

Centre for Political Studies

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ANNA DMK: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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BY

K. RAHASWATI SASTRY

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DECLARATION

Certified that the material contained in this dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

K. Ramaswamy Sastry
(K. Ramaswamy Sastry)

Aswini K. Ray
(Aswini K. Ray)
Supervisor,
Associate Professor,
Centre for Political Studies,

K. Seshadri
(K. Seshadri)
Chairman,
Centre for Political Studies,
School of Social Sciences,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi-110057.

FRONTISPIECE

This dissertation is submitted in part-fulfilment of the M.Phil. Programme in the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

An attempt is made here to evaluate the Anna DMK party; its genesis, emergence, programme, performance and prospects. I record with gratitude that Mr. M.C. Ramachandran, its founder-leader, was kind enough to grant me an interview, in spite of his tight schedule.

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K. RAMASWAMY SASTRY
Centre for Political Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University

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Chapter One

THE BACKGROUND*

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) can be called an infant prodigy among the Indian political parties. When it formed the government for the first time in Tamil Nadu ~~(in 1967)~~ in the year 1967, it had been in formal existence only for about eighteen years. It was indeed a spectacular feat on the part of the DMK, for the earlier Congress administration in the state was not only well-entrenched but its record of office was relatively good. However, the DMK which won a stunning victory in the Fourth General Elections, held in February 1967, had passed through many ups and downs before finally making it. It could be easily discerned that from the moment the DMK entered electoral politics, it had striven hard to improve its position from one outing to another.

* This chapter is designed to provide a description of the nature of regionalization and parochialization of politics in Tamil Nadu. Since this mainly deals with the origins of both the Dravida Kazhagam and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which have a common past, only a brief account is presented in this chapter here.

The DMK is an off-shoot of the Dravida Kazhagam (DK), which was founded by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (EVR) in 1944. The latter was reverentially referred to as Periyar (the "great sage") by his followers. (Also, he was one of the most important, dynamic, colourful and yet controversial political leaders of modern India.) EVR Naicker, however, was a social reformer who has not been given his due place, perhaps, due to his leading a socio-political protestant movement, viz., "the self-respect movement", which was outside the mainstream of Indian nationalism. The DK was coterminous with the Dravidian movement, which was mainly a reform movement aiming at the upliftment of the non-Brahmins in the erstwhile Madras Presidency. According to the DK, the North Indians and the Brahmins were Aryans whereas the non-Brahmins of the South were of the Dravidian origin. The proclaimed object of the Dravida Kazhagam was the achievement of a sovereign independent Dravidanadu or Dravidian Republic, federal in nature and made up of the four units corresponding to the Dravidian linguistic divisions, each with residuary powers and autonomy in internal administration.¹

The erstwhile Madras Presidency — which included parts of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu — was equated to the Dravidanadu. Also, the DK steadfastly made Hindi a live issue and juxtaposed it with the hoary past of the Tamil people, their language and culture and naturally upheld the latter. In furtherance of this cause, the DK attracted a galaxy of forceful writers and powerful speakers, who in their turn lured the youth to the Kazhagam's fold, to contribute to

1. Thiruvengadam, T.S., The Dravidian Movement: A Retrospect, 1955. (A pamphlet).

the cultural growth of Tamil Nadu. The splendour and glories of the Tamil kingdoms were hailed as peaks in the cultural history of our country. With the help of some European intellectuals, such as Robert Caldwell, "the antiquity of Dravidian Civilisation was further pushed back into the past".² In this connection, Professor Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. notes that: "The culture of the ancient Aryans was belittled as barbarian and in comparison to the splendour and richness of Dravidian tradition and Tamil culture. The past was resurrected and given a reality on a very little evidence".³

However, the Second World War and the unprecedented upsurge for national independence during those days in our country, eclipsed the Dravidian movement for a brief period. The declaration of Indian independence by the colonial British came as a shock to the DK. At the instance of E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, the Kazhagam boycotted the Independence Day celebrations on August 15, 1947. Naicker refused to respect the national tri-colour flag, as he had refused later to recognise the Constitution of India, viewing it as a tool of Brahmin tyranny. However, his disciple, C.N. Annadurai, saw national independence as the accomplishment of the entire nation and not merely of the Aryan North. This led to differences inside the Dravida Kazhagam. According to the CPI stalwart, late Baladhandayutham, these differences were "not on ideological grounds but on tactical question".⁴ Annadurai, one of Naicker's chief lieutenants,

2. Hardgrave Jr., Robert L., The Dravidian Movement, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965, p.30

3. Hardgrave Jr., Robert L., "Religion, Politics and the DMK" in Smith, Donald E. (Ed.) South Asian Politics and Religion, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966, pp. 221-22.

4. Baladhandayutham K., "The Rise and Fall of DMK", Indian Left Review, June-1973, p. 20.

felt that the Kazhagam could not be taken forward on these outmoded principles with EVR having the last say in all the matters. Moreover, there was no democratic functioning in the Dravida Kazhagam Organisation, with EVR's word being the law. Consequently, the challenge to his autocratic leadership came from a progressive group (led by Annadurai) within the ranks of Kazhagam itself. Annadurai found that this progressive group could not go along with his mentor, EVR, who was opposing everything that was taking place in the newly independent nation's politics. Annadurai's main argument was that if the Indian National Congress took six decades to achieve independence, the Muslim League under Mohammed Ali Jinnah took only six years to pave the way for the creation of Pakistan. Further, he felt in the same way the Dravida Kazhagam's cherished goal of Dravidanadu could be achieved in the shortest possible time if only it took active interest in the country's politics. These growing differences in the organization of the party were ignored by EVR. This apart, EVR decided to marry Mari Ammal, who was forty years younger to him and this led to the split in the ranks of the Kazhagam. Annadurai and his followers condemned this "un-equal" marriage as incongruous to the "self-respect" principles advocated by EVR himself. The progressive wing led by Annadurai, upholding the principle of democratic organization, broke away with the Dravida Kazhagam and formed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) — the Dravidian Progressive Federation — in 1949. Annadurai characterised the DK and the DMK as the "two barrels of a double barrel gun".⁵ Whereas the Dravida Kazhagam continues (even to-day) as a protestant socio-religious movement, i.e., "self-respect movement", the DMK grew in stature as a mature political party and assiduously built up its cadres from the

5. Ibid.

grass-roots level. And ever since the DMK came into being, Annadurai entertained the idea of entering into active politics, which was hitherto not possible as Naicker was firmly opposed to participation in elections.

The DMK is occasionally described as a party of film-stars as it has attracted, apart from many reputed journalists and men of letters, film-producers and film-stars into its fold. Along with Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi, the present Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the active association of Kannadasan, famous lyricist, and film-stars, M.C. Ramachandran, Sivaji Ganesan, S.S. Rajendran — with the party lends credence to this view. Besides, the DMK has another facet. The party is very popular among the rural and urban middle classes. It appears to be on the conservative side in its basic structure, but the nature of its leadership "is modern in its outlook and agnostic in its beliefs".⁶ However, due credit might be given to Annadurai for having admirably bridged the chasm between these two antagonistic cross-currents within the party.

The DMK had all along been opposing the economic "domination" of the Marwari community in the country. It has been championing the cause of the South Indian promoters and industrialists, such as Chettiars and Naidus, who are businessmen par excellence. They are, perhaps, comparable to the Marwaris and Gujarati Baniyas of North India. Their participation in the fields of industry, trade and other modern enterprises has not only made a significant contribution to the growth of industrialisation in the state, but also established Tamil Nadu firmly on the industrial map of the country.

6. Hartman, H., Political Parties in India, Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1971, p. 173.

Since the country's First General Elections (1952) came too soon for the nascent party to prepare itself for active participation, the DMK sought access to the political system outside the democratic framework through agitations on burning issues like the imposition of Hindi. It soon attracted nation-wide attention by its militant and separatist activities. But, Annadurai promised DMK's support to those candidates who supported the programme of the DMK party. Many non-Congress candidates — mostly Independents and those belonging to the Tamil Nadu Workers Party and the Commonweal Party — took advantage of the DMK's support and were elected. This convinced Annadurai and his followers further about the potentialities of the DMK as an alternative to the Congress party in Tamil Nadu.

In the Second General Elections held in 1957, the DMK contested for the first time and won 15 seats in the Legislative Assembly. In addition, it won two Lok Sabha seats and thus obtained a token representation at the national level. Also, significantly, in this maiden performance, it established itself as the second most powerful party in Madras. Its main plank was concern for some basic economic issues of the day and the plight of the industrially deprived South. But, from the moment the DMK entered into party politics, it has been hard put to evolve a positive ideology of its own save for an unsubstantiated allegation of exploitation of the South by the North. it 6

The results of the Third General Elections held in 1962, revealed beyond doubt the emergence of DMK as a formidable force vis-a-vis the Congress in Madras state. It won fifty seats in the Legislative Assembly

and seven seats to the Third Lok Sabha. It became the strongest opposition party ever to challenge the formidable Congress government in Madras. The DMK manifesto for the 1962 elections reflected, as in the First General Elections of 1952, an increased concern for the basic economic issues. As an electoral issue, "the striving for and achievement of Dravidastan" was conveniently dumped for the time being in favour of inflation, spiralling prices prevalent in those days in Madras state; naturally, the issues of bread-and-butter were of immediate concern for every voter.

Though the ultimate goal of the party was the attainment of Dravidanadu, the DMK altered its policy in 1963, when Parliament amended Article 19 of the Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) making propaganda for secession a legal offence. The party inserted a new clause, replacing the earlier Dravidanadu issue altogether, which sets out the party's objective thus: to strive for the formation of a closer Dravida union of the four southern linguistic states of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with as large powers as possible, within the framework of the sovereignty and integrity of India and of the Indian Constitution.⁷ The party's proclaimed ideology is socialism. And it stood for preserving the language and culture of the southern states, protecting the rights and privileges of the States, nationalization of banks and bus transport.⁸ ~~It was~~ In order to widen its mass-base, the DMK membership was thrown open to the Brahmins for the first time and in fact a few Brahmins have joined the movement.

7. Cited in The Hindu, November 4, 1963.

8. DMK Election Manifesto, 1962, p. 15.

~~Dravidanadu~~
~~Dravidanadu~~
~~Dravidanadu~~
~~Dravidanadu~~

Kamaraj Nadar, the then Chief Minister of Madras, having realised the implications of the DMK successes at the hustings, freed himself to devote full time for party work in his state. The particular plan he devised to draft all the senior-most leaders for whole-time party work, which came to be known as Kamaraj Plan, was taken up at the national level in the wake of the Chinese aggression in 1962 and its resultant repercussions for the survival of the Congress party itself in the country. He was promptly drafted for national politics by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the national leadership to cleanse the party from within. This created a leadership vacuum in Madras as the DMK had a field-day while Kamaraj was busy guiding the nation during its troubled days following the irreparable loss the country suffered in the death of both Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri in quick succession.

At this crucial juncture came the anti-Hindi agitation in 1965, which gave the DMK the much-needed fillip to prepare itself well for the Fourth General Elections on the emotive issue of language. As the leading partner of the anti-Congress alliance in Madras state, the DMK swept the polls in the 1967 General Elections. It won as many as 138 out of 234 seats in the Legislative Assembly and 25 seats in the Lok Sabha. Its stunning electoral successes surprised everybody including the DMK chief, Annadurai, who had to leave the Rajya Sabha to become the first-ever DMK Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Thus, the DMK scored a great victory defeating the ruling Congress party and making Tamil Nadu one of the two states in India with a non-Congress government. With its victory, the DMK rode high on a tide of anti-Congressism. The reforms initiated by the DMK directed toward the betterment of the masses in Tamil Nadu include:

- I Efforts to eradicate beggary in the state;
- II Supply of rice at rupee a padai (local unit of measurement);
- III Nationalization of Road Transport throughout the state;
- IV Appointment of a committee headed by Dr. Rajamannar, to review the Centre-State relations;
- V Establishment of State Planning Commission;
- VI Introduction of free education upto Pre-University level;
- VII Introduction of Manunithi scheme for people's grievances;
- VIII Reintroduction of Prohibition in the state;
- IX Appointment of non-Brahmin priests in the temples; etc., etc.

The death of Annadurai, the father-figure of DMK, in 1969, was a great blow to the internal cohesion of the party. The succession to his mantle was none too smooth as the groups within the party lying dormant till then came to the surface. These groups were led by M. Karunanidhi, V.R. Nedunchezhiyan and K.A. Mathialagan respectively, vying with one another for the control and leadership of the party. Apart from these three leaders, M.C. Ramachandran, the noted film-star, known more for his munificence, wielded considerable influence both among the DMK leadership and the film-loving Tamil masses. However, Karunanidhi, who proved to be more dexterous than Nedunchezhiyan and Mathialagan, managed to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu with the help of M.C. Ramachandran. And thereafter he proceeded to strengthen his hold over the party hierarchy by his shrewd leadership. When the split in the National Congress Party occurred in 1969, the faction led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi (then known as the Ruling Congress) became a minority government at the Centre. The Ruling Congress depended very much on the active support of all the 25 DMK MPs in the Lok Sabha for its survival and this situation was exploited to the fullest extent by the DMK under Karunanidhi's

stewardship. Its popularity scaled new heights in the Fifth General Elections of 1971. The DMK was clever enough to advance the date of the Assembly elections to coincide with the Parliamentary elections. The DMK successes were so astounding that it routed the opposition by winning for itself 183 seats out of 234 in the Assembly. In this context, it may be germane to quote Professor Hanson and Jenet Douglas: "Only in Tamil Nadu did a regional party (the DMK) triumph in the State elections and then only by dint of an electoral arrangement with Mrs. Gandhi, whereby the DMK was given a free run for the Assembly seats in return for an undertaking not to contest Mrs. Gandhi's candidates in 10 of the Lok Sabha seats".⁹ Further, the DMK successes of 1967 and 1971 general elections demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt the ability of its leaders to keep alive the regional consciousness of the Tamil masses. Also, it helped them to make capital out of the discontentment of the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes against the upper castes.

The DMK — before and after it came to power — contested the status accorded to Hindi, as the lingua-Indica of the nation. On the other hand, it advocated that the regional language in each state should be the official language for purposes of communication, education and administration. Moreover, Hindi as one of the regional languages, should be confined to those states where it has been the language of the masses. According to the DMK's language policy, Hindi should not be made compulsory in states where it has not been in vogue as well as against the interests, wishes and sentiments of the people. Professor Balasundaram observes that: "Its anti-Hindi

9. Hanson, A.H., and Douglas, J., India's Democracy, Delhi: Vikas, 1972, p. 60.

stand has sustained the DMK because it appeals to the genuine Hindi phobia of the Tamils who are interested in preserving their cultural identity".¹⁰ However, some provisions of Part XVII of the Constitution relating to the language were abandoned by the Union Government in the wake of the anti-Hindi riots in 1965. From then on, the issue of Hindi has gradually died down and even lost considerable leverage vis-a-vis the growing anti-North sentiments. But, the DMK lost no time in harping on State autonomy, which comes very near to a positive ideology for the DMK in contrast to its previous political issues consisting mainly of negative approaches; more in consonance with its evolution from the Dravidian movement and its aftermath. For quite some time now, the DMK has been vociferously demanding greater autonomy to the constituent states within the existing federal set-up. It is to the credit of the DMK that it has been flexible enough to adapt itself to the new environment. "Thus", to quote Professor Balasundaram again, "the DMK does not lag behind any other party in mastering the art of political expedience to survive in a mass democracy."¹¹

The DMK Party's main prop has been the poorer sections of the population, followed by the middle class. But, its leadership is drawn mostly from the traders, small businessmen and the urban professionals. The party, after forming government in Tamil Nadu, has since been pursuing a pro-capitalist and conservative policy with industrial labour problems and agrarian tensions.¹² Thus, it provides yet another

10. Balasundaram, S.N., "DMK Seeks a Positive Ideology", Assam Tribune (Gauhati), December 23, 1974.

11. Ibid.

12. Jayaraman, Raja, "Some Theoretical considerations in the Study of Social Development in the Third World", Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. XIII: Nos. 3/4, 1973, p. 250.

example of a popular movement controlling the reins of power and whose promises and performance are widely at variance. And the DMK, or for that matter, the Congress, are no exceptions to this aberrant posturing.

Though the 1971 poll helped the Chief Minister, Karunanidhi, to strengthen his grip over the party machinery, there came immediately after these successes the rumblings of a rift in the DMK monolith when the matinee-idol and party Treasurer, M.G. Ramachandran, was suspended from the party in the wake of alleged anti-party activities and as a reaction to his earlier charges that the Chief Minister was corrupt and dictatorial. The New York Times correspondent, Bernard Weinraub, perhaps, aptly described the scenario when he said that: "A movie star and a script writer are engaged in a somewhat zany feud here that dominates the politics of the key South Indian State of Tamil Nadu".¹³

13. Weinraub, Bernard, "Movie-Makers' Feud Dominates Politics in South India", The New York Times, September 28, 1974.

Chapter Two

EMERGENCE OF ANNA DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGAM

The split in the DMK, which occurred in October 1972, has proved to be the most exciting since the nation had witnessed the split of the Congress Party in 1969. From a party which is otherwise close to the celluloid world, political acting may be reasonably expected but what is being witnessed for nearly three years now is the reality of power struggle pecked with excitement, emotion and finesse. Ever since the DMK successfully displaced Congress at the helm of affairs in the state after the Fourth General Elections, it has developed certain political diseases normally associated with political power. It is generally believed that corruption has become synonymous with the DMK rule over the years. Its image which was carefully built up for nearly three decades, has been tarnished by "those elements in the party who have made money by unfair means".¹ Also, it is felt that its contacts with the Tamil masses have considerably weakened. For instance, the students who were responsible for DMK's spectacular rise to power in the 1967

1. National Herald, October 12, 1972.

General Elections are no longer its passionate torch-bearers, as borne out by the results of the student's union elections in the various colleges of the state.

