legislature. However it has the tendency to produce an absolute majority for a party which may not necessarily have a majority in the popular votes. What is even more worse is that this disproportionality between votes and seats can never be reduced or

eliminated. Yet the great advantage of operational simplicity of the system in the context of mass illiteracy of our republic influenced our leaders to choose it despite its drawbacks.

The leaders of the opposition parties which are weak as well as fragmented understood the undue benefits which may accrue to the major political party of the scenario. Indian National Congress as a result of this disproportionality between votes and seats. They started evolving appropriate political and electoral strategies to counter this unavoidable limitation. The strategy of electoral adjustments and alliances seemed to be the most appropriate for them. So they evolved the electoral alliances as an important part of their strategies.

In the first general elections of 1952 communist party of India and forward block entered into an informal understanding in few constituencies. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam which had not entered the elections supported their informal understanding. As a result CPI emerged as the single most largest opposition party in the legislative election winning 17 seats. In the general election 1957 forward block had an electoral alliance with Congress reforms committee (a breakaway group of Congress) and the alliance partners became the main opposition in the Assembly. They won 16 seats in the Madras state legislature. In the third General Elections of 1962 Swatantra, DMK, Forward bloc and Muslim League combined together to make electoral adjustments of constituencies. They won 62 seats in the legislature.

Though so far in the previous three elections electoral adjustments among opposition parties were made yet no serious alliance had been formed to capture the power in the state. The

dominance of Congress in the electoral politics of the state mostly based on the undue advantages arising from the disproportionality between votes and seats has been so complete that the party system itself came to be described as "Congress system". But the situation began to change dramatically in the 60's due to the increased popularity of DMK and end of Kamarajar chiefministership as he had moved from state politics to union politics. At the Thanjavour-Trichy regional conference of DMK, the chief C.N. Annadurai propagated the strategy of electoral adjustments with all other opposition parties irrespective of their different ideological orientations. He effected an alliance of all the opposition parties which included even the parties of conflicting ideologies like Swatantra and communist party, to fight the 1967 elections. The DMK dominated opposition front successfully dethroned Indian National Congress in the state.

In all these electoral adjustments in the state the ideological plane of anti-Congressism acted as the minimum common platform for these parties. But in the 1971 elections though electoral alliance was not based on anti-Congressism, weakening the powerful Congress faction in the state provided the basic consensus of the alliance. The ruling party at the state DMK and the less powerful faction of the divided Congress. Ruling Congress came together in a seven party alliance named as Left and Democratic alliance to defeat the Kamarajar led Congress(o) in the state.

2. 1977-91 PERIOD OF CONGRESS PARTNERSHIP :

The electoral alliance in the second phase are quantitative-ly and qualitatively different from the earlier ones. While earlier alliances were largely based on the ideological plane of anti-

Congressism the electoral alliances in the second phase are based on pragmatic politics, politics of power. While earlier ones were forged by smaller political parties like DMK, CPI, Muslim league, Swatantra out of sheer compulsion to break and undermine Congress hegemony, now they are forged by parties seeking Congress support and partnership. In this phase Congress role as an electoral partner has become very important. Though Congress can't capture power either on its own or in an alliance dominated by it yet it can tremendously influence the course of electoral battles in the state by its support to any of the major Dravidian political parties DMK and ADMK. Whenever it chooses to have an alliance with either of these two political parties the alliance becomes near invincible. Its alliances with either of the Dravidian parties had always become successful in the parliamentary elections. In the legislative Assembly elections except in 1980 when because of the inner contradictions, DMK -Congress alliance failed in all other elections. Its alliance with Dravidian parties has become successful.

The near decisive importance of congress as an electoral partner for Dravidian parties in the state to capture power is essentially due to the nature of the party system in Tamil Nadu in this phase. The nature of the party system in Tamil Nadu can be described as Triparty system. Though a number of national and regional political parties are existing, only three parties are important ones as they have comparatively greater social support than others. These three major parties are DMK, ADMK and Congress. As far as electoral support is concerned the two parties of the Dravidian origin are evenly matched. They account for nearly two

-third of the total electorate between them. While DMK gets considerable portion of its support from the agriculturally prosperous and socially middle level backward caste groups like Gounders of Western Tamil Nadu, Thevars of Southern Tamil Nadu, Vanniyar of Northern Tamil Nadu, ADMK derives its support considerably from Scheduled Castes.² But as both the regional parties sprang from the same social Dravida movement, their support base is found overlapping the caste barriers. So though ADMK gets considerable portion of its support from scheduled castes, the middle level castes like Thevars, Vanniyars also support it.

The third major political actor Congress has brahmins, part of Nadars, Vanniyars and other fringe group as comprising its support base. It totally accounts for one-fifth of the total electorate in the state.

(B) ELECTORAL ALLIANCES OF CONGRESS . 1977-91

For the sake of clarity the electoral Alliances of Congress are grouped under three sections. Each section has the elections where Congress had alliance with a particular party. In the first section Congress alliance with smaller parties as in 1977 and 1989 are analyzed. In the second section Congress alliance with DMK is analyzed. In the third sector Congress-ADMK alliance is analyzed and 1984 and 1991 elections are grouped together for the simple reason that both elections are characterised by ADMK Congress alliance.

In all these sections how alliances were forged, how distribution of seats took place, what and how electoral issues were chosen and dealt with, how parties performed in the election and what are the major deciding factors for the success or failure of

the alliance are dealt with.

C CONGRESS AND SMALLER PARTIES :

The Congress party entered the electoral battle in the state without the support of any of the two Dravidian parties in 1977 and 1989 Assembly elections. Instead, it had alliance with smaller political parties like communist party of India, Muslim league. In these alliances Congress dominated both in terms of the number of seats it contested and the number of seats it won. This Congress dominant position in these alliances was primarily due to the wider social and geographical base, political clout of the Congress in comparison to that of other partners.

On both these occasions the alliance of Congress with these smaller parties was not voluntary option but a compulsory one as the major Dravidian parties of the state DMK and ADMK decided against having an alliance with Congress. In 1977 the leader of ADMK, M.G. Ramachandran's reluctance to share power with Congress which had lost power at the centre in the Parliamentary elections and his shrewd decision not to antagonize the new Janata party government at the centre led to the breakdown of the alliance.⁴ In 1989 Congress had to fight the elections without ADMK's support because of the incompatibility in the demands and claims on seat sharing between the Jayalalitha faction of ADMK and Congress. The talks between the two parties broke down over the restoration of MGR formulae formulated by the then chief minister of Tamil Nadu Ramachandran and Congress leader Indira Gandhi.

The MGR formulae consists of sharing two-third of the Assembly seats by the ADMK and the remaining one-third by the Congress

(I) and in the parliamentary elections while Congress will get two-third⁵ of the 39 seats ADMK will get one-third. In 1989 due to the absence of personal equation between Jayalalitha and state leaders of Congress, differences over seat sharing remained unsolved leading to the breakdown of the alliance.

POLL ISSUES

In the 1977 Assembly elections the Congress front campaigned on two important points:

- (1) Corruption of DMK government
- (2) Political inexperience of ADMK.⁶

The Congress party and its alliance partner CPI concentrated their campaigning on the issue of corruption in the dismissed DMK government. The election itself was necessitated by the dismissal of the DMK government on corruption charges during the emergency period. In fact the 1977 parliamentary success of ADMK-Congress alliance in the state was due to their skillful campaigning on DMK government's actions of omissions and commissions. Soon after the dismissal of the state government, the central government constituted Sarkaria Commission to enquire into the corruption charges against DMK leaders. Even while the Sarkaria Commission was conducting its enquiry the Congress party described DMK as a corrupt party. The Congress (I) promised to provide an efficient, corruption free government if voted to power.