As regards the 1969 split in the Congress, it took place at least partly because of the warring postures assumed by the party's organisational wing on the one hand and the Parliamentary leadership on the other, led respectively by Nijalingappa, the then Congress President, and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister. Later, the split was sought to be used as an ideological tool. In juxtaposition, the DMK split occurred mainly because of a clash of personalities, though H.C. Ramachandran contended that it was basically due to a clash of principles. He asserted that "it has been said in some quarters that the present rift in the DMK is due to some personal animosities, or in other words, clash of personalities. This is wild imagination and I emphatically deny it".²

After the 1971 General Elections, the Ruling Congress ceased to be a force in Tamil Nadu. The only person outside the ranks of the DMK and the Ruling Congress and who is not only a 'grass-roots' leader but enjoys great mass following is K. Kamaraj Nadar. His constant presence in Tamil Nadu and his unparing criticism of the DMK administration on the issue of corruption, have created favourable conditions for the revival of Congress (O). In the Tamil Nadu political setting, Congress (O) is not seen as the much wronged Syndicate's unit but only as a Kamaraj-led Congress Party. By the time the split in DMK took

2. Ramachandran, M.G., "DMK: Before and After Split", Weekly Round Table, 1:44, December 3, 1972, p. 6.

place, Kamaraj's party had already captured 158 out of 164 college unions (which the DMK once controlled) on the plank of rampant corruption in the DMK government and its failure to provide jobs to the people.³

However, the formation of the Anna DMK in October 1972 has seriously eroded the popularity of Congress (O) as it could be witnessed from the fact that the entire student community have thrown their lot with M.G. Ramachandran. But, these developments were soon followed by the cliff-hanging series of political activity as were witnessed in Tamil Nadu for quite some time, namely, mass meetings, processions and hartals, adjournment of Legislative Assembly, prorogation of both the Houses of Legislature, Speaker's pique and court room-drama on two occasions, removal of the Speaker, defections and re-defections, Mrs. Sathivanimuthu's dismissal from the DMK ministry, anti-Malayalee stir and formation and fall of the Anna DMK-led ministry in Pondicherry.

The Split

On the fateful day of October 11, 1972, the DMK Treasurer, M.G. Ramachandran (popularly known as MGR), was suspended from the primary membership of the party. 26 out of 32 members of the DMK's Executive Council signed a memorandum demanding disciplinary action against MGR for his vehement criticism of the party leadership. With his suspension, the DMK suffered its first split since coming to power in 1967.

But, MGR was not simply a politician, but a leading film-star and, thus, an idol of millions unlike his erstwhile party comrades in

3. Amrita Bazar Patrika, October 22, 1972.

the DMK. His own contribution was not insignificant in the astounding successes of the party first in the 1967 General Elections and then in the Fifth General Elections of 1971.

The genesis of the split, according to Kuldip Nayar, a leading political commentator, could be traced to M.G. Ramachandran's claim, reportedly pressed in March 1971, soon after the mid-term poll, for a berth in the State Cabinet. Karunanidhi, who became Chief Minister for the second time, hedged on the ground that the rules of conduct did not allow a minister to combine a film career with an executive job.⁴

From then on, MGR tried to strengthen his hold on the DMK party with the help of his "Manrams" (MGR fan-clubs). The other personal reason for Karunanidhi's ire against MGR was the latter's popularity and mass-base. The 'MGR Manrams' and the 'MGR Rasigar Manrams' claimed a membership of three lakhs against the DMK's total membership of 6 lakhs. The prevailing general feeling was that Karunanidhi seemed to have become jealous of the popular film-star. Karunanidhi, therefore, tried to project his son, M.K. Muthu, as an alternative before the film-loving party masses. It was alleged that attempts were made to convert thousands of MGR Manrams into 'Manrams' named after Muthu, the Chief Minister's son, and naturally MGR, the aging film-star, resented these efforts. Thus, the tussle had reached a point of no return, when MGR raised the sensitive issue of corruption and deviation from Anna's ideals, like prohibition.

4. Nayar, Kuldip, "The Tamil Nadu Drama", The Statesman (New Delhi), December 5, 1972.

On October 8, 1972, at a public meeting organized to celebrate the birth anniversary of the late Annadurai at Thirukkalukundram, M.G. Ramachandran fired the first salvo against the DMK establishment. He lashed out at the Karunanidhi administration for the corrupt image of the party in the eyes of the general public. He demanded a party probe into the assets of the DMK rank and file, ministers, their relatives, party functionaries from the village level upwards. According to one news-magazine, M.G. Ramachandran was reported to have said to the cheers of a vast gathering that: "It is necessary that we should disprove opposition criticism of our party. There is no use our ignoring corruption against us. Everybody has to properly explain how he built bungalows and bank balances after we came to power".⁵ This demand, coming from a front-ranking party leader, had created a stir in the party hierarchy. After this incident, Karunanidhi was waiting for an excuse to get rid of MGR from the DMK. Soon afterwards, MGR was expelled for his 'anti-party' activities, the most important being his insistence that the DMK leaders at all levels, and their relatives should disclose their assets. Earlier, matters came to a head at the Madurai District Conference, as MGR being the party Treasurer had insisted that proper accounts be kept for the funds collected as he found a major discrepancy between the statements of Karunanidhi and Muthu, Mayor of Madurai, on the subject.⁶ Further, MGR threatened that he would go to the people, if the party's General Council did not accept his plea. Thus, the talk of corruption being rampant among the DMK partymen along with the demand of MGR has deepened the suspicion. But, what must have

5. Link, October 15, 1972, p.24.

6. Weekly Round Table, op. cit., p.7.

upset the DMK leadership was MGR's determination to move a resolution on the subject at the party's General Council meeting scheduled to be held on October 12, 1972. Evidently, to forestall this move the party lost no time in deciding on MGR's expulsion. This extreme step was taken at the instance and advice of Si.Pa. Aditanar, Minister for Co-operation, and thereupon Karunanidhi acted swiftly in this respect.

Karunanidhi, who is also President of the party, defended the action taken against MGR on the ground that it was meant to save 'the party'. He, however, regretted that it was painful for him to have taken this step against one of his closest associates of well over two decades.

MGR's suspension had made thousands of his fans extremely restive. This was amply exhibited through state-wide demonstrations against Karunanidhi. Pro-MGR rallies were held at many places including Coimbatore, Trichi, Erode, Mettupalayan, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Vellore, Gudiyattam and Madras. MGR's supporters at various places including Bangalore, which has a sizable Tamil-speaking population, demonstrated with black flags shouting slogans against Karunanidhi. At some places the processionists even burnt the effigy of Karunanidhi. For quite some time, growing tension and violent demonstrations protesting against MGR's expulsion continued in all parts of the state. By then, it was obvious that Karunanidhi and the DMK High Command had made a major miscalculation; they least expected the storm that broke out. Though the stability of the DMK government was not affected, there was no doubt that the DMK as a party would not be the same again.

MGR on his part exhorted his followers and the DMK workers to support him in the 'relentless battle' in the cause of righteousness and saving the party from dictatorship.⁷ Earlier, he had expressed his happiness over the spontaneous support of the people against the strong-arm methods of the DMK leadership, which had judged and convicted him without even giving him a chance to plead his case. He said the issues which he had raised were very much alive. Further, he appealed to his supporters not to be carried away by the propaganda unleashed against him, that he is a Malayalee and an enemy of the Tamil people.

Kamaraj who has been very critical of the DMK administration ever since it came to power, saw in the emergence of M.G. Ramachandran, a serious rival to his popularity. In fact, Kamaraj has built up an astounding mass-base solely on the plank of criticizing the DMK for its maladministration. Viewed objectively, the crisis in the DMK ranks has, in fact, been a testing ground for the Congress strategy itself in Tamil Nadu politics. Kamaraj made his intentions very clear when he described the split in the DMK as "a stunt or drama". Further, he was aware that MGR was defending the DMK all the time and he could not become suddenly virtuous. Era Sezhiyan, leader of the DMK group in the Lok Sabha, while commenting on the charges of corruption in the DMK levelled by MGR, said: "Regarding the charges of corruption, Ramachandran has unwittingly roused the ire of Kamaraj, who claims that he has been the chosen one all along to expose the corrupt regime of the DMK. Evidently, Kamaraj does not want the thunder stolen from him by an upstart!"⁸ On the other hand,

7. The Hindu, October 12, 1972.

8. Sezhiyan, Era, "DMK: Before and After Split", Weekly Round Table, I:44, December 3, 1972, p.4.

Rajaji, the elder statesman, applauded MGR and his efforts to topple the corrupt DMK ministry. The CPI was also very critical of the DMK's misrule, joined hands with MGR in his campaign against Karunanidhi's ministry. The CPI stalwart, Balachandayutham, described the crisis in the DMK as a consequence of the "dead weight of corruption in the party".⁹ According to Balachandayutham, the contradiction between the section which had benefitted most after the advent of the DMK and the section which did not benefit could not have been avoided at all. Also, the CPI supported MGR's campaign against rampant corruption in the DMK. But, to any non-partisan observer, it was something more than that. Perhaps, the crisis in the DMK was indicative of a deeper power struggle within the party itself which all of a sudden surfaced. And MGR was credited with providing more articulation to the Tamil masses with his dissent from the DMK politics.

At the time of the split it was generally felt that MGR had two clear advantages over his rivals, viz., (i) he challenged the DMK leadership on the delicate and emotive issue of corruption, and (ii) he filled the leadership vacuum in the opposition camp created by the abdication of the Congress in DMK's favour in 1971 mid-term elections. Added to these, one immediate outcome of the DMK split was the enormous credence lent to the widely-held belief of the DMK being corrupt from top to bottom. Whatever might be the explanation from the DMK leadership, the fact remains that the suspension of M.C. Ramachandran from the primary membership of the party was the logical reaction to his persistent demand for a probe into the fabulous private acquisitions of the party

9. Balachandayutham, K., "The Rise and Fall of DMK", Indian Left Review, II:4, June-1973, pp. 17-24.



functionaries. Moreover, coming as it does from a high functionary like the Treasurer, MGR, who could have never been seen away from the party itself and who was also the principal architect of the party's run-away victory in the 1967 and 1971 elections and "the exercise at shrugging shoulders and parading indifference to corruption charges could not be continued".¹⁰

The DMK executive which met on October 12, 1972, at Madras, viewed the unexpectedly fierce public reaction to MGR's suspension with great concern. After taking stock of the situation, the executive fully backed the decision of the leadership and resolved that further action would not be considered if MGR expressed regret for his public utterances. Thereupon, a peace feeler was sent to MGR to that effect. However, the offer was rejected by MGR when he asserted that "it is they who should express regret and not me". Meanwhile, Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, Krishnan Manoharan, Member of Parliament, and former leader of the DMK group in the Lok Sabha, and Mrs. Sathiyavaniimuthu, State Harijan Welfare Minister, earnestly tried to bring about a rapprochement but in vain.¹¹ Gradually, violence spread throughout the state as a result of the political stalemate.

In the meanwhile, MGR added a new dimension to his campaign by calling for a judicial probe into the assets of senior partymen and their relatives — whom he charged earlier with corruption and nepotism. Faced with this unexpected success of MGR in mobilizing the masses against the Karunanidhi ministry, the General Council, which is the

10. Link, October 15, 1972, p.24.

11. The Hindu, October 13, 1972.

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policy-making body of the DMK, met on October 13 and 14 and ratified the action taken by the DMK High Command against MGR. Endorsing the action of the Central Executive, it also resolved not to make any more peace overtures to him. All the 277 of the 310 members, who attended the meeting supported the resolution. MGR stated that he was not at all surprised at the Council's decision. He commented that if the party leadership was sincere, it should have invited him to the Executive meeting to hear his views before taking the disciplinary action against him. Further, it was generally interpreted as an unambiguous slamming of doors on reconciliation, although Karunanidhi said that the 'doors always stay open'. Reacting to the Chief Minister's statement, MGR observed that he was amused by the remark of Karunanidhi that the 'doors were still open for a compromise because the late Annadurai had repeatedly used to stress to his partymen that the DMK had 'no door' and it was an 'open house' to all those who believed in the party's ideals. Further, MGR reiterated that there was no question of his expressing regret as he had not done anything wrong. He praised the people for their spontaneous support to his 'operation cleansing', which had assumed the proportions of a mass movement.

Birth of the party

On October 16, 1972, M.G. Ramachandran along with his followers announced the formation of a new party — the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam — at a press conference, at Alandur, a suburb of Madras city. With the formal announcement of the Anna DMK, the split in the DMK was both formal and complete. The new party's flag was the same 'red and black' as that of the DMK along with a figure of C.U. Annadurai in

the Centre. The figure is the mark of distinction of the new party's flag. Further, MGR explained that his party will steadfastly implement Annadurai's policies and programmes including that of prohibition. To quote MGR, "Anna DMK was founded by me with a view to preserving, propagating our late beloved, lamented Anna's programmes. I am convinced the present DMK has deviated from the main philosophy of Anna, and what is more, within a short span of four years, Anna is pathetically forgotten".¹² While addressing a press conference, MGR also remarked that the DMK had become 'Karunanidhi's party', and deviated from the path of late Annadurai. "In our party there would be no domination by any individual. Within the party discussions would be encouraged, and dissent will never be frowned upon and treated as plain treachery as it is happening now in the DMK."¹³ He called upon his supporters to reorganize the party from the "grass-roots" level so that the party apparatus can be properly cleaned from bottom upwards. He proposed that the party would be organized at different levels such as, firstly at the taluka, secondly at the district and finally at the top level. MGR exhorted his followers that: "You take up the task of organizing the party and I will undertake the task of meeting people and of explaining my mission of cleaning up the Augean stables of the party".¹⁴ Since the formation of the Anna DMK, a sizable opinion in the DMK switched its loyalty to the new party and its membership increased with each passing day. The immediate reaction of the Chief Minister on the formation of Anna DMK was that MGR "has achieved what he wanted and planned to do".¹⁵ Whereas the late Rajaji,

12. Weekly Round Table, Op. cit., p.6.

13. Young Indian, October 26, 1972, p.13.

14. Link, October 22, 1972, p.16.

15. The Hindu, October 19, 1972.

the veteran statesman, declared that DMK under Karunanidhi had deviated from the principles laid down by Annadurai.¹⁶ According to him (Rajaji), MGR, the founder-leader of the new Anna DMK, has been the truer inheritor of Anna's political legacy. K.A. Krishnaswami, MP (Rajya Sabha), brother of Tamil Nadu Speaker, K.A. Mathialagan, became the second casualty of the DMK when he was also expelled for violation of party discipline and 'anti-party' activities. However, MGR promptly made him the State Organiser of Anna DMK. Thennagan, the daily edited by Krishnaswami, was made the mouth-piece of Anna DMK.¹⁷ Thus the process of emergence of DMK from DK and from then on DMK to ADMK was complete with the birth of the new party.

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The split in the DMK ranks was anything but ideological because the programme and policies of the break-away party are in no way different from those of the DMK. For instance, the basic goals are almost identical: (i) more powers to the states and the need for transfer of "residuary powers" to the states, and (ii) demand for the regional language to be the official language in the states and continuance of English as the 'link' language of the country. It is evident from the 'Anna DMK Manifesto' released on September 30, 1973, that the one important issue which the new party pledges to implement in the event of forming a government was total prohibition in the state.

16. Mainstream, November 4, 1972, pp. 14 and 35.

17. The Times of India, (New Delhi), October 17, 1972.

The rest of the socio-economic principles and objectives that the Anna DMK stands for, termed collectively as Annaiyam by M.G. Ramachandran, include, among other things, ceiling on urban income, elimination of intermediaries in land ownership, nationalization of more banks and more effective implementation of the social goals of bank nationalization, nationalization of heavy industry, take-over of the means of production and distribution of essential commodities, demonetization of hundred-rupee notes to eliminate black money etc. Also, the students are promised job opportunities after completion of their studies or in the absence of jobs some kind of "guarantee for a living".

Moreover, the Anna DMK Manifesto asks for a constitutional amendment to grant the power to the electorate to recall the elected representatives who have lost popular confidence or have swerved from their duties. In the event of the Anna DMK being voted to power, the party's chief minister would have to seek an annual vote of confidence from the party's General Council. These policies sound definitely "far-reaching, if not sensational in the context of the pervasive political permissiveness".¹⁸

Organizational set-up of Anna DMK

The General Council, consisting of 528 members, is the highest policy-making body of the Anna DMK party. It met in Madras on January 4 and 5, 1974, and adopted the Rules Code and gave the party an organization. The General Council unanimously elected M.G. Ramachandran as

18. (Quoted from my article on the DMK Split). Sastry, K. Ramaswamy "A Chronicle of the DMK Split", Economic and Political Weekly, IX:13, March 30, 1974, pp. 527-31.

its first General Secretary, the top-most functionary of the Anna DMK. In his turn, Ramachandran, the General Secretary, nominated 15 Secretaries to be in charge of various aspects of the organization. He also nominated a 28-member Central Executive including four women. Next in the hierarchy comes the Assistant General Secretary, and K. Manoharan, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), who has been nominated for this crucial post. Ramachandran also nominated secretaries for the following wings such as: Organization, Propaganda, Law and Muslim interests, Labour Agriculture, Labour weavers, Trade Unions, Women's Wing, Students' Wing, Arts and Culture, Youth Wing, Headquarters, Elections and party elections etc. These Secretaries, each in charge of a specific activity, will constitute the active implementing agency. Moreover, it is apparent that MGR had skillfully delegated authority, as a genuine effort at building up a democratic organization.¹⁹ It must be noted, however, that organizational elections have not yet been held since the party's formation.

Petitions to the President of India

On November 4, 1972, M.G. Ramachandran and M. Kalyanasundaram, a CPI Member of Parliament, met K.K. Shah, the State Governor, separately to present the petitions containing a list of 'Specific charges' against the DMK Ministry to be forwarded directly to the President of India. But, the Governor informed them that he could forward their petitions to the President only after 'verifying the facts' from the State Government as the constitutional procedure required him to do so. However convincing might be the stand of the Governor on this issue, MGR and Kalyanasundaram

19. The Statesman (New Delhi), January 7, 1974.

decided to present the petitions directly to the President of India. It was generally felt that the ground on which the Governor refused to forward the memoranda to the President was perfectly reasonable. On November 6, 1972, they handed over their respective petitions to President V.V. Giri. While Ramachandran listed 32 specific charges of corruption, nepotism and favouritism and abuse of power, Kalyanasundaram listed 20 charges on similar offences against the DMK administration. Also, they urged the President to appoint a commission of inquiry to go into the charges of corruption against the members of the entire DMK Cabinet.

Further, on November 19, 1972, K.A. Krishnaswami and K. Manoharan, both Anna DMK Members of Parliament, met the President and the Prime Minister and urged them to set up an inquiry commission to go into the charges on the basis of the memoranda presented to the President earlier. Thereupon, the Centre promptly forwarded the memoranda to the Chief Minister for his comments. After going through the charges levelled against him, Karunanidhi remarked that the two petitions 'did not contain anything new'. The CPI leader, Kalyanasundaram, reacted sharply to the Chief Minister's remark and said that the Centre had forwarded the petitions to the Chief Minister as a matter of routine, and he had given the impression of ignoring these charges. He commented that "Karunanidhi should not have hesitated to face a commission of inquiry, if the charges were not serious enough".²⁰

On December 14, 1972, Karunanidhi sent his comments running to 240 pages on the memoranda of charges presented to the President. He

20. The Hindustan Times, November 19, 1972.

emphatically denied all the allegations and dubbed them as "extremely frivolous, vexatious and false".²¹ Moreover, he raised a fundamental constitutional question that a 'State Cabinet is not accountable to the Union Government'.²² Further, he disputed the Centre's authority to appoint a commission of inquiry against the State Chief Ministers. His argument was that the Indian Constitution was not unitary in nature but federal and the essence of federal structure was that the constituent states were subordinates to the Central government, each State being autonomous within certain limited sphere. Moreover, each State had a parliamentary system of government and the cabinet was collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly. He further contended that there was no constitutional provision making the State Cabinet accountable to the Union government, and as such subversive of the entire scheme of our Constitution and the system of responsible government, if a State ministry was sought to be subjected to a commission of inquiry constituted by the Union government. Thus, he made it clear that the State Cabinet could not be subjected to a commission of inquiry as demanded by the Anna DMK and the CPI.

By and large, all the national dailies and other leading journals asserted that the Centre had the necessary right to enquire into the charges of corruption. However, most of the Opposition Members of Parliament were inclined to agree with the views held by Karunanidhi. Generally, they felt that it would not be healthy for the functioning of democracy if the Union government were to act on the basis of

21. The Times of India (New Delhi), December 15, 1972.

22. Ibid.

complaints and in that case no government would be invulnerable.²³ But on the other hand, some Congress MPs were of the view that the tone of reply to the Prime Minister was challenging in nature. They felt that Karunanidhi wanted to assert that there were specific spheres of functioning for both the States and the Centre and what he said was a reiteration of his demand for the States to have a larger measure of autonomy.²⁴ However, while reacting to Karunanidhi's comments, MGR noted that the Centre did have the power to set up a commission of inquiry to probe into charges against the State ministries. According to him, the Central government, formed on the basis of support from elected representatives of the people from all over the country, had the responsibility of ensuring the well-being of the people living in different parts. He wondered why a cabinet at the Centre could be there if it had no right to punish a state government when it became corrupt and autocratic and the people experience sufferings, etc. He added that if the State government questioned the authority of the Central government, why should the DMK government often seek the help of Central Reserve Police to meet any law and order problem.²⁵

Thereupon, the Anna DMK and the CPI leaders submitted a 200 page rejoinder to the Prime Minister and thereby answered Karunanidhi's reply to the charges made against him and his ministry.²⁶ The Prime Minister had again referred the matter to Karunanidhi for his comments on the

23. The Indian Express (New Delhi), December 16, 1972.

24. Ibid.

25. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

26. The Hindustan Times, January 6, 1973.

supplementary memorandum. She made it clear that only after scrutinizing the Chief Minister's reply, the question of appointing an inquiry commission would be considered. Ram Nivas Mirdha, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, informed the Lok Sabha on April 19, 1974, that the Centre had received the final comments of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on the allegations made against him by the Anna DMK leader, M.G. Ramachandran, and the CPI leader, K. Kalyanesundaram, and the 'matter was being processed further'.²⁷ But, so far as the constitutional position is concerned, the Union government has the power to order a probe into charges against any erring state ministry.

Popular Support to the Anna DMK

MGR alleged that the DMK government indulged in acts of lawlessness, police repression and violence on innocent people who supported his party. To quote him, "Tamil Nadu suffers from the tyranny of dictatorship. In a Police Raj, Anna DMK workers are arrested and ill-treated in jail. The erstwhile leader of the DMK party in Parliament, K. Manoharan, was manhandled at Madras airport; students are being chased and beaten. Ministers cannot move out without heavy police bandobust....The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu suffers from frustration. He depends on police rather than the people....The people are furious; they want a definite change in the political set-up; they want a change of administration. In so short a time, Mr. Karunanidhi has proved the dictum that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."²⁸ To protest against the police repression, he led a mammoth procession to

27. The Hindu, April 18, 1974.

28. Weekly Round Table, Op. cit., p.8.

Raj Bhavan on November 10, 1972. The sole aim of the procession was to express people's agony to the Governor. The procession was peaceful and orderly and it was a mighty demonstration of the people's support to the Anna DMK and its twin demands, namely, (i) the resignation of the ministry, and (ii) setting up of a commission of inquiry to go into the charges against Karunanidhi ministry. It was generally felt at that time that the rally led by Anna DMK made some impact on the masses.²⁹ While commenting upon the rally, Karunanidhi said that it was 'a victory for the Communist Party', thereby deriding the success to the Anna DMK. In the meantime, the Congress High Command which met at New Delhi on November 12, 1972, decided that it should not involve itself in the situation created by the split in the DMK as it was "purely an internal matter".³⁰ However, the High Command was of the opinion that the Centre should look into the charges of corruption levelled by MGR against the DMK ministry and act in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Tamil Nadu observed a near total Hartal on November 15, 1972, in response to a call given by the Anna DMK and CPI leadership in the State. The Hartal was called to demonstrate the "popular ill-will" against the DMK ministry, to protest against lawlessness and to back up the demand for a judicial inquiry into the corruption charges against the State ministry. Again, the Chief Minister, Karunanidhi, while commenting upon the bundh, claimed that the Hartal was no indication of people's attitude towards the DMK rule. However, impartial observers described the Hartal

29. The Hindustan Times, November 14, 1972.

30. The Hindu, November 13, 1972.

as "most complete witnessed in the State".³¹ It could be interpreted as yet another instance of people's support to MGR's movement against the DMK rule.

The Anna DMK and the CPI organized a "voters' rally" throughout Tamil Nadu on November 26, 1972. As planned earlier, memoranda were submitted to the DMK MLAs requesting them to withdraw support to the ministry. However, there were conflicting reports about its success. About 500 persons marched to the Gopalapuram residence of the Chief Minister to present the memorandum to him. Four leaders from among the demonstrators were allowed to see Karunanidhi who received the memorandum personally. He commented in his usual inimitable style that: "I polled over 63,000 votes in the 1971 elections. But the procession consisted of only 500 persons....And I don't know how many of the processionists were from my constituency".³² Mrs. Sathiyanimuthu, the State Harijan Welfare Minister, also accepted the memorandum personally. At a few other places, the family members of the MLAs received the memorandum and in all the rest of the cases the memorandum was pasted on the doors of houses belonging to the DMK MLAs. The Anna DMK and the CPI, the parties who have organized the "voters' rally" claimed that the event was a "big success" throughout the State and characterized it as the third phase of the struggle against Karunanidhi ministry's continuance in office.³³

31. The Hindu, November 16, 1972.

32. The Hindustan Times, November 27, 1972.

33. Ibid.

Prorogation of Tamil Nadu Legislature

The Tamil Nadu Governor, K.K. Shah, prorogued the session of both the Houses of Legislature with effect from the forenoon of November 14, 1972, till December 5, 1972, as a sequel to the extraordinary ruling and dramatic adjournment of the Assembly by the Speaker, K.A. Mathialagan. Earlier, the Speaker took the whole House by surprise by addressing the Chief Minister, Karunanidhi, as an 'old friend' and advising him to secure a fresh mandate from the people. The Chief Minister rejected the suggestion and said that he would go to the polls only when the term of the present Assembly expired in 1976 and not earlier. The order of adjournment followed, although the Speaker had declared earlier that he would allow discussion of a no-confidence motion for the removal of the Speaker on the following day. But, as a result of the prorogation, the motion for the removal of the Speaker lapsed and a fresh notice would have to be given to raise the issue again.³⁴ However extraordinary the situation might have been in the state, in the wake of the split in DMK, the stand taken by the Speaker clearly appeared both improper and unjustified. The Chief Minister's hold over the Assembly was decisively clear as 178 members of the ruling coalition were solidly with him.³⁵ The Chief Minister in a statement appealed to Mathialagan to accept in true democratic spirit the suggestion made by an overwhelming majority of the MLAs to resign from the speakership. These MLAs charged Mathialagan with conducting the proceedings in an undemocratic and partisan manner. Mathialagan rejected the demand and expressed that although he

34. The Hindu, November 15, 1972.

35. The Hindustan Times, November 15, 1972.

had earlier announced that the motion for the removal of the Speaker would be taken up on November 14, he felt that the "extraordinary situation" in Tamil Nadu following the split in the DMK called for an "extraordinary solution" to resolve the crisis.

The usual solution to a temporary deadlock in the House would be a brief adjournment for tempers to cool down. Instead, Mathialagan's action revealed his partisan loyalty to the Anna DMK when he observed that "it is not enough for a Chief Minister to enjoy the support of MLAs alone".³⁶

In the meantime, the Madras High Court had admitted three writ petitions filed by Mathialagan, MGR and Thangamani (of the CPI) challenging the action of the State Governor in proroguing the session of the Legislature. In yet another dramatic move on November 28, the Governor summoned the Tamil Nadu Legislature on December 2, 1972. All the members were telegraphically informed of the Governor's notification. The Madras High Court made it clear (on December 1, 1972) that the business of the Tamil Nadu Legislature need not be stopped because of the pendency of the writ petitions filed against the prorogation of the Legislature by the Governor earlier.³⁷ The Chief Justice observed that if the Court held at a later date that the prorogation was invalid, then the proceedings of the House would automatically become void. However, on December 11, 1972, a full-bench of the Madras High Court

36. The Statesman (New Delhi), November 17, 1972.

37. The Hindu, December 2, 1972.

upheld the Governor's action in proroguing the State Assembly through his order of November 14, 1972. The Court further upheld the Governor's action as being guided by the Council of Ministers.³⁸

Parallel Sessions and the Removal of the Speaker

The Tamil Nadu Assembly session which met on December 2, 1972, was unprecedented in the history of State Legislatures in India. Pandemonium prevailed when the House had two presiding officers — the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker — conducting parallel proceedings simultaneously in the same chamber for nearly one and-a-half hours. It all started when the Speaker, Mathialagan, took up the no-confidence motion tabled by the Anna DMK against the DMK ministry. Immediately, Veeraswami, a DMK member, interrupted and read out a resolution which was supported by 184 Members of the Assembly and asked for the removal of the Speaker. Amidst shouts and counter shouts, V.R. Nedunchezhan, Education Minister and the DMK floor leader, demanded that when such a motion was being discussed the Speaker ought to step down. Mathialagan refused to comply with the DMK leader's request and told the House that the no-confidence motion against the DMK government for which notice was given by Thangamani (CPI) and other opposition leaders, would have precedence over the DMK resolution for the Speaker's removal. On the other hand, the House resolved that the Deputy Speaker should preside and conduct the proceedings of the House. Thereupon, P. Sreenivasan, the Deputy Speaker, moved close to the Speaker's chair and began conducting the proceedings amidst protests from the Anna DMK, the CPI, the Congress (O) and the Congress members. The resolution moved earlier by Veeraswami (of the DMK) calling

38. The Times of India (New Delhi), December 12, 1972.

for the removal of the Speaker was supported by all the DMK members and its allies present in the House, which Sreenivasan, the Deputy Speaker, declared as carried. While all this was in progress, Mathialagan was in occupation of the Speaker's chair. Further, in the confusion that followed, the Speaker's bell was snatched away and mikes of the opposition members were switched off. Members from both the sides continued speaking for more than hundred minutes. When the time approached for the adjournment of the House, Mathialagan ordered that the speeches made by those members whom he did not call upon to address the House be expunged. And in utter disgust, the Speaker (Mathialagan) announced the adjournment of the House and left at 2 p.m. and the entire opposition followed suit. Thereafter, the Deputy Speaker occupied the chair vacated by the Speaker and conducted the proceedings for half-an-hour more. But, before adjourning the House, the Deputy Speaker accepted a resolution moved by Nedunchezhiyan, the DMK floor leader, thereby notifying the removal of the Speaker and empowering the Deputy Speaker to preside over the proceedings.

Later, it was against his removal as Speaker that Mathialagan filed a writ of Mandamus in Madras High Court on December 5, 1972, praying that the Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister, the Leader of the House and the Secretary of the Legislative Assembly should be restrained from interfering with his right to continue to function as Speaker. Admitting the writ petition, the Madras High Court directed issue of notices to the respondents, returnable in a fortnight's time. However, the Deputy Speaker, who was one of the respondents, declared in the Assembly that he did not propose to be subjected to the authority of

any Court in performance of his functions. Mr. Justice Ramprasad Rao, who heard the petition, granted an interim injunction restraining the appropriate authorities from disturbing the Speaker's residence and other amenities provided to him.

On February 27, 1973, a full-bench of the Madras High Court dismissed the writ petition filed by Mathialagan, challenging his removal as the Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. The Court held that it was beyond the purview of the Court under the Constitution. It further observed that the two acts of the Assembly, *viz.*, (i) taking up the motion for the Speaker's removal; and (ii) authorising the Deputy Speaker to conduct its business, were not "illegal" or "unconstitutional" and the House had the power to deal with and decide upon them. The Court declared that Mathialagan's attempt to cling on to the chair when a resolution was round the corner for his removal was indeed a violation of the Constitution. Further, the Court in its ruling observed that Mathialagan ought not to have allowed MGR to move the no-confidence motion against the DMK ministry before transacting the business as set out clearly in the Governor's message.

It was generally felt that Mathialagan had precipitated the constitutional crisis and brought disrepute to the august office of the Speaker. It was very clear that he had lost the confidence of the Legislature even before it met on December 2, 1972. In such circumstances, it would have been more decorous for him to vacate the chair in good grace; therefore, he could still have gone to the Court. Instead there was 'bedlam',³⁹

39. The Hindustan Times, December 5, 1972.

The Dindigul By-election*

The popularity of the Anna DMK was amply demonstrated by the Dindigul Lok Sabha by-election which was held on May 20, 1973. Not only did it provide a real test of MGR's electoral appeal, but also served as a focal point of contradictions in Tamil Nadu politics. The alignments between various political parties at the by-election reflected these contradictions: the DMK which defended the seat was backed by the Muslim League; the Anna DMK had the backing of the two Communist Parties — the CPI and the CPI(M) — as also the splinter Tamil Nadu Muslim League; the Congress (O) had the support of the Swatantra Party and the Congress (R) contested on its own.⁴⁰

The victory of the Anna DMK was indeed very impressive. It defeated the DMK and then the two Congress parties, polling 25,000 votes more than the total jointly secured by all the three opponents — DMK, Congress (O) and Congress (R). In practical terms, it was a vote against the party in power. The electorate decisively rejected the ruling party, the DMK, and simply ignored the Congress (R).