While corruption was chosen to attack DMK, the supposed political immaturity and administrative ignorance were chosen as the main issue to attack ADMK. The fact that ADMK was only a party with six years of experience was repeatedly picked up by the Congress as an indicator of ADMK's administrative, political

bankruptcy. Congress attack on ADMK was more severe than on DMK as the Congress leaders wanted to teach a lesson to ADMK for breaking earlier alliance with it. Even there was a tacit understanding in some constituencies between Congress and DMK against ADMK. The Congress leaders indirectly supported the DMK President Karunanidhi while campaigning in his constituency. The leader of state unit of Congress even declared that people like Karunanidhi should be voted to the Assembly so that the state can benefit from their abilities, experience and service.⁷

In the 1989 elections the Congress front singularly campaigned on the issue of Nationalism.⁸ It cautioned the people in its electioneering that the success of any of the regional parties will lead to the enthronement of regionalism at the cost of nationalism. Nearly two decades after it lost out the battle over the nature of Dravidian Movement's relation with national integrity, it again brought up the issue. It portrayed regional identity as an antithesis of national unity. It also criticised the two decades of Dravidian rule as nothing but corruption, inefficiency, nepotism and vowed to reestablish "the golden years of Kamarajar". It charged the two Dravidian parties as responsible for the backwardness of the state in all spheres industry, agriculture, education etc.

PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS AND ITS PARTNERS 1977 TO 1991

TABLE II

YEAR	ALLIANCE PARTNER	PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS		PERFORMANCE OF PARTNER (S)	
		SEATS	% OF VOTE	SEAT	VOTES
1977	SMALLER PARTIES	27	17	17	5
1980	DMK	30	20.7	38	22.3
1984	ADMK	62	22.7	132	36.5
1989	SMALLER PARTIES	26	20.2	-	0.5
1991	ADMK	61	21.5	163	41.06

Source : RESULT OF TAMIL NADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS
PUBLISHED BY TAMIL ARASU IN 1977, 1980, 1989 AND 1991.

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

As far as the electoral outcome in the state was concerned

in both elections the Congress party was defeated very badly. While in 1977 elections Congress party polled 17% of the total valid votes securing 27 seats in the 1989 elections it polled 20.2% of the total valid votes securing 26 seats (shown in Table II). Though the electoral performance of Congress was almost equal both in terms of the number of seats it won and percentage of votes it polled, the 1977 electoral outcome was considered by both Congressmen and neutral, politically conscious people as a satisfactory one while the 1989 outcome is described as a complete rout. This is because of the high and rosy promises and expectations of the local leaders of Congress in 1989.

In 1977 the complete rout of the party was anticipated by all as Congress suffered from problems like factionalism, poor organisational strength, narrow social base, absence of charismatic leadership etc. But in 1989 the Congress party had taken systematic measures to remove those drawbacks. During the President's rule steps were taken to promote organisational solidarity and strength of the party and also to widen its social base. The Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi was portrayed as Congress alternative to DMK's Karunanidhi and ADMK's Jayalalitha. The prime minister visited Tamil Nadu as many as twelve times in the few months before elections. Moreover the Congress party projected the efficient administration during the president's rule as an example of what the Congress party can do to the state if elected to power.

But the Congress party lost the elections. The absence of any electoral alliance between Congress and DMK was the main reason for the victory of ADMK in 1977 elections. If there had

been any alliance between DMK and Congress. They would have polled around 61% of popular votes and won around 175 seats. Similarly the absence of any alliance between Congress and Jayalalitha faction of ADMK was considered to be the prime factor in the victory of DMK. If there had been any such alliance Congress and ADMK would have polled around 45% of votes and got around 130 seats.

As for as the performance of Congress party was concerned in both elections it showed a comparatively better performance in the southern districts of Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Ramana-thapuram. The better showing of Congress in these districts was due to some socio-political reasons. In these southern districts there are three main caste groups, Nadars, Thevars and untouchables. In the traditional Hindu caste system the Nadars (who were earlier known as Chanars or toddy tappers) were placed slightly above that of untouchables. This lowly placed community in order to achieve socio, economic, educational development underwent initially sanskritisation (a process whereby the lower castes try to become socially higher by adopting the symbols, values etc of higher castes). Finding it difficult and often useless, they gave up sanskritisation and started pursuing modern education and industry for achieving higher socio economic status.⁹

In their attempt to raise above in the social scale they encountered massive and often violent opposition from the dominant Thevar community in the first half of the century. When they were groping in the darkness about how to fight this dominant community, a member of their community, Kamarajar started acquiring more power and status in Congress politics.

Though Kamarajar didn't commit himself for the exclusive welfare and development of Nadars, Nadars started supporting him wholeheartedly purely because he was a Nadar. They proved to be the important social group supporting Congress in Tamil Nadu. Though their support to Congress started declining after the emergence of Dravidian movement and the death of Kamarajar in 1975, yet significant portion of Nadar community continued to support Congress because of loyalty to the now deceased leader.

There is another factor for the better showing of Congress in the southernmost district of Kanyakumari. This district though demographically Tamil was administratively under the Travancore state during the colonial period. As dravidian movement concentrated its attention only in Tamil speaking areas of Madras Presidency, Kanyakumari was left out of its operations. Because of this fact there was no sufficient penetration here by Dravidian movement. So support for Dravidian political parties had always been weak here. Moreover when a widespread agitation was launched for the incorporation of this district into the state of Tamil speaking Madras, the movement was supported by the then chief minister Kamarajar. So the people in this district had always been supportive of Congress in gratitude. Another aspect of the politics of this district is the peculiarity of its political culture. While other parts and districts of Tamil Nadu are emotionally attached to the pan-Tamil identity, because of the lack of Dravidian movement influence here no significance is attached to such an identity. Here caste plays a significant role than language. As

Kamarajar was a Nadar, this Nadar dominated district supported Congress and still continues to support even when Kamarajar is no more.

CONGRESS -DMK ALLIANCE

The internal contradictions inherent in the ruling Janata party came to the fore over the question of dual membership and its central government collapsed within two years after coming to power. This necessitated the parliamentary elections of 1980. The major parties of opposition, Congress and DMK in the state realised that an electoral alliance between them is needed to dislodge ADMK from power in the state. So they fought the 1980 parliamentary elections unitedly and achieved a major victory winning 37 of the 39 constituencies in the state. When the victorious Congress party formed its government at the centre, it dismissed around eleven state governments ruled by the opposition parties including ADMK govt in Tamil Nadu on the basis of the principle of linked mandate.

According to the principle of linked mandate, the electoral performances of political parties in the parliamentary elections of 1980 is seen an indicator of what they would have performed if assembly elections were also held. So if they had lost the parliamentary election. They don't have a right to stay in power at the state level. The loss in the parliamentary polls indicates a loss of legitimacy for the state governments headed by the opposition parties. So they were dismissed.

After the dismissal of the government, the two major opposition parties in the state DMK and Congress entered into an alliance. They contested 110 seats each leaving the remaining

seats to the other political partners . It is to be noted here that the Congress party had contested more seats both in the legislative assembly elections and parliamentary elections when it had alliance with DMK than ADMK.

POLL ISSUES

The congress - DMK alliance concentrated on the same issues on which they won the previous parliamentary elections . They criticised the dismissed ADMK government of miserable performance, political inexperience , administrative inefficiency, corruption and violent suppression of liberties and rights of the people. They condemned the violent methods adopted by the previous ADMK government in tackling the agitations of various sections of the society like students , farmers , policemen , etc. .

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

The outcome of the Assembly polls in was a shocking one . The Congress - DMK alliance which had won 95 % of the seats and 56.4% of the valid votes in the January parliamentary elections from the state suffered a sharp slide back to get only 29% of seats and 44.4 % of votes in this election (shown in the table II). The partners of the alliance , Congress and the DMK who had contested 110 seats each could get only 30 and 38 seats respectively. While DMK secured 22.3 % of popular votes , the Congress party could secure only 20.7%of votes .