The massive mandate in favour of the Anna DMK made it further clear that the stand taken by the Congress (O) and Congress (R) and their many charges of corruption and maladministration against the DMK government was not wide off the mark.⁴¹ Also, the electorate seemed to have regarded the contest as primarily a trial of strength

* For detailed description and analysis, please see the chapter entitled "Electoral Performance".

40. Economic and Political Weekly, May 12, 1973, p. 486.

41. The Hindu, May 23, 1973.

between the DMK and the Anna DMK and backed the latter. The other decisive factor, caste, was largely neutralised by all the contesting parties taking care to set up a candidate from the majority caste in the Dindigul Constituency — the Thevars. Further, the DMK chief, Karunanidhi, felt that it was caste that proved decisive, because the winning Anna DMK candidate, Maya Thevar, belonged to the Thevar subsect of Pira Malaikallars, who constitute about half of the electorate in the area. On the whole, it would be more reasonable to assume that the electorate registered its dissatisfaction with the record of the ruling party, the DMK, and preferred to vote for the new entrant — the Anna DMK.

The Anna DMK leader, H.C. Ramachandran, said that the people of Tamil Nadu had given a decisive verdict against the corrupt and repressive DMK government, and reiterated the demand for appointing a probe panel by the Centre.

Mrs. Rani Annadurai, MLC, and widow of C.N. Annadurai, the DMK founder and the first Chief Minister, joined the Anna DMK on August 20, 1973. Mrs. Annadurai levelled a series of charges against Karunanidhi, specifically accused the Chief Minister of engineering the party split by driving out Ramachandran and thousands of his followers from the DMK. Also, she alleged that the Chief Minister had indulged in the repression of the supporters of Ramachandran. However, she returned to the DMK fold on January 27, 1974, and severed her connection with the Anna DMK. Likewise, Mathialagan, the colourful and controversial personality of the DMK and Ex-Speaker, jumped over to the Anna DMK only to return to the DMK ranks saying that he was disillusioned

with the Anna DMK leadership. Though he said that his exit was the result of MGR's dictatorial attitude, the Anna DMK leadership alleged that he was lured back into the party fold on a promise to rehabilitate him in public life. Consequently, he withdrew his appeal in the Supreme Court against his removal as Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Assembly. Karunanidhi not only welcomed him but seriously considered accommodating him in his cabinet. However, Mathialagan was later offered the Vice-Chairmanship of the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission.⁴² Mathialagan accepted the offer gratefully.

On the other hand, the Anna DMK too made some significant gains in the form of desertions from the DMK. For instance, P. Sreenivasan, the Deputy Speaker of Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, resigned from the DMK and joined the Anna DMK just before the Pondicherry elections and by-elections in Tamil Nadu. His defection can be attributed to Karunanidhi's refusal to elevate him to the speakership after the Mathialagan episode. But, the recent addition to Anna DMK in the person of G. Viswanathan, the erstwhile Deputy leader of the DMK group of MPs in the Lok Sabha, is indeed a shot in Anna DMK's arm. For the youthful leader commands a good following with a sound mass-base.

Pondicherry Elections

In the meantime, the political developments in the adjoining Union Territory of Pondicherry⁴³ provided the Anna DMK-CPI alliance an opportunity to prove their popularity in concrete terms further. The

42. The Hindu, April 24, 1974.

43. For a detailed description, please see the chapter entitled "Electoral Performance".

simmering differences within the ruling DMK party in Pondicherry surfaced when two senior cabinet ministers, S. Ramaswamy and D. Ramachandran, and a legislator, Thangavelu, resigned from the party on December 28, 1973, and defected to the Anna DMK. They accused the party leadership of flouting the principles enunciated by late Annadurai. The DMK ministry in Pondicherry just failed to complete one full five-year term of office due to these defections. However, these developments brought the two Congress parties together for the first time since the 1969 party split — when they forged an electoral understanding on the eve of the elections to the Pondicherry Assembly. Heavy stakes were involved in the Pondicherry elections as it was generally felt at that time, the results would serve as a dress rehearsal to the future political set-up in the neighbouring Tamil Nadu. For the DMK, whose base was badly shattered by the emergence of Anna DMK, it was a fight for survival. For the Anna DMK, which had successfully eroded the well-entrenched DMK base, it was a fight for recognition. And for the Congress combine (i.e., Ruling Congress and the Organization Congress), it was a fight for rehabilitation and rejuvenation.

Moreover, the electoral adjustments showed a marked polarisation on the part of the various contestants for the Pondicherry Assembly elections and some Parliamentary and Assembly by-elections in Tamil Nadu. The Congress front consisting of Congress (O) and the Congress (R) contested all the 30 Pondicherry Legislative Assembly seats. Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, and the veteran Congress (O) leader, Kamaraj, appeared on a single platform, at many election meetings, to solicit votes. On the other hand, the DMK appeared rather subdued and it contested 26 seats,

largely "because of its ruling party status, until recently".⁴⁴ For the remaining four seats, the DMK supported Independents. The main contenders for power were the Congress front on the one side and the Anna DMK-CPI alliance on the other. M.G. Ramachandran undertook an extensive tour to the nook and corner of the Union Territory and Coimbatore constituency in Tamil Nadu, to campaign for the Anna DMK-CPI alliance, which solely depended upon him for propaganda and mobilization. Sivaji Ganesan, another celebrity in the celluloid world, campaigned for the Congress combine to neutralize MGR's appeal to the masses.

The twist in the changing political scene during the 1974 Pondicherry elections and Coimbatore by-elections, was the emergence of Anna DMK as the most out-spoken critic of the Congress. Spearheading the Anna DMK election campaign, MGR launched a blistering attack on the Congress. He accused the Congress of being pro-capitalist and pro-exploiter and of following the capitalist path of development. "He was borrowing generously from the Marxists' book."⁴⁵ He also made a major issue out of the reportedly increasing attacks on South Indians by the Shiv Sena in Bombay. Ramachandran told the Pondicherry electorate to keep away from Mrs. Gandhi's election meetings. He declared that "our brethren have no security of life and property in Bombay and some other parts of Maharashtra. Who is responsible for this? I will not blame the Shiv Sena because it is only an instrument in the hands of the Ruling Congress. The Prime Minister, in whom we believed so far as our mother-protector, has betrayed us."⁴⁶ The Anna DMK's anti-Congress stance was

44. The Young Indian, January 17, 1974, p. 15.

45. Prasad Rao, V.C., "Anna DMK Spearheads Attack on Congress in Tamil Nadu", The Times of India (New Delhi), February 15, 1975.

46. Ibid.

contrary to its earlier eagerness to befriend it. During the Dindigul Lok Sabha by-election, it failed to win over Congress to its side. At that time, the Congress not only chose to go it alone, but did not show any hostility towards Anna DMK.

It was felt at that time of the Pondicherry elections that there might be a 'third front' comprising the Anna DMK, CPI and Congress. But, after the accord between Mrs. Gandhi and Kamaraj, the prospects of Congress joining the third front faded out gradually. The influence of Kamaraj forced the Ruling Congress to antagonize the Anna DMK. And the latter's violent reaction was mainly due to the co-operation between Congress (O) and the Congress (R).

However, the CPI continued to be a close ally of the Anna DMK, as they were making a joint bid to unseat the DMK and the Congress front in Pondicherry. To Anna DMK this posed no problem. But, to the CPI it did. The CPI was in alliance with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh and Orissa and opposing it in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. Though the Congress (O) had the same problem as that of CPI, Kamaraj showed little interest in his party's prospects in U.P. and Orissa. In these circumstances, the Anna DMK had a clear field to make use of, which it did quite successfully as the election results suggest.

In the elections to the Pondicherry Assembly, which were held on February 24, 1974, the erstwhile ruling party, the DMK, suffered a total rout. The results for the 30-member Assembly were as follows: the DMK secured only 2 seats; the Anna DMK won 12 seats; the Congress front got 12 seats — Congress (O) 5, and Congress (R) 7 — the CPI won 2 seats;

the CPI(M) and Independents won one seat each. In addition to this, the Anna DMK won the Pondicherry Lok Sabha seat and Coimbatore Assembly seat, whereas its electoral partner, the CPI, annexed the Coimbatore Lok Sabha seat.

The Anna DMK came to power in the Union Territory within one and-a-half years of its formation. And the victories it recorded in this short span were rather spectacular. MGR and his supporters were "more than satisfied"⁴⁷ with their party's performance considering the opposition it faced from the well-entrenched DMK and the all-India parties like the Ruling Congress and the Organization Congress. In Pondicherry, the Anna DMK formed the ministry with the help of the CPI, which had been supporting the Anna DMK ever since it came into being.

A four-member Anna DMK ministry, headed by S. Ramaswamy and including D. Ramachandran, V.C. Varada Pillai and H. Venkatasamy, was inducted into office on March 6, 1974. The Anna DMK formed a minority government since it was three short of absolute majority in the 30-member Legislature. The strength of Anna DMK was further reduced, when S. Pakkiam was the lone nominee, who was declared elected Speaker on March 26, 1974. Only its electoral ally, the CPI, pledged support to the Anna DMK-led government. The lone CPI(M) member promised support to the government on 'merits'.

However, three weeks later, the Anna DMK-CPI coalition ministry resigned on March 27, 1974, after it was defeated in the Assembly in a division forced by the opposition. In the first trial of strength, the

47. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

entire opposition, consisting of the Congress front — Congress (R) 7, and Congress (O) 5 — and the lone Independent combined to defeat the motion of the Chief Minister (for vote-on-account for the four months of the 1974-75 financial year) by 15 votes to 14.

The elation of the Anna DMK was short-lived, as the Pondicherry Chief Minister submitted the resignation of his cabinet and advised the Lt. Governor, Cheddi Lal, to recommend to the President to dissolve the Assembly and hold fresh elections to the Union Territory. It was a sequel to the defeat of the Anna DMK-CPI coalition government in the Assembly on a division forced by the opposition.

The President of India accepted the Lt. Governor's recommendation that following the defeat of the Anna DMK-CPI ministry, there was no possibility of forming a stable alternative government and the Assembly should be dissolved. Accordingly, the Union Territory of Pondicherry was brought under the President's rule under article 356 of the Indian Constitution, and the Assembly dissolved on March 28, 1974.⁴⁸ Also, this was the second time within three months that President's rule was imposed on the Union Territory of Pondicherry; first on January 3, 1974, following the resignation of the DMK ministry when two DMK ministers and a legislator defected to the Anna DMK, and then again on 26th March, 1974.

The former Chief Minister of Pondicherry, S. Ramaswamy (of the Anna DMK), accused the Congress of joining hands with the DMK in a brazen and shameless manner to topple his government, despite the fact that the then Congress President, Shankar Dayal Sharma's assurance to the effect

48. The Indian Express (New Delhi), March 29, 1974.

that the Congress alliance in Pondicherry would function as a "constructive opposition".⁴⁹ It was widely felt at that time that the Anna DMK came to power apparently with the green signal from the Centre. Also, it was generally believed that the Congress would provide the Anna DMK-CPI coalition, a reasonable chance for the ministry formation. The Times of India editorially commented that "it will be particularly unfortunate if the two Congress parties choose to adopt short-sighted tactics merely with a view to accentuating the antagonism between the DMK and the Anna DMK, unmindful of the large interests of the people of the State".⁵⁰ According to The Tribune, "tactically it would perhaps have been better for the opposition to let the minority government stay in its own juice for some time and strike only when it ran into trouble. The ministry was not given a chance even for misrule."⁵¹

The Anna DMK chief, M.C. Ramchandran, accused the Congress parties of "murdering democracy in collusion with the DMK". Nevertheless, he admitted that the Anna DMK-CPI alliance assumed office under the constant threat of being toppled at any time. "But we did not anticipate that the anti-people forces, masquerading in the name of opposition parties, would unite and calculatedly pull down the Anna DMK ministry so soon."⁵² He felt that it would have been justifiable if the opposition had evaluated the policies and programme of the Anna DMK-led government for a while and voted it out if they were convinced

49. The Hindustan Times, March 29, 1974.

50. The Times of India (New Delhi), March 29, 1974.

51. The Tribune, March 28, 1974.

52. The Hindustan Times, March 29, 1974.

that these policies were anti-people. Further, he added that, "by their action they had betrayed their one and only intention of toppling the ministry".⁵³ The only solution to the political stalemate in Pondicherry lay, according to MGR, in holding a fresh election which would give the people another opportunity to elect a stable government.

It was widely believed that the Congress (O) leader, Kamaraj, was responsible for the fall of the ill-fated Pondicherry ministry within three weeks of its coming into office.⁵⁴ The combined Congress group of twelve members, acting on Kamaraj's advice, voted against the government on a routine vote-on-account motion for funds, pending the passage of the budget on the second day of the Assembly session on March 27, 1974. The former DMK Chief Minister, Farook Maricar, finally touched off the coup when he waved a bunch of papers saying that the budget proposals were leaked out before being presented to the House. Having been routed in the elections, the DMK was understandably keen to humble the break-away Anna DMK at the earliest opportunity. But, the way the two Congress parties behaved was intriguing. The two DMK legislators and the lone Independent⁵⁵ voted with the Congress against the Anna DMK-CPI government. The Speaker, belonging to the Anna DMK, could not vote. Therefore, the coalition of Anna DMK-CPI could only secure the support of fourteen legislators in the crucial voting.

However, the contention of the leader of the combined Congress in the Pondicherry Assembly, Dhana Kantharaj, that the Anna DMK-CPI government had proved its incompetence to govern, by publishing the

53. Ibid.

54. The Times of India (New Delhi), April 6, 1974.

55. Kenichetty S. Varaprasada Rao represented Yanam Constituency in the Pondicherry Assembly as an Independent.

budget speech before it was formally presented to the House, "was no more than a pretext"⁵⁶ to topple the government. M.G. Ramachandran demanded a 'full enquiry' into the leakage of budget papers prepared by the short-lived Anna DMK-CPI ministry in Pondicherry.⁵⁷

The Anna DMK supporters had a different story to tell. According to sources close to the Anna DMK, the President of the labour union of the Government Press, where the budgetary proposals were printed, happened to be a Congress MLA. He came to know the budget details and passed them on to Purook Maricar, to enable him to challenge the government on the floor of the House on the ground that the proposals were leaked out even before they were formally presented to the House. While commenting upon this unfortunate incident and its aftermath, M.G. Ramachandran observed that it was a pity that the Anna DMK-led government was not given a chance to prove its bona fides to implement the budget and the revolutionary proposals contained therein. Moreover, he felt that the budget was so revolutionary in character that "had it only been passed by the Assembly, the opposition parties, who voted against the government, knew very well that they would not be able to face the electorate again".⁵⁸ He further asserted that "in fact some of the features of the vetoed budget had been incorporated when it was passed by the Union Parliament later".⁵⁹ After a great national debate on the alleged abuse of power by the Union government, the Pondicherry budget was finally voted by the Lok Sabha on April 16, 1974.

56. The Times of India (New Delhi), April 29, 1974.

57. The Hindu, April 5, 1974.

58. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

59. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

The statements of both the Congress parties on the fall of the Pondicherry government, that a minority government met the fate it deserved, are unconvincing. No other party or a group of parties could have formed a government in Pondicherry. It is pertinent to recall that in Orissa, the Congress formed a minority government with the support of the CPI. Even Mrs. Indira Gandhi's government at the Centre had to be propped up by parties like the DMK and the CPI after the Congress split of 1969 till the dissolution of Parliament by Mrs. Gandhi in December 1970. According to some political observers, President's rule might be extended upto 1976 so that the elections to Pondicherry Assembly are held simultaneously with the General Elections.⁶⁰

Mrs. Sathiaivanimuthu's Exit from the DMK Cabinet

Close on the heels of the Pondicherry imbroglio came the dropping of Mrs. Sathiaivanimuthu, Tamil Nadu Harijan Welfare Minister, from the DMK Cabinet and anti-Malayalee agitation which again shook the political boat in the state.

Mrs. Sathiaivanimuthu was sacked from the Karunanidhi government, following differences between her and the Chief Minister, on the conduct of some government officials. The Chief Minister, who had earlier referred charges made by Mrs. Muthu to the Chief Secretary for an inquiry, asserted that her allegations were found to be baseless and she had acted against the government policy and the principle of joint responsibility of the Cabinet.⁶¹

60. The Times of India (New Delhi), April 4, 1974.

61. The Hindustan Times, May 3, 1974.

Mrs. Sathievanimuthu had been a minister of cabinet rank since 1967, when the DMK formed the government for the first time. Also, she had occupied a top position in the DMK party hierarchy. Earlier, she made some controversial statements and charged the state government officials with non-cooperation in the implementation of Harijan Welfare Schemes in the state. She had also appealed to the Harijan mothers not to practise family planning as the community wanted more warriors to man a militant protest movement on the lines of Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra.⁶² The Harijan community, according to her, should become militant to protest against atrocities committed by the caste Hindus. These remarks had led to a correspondence between her and the Governor K.K. Shah, in which she had not only owned the statements attributed to her but also reiterated her views. The Chief Minister, on his part, had also referred her allegations against the officials to the Chief Secretary for an inquiry. Mrs. Muthu's allegation of misuse and diversion of Central funds meant for Harijan welfare, acutely embarrassed the DMK leadership. It was also felt at that time that she had refused the offer made by Karunanidhi to give up the Harijan welfare portfolio in lieu of some other department. In view of these developments, the Chief Minister had no other option but to drop her from the cabinet. Mrs. Muthu claimed that she took her dismissal from the ministry as a "reward for championing the cause of her community".⁶³

The dismissal of Mrs. Muthu snowballed into another small rift in the DMK. On May 5, 1974, she resigned from the ruling DMK party. Ten MLAs, two MLCs and an MP, all belonging to the Harijan community, sub-

62. The Times of India (New Delhi), April 22, 1974.

63. The Times of India (New Delhi), May 5, 1974.

mitted their resignation from the DMK, in support of her. But, soon afterwards they retreated and promptly wrote letters of apology to the Chief Minister assuring him of their full co-operation.⁶⁴ Thus, her exit from the DMK fold did not cause any major rift in the ruling party as originally feared. Moreover, Mrs. Muthu did not receive support from any of her erstwhile colleagues in the DMK Cabinet. Later she founded a new party named "Depressed Classes Forward League" (DFL). In the long run, Mrs. Muthu's revolt may erode the DMK's popularity among the depressed classes. For the time being, Karunanidhi withstood yet another storm and proved once again his dexterity.

Anti-Malayalee Stir

In Madras city, a procession was taken out by the Tamizhar Padukku Peravai ("Tamil Protection Organization") on May 26, 1974. The processionists stoned a couple of theatres exhibiting Malayalee films and some other establishments owned by the Malayalee community. The chief objective of the Peravai, which organized the rally of Tamils, was to "smash the domination of outsiders"⁶⁵ in Tamil Nadu. Raising anti-Malayalee slogans, the processionists pulled down several posters and banners which publicized Malayalee movies and contained the pictures of M.G. Ramachandran, the Anna DMK leader, who is a Malayalee by birth. "In the face of it, the violence is the direct outcome of the inflammatory speech made by Madhavan, the State Industries Minister, ... threatening non-Tamilians with loss of their jobs."⁶⁶ The Police escorting the

64. Prasad Rao, V.G., "Mr. Karunanidhi Foils A Party Revolt in Tamil Nadu", The Times of India (New Delhi), May 15, 1974.

65. The Times of India (New Delhi), May 27, 1974.

66. The Times of India (New Delhi), May 28, 1974.

procession made some arrests, but not before the processionists had achieved what they wanted to accomplish. It looked as if the Police had orders not to restrain the demonstrators.

In retaliation, at Trivandrum, a crowd indulged in stone-throwing on some hotels and shops run by the Tamils. The Police took effective steps to put down the vandalism and enabled the shops and hotels to reopen. Also, the Kerala Chief Minister, Achyuta Menon, wrote to Karunanidhi urging him to take effective steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents. He also appealed to the people of Kerala to consider persons belonging to all minorities living among them as their brethren and give them protection.⁶⁷

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi, promised that his government would take necessary steps to protect people belonging to all the communities in the state. Referring to the anti-Malayalee incidents in Madras, he described it as a "cumulative reaction" of some developments. Karunanidhi asserted that one of the factors was an observation made by M.G. Ramachandran at the Muslim League conference in Salem against women belonging to a 'particular community', which had taken to prostitution. Further, Karunanidhi sought to justify the incidents when he said that talking ill of women from political platforms had roused the feelings of a section of people and they gave vent to their anger through the agitation. On the other hand, Ramachandran accused the Chief Minister and held Karunanidhi solely responsible for the anti-Malayalee stir in the state. He asserted that "Karunanidhi was in 'jitters' over the imminent constitution of an inquiry commission by the Centre and go into

67. The Hindu, May 28, 1974.

the corruption charges and was using the Tamil Sena as a pretext to unleash terror and violence to wipe out the Anna DMK". He added that this would "force the Centre to dismiss the DMK from power, so that the Chief Minister and his party could become martyrs".⁶⁸

Also, Ramachandran ridiculed the Chief Minister's charge that his recent speech at Salem regarding women of a 'particular community' sparked off the May 26 violent incidents in Madras city. He emphatically denied having made any derogatory remarks on the women-folk of any community. Further, he clarified that what he had said at Salem was that marriages between different linguistic groups had to be encouraged to promote real integration. He felt that deliberately a vilification campaign was launched by some news-papers with the "blessings of the Chief Minister"⁶⁹ to create hatred and ill-will towards him and his party. He asserted that this had not affected the popularity of Anna DMK.

These incidents were condemned by all the opposition parties in Tamil Nadu. They felt that the DMK government indulged in whipping up Tamil chauvinism as a weapon against the Anna DMK of MGR. One possible reason might have been that the DMK leadership was alarmed at the continuing popularity of the Anna DMK. Moreover, Karunanidhi has not been above discreet anti-Malayalee utterances since the formation of the Anna DMK in 1972. "Even from the point of view of getting on with a political foe, this is poor tactics."⁷⁰

68. The Hindu, May 31, 1974.

69. Id.

70. The Hindustan Times, May 28, 1974.

Viewed impartially, it gives an impression that having failed to get the better of Anna DMK on the political plane, the DMK started discrediting "the break-away party by raising the bogey of 'domination' by 'settlers'",⁷¹ Moreover, the two organizations — Thamizhar Padukappu Peravai and Shakthi Sena — who raised the "Tamil only" cry, pledged to weed out "non-Tamils", have singled out Malayalees for special treatment. The shakti Sena is a brain-child of M.R. Radha, who served a long jail term for shooting at MGR in 1967.

On May 28, 1974, a deputation of six political parties, led by the Anna DMK, submitted a memorandum to President Giri urging a judicial inquiry into the violent incidents that occurred when the 'Federation for the Protection of Tamils' took out a procession in Madras city. The President promised to forward the memorandum to the Prime Minister for necessary action. In fact, Mrs. Gandhi wrote to Karunanidhi stressing the need for providing protection to the linguistic minorities in the state. Karunanidhi replied to the Prime Minister "that all safeguards were being provided to minorities here".⁷²

Though the anti-Malayalee stir caused tension in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere, it had least affected the popularity of M.G. Ramachandran. According to 'Cho' Ramaswamy, Editor of Thuglak, Karunanidhi committed blunder after blunder in dealing with MGR, starting from his expulsion from the DMK to the anti-Malayalee stir. 'Cho' observed, instead of suspending MGR from the DMK, Karunanidhi would have done better to contain MGR from within.⁷³

71. Prasanna, V.G., "Malayalees Victim of DMK Tactic", The Times of India (New Delhi), May 31, 1974.

72. "Indira Writes to Karunanidhi", The Mail (Madras), July 20, 1974.

73. Interview with 'Cho' Ramaswamy, Madras, July-1974.

In sum, it could be concluded that the Anna DMK, at present, is by far the most popular political party in Tamil Nadu. This was amply demonstrated by its electoral successes. It forced even the ruling DMK, Congress (O) and Congress (R) parties to be on the defensive. The personal popularity enjoyed by M.C. Ramachandran has won many followers to the Anna DMK fold. The Tamil masses still seem to believe in the regionalization of issues to counter the alleged North-Indian domination in the nation's affairs. The believers in DMK ideology, who are, of late, disillusioned with its performance, have found an alternative in the Anna DMK party. The emergence of the Anna DMK, as an alternative to the ruling DMK, has not only successfully changed the political landscape of Tamil Nadu, but it continues to puzzle the futurologists in their predictions as to what the next round of hustings will bring in.

Chapter Three

THE PARTY PROGRAMME

The Anna DMK policy statement was announced on September 30, 1973, a year after the party formally came into being. At the time of its birth, "corruption" was the only charge of M.G. Ramachandran against the DMK government. However, he had no objection to the continuance of the DMK ministry in office. But, gradually there has been a qualitative change in the party's objective which is now directed towards removing the DMK from power. The popularity of the infant party enabled it, within six months of its coming into being, to sweep the polls at the Dindigul Parliamentary by-election by winning the seat with fifty-two per cent of the popular vote.

For any political party, a policy statement is the sine qua non for proper articulation of its programmes. In the case of Anna DMK, it took a long time to come. The phase of Anna DMK's "upsurge politics" was over when its policy document was made public. On the basis of its programme the party "has converted itself into a reasonably cohesive political platform of left democratic forces ... in Tamil Nadu".¹

1. "Anna DMK Policy Document", Link, October 7, 1973, pp. 23-24.

However, the lengthy document's central theme is basic leftism "with an appeal to the lumpen proletariat and rural peasantry".² Of course, the new party's programme is replete with "loyalty pledges" to "Anna's programme". This programme in its turn has reference to DMK's original moorings in being the "genuine Communist Party south of the Vindhya", as the late C.N. Annadurai used to describe the DMK. At the same time, the "loyalty pledges" seem to be tactical, for the new party clearly aims at capturing the base, which hitherto has been the DMK's stronghold.

The Anna DMK programme also mentions of the "Dravidian Ethnic Solidarity",³ which incidentally was the original theme of the DMK during the lifetime of its founder, Annadurai. Whereas, the DMK, under Karunanidhi, talks only of "Tamil race and Tamil language".⁴ But, the Anna DMK document has made it clear that the party stands for full and total "emotional integration of the people of India without regard to caste, creed, language or religion".⁵ Further, the cardinal declaration affirms that "the unity of India is the fulcrum of Anna DMK's political philosophy".⁶

"Sons of Soil" Policy

Recent developments in Tamil Nadu indicate that the DMK is also falling a victim to chauvinistic demands, such as, the adoption by the State Legislative Assembly of the "Sons of the Soil" policy, in the matter of recruitment into provincial services in the state. Thus, the

2. Ibid.

3. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973.

4. DMK Manifesto, 1971.

5. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973.

6. Ibid.

DMK has legalized the slogan of "Tamil Nadu for Tamils only" under the mask of fighting for "State autonomy". On the other hand, the Anna DMK repudiates this doctrine in no uncertain terms when MGR calls the "Sons of the Soil" philosophy as "quite absurd" and against the larger interests of the nation.⁷

Centre-State Relations

While stressing the need for more powers for the constituent states and "responsive federalism", the Anna DMK has given a new slogan for improving the federal concept in the Indian polity. The party's stand was made clear by G.R. Edmund, its Deputy Leader in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, when he said: "We are certainly for granting more powers to states, but not for autonomy".⁸ Also, MGR has said that the DMK's demand for "State autonomy" was aimed at personal gains.⁹ The Anna DMK's much-debated principle of Centre-State relations says that: "We want neither dependence nor independence, but inter-dependence."¹⁰ Thus, the "interactive federalism" seems to be the main criterion of the Anna DMK's political concept.

The rallying-cry of the ruling DMK will be "State autonomy" during the next general elections.¹¹ The DMK thesis is that the Centre should be federal in nature whereas the constituent states should enjoy more

7. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

8. "Fratricidal Polemics", The Hindu, March 14, 1975.

9. Patriot, April 7, 1975.

10. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973. According to MGR and his followers, this principle is also known as "Anna's Dictum" on Union-State relations. Cited also in The Hindu, March 14, 1975.

11. Balasundaram, S.N., "DMK Seeks Positive Ideology", Assam Tribune (Gauhati), December 23, 1974.

powers. Also, the residuary powers should be transferred to the states. For the DMK, this slogan has "the double advantage of appealing emotionally to the Tamil speakers and of distinguishing the DMK from its twin and rival, the Anna DMK".¹²

Language Policy

An American press correspondent points out that "language is part of the autonomy campaign, on which the two opponents (the DMK and the Anna DMK) agree".¹³ The party "stands in the vanguard of the opposition" to Hindi as the country's sole official language.¹⁴ While, like the DMK, pleading for the concept of bi-lingualism of English and the regional language in each state as its language policy, the Anna DMK further emphasizes the fact that it does not favour the growth of any one language at the expense of the other. Thus, "equality of languages" is seen as a clear snub to the "Tamil superiority" concept of the DMK. Further, the programme pleads for inclusion of English among the Indian languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, as, according to the party, it is the language of the Anglo-Indian minority, spread all over the country and also the official language in the north-eastern State of Nagaland.

Annals

The party's economic objective is described as the "creation of full-fledged socialist society in the country".¹⁵ It does not want

12. Ibid.

13. Simons, Lewis M., "The Actor's Role in Politics in India", The Washington Post, March 9, 1975. The insertion in the brackets is mine.

14. Asian Recorder, November 19-25, 1975, p. 11708.

15. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973.

Socialism as a mere economic goal but as an accepted "way of life". The programme enjoins that the means of creating socialist society should be inspired by "humanism". It wants that both the methods of "levelling up and levelling down ... be used discretely like a surgeon's knife". This will facilitate "distributive social justice even as national resources are mobilized for planned development".¹⁶ Further, MGR has clarified that "we prefer to call this concept Annaism. This is because the 'isms' are interpreted in a variety of ways by others and our interpretation of socialism is better described and understood by the masses who accept our programme as Annaism".¹⁷ However, this is not a far cry from the bait of "socialism without tears"¹⁸ dangled by the DMK election Manifesto of 1971.

The first article of Annaism is state control of the means of production and the productive process and the distribution of the finished products including the pricing mechanism. The party wants total elimination of the "middlemen" between the producer and the consumer until the time state control of means of production is achieved. The party document says that "only by creating a society which is free from exploitation of every kind can we put an end to the tyranny of few people fattening themselves on the toil of the vast multitude in this country".¹⁹ To free society from exploitation, the party wants an "unadulterated and firm economic policy of ruthlessly eliminating speculators, hoarders and black-

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. "Straining Hard for Ideas", Economic and Political Weekly, 8:45, November 10, 1974, p. 1999.

19. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973.

marketeers, profiteers and black money tycoons".²⁰ As one way of eliminating the black money control of the economy, immediately, the party wants demonetization of the hundred-rupee currency notes.

The CPI's influence in drafting the document is obvious.²¹ However, it should be noted that there is no reference to the source of black money in the document. The party wants nationalization of more banks, which have qualified, since the measure was undertaken way back in 1969, for the norms set out in the scheme of nationalization. Of course, as a matter of policy, the Anna DMK wants nationalization of all financial and credit institutions as well. The party particularly wants an immediate halt to the policy of nationalized banks helping only the big capitalists, thereby defeating the very purpose of nationalization.²²

The party stands for firmly dealing with the private sector, which needs to be thoroughly "disciplined". "The private sector is now using the government to secure its selfish ends. The process must be reversed. The private sector must be used by the government to secure its socialist objectives."²³ The party wants elimination of the private sector from big and heavy industries, mills, etc. "There is no halfway house in the scheme of nationalization. There should be no exemption, for instance, in the scheme of nationalization to rubber, coffee, tea and cardamom plantations".²⁴

20. Ibid.

21. Economic and Political Weekly, Op.cit., p. 1999.

22. Link, October 7, 1973, pp. 23-24.

23. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973.

24. Ibid.

Socio-economic Reforms

In the domain of social reforms, the party wants an immediate halt to "divisive forces" which propagate "pernicious ideas of dividing the people on grounds of birth, employment, caste, race or language". It wants "untouchability", which "despite all legislation" is practised widely, to be abolished at any cost. "No section in Indian society should be known as scheduled or depressed or underdeveloped community. Those who oppress the Harijans must be punished."²⁵ Further, the party wants economic criteria to be the determining factor for assessing the relative backwardness of the people.

The party advocates a fair deal to the peasants, who over the years, have borrowed heavily from the unscrupulous private money-lenders. According to the Anna DMK document, at present the financial institutions of the state have replaced the village money-lenders. In spite of nearly three decades of planned development, indebtedness still stalks the countryside. "Instead of private money-lenders, the financial institutions are evicting them from lands and suppressing them. There is neither sense nor revolution in the change of nomenclature of oppressors. The peasants must be helped to remain free from debt burdens by introduction of policies like price support, crop insurance, fixity of tenure and inalienable rights on the lands he owns subject to a ceiling in public interest."²⁶

It must be said to the credit of the Anna DMK that the present Congress government has taken a leaf out of the former's policy document.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

For, the 20-Point Economic Programme of the Congress Party as enunciated by the Prime Minister, inter alia, envisages to free the village peasantry from the shackles of rural indebtedness.²⁷

The party also advocates a fair deal to the weavers, who form a majority in the population of Tamil Nadu. According to the party document, certain varieties of cloth must be reserved for exclusive production in the handloom sectors. Again, the Anna ILL can claim credit for the recent decision of the Union government to appoint a Development Commissioner for Handlooms, the development of which was one of the components of the economic programme announced by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in July-1975. Even as such a move is taking shape, the Central government has earmarked Rs. 5 crores for providing relief to weavers.²⁸

Apart from these radical proposals, the party is in favour of "need-based minimum wages for the working class right now". The next step envisaged in the programme is the "fair wage" with the eventual vision of "living wages" to all categories of workers and middle class salaried employees.²⁹

27. "The 20-Point Economic Programme" of the Congress Party envisages, among other things, "plan for liquidation of rural indebtedness. Legislation on moratorium on recovery of debt from landless labourers, small farmers and artisans". The Times of India (New Delhi), July 2, 1975.