The opposite ADMK alliance comprising ADMK,CPI,CPI(M) improved its position from 5% seats and 40.1% votes to 69% seats and 48.6% votes. There was a swing of 8% of popular votes from the DMK-Congress alliance to the opposite front. The final results of the election resembled closely the distribution of seats

that existed in the dissolved Assembly.

A detailed examination of the elections of 1980 reveals the following factors as responsible for the disappointing performance of Congress-DMK alliance.

- (1) Internal contradictions of DMK-Congress alliance.
- (2) Reformed attitude of ADMK government.
- (3) Issue of state autonomy.

Internal contradictions of DMK-Congress alliance which got further aggravated by the distinct poll prospects of capturing power acted as the major factor for the failure of the alliance. Here are three major aspects or issues around which the contradictions in the alliance revolved. They are:

- (1) Issue of chiefministership.
- (2) Problem of rebel candidature.
- (3) Contradictory, Uncoordinated electioneering.

ISSUE OF CHIEFMINISTERSHIP

The problems in the alliance initially revolved around the issue of chiefministership. Talks on seat sharing between the alliance partners suddenly ground to a halt over the question of chiefministership.

It was obvious that the Congress central leadership must have promised the chair to the DMK chief Karunanidhi during the discussion in the previous parliamentary polls itself in return for a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha. Even so, it balked at a public confirmation of this and allowed the Tamil Nadu unit to twist the DMK chief's arm. The DMK chief Karunanidhi who had already given 50 percent of seats to the Congress (I) much to the chagrin of DMK's lower level leaders and cadres adopted a firm

stand that in case of any DMK-Congress alliance government in the future, he will be the chief minister. Though the controversy over the issue was settled, with the central leadership of Congress declaring Karunanidhi as chief minister in a future Congress - DMK coalition ministry, the fissures in the alliance had already been widely known to the people and their confidence in the alliance started declining.

Problem of Rebel candidature :

Once the issue of chiefministership was settled, the apportioning of constituencies between the partners took place smoothly but when it came to selecting candidates, the going was a lot tougher for both parties than in the earlier parliamentary elections. The problems of Congress in choosing its candidates became more embarrassing. Here open physical clashes involving top leaders became the order of the day. It even reached a stage where the TNCC(I) president's briefcase was whisked away from his hotel room and several rebel candidates filed their nomination papers with genuine authorization slips for the hand symbol. The dilemma of the scrutinizing officers, faced with more than one genuine authorization slips for the hand symbol was solved for them by an unprecedented directive from the Election Commission in extending the date by one more day to enable the TNCC(I) leadership to sort out the muddle arising from the theft.

The selection of candidates by the Congress party generated a lot of bitterness and mistrust. Rather than experience and loyalty, closeness to political leaders like Sanjay Gandhi became the decisive criterion for selection. The moneyed people pressed into service their resources and got selected. The bitterness, it

generated led to serious clashes in several places and in the end rebel candidates filed nomination papers in more than 25 % of the constituencies. One such candidate, Dorai Ramaswamy from Vella-koil constituency who had been with Congress through hard and bad times was ignored and in his place a landed tycoon with high level connection was selected. In utter disgust Dorai Ramaswamy went over to the opposite camp. Fighting on ADMK's ticket he trounced the Congress candidate by the second highest margin in the election.

Uncoordinated Electioneering :

Electioneering by the Congress-DMK alliance was also not as coordinated as it was earlier in the parliamentary elections. For example when the prime minister came for electioneering, in her schedule none of the 110 DMK constituencies were included. The DMK chief who got disappointed over such discriminatory exclusion protested against the intentional, deliberate exclusion of DMK constituencies from the schedule of the prime minister.¹⁴ During the course of electioneering both partners of the alliance contradicted each other in giving promises. During the campaign not to be outdone by ADMK, Congress (I) promised unemployment doles. But Karunanidhi maintained that providing unemployment is not feasible and advisable. This contradiction and lack of coordination in electioneering reached a highly embarrassing point when the 23 point programme of DMK-Congress front was announced. Much to the chagrin of DMK, provision of unemployment dole was an important item in that common programme.

This mistrust contradiction and absence of coordination in the DMK-Congress alliance severely eroded their chances of coming

to power in the state. Even after the electoral results were announced, both the parties indulged in mudslinging against each other. Asked to comment on the electoral outcome in the state, the prime minister blamed the alliance failure on the naming of Karunanidhi as the alliance's chief ministerial candidate. But the detailed study of the election reveals that rather than DMK being a liability for Congress, it was Congress which was a liability for DMK. Because both parties contested equal number of seats and while DMK win 38 seats, Congress won only 30 seats while DMK had captured 22.3 percent of votes, Congress won only 20.7 percent of votes. This despite the fact that it was DMK which was allotted unfavorable constituencies.

Reformed attitude of ADMK:

The attitudinal transformation of ADMK's leadership after its electoral setback in the January parliamentary elections also influenced the elections of 1980. The January poll verdict came as a severe setback to ADMK. The party leader M.G. Ramachandran realised that the high handed approach of his government in tackling the agitation of various sections of the society in the past one year had precipitated the party's defeat. So he decided to adopt a more positive posture towards these groups especially agriculturists, policemen etc.

To mend fences with farmers he released all the imprisoned agriculturists. As he had violently suppressed their movement earlier, the Agriculturist Association gave a decisive call in the parliamentary elections to vote against ADMK. This time the chief minister accepted their 9 point charter of demands in toto. He promised to urge the centre to write off loans of the farmers. If

the centre refused it was promised by him that the state would step in and help them clear the arrears in five years. This reformed attitude of ADMK influenced the leaders of Agriculturist Association to stay neutral in the 1980 Assembly elections. This change from a hostile stand to neutral one favored the ADMK immensely in the assembly elections.

The same conciliatory attitude was adopted towards the agitating policemen. The government released the arrested chief of policemen Britto and promised to accept their demands of reinstating the dismissed policemen. He also expressed his consent for recognising the right of the policemen to form their own associations.

Issue of state's autonomy:

The question of state's autonomy was highlighted by the ADMK alliance. Historically both the Dravidian parties had expressed reservations about the prevalent constitutional provisions relating to the distribution of powers between the centre and the states. The provision relating to the imposition of president's rule in the states were severely criticised by them. As his government was dismissed earlier by the Congress government at centre, the chief of ADMK Ramachandran made this unequal distribution of powers as the focal point of his campaigning. He portrayed the dismissal of his government as an wicked act of the Congress-DMK alliance and an insult in the people who elected him. He linked his government's dismissal to state autonomy and created a strong attitude of sympathy from the people which led to the defeat of Congress-DMK alliance.

(3) CONGRESS-ADMK ALLIANCE :

The Congress party entered into electoral alliance with ADMK for the legislative Assembly elections of 1984 and 1991. On both these occasions alliances were based on MGR formulae by which Congress was given one third of the Assembly seats. The simultaneous conduct of both the legislative Assembly election and parliamentary election facilitated the frictionless settlement about the number of seats each party should contest and which constituency should be given to whom. In both the 1984 and 1991 elections Congress party was allotted those constituencies where it had considerable support base like those seats in the districts Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, North Arcot etc.

Poll Issues

The Congress-ADMK alliance in the 1984 elections concentrated on two important issues:

- (1) Threat to National Security.
- (2) Continued mandate for the hospitalised chief minister.

The parliamentary elections were announced soon after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi by her own bodyguard on October 31, 1984. The acting chief minister of Tamil Nadu Nedunchezian in consultation with his own party leaders decided to hold the legislative Assembly elections along with parliamentary elections. The Congress party in particular and alliance partners in general campaigned on the issue of prime ministerial assassination and the subsequent threat to national sovereignty, unity and integrity. The alliance partner asked the people to give their parliamentary vote for the continuance of Congress government

headed by the assassinated prime minister's son Rajiv Gandhi. In the campaign the aggressively projected issue was the inability of the non-Congress parties to thwart the threat to national security, posed by both the external and internal forces and vested interests.

The second issue focussed by the partners was the question of stability and continuance of the ADMK government at the state level. The hospitalisation of the charismatic chief minister and the unceremonious and provoking campaign of the opposition parties on his physical ability to govern was utilised by the ADMK leaders to create a wave of sympathy.

In the 1991 elections the ADMK- Congress alliance placed two major issues before the electorate. (1) The alliance partners attributed the increasing lapse in the maintenance of law and order to the growth of LTTE's strength and activities in the state, particularly in the coastal districts. It charged the DMK and LTTE as responsible for the introduction of "Gun Culture" in the state which was till recently a "garden of peace". In fact the very dismissal of DMK's government which precipitated the elections was demanded by the alliance partners primarily on this DMK-LTTE nexus and the allegedly resultant lawlessness in the state. The assassination of Congress chief Rajeev Gandhi near Madras while he was campaigning, by the suspected LTTE suicide bomber seemed to substantiate the alliance partner's allegations against DMK and LTTE.

The second issue projected by the alliance partners was the issue of corruption in the previous government of DMK. Earlier before the elections, the ADMK-Congress alliance submitted to the

President a memorandum of corruption charges against the DMK government. The charges included nepotism in the granite business, land acquisition in Tanjore district, appointment and promotion of sympathetic officials to high offices of the state and district administration and recomposition of the state public service commission (TNPSC) in favour of the ruling DMK party.

Electoral Performance:

In both the 1984 and 1991 elections the Congress- ADMK alliance defeated the DMK led opposition front. While they won 198 of the 234 seats in the legislative assembly in the 1984 election, they captured 224 of the 232 contested seats in the 1991 elections representing a stunning 97% success rate. (shown in the Table II). The performance of DMK front in general and DMK party in particular was miserable. While it captured 37 seats in the 1984 election, it was almost wiped out in the 1991 election. The ruling party of yesteryears had won in only one seat, Madras Harbour constituency where its leader Karunanidhi was elected with a narrow margin of 800 votes.

The margin of Congress-ADMK alliance victory was more impressive in 1991 elections than in 1984 elections. In 1991 in a large number of constituencies the lead was well over 40000 votes. In as many as 196 assembly constituencies the ADMK-Congress alliance polled more than half of the valid votes. This proportion was more than 60 % in about 55 constituencies.

In this election the alliance was able to capture all the seats of Northern districts the traditional support bases of DMK from where DMK won more than 75 % of its 151 seats in the 1989

elections. In 1984 Congress won 62 seats and ADMK won 132 seats. In 1991 elections Congress captured 61 seats and ADMK won 163 of the total contested seats.

The detailed analysis of the 1984 and 1991 elections brings out the following factors as responsible for the impressive performance of ADMK Congress alliance

- (1) Electoral alliance between Congress and ADMK
- (2) Generation of sympathy waves
- (3) Alienation of scheduled castes from DMK
- (4) Alienation of Vanniyars from DMK
- (5) Problems in the developmental schemes of DMK government
- (6) Anti-DMK attitude and propaganda by the media
- (7) Srilankan Tamil Conflict.

Electoral Alliance

As the two regional parties are almost evenly matched in terms of social base both appropriating approximately two-thirds of popular vote in the state, the third major party Congress tilted the electoral scale against DMK by its alliance with ADMK. The smooth, friction free relationship between these two alliance partners during the whole electoral process from the apportionment of the constituencies between them to the coordinated, non-contradictory electioneering contributed a lot in strengthening people's faith in them. At the very start of the process, both partners had come to agreement over who will head the government in the state if their alliance won and coalition government was rejected by both parties. It was agreed that ADMK will run the government while Congress will remain as its active ally after the election. The influence of alliance factor on the

success of the front is clearly had by analysing how many seats each partner would have got if there were no alliance.

If there had been no alliance ADMK with its share of 37.1 % and 44.37 % popular votes in 1984 and 1991 would have got only 86 and 102 seats not the 133 and 161 seats it won in 1984 and 1991 respectively. Congress would have won only 37 and 35 seats respectively in 1984 and 1991.

Role of Sympathy wave

Surprisingly in both the elections where the Congress-ADMK alliance won the election, there was the phenomenon called sympathy wave. The skillful electoral strategy of the alliance partners had created sympathy waves in favour of them. The assassination of the prime minister in 1984 and assassination of Congress chief in 1991 were utilised by the alliance partners for inducing a sympathy wave favouring them.

In 1984 apart from the prime ministerial assassination, the hospitalisation of M G Ramachandran also had an impact. Commenting on the electoral outcome in 1984 the DMK chief Karunanidhi rather sarcastically said that people had given the parliamentary vote for the deceased and Assembly vote for the diseased.

In 1991 the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi inside Tamil Nadu worked heavily in favour of ADMK- Congress alliance.¹⁹

Alienation of scheduled castes from DMK:

One of the most important factors for the electoral success of Congress-ADMK alliance in both 1984 and 1991 elections was the crystallisation of the support of scheduled castes for them. This alienation of scheduled castes from DMK has a historical legacy.²⁰ Though the founder leaders of Dravidian entities

E.V.Ramasamy, Annadurai worked for the welfare of all non-brahmins and abolition of caste system including untouchability, the movement came to the dominated by the caste Hindus. The thevars of southern districts. Gounders of western districts, and vellallas etc. formed the core of these caste Hindus. This dominant landowning caste groups were responsible for enforcing untouchability. They also enforced seclusion of the scheduled castes outside the area of the caste Hindu in the villages. Clashes erupted repeatedly between these groups and scheduled communities owing to the attempts! demands of the later to change existing inequitous socio-economic structure. In all such cases of clashes between backward castes and scheduled communities the backward castes dominated DMK worked against the scheduled castes. ²¹

For a brief period in 1967, however, the scheduled castes were not opposed to the DMK C.N. Annadurai had, during electioneering for the 1967 Assembly elections successfully managed to attract a large number of educated SC youths to participate in the party activities. He was able to create an atmosphere of non-confrontation between the two groups within both the party and ministry.

But this changed after DMK's rise to power and now it started adopting a blatantly anti-scheduled caste stand. The Kilvenmani massacre of 1969 in which 42 scheduled caste laborers were brutally murdered by the upper caste landlords and the partisan role of the DMK government and the resignation of Satyavani Muthu the SC member of Karunanidhi's ministry following her differences with party leadership over the issue of the conservative, reactionary bureaucracy again set off the process of SC alienation

from DMK.

The alienated scheduled castes went to form a substantial portion of ADMK's social base when M.G. Ramachandran founded it after walking out of DMK due to his personal and political differences with party leadership. Due to the support of scheduled communities ADMK under Ramachandran leadership continued to win the elections impressively. He continued to enjoy the support of the scheduled castes as he conceived and implemented certain schemes for their development.

The most popular programme of the Ramachandran government was the nutritious noon meal scheme. He modified the existing noon meal scheme introduced by the Kamarajar government in the 50's. Besides attracting impressive attendance in school (as poor children joined schools so that they can have a nutritious lunch besides studies) the scheme won huge admiration for the chief minister from the people. Though the scheme was not meant for exclusively scheduled castes, it benefited them most as they constitute a overwhelming portion of the poor in Tamil Nadu.