28. "Central Aid for Handloom Weavers", The Sunday Standard (New Delhi), August 17, 1975.

In the 20-Point Economic Programme, the relevant provision in this regard is: "New development plan for development of the handloom sector". See The Times of India (New Delhi), July 2, 1975.

29. Link, October 7, 1973, pp. 23-24.

The party makes a special mention of women as "custodians of Indian culture". They are advised by the document "not to identify Western culture with progress". Also, the Anna DMK makes special provision for women in regard to extending privileges. The party has committed itself to reserving 25 per cent of its seats for women, in the next General Elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislature.³⁰ Further, it pleads for "statutory provisions" for representation to women in all "policy-making institutions". Also, the party wants the elimination of wage discrimination between men and women in all spheres.

Educational Policy

The Anna DMK wants free education to be extended up to the highest level of university education. The DMK also has laid special emphasis on education. It has already made education free up to the Pre-University level. The Anna DMK goes one step further, when it wants unemployment doles to be given to the educated unemployed, as a kind of "guarantee for living". M.G. Ramachandran is also keen on a review of the entire gamut of the education policy.³¹ He emphasized that the existing basis of the education system should be changed. Firstly, according to him, those who formulate the educational policies should not be politicians and political opportunists. Instead, the policies should be evolved by the far-sighted academicians, who must function as a braintrust for this purpose. Second, education should provide a means for natural growth,

30. Ibid.

31. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

combining utilization of both physical and mental faculties. In essence, the Anna DMK would like to bridge the gap between intellectual and manual labour.

The Anna DMK programme pleads for the rehabilitation of all Indians who return or are compelled to return to India from other countries. The DMK is very much concerned about the plight of "Overseas Tamils" only, whereas the Anna DMK programme scrupulously avoids the term "Overseas Tamils". However, the programme says that the Indians who return from abroad should be taken care of by "the states to which they belong in India".³²

The party stands for total prohibition in the country as a whole. Further, the party document notes that: "Ultimately total prohibition should be enforced all over the country and the stratagem of getting exemption from prohibition under the guise of medical necessity should be thoroughly defeated".³³ It even threatens "direct action by the party to compel the government to eliminate pseudo-medical alcoholic preparations".³⁴ In fact, the DMK reintroduced prohibition in Tamil Nadu in September 1974, as a matter of concession to the Anna DMK's campaign against the DMK government on this issue. Thus, the Anna DMK can take some credit for the ruling DMK's decision to reintroduce the measure.

While advocating more powers to the states, the Anna DMK wants "equal transfer of powers from the state governments to local self-

32. Anna DMK Manifesto, 1973.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

governing bodies like municipalities and panchayats". It would like to translate the concept of grass-roots democracy into a living reality.

Electoral Reforms

The Anna DMK pleads for wide-ranging electoral reforms. The most important of these being the right to recall the elected representatives, in case they no longer retain the implicit confidence of the electorate. "The electorate which has the constitutional right to elect its representative must also have the right to recall him in case he ceases to represent it."³⁵ Another salient feature of the Anna DMK programme is MGR's offer that the successful Anna DMK candidates would seek a vote of confidence from their constituencies once in every two years and if they failed to get it, they would resign their seats.³⁶ "This is Annaism", MGR emphasizes. Also, he added that "Annaism" would mean that the right to choose ministers would vest "not with MLAs but with party cadres".³⁷ Moreover, an Anna DMK Chief Minister, in the event of the party being voted to power, would have to seek an annual vote of confidence from the party's General Council. And no minister would hold a party position concurrently. Also, office-bearers of the party would hold office for a consecutive second term and will be able to get re-elected only after three years of grass-roots party work.³⁸

35. The Statesman (New Delhi), February 7, 1974.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Asian Recorder, November 19-25, 1973, p. 11708.

But, the critics of MGR have ridiculed these suggestions. A columnist commented on them as "good jokes" and asked what would happen if a chief minister enjoyed the people's confidence but lost that of party's legislators.³⁹ The Swatantra Party described the suggestions as impractical and possibly more suited to governments as they are shown to be formed in films.⁴⁰

Elimination of Corruption

The Anna DMK programme calls for firm steps to eliminate corruption in public life. Further, it wants that all politicians who have amassed wealth during their stint in power and position should be compelled to face scrutiny through judicial probe into the 'why' and 'what' of their acquisitions. They should be punished, if found guilty and their "ill-gotten wealth" should be attached to the state.

However, one obvious lacuna in the Anna DMK policy document is that it does not spell out clearly how it proposes to raise the huge resources required for the realization of its mammoth plans.

M.G. Ramachandran told an American audience on November 18, 1974, in New York, that his political philosophy was based on a "blend of socialism, communism and capitalism". He further elucidated that a government based on this political philosophy was best suited to the needs of the people in Tamil Nadu. And such a programme would help them realize their economic and social goals expeditiously.⁴¹

39. The Statesman (New Delhi), February 7, 1974.

40. Ibid.

41. "MGR Explains Anna DMK's Policy in US", The Hindu, November 19, 1974.

The CPI, an ally of the Anna DMK since the latter came into being as a political force in Tamil Nadu, has welcomed Annaism. It has also pledged unqualified support to Anna DMK. However, the DMK was very critical of the concept of Annaism, claimed by MGR and his followers as the original version of Annadurai's philosophy. When it was announced, a DMK minister was reported to have quipped that "at last the CPI had found time to draft it".⁴²

The policy document has made Anna DMK party's position clear on various issues vis-a-vis the other political parties in the country. The similarity between some of the objectives of the Anna DMK and some of the features in the 20-Point Economic Programme announced by the Prime Minister on July 1, 1975, is particularly striking. The document of action of the Anna DMK is due to be tested when it faces the ruling DMK in the 1976 General Elections in Tamil Nadu. The party already had a cake-walk victory in the Dindigul Parliamentary by-election even without formally announcing its programme of action. After the release of the document, the Anna DMK is better equipped to fight the Sixth General Elections.

42. Economic and Political Weekly, Op.cit., p. 1999.

Chapter Four

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

After its successes in the Dindigul and Coimbatore by-elections and Pondicherry General Elections, the MGR-led Anna DMK has emerged as a major political force in Tamil Nadu. It was hardly expected at the time of Ramachandran's expulsion from the DMK in 1972, that the break-away party, in such a short time, would become a serious contender for power. It was difficult, even amongst MGR's optimistic supporters, to expect that he would withstand the expulsion from the DMK and that the expulsion would pay off so handsomely. The Anna DMK (founded by MGR in October 1972), has since won, apart from the Dindigul and Pondicherry Parliamentary (Lok Sabha) seats, 12 out of 30 Assembly seats in the Union Territory of Pondicherry and, in addition, the Coimbatore Assembly seat in Tamil Nadu. By any yardstick, it has been a creditable performance for an infant party.

(A) Dindigul Lok Sabha By-election

The Anna DMK leader's campaign of corruption and nepotism generated a wave of popular indignation throughout Tamil Nadu, against the DMK administration. The "MGR Glamour" or "MGR Wave" had its first political test in the by-election to the Lok Sabha from Dindigul in May 1973. The by-election was caused by the death of M. Rajangam, a DMK MP. Moreover, the Dindigul by-election was treated as a test case by all the major contestants: the Anna DMK; the Congress (O); the ruling DMK; and the Congress (R). The Congress (O) thought that it could score a significant victory after its debacle in the Fifth General Elections of 1971. After initial hesitation, the Congress (R) finally decided to go it alone. Probably, the latter wanted to test its strength in Tamil Nadu. But, the verdict proved to be uncomfortable for the two all-India parties. The Anna DMK, in spite of fielding an unknown candidate, recorded a smashing victory over its nearest and more experienced rival belonging to the Congress (O).

The following table gives an indication of the measure of popular support the Anna DMK party had enjoyed over its rivals, namely, the ruling DMK, the Congress (O), and the Congress (R). The Dindigul by-election result (illustrated in Table - 1) proves also that both Karunanidhi and Kamaraj had misjudged the popularity and mass-base of M.C. Ramachandran.

TABLE - 1

Dindigul Parliamentary By-election, 1973

Total Electorate	:	643,704
Total Votes Polled	:	505,253
Total Valid Votes Polled	:	496,555

S.No.	Name of the Party	Votes Polled	Percentage of Votes Polled
1	Anna DMK	260,930	52.55
2	Congress (O)	119,032	23.97
3	DMK	93,496	18.83
4	Congress (R)	11,423	2.30
5	Independents (5)	11,674	2.35
TOTAL:		496,555	100.00

SOURCE: Compiled from the details given in Asian Recorder, July 2-8, 1973, p. 11471.

The Dindigul defeat was the second major reverse for the ruling DMK in fourteen months¹; in April 1972, the DMK lost another prestigious by-election in the adjacent Union Territory of Pondicherry. The DMK suffered its first defeat in its confrontation with the Anna DMK in the Dindigul Lok Sabha by-election when it polled only 93,496 votes (18.83 per cent) as against the break-away party's 260,930 (i.e., 52.55 per cent). The DMK finished a poor third in five out of six Assembly Constituencies. However, in the sixth Assembly constituency, Usilampatti, reputedly a stronghold of the Forward Bloc, the DMK polled slightly over 18,000 votes compared with Anna DMK's 44,000 which was proof enough that the Forward Bloc's caste-based hold over the electorate had been thoroughly shaken.²

Perhaps, the biggest setback in the by-election was that of the Congress (R), whose candidate polled a paltry 11,423 votes (2.30 per cent). It is interesting to note that the same candidate polled 151,003 votes³ in the 1971 poll, which explains the decline in popularity suffered by the ruling Congress party in Tamil Nadu politics.

1. Asian Recorder, July 2-8, 1973, p. 11471.

The detailed results of the Dindigul Parliamentary election were:

K. Mayathevar (Anna DMK) 260,930; N.S.V. Chithan (Cong-O) 119,032; P. Mathuramalingam (DMK) 93,496; K. Cheemaichamy (Cong-R) 11,423; Surtimuthu (Ind.) 9,342; Angama Chettiar (Ind.) 448; Govindaswamy (Ind.) 687; Varada Desikan (Ind.) 502; and Sethuram Thevar (Ind.) 695.

2. Ibid.

3. Who's Who, Fifth Lok Sabha, 1971, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 486.

Moreover, the Congress initially toyed with the idea of forming a third front with the Anna DMK and the CPI, but abandoned it at the last moment. On the other hand, Congress (O) secured 119,032 votes which worked out to 24 per cent of the votes polled. The Congress (O) performance was far better than that of the ruling DMK and the Congress, but it simply could not withstand the "MGR wave" in Dindigul.

In the Dindigul by-election, the Anna DMK score of 260,000 votes was decisively larger than the combined score of all the other candidates (namely those of the Congress (O), the DMK, the Congress (R), and five other Independents), totalling 235,625.⁴ A landslide victory of this nature by a new political party, with no record of office and otherwise unable to attract many legislators of its parent organization to its fold, is rather unusual.

The party's victory in Dindigul was largely due to the predominantly rural character of the Parliamentary constituency, with women outnumbering men.⁵ Moreover, prohibition was the key issue which tilted the scales in the Anna DMK's favour. The heavy rush of women voters at the polling booths could be interpreted as their protest against the scrapping of prohibition, and as a reaction to the ruin and turmoil which was brought to their homes by the promotion of drinking by the government itself.⁶

4. This figure is derived from Table 1.

5. The Statesman (New Delhi), March 18, 1974.

6. The Hindu, May 23, 1973.

Whatever might be the reasons for the success of the Anna DMK, it could be reasonably stated that the new party had made its presence felt in Tamil Nadu politics. Also, the Dindigul electorate, perhaps, lent greater credence to the feeling that there had been rampant corruption in the DMK rule.

(B) Coimbatore By-elections

In Tamil Nadu, the by-elections to the Coimbatore (West) Assembly constituency and Coimbatore Parliamentary constituency were held in February 1974. The Assembly seat was won by the Anna DMK and the Lok Sabha seat by the CPI with the Anna DMK's support. Thus, the Anna DMK-CPI combination, which came into concrete shape soon after the formation of Anna DMK, won the elections much to the discomfiture of the ruling party. Tables 2 and 3 provide the relative strengths of the contestants in the by-elections to the Coimbatore (West) and Coimbatore Parliamentary constituencies.

(1) Coimbatore (West) By-election

The by-elections to the Lok Sabha and the Tamil Nadu Assembly in Coimbatore excited unusual popular interest, as it was for the first time after the split in the Congress (1969) that the two Congress parties together tried to put up a determined fight, to show that their electoral understanding was in the larger interests of the people in the country. It was also a test for MGR's personal popularity after the landslide victory of the Anna DMK in its maiden appearance at the

Dindigul by-election of May 1972. In both these elections it was mainly a four-cornered contest, among the DMK and the Anna DMK-CPI combine; and the Congress (R)-Congress (O) front; a few Independents; whereas the CPI(M) alone decided to plough its own furrow.

In the Coimbatore (West) constituency, the vacancy was caused by the death of P. Gopal (DMK) on December 28, 1972. Under the poll understanding worked out between the Prime Minister and Kamaraj, the Congress (O) put up its candidate, C. Jagannathan, for the Assembly seat.

TABLE - 2

Coimbatore (West) Assembly By-election, 1974

Total Electorate	: 94,323
Total Votes Polled	: 70,189
Total Valid Votes Polled	: 67,834

S. No.	Name of the Party	Votes Polled	Percentage of Votes Polled
1	Anna DMK	25,404	37.45
2	Congress (O)	24,877	36.67
3	DMK	16,086	23.72
4	Independents (3)	1,467	2.16
TOTAL:		67,834	100.00

SOURCE: Compiled from the details given in The Hindu, February 28, 1974.

From the above table, it would be clear that the Anna DMK just nosed out the Congress (O) which had made a bold bid for rejuvenation in Tamil Nadu. The DMK has been relegated to the side-lines by the emergence of the Anna DMK, which seems to have captured the nose-base of the party.

(ii) Coimbatore Parliamentary By-election

In this constituency, a vacancy to hold the by-election was caused by the death of K. Baladhandayutham of the CPI in May 1973. Baladhandayutham who died in an air crash near Palan, had been actively associated with M.G. Ramachandran in formulating the major policies of the Anna DMK. In fact, the CPI leader was the chief architect of the Anna DMK-CPI alliance.

Mrs. Parvathi Krishnan, wife of N.K. Krishnan, a member of the CPI Central Secretariat, and sister of the late Mohan Kumaramangalam, was chosen by the CPI, and its poll partner, the Anna DMK, fully backed her. The DMK put up S. Chinnaswami, whereas K. Ramani was the CPI(M) nominee. The Congress (O) put up S.V. Lakshmanan as its candidate.

While analysing the relative strengths of candidates, the Madras correspondent of The Times of India gave top billing to the CPI nominee,⁷ who won the seat way back in 1957, defeating her nearest Congress rival by securing nearly 48 per cent of the total votes cast. But, in the

7. The Times of India (New Delhi), February 16, 1974.

1962 general elections, she lost the same constituency to a Congress candidate. Thereafter, she worked as a trade unionist till 1967. In the 1967 general elections, the CPI(M) candidate, Remani, supported by the DMK, was elected from this Parliamentary constituency. He polled 240,656 votes (i.e., 58 per cent of the ballots cast). But, when contesting for the 1971 general elections, he was trounced by the nominee of the DMK-led alliance, Baladhandayutham. Remani could obtain only 52,388 votes in that elections as against his impressive record in the 1967 poll. According to P. Ramamurthi, the Marxist leader, the aim of the CPI(M) was not so much to win as to "teach a lesson" to the Anna DMK for spurning the CPI(M) and embracing its political foe, the CPI. Thus, the CPI(M) was content only with the defeat of the CPI. The DMK candidate, Chinnaswami, reputed to be an industrial-magnate, joined the fray just before the nominations were filed and it was widely believed at that time that the DMK felt threatened. The party was reportedly not even keen on fighting the Parliamentary by-election but was eager to retain the Assembly seat.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances that led to her nomination in 1974, the CPI candidate, Mrs. Parvathi Krishnan, elicited the sympathy of the electorate. Her brother, Mohan Kumaramangalam, died in May 1972 in the same air crash near Palam, along with the CPI stalwart, K. Baladhandayutham. Subsequently, Marudachalam, who was originally chosen by the CPI to contest, died of a heart attack before he could file his nomination papers. Thus, Mrs. Krishnan entered the fray virtually in the last moment, but the Anna DMK enthusiastically

welcomed her candidature. Moreover, her work as a veteran trade-unionist in the industrial belt of Coimbatore placed her at a relative advantage. It was expected of her to capture the working-class vote in the Coimbatore Parliamentary constituency.

TABLE - 3

Coimbatore Parliamentary By-election, 1974

Total Electorate	:	653,428
Total Votes Polled	:	493,705
Total Valid Votes Polled	:	481,217

S.No.	Name of the Party	Votes Polled	Percentage of Votes Polled
1	CPI	172,435	35.84
2	Congress (O)	169,888	35.30
3	DMK	89,827	18.67
4	CPI(M)	35,779	7.44
5	Independents (2)	13,238	2.75
TOTAL:		481,217	100.00

SOURCE: Compiled from the details given in The Times of India (New Delhi), February 28, 1974.