The decision of ADMK government to abolish the post of "Karnam" or the traditional Village accountant (a post normally held by Brahmin or upper caste persons) and its substitution by the present system of government appointed village Administrative officers in which SC persons were also to be appointed as per reservation norms helped to increase the self-confidence and dignity of the scheduled castes. This is because for the first time they are appointed as village administrative officers and the caste Hindus have to come to them to get certificates, pay revenue etc. something unthinkable earlier.

These measures along with the fact that no major mass violence was committed against the scheduled castes in the period of ADMK's government influenced them to support ADMK. Their support to ADMK played a crucial role in the ADMK-Congress alliance victory in the 1984 elections. But the 1989 elections their support got divided between the two factions of ADMK (Janaki and Jayalalita factions) precipitating the defeat of both groups.

When DMK came back to power in 1989 it understood the crucial role played by the alienated scheduled castes in its exclusion from power in the state since 1976. So it consciously sought to attract them into its fold and undertook various developmental programmes exclusively meant for their upliftment. These included construction of free concrete houses, increased scholarships for SC students etc. But soon the inherent contradiction and antagonism between the landed castes and scheduled castes came to fore. Two important events took place which restarted the alienation of SC from DMK. They are

(1) Bodynayakanoor violence

(2) Resignation of RadhaKrishnan from ministry.

The simmering hostilities between the Thevars and scheduled castes in the southern districts erupted into an explosive caste riot in April 1990 claiming around 20 lives, apart from causing from extensive loss to property. Both material and human loss was more for the scheduled castes than the caste Hindus. In this violence which initially erupted between Thevars and scheduled castes the other landowning castes supported the thevars, in spite of their internal difference, in suppressing the SC people.

The Indian people front inquiry committee reported that while local leaders of all the parties were involved in the violence against the weaker section DMK's MLA's, Panchayat union chairman, village Panchayat Presidents led the attackers.²²

The second incident which angered the scheduled castes was the abrupt removal of minister for Anti-Dravida welfare, Radhakrishnan from the ministry. He was removed owing to pressure from the upper caste landowners. The upper caste had engineered his removal to teach him a lesson for his involvement in the conflict between the agricultural laborers and landowners in the northern districts. The agricultural laborers who are overwhelmingly Scheduled caste men wanted an increase in wages in the rich sugarcane areas of north Arcot, Chengalpathu and south Arcot. The dominant landowning caste like Mudaliyar, Reddelyar etc. resented the ministerial assistance given to the laborers in their agitation and so pressed the party leadership to remove him.

The dismissed minister was admitted into the ADMK and was put up as a ADMK candidate in one of the Assembly constituencies. This admission of dismissed minister into ADMK strengthened the already prevailing perception among the politically conscious and educated members of scheduled caste that ADMK offers better opportunities for any schedule caste person aspiring for political participation and leadership.²³

These two events further widened the gap between DMK and SC and the consolidation of SC support behind the ADMK-Congress alliance was completed enabling the combined to win the election spectacularly.

Spoiler Role of PMK

The hostile relationship between DMK and Pattali Makkal Katchi (Toiling people's party) and the subsequent alienation of Vanniyar's from DMK was another important factor in the defeat of the DMK and the victory of Congress- ADMK alliance while DMK reapt rich electoral rewards in the 1989 election owing to the embittered relationship between Congress and Vanniyar Sangam, it became the main enemy of Vanniyar Sangam in 1991 elections. Soon after the formation of DMK government in 1989, the new chief minister Karunanidhi accepted the long standing demand of the Vanniyar Sangam for reservation in the state services. However the decision to create a new category " Most Backward Classes" (MBC) and allotting it 20 % out of the total 49 % reservation for BC's antagonised the Vanniyar Sangam as its demand for 20 % exclusive reservation for Vanniyar was not accepted.

So Vanniyar Sangam went on the offensive. Bitterly attacking the DMK chief on the ground that this decision was meant as a cunning ploy to deny the Vanniyars the benefits due to them. Dr. Ramdoss the Vanniyar leader said that the chief minister had deliberately expanded the MBC list from 33 communities identified by the Sattanathan committee to 107 which would end up cutting into the benefits which the Vanniyars would actually enjoy.

In July 1989 Dr. Ramdoss formed his own party Pattali Makkal Katchi to represent the interests of Vanniyars in particular and all the dispossessed classes in general. He conceived PMK as a party of weaker castes having an independent autonomous identity of its own, different from DMK, ADMK and Congress. Though he criticised all other parties, his attack on DMK was more inten-

sive. He vehemently criticised the DMK in his election meeting. The party organ Thinapuratchi (Daily Revolution) carried articles heavily critical of DMK. Dr. Ramdoss characterised Karunanidhi as a " Traitor of the Dravidian Movement " and " betrayer of the LTTE, mandal issues"²⁴.

The impressive performance of PMK in the northern districts where it pushed DMK to third place in many constituencies worked to the advantage of ADMK - Congress. In many constituencies DMK lost because of the erosion of its support among the Vanniyars due to presence of PMK in the electoral battle.

PREVIOUS DMK GOVERNMENT'S SCHEMES.

During the 23 months in power DMK introduced a series of populist programmes formulated to woo specifically targeted social segments. However the inbuilt biases and contradictions brought about such distortions that instead of satisfying the beneficiaries it created the opposite effect. One such programme was the pay commission increase in the salaries of state governments which sought to meet the long standing demands of the state government servants for parity in pay with central government employees. However in revising the pay scale's two important changes were made. Firstly the Dearness allowance was merged with basic pay. This new pay-packet involved a higher basic salary: but as the DA was fixed at a lower, fixed scale, unlinked to the cost of living index (therefore not taking into account inflation) the net increase in pay was not substantial.

Secondly the government proceeded to alter the amount and number of grades and scales of pay and ended up literally oblit-

erating scale differences between various levels of seniority as between grades. this resulted in an anomalous situation in which a person with 20 years of service had a marginal pay difference with a newcomer. Thus this pay commission increase instead of securing support from the government servants only ended up estranging them.

Provision of free rise scheme was one more scheme which boomeranged electorally for DMK. This populist measure intended to increase the electoral stock of DMK was launched amidst much fanfare whereby on five important occasions namely Tamil new year day, Pongal, Annadurai birthday, Diwali and Karunanidhi birthday free distribution of 5 kg of rice for the poor was envisaged. But due to the non-availability of further supply after the complete exhaustion of existing surplus the scheme was discontinued. The opposite Congress-ADMK front described the reversal of the programme as manifestation of the insincere attitude of DMK towards poor.

Perhaps the most unpopular scheme of DMK government was its cheap liquor scheme (CLS) by which liquor was sold at government approved rates in authorized shops in almost all the villages in the countryside. This issue was exploited by Congress-ADMK alliance. They successfully linked the anti-liquor scheme to the supposedly anti-women nature of DMK. As women are the once who will have to ultimately face the problem of increased drunkenness violence and shortage of money, the allegation about CLS being inherently anti-women and the party which brought the scheme as anti-women. They questioned the ethics of the government involving in liquor trade. The alliance focussed on what Kamarajar had

said in the 50's and 60's about how the loss in revenue of prohibition will be compensated by the channelisation of the saved money into spending for better causes.

MEDIA MANIPULATION

According to some political scientists the partisan role played by both official and unofficial media is also responsible for the success of ADMK-Congress alliance. Because of the absence of autonomy and excessive financial dependence of official media on central government where Congress has considerable clout, the official media was used in a distinctly partisan manner to discredit the opposition front.

The unofficial media in Tamil Nadu had always been against DMK and DK since the initial days of self-respect movement. The unofficial media is in the control of the powerful brahmins. As very basic policy of DMK is anti-brahmin, the brahmin controlled unofficial media played a partisan in discrediting DMK. V. Geeta and S.V. Rajadurai attribute the DMK's failure to the persistence of brahmins hegemony mediated through an arrogant, unrepentant and castiest brahmin intelligentsia that makes its views and opinions known through the strategic abuse of the media. M.S.S. Pandian an important scholar of Dravidian movement described ADMK- Congress victory as representing the culmination of a process of anti-DMK propaganda orchestrated by a miniscule but powerful brahmin community. Though they contribute only about 3 % of the population, they have disproportionate influence in the unofficial media through which they influence the public vote in the manner they want.

ROLE OF TAMIL-SINHALESE CONFLICT

The ADMK-Congress alliance reaped rich electoral dividends both in 1984 and 1991 by successfully exploiting the issue of Tamil-Sinhalese conflict in the Emerald island. The 1983 anti-Tamil violence precipitated a massive exodus of refugees into the shores of Tamil Nadu. As the magnitude and intensity of violence against them surpassed the previous riots, the political parties of Tamil Nadu were compelled to take firm stand. Following the violence Tamil militancy became active in Srilanka. The political differences between the major political parties of Tamil Nadu soon found manifestation in the factionalised Tamil Militancy while ADMK supported LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam), DMK supported TELO (Tamil Ealam liberation organisation)

Though both the Dravidian parties were supporting rival organisations they were basically committed to the idea of either direct or indirect intervention from India to secure a Tamil homeland "Tamil Ealam" which will cover the north and eastern districts of Srilanka. There was a streak of ambivalence in the attitude of Congress (I). It supported whatever the central government did.

As 1984 election were the first to be conducted in Tamil Nadu after the 1983 violence in Srilanka the Srilankan issue came to the forefront. Both ADMK and DMK promised to secure the homeland for the Srilankan Tamils. The Congress party in the state seemed to support its alliance partner's quest for a homeland for Tamils in Srilanka.

Following the change in Indian perception about the nature and role of Tamil Militancy in Srilanka in the post Indian-Srilankan

accord phase characterised by the bitter, fratricidal LTTE-IPKF war the attitude of Congress (I) towards the LTTE hardened. After the formation of DMK government in 1989 the attitude of ADMK towards the Srilankan conflict in general and LTTE in particular changed. The alliance partners even went to the extent of demanding the dismissal of the popularly elected DMK government over its alleged nexus with LTTE which was conceded by the Congress backed Chandrasekhar government at the centre.

During the course of his electioneering, the Congress chief Rajeev Gandhi was assassinated near Madras and soon the needle of suspicion tilted towards LTTE. The assassination increased tremendously the aversion of the alliance partners towards LTTE. The partners vehemently campaigned against the Tamil militant group and they successfully created an impression in the minds of public that LTTE assassinated Rajeev Gandhi on the orders of DMK party. This skillful electoral manipulation of the assassination episode worked wonderfully for the alliance partners and what was expected to be a comfortable victory for the alliance was turned into a spectacular one for them.

IMPACT OF ELECTORAL ALLIANCE

The dynamics of electoral alliance forged by Congress left a profound impact on the politics of Tamil Nadu. Their impact can be studied under three categories. They are

- (1) Political Stability
- (2) Political Issues
- (3) Inter Party Intra-Party relationships.

(1) Political Studies

The electoral alliance of Congress had produced deci-

sive majorities in all the parliamentary and most of the legislative elections of the state, leading to smooth political change and thereby reducing the politics of the violence to the minimum. The state never witnessed either any political instability or any coalition government which is rather common in most of the opposition ruled states.

The ADMK-Congress alliance won a decisive majority in the 1984 and 1991 legislative assembly elections thanks primarily to the strategy of electoral alliances. Under exceptional circumstances the DMK-Congress alliance lost the 1980 elections. In spite of the bright prospects and pre-poll predictions the alliance lost because there was no mutual trust, co-ordination, co-operation between the alliance partners. If they did not have these problems, the alliance would have won the assembly election as they did in the preceding parliamentary elections. The absence of any electoral alliance between Congress and any of the major parties helped ADMK to win in 1977 and DMK in 1989 elections. Thus the State witnessed a stable political life in the period,

Electoral alliance and Political issues

The electoral alliance of Congress affected the postures of political parties on the paramount political issues of the state. This two crucial issues are:

- (1) Existing center-state relations
- (2) National Language policy

Before going into how the postures of political parties on these two crucial issues were affected by Congress alliances, a brief description of the stated views of major political actors

ADMK, DMK and Congress on these issues is important. Soon after the enactment of anti-secessionist law in 1960 in accordance with 16th Constitutional amendment and the subsequent disowning of the separate homeland demand, by DMK at its Kumbakonam meeting, the question of altering the existing constitutional provisions regarding centre-state relations came to the forefront of DMK's politics. Accordingly pursuing its commitment further the DMK government constituted the Rajamannar committee to enquire into the federal provisions and to recommend suggestions to remove the imbalances. Though the suggestion of the commission were not accepted by the centre, DMK showed the world the importance it attached to the issue of state autonomy. The party wants all powers to be invested with the states except those relating to national security like defence, communications, currency, foreign affairs.

The rival political party, ADMK also follows stand of DMK. It wants neither independence nor dependence but inter-dependence. The stand of Congress party on this issue is a complex one complicated by historical factors. While the national unit of the party seemed to be comfortable with the existing scheme of distribution, the state leaders had shown a slight deviation from that of national unit due to the impact of the regional Dravidian movement, the Tamilisation of Congress was witnessed and because of this Tamilized or regionalised nature such deviation exists.

National Language Issue

On this issues of national language , both the Dravidian parties favour the continuance of English as the language of official business. They favour the total scrapping of the posi-

tion accorded to Hindi by the language provisions of our constitution.

Ever since the written assurance of the then Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru about the continuation of English as the language of inter-governmental communications as long as Hindi was found unacceptable to the people of non-Hindi speaking areas, the Congress party in the state advocates the continued status of English as the link language yet the stand of Congress differs from that of others in that it favours the progressive acceptance of Hindi by the people.

Operational Dynamics of Alliance

The strategy of electoral alliance adopted by Congress determined the extremity or otherwise of the postures of these parties on these issues. As due to a complex set of factors explained previously the electoral alliance has become very indispensable for capturing power. In this context the Dravidian parties show extreme flexibility in their ideological stands to win the favour of Congress.

Whenever Congress entered into electoral alliances with ADMK, the stand of the rival DMK on these issues of state autonomy and national language exhibits considerable rigidity. As seen in 1984 and 1991 elections DMK on these occasion focuses in entire electioneering on these two issues, while DMK shows rigidity, the stand of ADMK is just the opposite. It is very flexible. The issues of state autonomy and national language are blissfully ignored.

Whenever Congress enters into alliance with DMK as in 1980, DMK adopts a moderate stand on these issues. It ignores these two

problems. But ADMK focuses its attention predominantly on these two issues only.

Whenever the rival political parties of Dravidian origin didn't have alliance with Congress the stand of Congress on these issues changes. It adopts a complex stand whereby it ridicules the Dravidian parties for their supposedly anti-national credentials while simultaneously questioning their sincerity towards Tamil. In 1978 when Congress was out of power at the centre, the Congress leaders at the state level openly protested against the supposed clandestine imposition of Hindi on Tamil Nadu. The Congress chief minister of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh even went to the extent of convening a south chief minister's conference to protest against such clandestine imposition.

In 1989 Assembly elections Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress president in his electioneering castigated Karunanidhi for joining National Front which has leaders who are advocating imposition of Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people. Thus on these occasions where no Dravidian party was its electoral ally, Congress adopted a rigid stand on the nature and role of regional political parties. It called them as anti-national.

Thus the electoral alliances determine the extremity otherwise in the stand of political parties on these crucial issues.

Intra-party relationship:

The intra party relationship is the major causality of the strategy of electoral alliance. Since ADMK and DMK are strongly monolithic, and controlled by charismatic individuals, the impact of electoral alliance on these parties is negligible. But intra party hostility of Congress can be primarily attributed to the

effects of electoral alliance strategy.