The CPI nominee, Mrs. Parvathi Krishnan, won the by-election by a margin of only 2,591 votes over her nearest Congress (O) rival, S.V. Lakshmanan. In the 1971 election, the CPI-DMK alliance candidate, late Baladhandayuthan, had won the same seat by a margin of 77,053 votes over his nearest rival. The two Independents by their meagre support proved the incongruity of the role of the Independents in the contemporary politics of Tamil Nadu.

The Anna DMK won the two by-elections it had so far contested in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, its electoral partner, the CPI, also retained the prestigious Coimbatore Lok Sabha seat to the discomfiture of the ruling DMK, the CPI(M) and the Congress (O) parties.

From the above survey, it would be obvious that both the Congress (O) candidates lost the two Coimbatore by-elections very narrowly. The Congress (O) performance was indeed impressive and the support received from the Congress (R) might have been largely responsible for this showing. Perhaps, another reason for the partial rehabilitation of the Congress (O) — when it came within sniffing distance of victory — was the electoral compact agreed upon between the Prime Minister and the Congress (O) leader, Kamaraj. Accordingly, they plunged in a joint election campaign which brought them good dividends, though limited to the Coimbatore and Pondicherry elections. In this context, the special correspondent of The Statesman noted that "the Congressmen do not appear to be downcast. On the contrary, they seem to be satisfied that, fighting against heavy odds,

the party lost only by small margins".⁸ The Times of India, in a special article, wrote in almost similar tone and observed that "the Congress (O) performance in Coimbatore has helped Mr. Kamaraj to show that in Tamil Nadu at least, his party has inherited the mantle of the undivided Congress". It noted that Kamaraj "was able to demonstrate that the two Congress parties can join to pose a challenge to the ruling DMK as well as the Anna DMK in the 1976 elections".⁹ The ruling DMK in Coimbatore was relegated to the third position; for the Parliamentary seat it secured only 18.67 per cent of votes and for the Assembly seat it obtained 23.72 per cent of votes.

The Anna DMK leader, M.G. Ramachandran, admitted that his party's performance at Coimbatore was none too convincing compared to its performance in the Dindigul by-election of May 1973. But, MGR asserted that in actual fact the victory in Coimbatore should be considered more significant than the one at Dindigul in the previous year, because the odds in the former case were overwhelmingly against the Anna DMK-CPI alliance: firstly, the Congress (R) extended its support to the Congress (O) with funds and all the other resources at its command; secondly, the power and machinery of the ruling DMK provided stiff opposition; and, finally, even parties like Swatantra compromised with the Congress (O) to thwart the progress of Anna DMK.¹⁰

8. Manian, V.S., "Congress Not Downcast By Reverses in South", The Statesman (New Delhi), March 18, 1974.

9. Prasad Rao, V.C., "Anna DMK Now A Major Force: Election Successes", The Times of India (New Delhi), March 8, 1974.

10. Author's interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

The supporters of Anna DMK-CPI alliance attributed the following reasons for their low scoring victories:

- (i) In Dindigul, the only issue at stake was whether the DMK or the Anna DMK was the 'real Kozhagam', whereas in Coimbatore (and Pondicherry) there were a 'welter of political issues';
- (ii) In Dindigul, the Congress (O) and the ruling DMK were over-confident, whereas in Coimbatore they were less complacent;
- (iii) Industrial Coimbatore has always been pro-Congress;
- (iv) At the last minute, the ruling DMK diverted its votes to the Congress; and
- (v) The capitalists and landlords of Coimbatore backed the Congress.¹¹

But, according to the official daily of the Anna DMK, Thamizh, the achievement of the Anna DMK-CPI front, despite heavy odds, was the victory "not of personal glamour but of the glamour of ideology".

However, it was observed that in spite of MGR's charisma and the committed vote of the CPI, the fact that the Anna DMK-CPI front barely was able to scrape through, is a welcome sign for the Congress.¹²

Whatever might be the inference, the Anna DMK won the two by-elections it contested (Dindigul Lok Sabha seat and the Coimbatore (West) Assembly seat) and also helped its alliance partner, the CPI, to defend the

11. The Statesman (New Delhi), March 18, 1974.

12. Ibid.

Coimbatore Lok Sabha seat, in the by-elections held from Tamil Nadu. Hence, the break-away party made serious dent into the mass-base of the ruling DMK party, once considered invincible. Moreover, people are more prone to judge a party in office rather by its performance than by its lofty promises made during the election campaign. That there was a growing disenchantment with the DMK was clear from the victories of the Anna DMK in the Dindigul Lok Sabha by-election in May 1973. This trend was further confirmed when the DMK lost both in the Coimbatore Lok Sabha by-election and a by-election to the Tamil Nadu State Assembly in the same district in February 1974.

(C) Third General Elections in Pondicherry

The Union Territory of Pondicherry claimed the focus of attention during the year 1974; first, because of the unusual interest it generated as a result of the Legislative Assembly elections; secondly, the formation of Anna DMK government and its fall within three weeks, the uproar it caused as a sequel to the Presidential order on Pondicherry funds and finally, due to the Pondicherry Licence Scandal, which rocked the entire Winter Session of Parliament, 1974. Of course, we are concerned here with the very first aspect, namely, the Third General Elections to the 30-member Legislative Assembly.

A little over a quarter million voters in the Union Territory of Pondicherry went to the polls on February 24, 1974, to elect 30 members to the Legislative Assembly and a representative to the Lok Sabha.

This was the third time that the general elections were held in Pondicherry after it became a Union Territory in 1963, nearly 10 years after the French relinquished their control over the 480 square kilo-metre territory.¹³ When France gave up its possessions in our country, the Government of India agreed to preserve the identity of the far-flung pockets as an island of French culture. Later, the Government of India accorded to Pondicherry the status of Union Territory. Of the thirty (30) seats to the Legislative Assembly, 21 belong to Pondicherry proper while six seats belong to Karaikal and two to Mahe and one to Yanam.

Notably, the constituencies in Pondicherry are smaller than even the municipal wards in Tamil Nadu. The biggest constituency, namely, Muthialpet, has 12,269 voters, the smallest being Yanam with less than 5,000 voters. The average number of voters, which ranges from 7,500 to 8,000, makes it ideal for door-to-door canvassing, providing relatively greater scope for the play of money.

Early Congress Monopoly

The Congress Party in Pondicherry has had a chequered career during the period between 1955 to 67. It won an absolute majority in the elections held in July 1955, soon after the informal transfer

13. The Union Territory of Pondicherry consists of: (a) Pondicherry on the Eastern coast, where it is an enclave in the district of South Arcot in Tamil Nadu; (b) Karaikal, South of Pondicherry, is an enclave in the Tanjore district in Tamil Nadu; (c) Yanam, situated in the Godavari delta of Andhra Pradesh; and (d) Mahe, on the left bank of River Maha, is an enclave in the Cannanore district in Kerala state.

of four French possessions, viz., Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam, to India in 1954. When in 1964, the first general elections were held in Pondicherry, after it became a Union Territory, the Congress retained its hold over the area. Again, in 1967 elections, it won convincingly. But surprisingly the party had failed on all occasions to stay on in power for a full term. The Congress governments were not stable due to factionalism within the party ranks, which led to frequent floor-crossings by the legislators. In fact, the DMK government headed by Farook Haricar (who had earlier defected from the Congress), had the distinction of being in office for the longest period in Pondicherry. But, it too fell a victim to defections just two months before completing a full quinquennium in office. But, it did not in any way affect the election schedule, as these elections were due to be held in February 1974, the time originally set for the polls.

At the time of the elections in Pondicherry, i.e., in February 1974, the Union Territory was placed under President's rule. The exit of the DMK government was accelerated following the defections from DMK to the Anna DMK. The DMK, enjoying a slender majority in the 30-member Assembly, was reduced to a minority with the defection of two ministers and a legislator to the Anna DMK. The DMK ministry, in fact, had a precarious existence soon after the withdrawal of the CPI support in April 1973 from the coalition, thus, it could not survive this altogether new crisis. As it was, the sudden blow came from within, which paralyzed the government and was much more serious. Moreover, it badly shattered the party's strength and revealed the

growing dissatisfaction within its ranks.¹⁴ Also, the DMK had lost the advantage of being in office during the crucial period preceding the elections. On the contrary, the Congress front — consisting of Congress (O) and Congress (R) — viewed the President's rule as a boon to its prospects in the ensuing elections. The feeling during those days was that "Pondicherry might release new political forces and foreshadow a new political set-up for the country".¹⁵

Another notable feature of the emergence of Anna DMK in Tamil Nadu politics has been the considerable erosion of the DMK mass-base. The Anna DMK party was facing the first large-scale election in its short but impressive career. Along with the CPI and more than the DMK, it projected the image of "being anti-establishment both at the regional level and the Centre"¹⁶ and this could be to its advantage. It was, however, widely held that the real battle was strictly between the Anna DMK and the combined Congress, with the former having an edge over the latter. In case the Anna DMK did no more than split the DMK vote, the Congress stood a fair chance of emerging as the largest single group.

The elections to Pondicherry gained considerable significance because it was expected to prove the validity of the new experiment of the two Congress parties, jointly facing the electorate for the

14. "DMK at Bay", The Indian Express (New Delhi), January 1, 1974.

15. Aarita Bazar Patrika, January 1, 1974.

16. The Free Press Journal (Bombay), January 26, 1974.

first time after the Congress party had split. Kamaraj and Mrs. Gandhi addressed election meetings together and stressed the need for strengthening the nationalist forces. Neither of them mentioned 'old Congress' or 'new Congress', but by implication suggested that the Congress label applies to both the parties jointly contesting the elections. Kamaraj called on the people to co-operate with Mrs. Gandhi in her "great task of bringing about a big change in our society".¹⁷ The Prime Minister, in her speeches, had referred to and welcomed the co-operation extended by the Congress (O) leader, Kamaraj, and stressed that the co-operation sought was not for any temporary gains and might well extend for future too. "Kamaraj and I are united in solving this country's problems",¹⁸ she claimed. It was also said that C. Subramanian, in one of his election speeches, made a cryptic remark that there was no more any "old" or "new" Congress in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, but only one "common Congress".¹⁹ All the other contestants looked upon the elections in Pondicherry as a straw in the wind for the general elections in Tamil Nadu due in 1976. The big turnout at the meetings jointly addressed by the Prime Minister and Kamaraj was interpreted by Congressmen as a swing of voters in their favour. The big crowds comprised a sizable number of Congressmen and members of the Sivaji Ganesan Fans' Association from many parts of Tamil Nadu contributed to the personal popularity of both Mrs. Gandhi and Kamaraj.

17. The Times of India (New Delhi), February 19, 1974.

18. Ibid.

19. The Statesman (New Delhi), February 18, 1974.

The DMK was in a dilemma about what to do in the changing circumstances. The DMK boss, Karunanidhi, had announced a 9-party alliance for fighting the Pondicherry Assembly elections and the Coimbatore by-elections. Indeed, it was a strange alliance, for except the DMK, none of its alliance partners — the Socialist Party, The Forward Bloc, the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam, the Dravida Kazhagam and the Tamil Nadu Communist Party, the Muslim League and the Toilers' Party — were of any significance either in Tamil Nadu or in Pondicherry.

The dramatic personae of the Pondicherry elections were fascinatingly identifiable by their names, affiliations and promises. For the Congress front, the chief poll campaigners were Mrs. Gandhi, Kamaraj and Tamil film-star Sivaji Ganesan; for the DMK the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi, was the main vote-catcher; and for the Anna DMK-CPI combination M.C. Ramachandran and Bhupesh Gupta took charge of the situation. They conducted extensive tours of the Union Territory to convince the masses about their lofty programmes.

However, the spotlight was more on the two famous cine-artists — M.C. Ramachandran and Sivaji Ganesan — campaigning on behalf of their respective alignments, namely, the Anna DMK-CPI progressive group and the Congress (R)-Congress (O) front. According to a current joke, which to some extent summarized the mood of the electorate, "there are only two parties in Tamil Nadu and they are led by rival film-stars. MGR leads one and Sivaji the other".²⁰ The DMK, which

20. Radhakrishnan, R.N., "Where Matinee Idols are not Idle", The Hindustan Times, February 21, 1974.

was once the only beneficiary of "star involvement" for propaganda and mobilization, had been bereft of it ever since MGR's expulsion. The party can only parade a few former stars and junior artists like Muthu (Karunanidhi's son), who do not glitter half as bright as the stalwarts in the two opposing camps, viz., the Anna DMK and the Congress (O). But, the DMK hoped that "the two giants would neutralise and the resultant advantage would be in its ken".²¹

The Anna DMK leader, MGR, was the darling of the crowds, when the "star" campaigner launched a whirlwind election tour in Pondicherry. Indeed, "MGR wave" was sweeping through the Union Territory in the pre-poll days. The Anna DMK High Command was very optimistic when it claimed that: "if money can't buy votes, then Pondicherry is ours".²² But, the Congress front on the other hand felt that much of the frenzy witnessed at the meetings addressed by MGR, as being a passing attraction of the people for a movie-star. Further, according to the Congress front, political discretion rather than the excitement for film-star would assert on the polling day. But, it had also pressed into service another noted film-star, Sivaji Ganesan, to campaign for the Congress front. If the Congress experiences in the 1967 and 1971 general elections are any indication, "Sivaji Ganesan's past campaigns for the Congress (O) had proved not only ineffective but actually counter-productive".²³ For, Sivaji Ganesan after initially actively

21. Ibid.

22. Radhakrishnan, R.N., "Pondy Under MGR Spell", The Hindustan Times, February 12, 1974.

23. Radhakrishnan, R.N., "Money Vs. Star Power", The Hindustan Times, February 13, 1974.

associating himself with both Dravida Kazhagam and the DMK, later on switched over to the Congress and ever since his appeal to the film-loving masses has considerably weakened. But, MGR's association with the DMK had been a sort of a "mutual reinforcement", as the party made use of him for propoganda purposes and the film-star in his turn built up his illustrious career with unqualified support from the party cadres. When he founded the Anna DMK, his "star appeal" had naturally been a major support-base for the new party.

The 1974 Poll Arena in Pondicherry

A record number of 216 nominations were filed by various contestants, and only two were rejected. After withdrawale on January 31, 1974, 108 candidates were left in the field. The party-wise break-up of the contesting candidates was: DMK 26; Congress (R) 14; Congress (O) 16; Anna DMK 21; CPI 7; CPI(M) 5 and Independents 19. This compared with the following break-up in the 1969 Pondicherry general elections: DMK 19; CPI 7; undivided Congress 30; and Independents 20. For the 1974 elections, the erstwhile ruling party, the DMK, put up the largest number of candidates, i.e., 26, and the CPI(M) the lowest number, i.e., only 5.²⁴

With three viable fronts in the running, namely, the DMK front, the Anna DMK-CPI alliance, and the Congress (R)-Congress (O) combination, significantly there was no straight contest in any

24. Svarajya, February 16, 1974.

constituency. There were sixteen triangular contests, nine four-cornered and five multi-cornered contests. As many as 25 members of the dissolved Assembly —including 11 ministers —were in the field, nominated by all the competing fronts. According to a political commentator, "this should reveal the continuing hold of local strongmen over the political trends".²⁵ In the 1969 elections, the pattern of contests was: seventeen straight, ten triangular and three four-cornered contests.

There were only two women candidates —Mrs. Saraswathi Subbalah, wife of the CPI stalwart, who contested from the Ariyankuppam constituency on the CPI ticket, and Mrs. C.S. Jayalakshmi, the Anna DMK candidate who contested from Yanam. But, both of them ultimately lost, the former to P.C. Purushothan Reddiar of the Congress and the latter to Kanichetty S. Varaprasadarao, an Independent candidate supported by the DMK.

The former Chief Minister, Parook Maricar, was opposed by two student leaders in the Laupet constituency —Varadhan (Anna DMK) and D. Annamalai (Congress-O). Another former Chief Minister, V. Venkatasubba Reddiar, was facing S. Venkatachalapathy (Anna DMK) and S. Ramamurthi (DMK) in the Nettepakkan constituency, which was represented by the former minister, D. Ramachandran, who shifted to Mannadipath for the 1974 poll. Also, S. Ramaswamy, former Home Minister, contested on the Anna DMK ticket from the Karaikal South constituency,

25. The Hindustan Times, February 13, 1974.

while in 1969 he was returned from Neravi constituency on the DMK ticket. The Speaker of the dissolved Assembly, H. S. Selvaraj (DMK), contested from the Raj Niwas constituency in Pondicherry, which was held by the Congress. He was opposed by Dhana Kantharaj of the Congress (R) and K. Jothi (Anna DMK). Selvaraj had represented the Karaikal South in the dissolved Assembly. The CPI leader, V. Subbalaah, was opposed by the Congress (O) and DMK rivals in the Reddiarpalayam constituency. The CPI(M), in a gesture of personal goodwill to the only CPI leader acceptable to it, did not field a candidate against Subbalaah. It even promised full support to him.²⁶

Making its electoral debut in the Union Territory and virtually going it alone, the CPI(M) fielded 5 candidates.²⁷ This was after its negotiations with the Anna DMK and CPI broke down over the Coimbatore Parliamentary seat.