In fact one of the main factors for the marginalisation of Congress in the state where it is nothing better than a pressure group of election times is the incapacitating problem of factionalism. Though factionalism always existed throughout the long history of Congress the factional struggle in the post 77 period differs from the earlier ones by the nature and source of such factionalism. While earlier factional fighting revolved around the issues of brahmin -non brahmin dichotomy, Telugu- Tamil conflict, organisation leaders versus governmental leaders in this period from 1977 onwards the source of factionalism in Congress is always the issue of alliance. Congress contains different groups advocating alliance with different parties and because of that factional fighting arises.

In 1978 Congress witnessed for the first time the emergence of factionalism on the basis of the alliance factor. There were two main factions in Congress. While Nedumaran group advocated alliance with ADMK, Swaminathan led group demanded alliance with DMK the Congress state president Moopanar advocated an independent course as it was his firm belief that alliance with Dravidian parties will only perpetuate Congress exclusion from power. The central leadership of Congress which was in favour of alliance with DMK removed the state unit president and installed Swaminathan in his place and forged an alliance with DMK for the 1980 election.

But as the alliance faced unexpected rout in the elections, the pro-ADMK group asserted its views and a new alliance was formed with ADMK for the 1984 elections. As the ADMK-Congress

alliance was successful the pro-DMK group had to keep quite.

The next bout of factionalism emerged with severe intensity in the post-Ramachandran phase of Tamil politics characterized by legacy feuds of ADMK. There were three factions in Congress in 1986. One group led by Moopanar wanted to adopt a neutral stand on the succession struggle of ADMK and favoured the building up of Congress organisational structure to face elections independently. The second group wanted to support the Jayalalita led ADMK. The third group led by Shivaji Ganesan wanted to support Janaki led ADMK. As Congress leadership favoured Moonpanar line,²⁷ Siwaji group went out of Congress to form a separate party.

For the 1989 elections Congress, in accordance with the wishes of state unit chief forged alliance with smaller partners. But DMK won the elections with handsome margin. In the post-election scenario the pro-ADMK group led now by Valapadi Ramamoorthy advocated disowning Mooponar stand and campaigned for Congress-ADMK alliance. Just before the 1989 parliamentary elections, Ramamoorthy replaced Mooponar as state unit president and ADMK-Congress relationship was formed.

In both 1989 and 1991 parliamentary elections Congress-ADMK alliance was successful and Ramamoorthy continued to be Congress president. But in 1991 the relationship between ADMK and Congress turned hostile. At Madurai meeting of her party Jayalalitha made allegedly objectionable comments on Rajiv Gandhi and Congress. From then onwards Ramamoorthy faction opposes her Vehemently. At present there are three factions in Congress while Moopanar and Ramamoorthy factions want no alliance with ADMK, Thangabalu the central ministry led group advocates the reestablishment of the

broken alliance with ADMK. Thus the strategy of electoral alliances acts as the major source of factionalism within Congress in the period from 1977 to 1991.

As seen above the strategy of electoral alliances on the positive side had given political stability to the state and national level benefits to the Congress party. But in the process the interests of the local unit of the party are sacrificed leading to the prolonged marginalisation of the party in the politics of the state.

FOOTNOTES

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IV CONCLUSION

The emerging modern elite of Tamil Nadu in the closing decades of the 19th century was predominantly composed of brahmins hailing from the districts of Thanjavoor Trichirapalli and Palaghat. Their domination of the western educated elite of Madras presidency was essentially due to historical advantages which they enjoyed over others like their traditional caste status, access to landed wealth, generations of involvement in administration and aloofness from cultivation.

As they were conservative they were satisfied merely by using western education for achieving modern professional expertise and mobility. So initially nationalism and freedom etc. were ignored. The modern political theory was utilized merely for career advancement. But soon in their professional advancement they came into conflict with the rivals of European origin whose professional interest were protected and furthered by the British colonial government. This effected a change in their opinion about the role and relevance of political organisations and accordingly they formed Madras Mahajana Sabha, a forerunner to Indian national Congress in Tamil Nadu.

The initial objectives of their political formation was not national freedom and decolonisation but progressive indigenization and Indianization of British colonial administration. They

worked for these ideals very vigorously. But soon the change in the nature and content of nationalist struggle in other provinces and presidencies notably Bengal begun to influence the course of politics in the southern region also. The emergence of extremists during and after 1905 Bengal partition agitation changed the complexion of the national struggle. The moderates who were controlling the organisation of Congress were criticised by these new leaders like Tilak for their line of thinking about the nature and functioning of British colonial government. The days of moderate dominance of Congress politics seemed all but over at the centre.

But in Tamil Nadu inspite of the vigorous commitments and aggressive tactics of Tamil extremist leaders like Chidambaram Pillai, the moderates remained firmly committed to their idea of constitutionalism. Declining to resort to drastic methods to secure further constitutional progress they continued to believe that political advancement would necessarily be slow because the ideal of responsible government and democracy would only gradually percolate down from the western educated to the masses. Moreover they thought that the British would only be persuaded to yield power by steady but polite constitutional pressure from the educated Indians, that too through cooperation not confrontation.

But this decade old factional struggle between the moderates and extremists from the days of Surat Congress split came to an end in 1916 following Lucknow Pact. From now on the factional struggle between extremists and moderates was replaced by a new kind of factionalism this time between the pro-council entry nationalists and Gandhians. But due to the political tactics and

shrewdness of the Gandhian factional leader Rajaji who cultivated mutually beneficial political relations with all pressure groups in the state the Gandhians were able to dominate the politics of Congress in Tamil Nadu from 1920's onwards till independence.

While Tamil Nadu joined other provinces and presidencies in the nationalist struggle based on the Gandhian agitational techniques of satyagraha, non-violence, its politics in the pre independent period witnessed the simultaneous rise of a non-brahmin movement committed to the ideals of social egalitarianism, Tamil nationalism and rationalism. This rather exceptional feature of Tamil politics was primarily due to the social and cultural seclusion of the demographically negligible brahmin elite from the rest of the people and more importantly the absence of the middle level or intermediary caste groups like Kshatriyas of north India, Linghayats of Karnataka who shared the secular domination along with brahmins. The rise of Dravidian movement backed by the newly modernizing, rising castes like vellalas, mudaliyars induced the important process of Tamilization or regionalisation of Congress in Tamil Nadu. As a result of this Tamilization the Tamil Nadu unit of the nationalist party began to exhibit significant deviations from that of its parental unit both in terms of the policies and programme and social composition of its state level leadership .

Stung by the criticism of the Justice party leaders about Congress being a party merely founded for and committed to the welfare of brahmins, in the second decade of the present century non-brahmins within Congress formed Madras presidency association which strove to pursue simultaneously the two seemingly contra-

dictory and incompatible objectives of national decolonisation and Congress non-brahminisation.

The non-brahmin -brahmin conflict received great nourishment from the factional struggle between the two Congress stalwarts Rajaji and Satyamoorthy. Satyamoorthy, disappointed by the political one upmanship of his opposite group began to build up his own group of loyal supporters. His group either by design or by accident surprisingly came to be composed by mostly non-brahmin Kamarajar the non-brahmin hailing from the southern district of Ramanathapuram was groomed by Satyamoorthy as his heir to fight the unfinished factional fight with his rival Rajaji. So after the death of Satyamoorthy, Kamarajar came to be the chief of the faction rival to that of Rajaji. But Kamarajar could not effectively counter the opposite brahmin faction till independence and states reorganisation was carried out. This is because Kamarajar had no formal modern education and his knowledge of other languages was very weak. This acted as a major handicap for him in the pre-independence period as Madras presidency had substantial percentage of Telegu, Kannada and Malayalam speaking area in it.

But the states reorganisation in 1952 and the creation of Andhra Pradesh led to the indigenization and localisation of politics in this southern state. Kamarajar started flourishing in this favourable political climate. In 1954 he displaced Rajaji from chief ministership in the state. His rise to chief ministership meant not only his personal achievement but also the end of brahmin domination of Congress politics and organisation in the state.

After becoming chiefminister Kamarajar recognized his tenu-

ous personal control over Congress and Congress control over politics in the state and so proceeded to adopt political and electoral strategies to consolidate his position within the party and his party's position in the state politics. The induction of non-brahmin leaders like Ramaswamy Padayachi into Congress, Informal, mutually beneficial alliance with Dravida Kazhagam and implementation of a series of developmental plans are the three main features of such a policy. As a result of these tactics the era of Congress system was ushered in the politics of Tamil Nadu. It also led to the emergence of Kamarajar as the most important Congress organisational leader at the national level.

In the epoch creating elections of the 1967 the undisturbed Congress monopoly in Tamil politics came to an end. The Congress defeat in this election was primarily due to a variety of factors like controversy over national language policy, United opposition front, DMK's mobilizational politics, and uneven impact of the development achieved in the state by the Congress governments in the past two decades. But not crestfallen, the Congress leaders notably Kamayar started carrying a series of political activities to regain the lost status for the party.

But the event of crucial importance followed the 1967 elections. The longstanding factional struggle between the organisational and the governmental wings of the Congress, at the national level reached the boiling point over the issue of Congress candidate for presidential election. Due to the incompatibility of interests between the two factions Congress came to be split into two Congress (Ruling) and Congress (organisation).

While Congress (O) remained weak in other states in Tamil

Nadu due to the popularity of Kamarajar it became more powerful than Congress (R) by inheriting majority of the organisational structure and social base from the undivided party. From now on for a decade Congress politics was dominated by Congress dualism. This Congress dualism or the existence of two powerful Congress factions precipitated fratricidal political rivalry bringing mutually assured destruction and in the process ensuring the consolidation of the opposing, ruling party of the state. Whenever anyone of the two factions attempted any political comeback, the other faction derailed it by joining the opposite parties and thus defeating its estranged colleagues.

Even after the death of Kamarajar and the subsequent merger of these two organisations, the baneful effects of Congress dualism continued. After the 1977 parliamentary loss the Congress again split, this time into Congress (R) and Congress (I). But as the Congress(R) faction was not powerful, soon it lost out its role and relevance in the politics of the state and country.

So the dawn of 80's witnessed the emergence of Congress (I) as the most predominant of all Congress factions in the state. Though other Congress factions continue to operate, in terms of political popularity, social base, organisational visibility Indira Congress became important, thus the era of Congress dualism and associated fratricidal political rivalry ended. The political prospects were favourable for a Congress comeback.

But the Congress exclusion from power in the state was not sought to be changed by the party leadership. The prolonged marginalisation of Congress in the politics of the state in the period between 1977 to 1991 was precipitated essentially by the

mode of electoral strategies adopted by the party leadership. From 1977 onwards all the parliamentary elections and most of the assembly elections in the state were faced not by a Congress striving to achieve its lost social base and political power but by a party dictated by its own electoral insecurity and compulsions. This electoral alliance dominated political strategy precipitates its continued marginalisation in the state.

For the first time in three decades of Indian experiment with democracy Congress lost the mandate to form government in 1977 following the politically gloomy years of emergency. The elections tellingly revealed to the party leadership that its predominant social base consisting of schedule castes and minorities had underwent significant erosion and therefore the electoral prospects especially in the politically crucial North Indian states had considerably dimmed. Though Congress won back power in the 1980 elections with the promise of providing a government that works yet the elements of electoral insecurity continued to haunt the party leadership. The loss of power in the two southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in 1983 only strengthened its electoral worries. To overcome its insecurity the party gradually began to devise various strategies. The right wing shift in Congress politics was one of those strategies which changed the course of national politics by bringing in the politics of competitive communalism.

When the party was prepared to do anything to achieve its continued hold over centre, a kind of party system emerged on the scene in Tamilnadu. Of the three major parties, much to the chagrin of the Congress leaders Congress was the weakest. It

accounted for only about one fifth of the total electorate. While the Dravidian parties DMK and ADMK were near equally matched appropriating around two-thirds of the electorate. The Congress leaders understood the fact that with the share of around 15 to 20% popular vote Congress can not successfully attempt to capture power in the state. But as every cloud has a silver lining in this rather politically disappointing scenario they recognised the the initial benefits accruing to the party if it decides to exploit the fratricidal political rivalry between the two regional parties. With its share Congress understood that it can decide the course of electoral battles between the two parties as the party with Congress support has considerable prospect of electoral success.

As the political priorities of Congress and regional parties was not incompatible, in the sense that the Congress's main priority of continued hold over central government is not incompatible with regional parties desire to have control over state government, a satisfactory, mutually beneficial strategy of electoral alliances was easily worked out. In such a strategy the Congress disowned its claims to a share in the state government and the regional parties had reconciled themselves to the prospects of conceding majority of parliamentary seats in the state to Congress. In other words this strategy demanded the sacrifice of state level interests of Congress for protecting its national level concerns which the party leadership readily obliged.

No doubt this strategy brought forth rich electoral dividends for Congress in the parliamentary elections. Except the

state of Maharashtra no other state in the country had sent a overwhelming majority of Congress members to parliament with enviable, uninterrupted consistency. About 95% of the parliamentary seats in the state were bagged either by Congress or by its allies who unfailingly pledged their support to it.

Apart from this crucial benefit, this strategy of electoral alliance had brought more harm than good to the party. The foremost disadvantage arising from the continued faith in the strategy of electoral alliance was the marginalisation of the party in the states politics and subsequent sense of demoralization prevailing in the minds of cadres and local leaders. Except in 1989 no serious attempt at generating enthusiasm in the minds and hearts of Congress worker and at capturing power was made. This had definite impact on the morale of workers and the Congress came to be important in the state not as a political party but as a pressure group during election times.

More than the demoralisation of cadres, the impact of this electoral alliance strategy on the organisational structure and cohesiveness of the party is crucial. Though factionalism is not a new phenomenon to Congress as it existed from the initial decades of this century yet factionalism present now is qualitatively different from that of the earlier periods. Now the factionalism exists neither on the basis of social issues nor ideology. It now operates only on the issue of electoral alliances. Whenever Congress enters in to electoral adjustments with any one of the two major political parties, invariably factional struggle arises. while one group supports the preservation of existing pattern of alliance, the other group demands a change in alliance

pattern. The second group bases its argument usually around the issue of humiliating treatment from the leader of the senior alliance partner. For example the state unit president Valapadi Ramamoorthy, who following the 1989 electoral defeat of Congress led a revolt against Moopanar on the issue of forming alliance with ADMK now strongly opposes any move to reestablish any alliance with ADMK. He cites the allegedly humiliating treatment meted out to Congress leadership by the chief minister as the reason for the change in his stand.

Now in the Congress party there are three major factions while Ramamoorthy faction opposes any alliance with ADMK, Thangabalu faction supports any such move. The third faction led by Karrupiah Moopanar advocates alliance neither with ADMK nor DMK. Instead it advocates an independent role for Congress. It stands for a long term strategy of revitalising the party organisation and regenerating the mass base.

The above study reveals that the marginalisation of Congress (I) party in the state is caused by its own problems like organisational incoherence, short term electoral strategies etc.. If Congress (I) wants to regain its lost status in the politics of the state it has to undertake certain steps like building up its organisational structure, regenerating its lost popular support and changing its electoral strategies. This study also confirms the emerging view that the position of Congress in various states is considerably weakened and its continued status as the ruling party of India is primarily due to the non-emergence of any viable national alternative.

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