For the Pondicherry Lok Sabha by-election,²⁸ there were seven candidates in the field: S. Siva Pragas Reddiar (Congress), Aravinda Dala Pajenor (Anna DMK), N. Rajaram (DMK), Illango (Independent), Dadaia Ramanayya (Independent), G. Rangaswamy (Independent), and S. Somasundaram (Independent).

26. The Hindustan Times, February 13, 1974.

27. And it won a surprising victory, when the CPI(M) candidate won from Mahe.

28. The by-election was caused by the death of S. Mohan Kumaramangalam (Congress), the Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industry, who died in an air crash near Palam air port, New Delhi, on May 31, 1973.

Party Manifestoes

The Congress front had not put out any election manifesto. Kamaraj, the Congress (O) leader, thought that it was redundant to issue anything like that, for it would be nothing more than a conventional pleasantry. He addressed over 100 election meetings and gave the impression that whatever he said might pass for the Congress front's poll pledges to the people. The party promised an efficient and honest administration with a "nationalist out-look". Also, it promised to fight for fuller statehood for Pondicherry and better economic development and "all the rest of good and great things".²⁹

The Anna DMK and its poll partner, the CPI, issued separate manifestoes. These two manifestoes sounded as if they were complementary to each other. The Anna DMK's programme was essentially leftist in content and was obviously in consonance with the CPI line. The Anna DMK has also promised to strive for securing full statehood for Pondicherry. The other important promises made in its 26-point manifesto include: setting up of consultative committee for the redressal of grievances of government employees; removal of glaring anomalies in pension and dearness allowance rules of former French government employees; introduction of radical land reforms; supply of fertilisers and other essential articles to farmers at fair prices; control over food prices; efforts to set up a major industry in the Union Territory; encouragement to small-scale industries; promotion

29. The Hindustan Times, February 12, 1974.

of the Tamil language; fight against imposition of Hindi; establishment of a separate High Court; special assistance to the Scheduled Caste people and the down-trodden. Further, it promised generous aid to the fisherman community, which is the majority community in the Union Territory. Also, the party, if voted to power, promised to choose its members after consultation with the voters. The manifesto enjoined on its representatives who are elected to seek the electorate's confidence once in every two years. It claimed that the principle of the electorate's right to 'recall' the erring representatives is implicit in this guarantee.³⁰

The DMK's election manifesto was a reiteration of its oft-repeated slogans: "Composite government at the Centre and self-rule in the states". Moreover, it pledged to fight for state autonomy. It also promised stability and plenty, if returned to power. The DMK chief, Karunanidhi, in his election speeches, alluded to his government's record in Pondicherry in successfully bringing about the green revolution and achieving surplus food production. The DMK also promised to work for securing statehood to the Union Territory, and to urge the Central government to sanction a free port, an air port, new railway lines between Pondicherry and Tindivanam and from Pondicherry to Karaikal, to follow up government efforts for setting up an atomic power plant and a television station. It promised to take steps to prevent the imposition of Hindi as the medium of instruction in the proposed Central University and to give a special status to Tamil language.

30. Ibid.

Described as an appendage to the Anna DMK document, the CPI manifesto promised full employment to all the educated unemployed, advocated for the take-over of the only textile mill in the Union Territory. The party also promised to join the battle against corruption in public life.

The CPI(M) did not issue a poll manifesto. But it castigated the "opportunist" CPI for supporting the Congress elsewhere and opposing the same party in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. The Marxist leader, P. Ramamurthi, said that the party joined the fray only to "educate the electorate" on the "futility of voting for the "Syndicate, Indicate or the CPI".

TABLE - 4

The Distribution of Candidates, Seats
and Votes in the Pondicherry Assembly Elections, 1974

S.No.	Parties	Number of candidates	No. of seats won	Percentage of seats	Valid Votes Polled	Percentage of Votes
1	Anna DMK	21	12	40.00	60,862	27.85
2	DMK	26	2	6.67	47,813	21.87
3	Congress (O)	16	5	16.67	41,408	18.94
4	Congress	14	7	23.33	34,604	15.83
5	CPI	7	2	6.67	18,468	8.43
6	CPI(M)	5	1	3.33	2,737	1.25
7	Independents	19	1	3.33	12,706	5.81
TOTAL:		108	30	100.00	218,578	100.00

SOURCE: Report on the General Elections to the Legislative
Assemblies of Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, U.P. and Pondicherry,
1974, New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1974,
pp. 246-48.

The Anna DMK emerged as the largest single party in the third general elections held in Pondicherry in February 1974. The party won as many as 12 out of 30 seats to the Assembly but narrowly missed the distinction of securing an absolute majority in the House.

For the DMK and its regional satellites (allies), it was an electoral disaster. The DMK, the majority party of 1969, could secure only two seats out of twenty-six seats (the maximum by any single party in Pondicherry), it contested. "For the DMK", the Link magazine too asserted, "which ruled the State from 1969 ... it was a humiliating defeat".³¹ However, in terms of popular votes, it was still the second best political party. Though it won only two seats, it won as many as 47,813 votes, i.e., nearly 22 per cent of the total valid votes cast, indicating that its popular base was still more or less sound. In the 1969 elections, when the DMK won 15 out of the total seats, it had polled 33.7 per cent of the valid votes.³²

The two Congress parties — the Congress (O) and the Congress (R) — could muster nearly 35 per cent of the popular votes only. The Congress (O) accounted for 19 per cent of the popular votes and the Congress (R) 16 per cent. However, the total vote of the Congress shows the continuation of a steady declining trend in its popularity since 1964. Together, these two parties won 12 seats in 1974 — Congress (O) 5; and Congress (R) 7, and they contested all the seats in between —

31. Link, March 3, 1974, p. 11.

32. The Times of India (New Delhi), February 28, 1974.

two more than in the dissolved House when the undivided Congress had a poll percentage of 44.2 in winning 10 seats in the elections held in 1969.³³ It won 21 seats and polled 54 per cent of the popular vote in the first general elections of Pondicherry, held in 1964.³⁴

For the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Anna DMK's alliance partner, it was rather a disappointing performance. The party lost in terms of both seats won and the votes polled. It won only 2 seats (out of 7 contested) and about 8.5 per cent of popular votes. As against this, the party won 3 seats and 12.69 per cent of popular votes in the 1969 elections.³⁵

The Marxist Communist Party (CPI-M), which won a surprise victory when it bagged the Mahe (on the Kerala coast) seat, while making its debut in the Union Territory. It could only obtain 1.3 per cent of the popular vote. Of the five candidates it fielded, four lost their deposits. But, the CPI(M)'s victory was significant in the sense that it entered the fray only to 'teach a lesson' to its former Dindigul poll partners (the Anna DMK and the CPI), "had the last laugh".³⁶

The 19 Independents, together, polled about 5.8 per cent of the valid votes, won only one seat, when an independent candidate triumphed from the Yanam constituency on the Andhra coast. They polled slightly more than half the percentage (11.06) registered by the twenty Independents contested in the 1969 poll.

Other significant findings are: the honour of obtaining the highest number of votes, by any candidate, in the Pondicherry elections went to the Anna DMK. Its candidate, V.M.C. Varada Pillai, who won from Neravy Grand

33. The Hindustan Times, February 28, 1974.

34. Economic and Political Weekly, IX:11, March 16, 1974, p. 429.

35. The Hindustan Times, February 28, 1974.

36. Prasad Rao, V.G., "Anna DMK Now A Major Force: Election Successes", The Times of India (New Delhi), March 8, 1974.

Aldea constituency, secured 5,313 votes out of 8,871 valid votes polled (about 60 per cent); the two woman candidates — Mrs. Saraswathi Subbaiah and Mrs. C.S. Jayalakshmi — lost to their redoubtable opponents.

About 82.77 per cent of the voters exercised their franchise in the 1974 elections. At some places, the turn-out of voters at the polling booths was above 90 per cent. The party positions in 1974 are given in Table - 5 together with those of 1964 and 1969. Also, the graphical representation on page 97-A would give party-wise representation in the 1964, 1969 and 1974 Pondicherry general elections.

TABLE - 5

Pondicherry: Respective Party Positions
in Three General Elections: 1964, 1969 and 1974

S.No.	Name of the Political Party	1964	1969	1974
1	Congress	21	10	12*
2	IMK	--	15	2
3	Anna IMK	--	--	12
4	CPI	--	3	2
5	CPI(M)	--	--	1
6	Peoples' Front	4	--	--
7	Independents	5	2	1
TOTAL:		30	30	30

* Congress (R)-Congress (O) combine.

SOURCE: Asian Recorder, April 9-15, 1974, p.11941.

PONDICHERRY : Respective Party Positions in Three
General Elections 1964, 1969, 1974.

1 - 1964
2 - 1969
3 - 1974

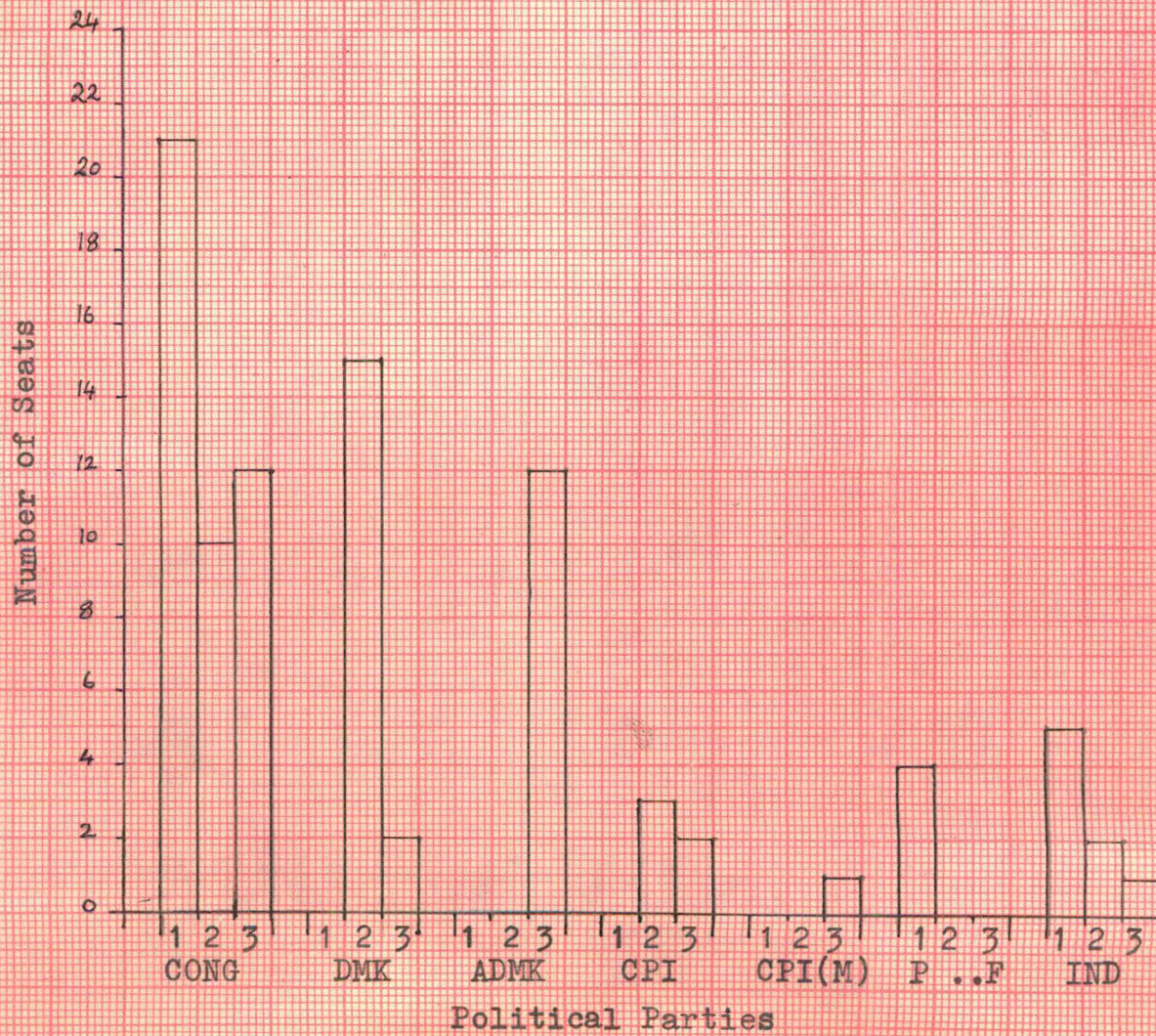


TABLE - 6

Pondicherry Lok Sabha By-Election, 1974

Total Electorate	:	264,103
Total Votes Polled	:	225,335
Total Valid Votes Polled	:	217,905

S.No.	Name of the Party	Votes Polled	Percentage of Votes Polled
1	Anna DMK	86,362	39.63
2	Congress	74,244	34.08
3	DMK	47,250	21.68
4	Independents (4)	10,049	4.61
TOTAL:		217,905	100.00

SOURCE: Compiled from the details given in The Times of India, (New Delhi), March 1, 1974.

The Anna DMK candidate, Arvinda Bala Pajoor, annexed the Pondicherry Lok Sabha seat, defeating his nearest Congress rival, S. Siva Pragas Raddiar, by a convincing margin of 12,118 votes in a seven-cornered contest. As the figures in the table speak, the Anna DMK obtained 39.63 per cent of the total votes polled, whereas the Congress secured 34 per cent. The DMK secured only 21 per cent and the four Independents, together, obtained a paltry 4.6 per cent of the popular vote.

The irrelevance of the two Communist parties and of those without any political affiliations (Independents), in Tamil Nadu politics has once again become manifestly clear. The Communist movement which was strong in the composite Madras State, had become very insignificant after the formation of linguistic states. Moreover, the party's leftist thunder was stolen by the DMK, which was making a determined bid to oust the well-entrenched Congress from power. The Communist Party's wreck was complete with the party split in 1964. From then on, neither of the parties — the CPI or the CPI(M) — "has won a single Legislature seat in Tamil Nadu on its own".³⁷ The feature of the 1974 Pondicherry poll was the decline of the CPI in the Union Territory where it is supposed to be strong on account of its role in the Pondicherry freedom struggle. It won only two seats. Another notable feature of the 1974 elections, was the eclipse of national parties like the Socialist Party, the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party. Also, parties like the Forward Bloc, the Muslim League, have become so insignificant in the Tamil Nadu political scene that it is doubtful whether they can win any election on their own strength.

Further, the voting pattern in both Pondicherry and Coimbatore shows that in spite of its being routed at the elections the DMK had polled a substantial percentage of popular vote. The DMK and the Anna DMK together polled 49.72 per cent valid votes, constituting roughly half the total ballots cast, indeed an improvement in its performance

37. The Times of India (New Delhi), March 8, 1974.

as compared to the 1969 poll. On the other hand, the two Congress parties accounted for slightly more than a third, i.e., 34.77 per cent of the popular vote, which was also an impressive achievement. Viewed from this angle, the main contenders, the Anna DMK, the Congress front and the DMK have achieved some polarization of political forces, but this has further complicated the political situation in Tamil Nadu as far as prediction about the future alignments for the 1976 general elections.

It would be easily discerned that the personal popularity enjoyed by M.G. Ramachandran has been the chief contributing factor for the successes of the Anna DMK party. Even Karunanidhi's biographer has conceded the fact that "the Anna DMK had quite a few successes in recent elections".³⁸ However, the future success of the party will also depend on the survival of the 'MGR phenomenon', for the Tamil film hero is the hero of Tamil politics as well.

38. Swaminathan, S., Karunanidhi: Man of Destiny, New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1974, p. 64.

Chapter Five

PROSPECTS

Much water has passed down the Cooum between MGR's suspension from the DMK in October 1972 and now. The Anna DMK has grown into a full-fledged regional opposition party, somewhat on similar lines as the DMK. Ever since its formation, it has affected not only the fortunes of the ruling DMK but also of the Congress (O). The emergence of Anna DMK, also, stirred a mild polarization in Tamil Nadu politics as well.

For quite some time now, Tamil Nadu has been in the grip of an unprecedented drought, the worst in a century. Twelve out of fourteen districts are plagued by drought affecting nearly 15 million people. Long accustomed to a marginal surplus in paddy production in the state, both the masses and the farmer-producers have become frustrated. For the past several months, many parts of the state, including the capital city, Madras, have been facing acute scarcity of drinking water. Shortage in food-grains and other essential commodities has also resulted in soaring prices.

Chief Minister Karunanidhi denigrated NCR's efforts to overthrow his government at this critical juncture. "Politics may be the great priority of others in this State", he cryptically remarked. "But", he chimed in, "food is our main concern".¹

The main political parties in the state, who come to the limelight usually at the time of elections, are unmoved by the pressing needs of the hapless masses. All the major parties have already cast their eyes on the 1976 general elections. Each one is striving hard to outsmart the other in gerrymandering. It is relevant to point out here what Professor Balasundaram feels about the degeneration of party politics in the state: "Whereas the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is using the drought as a weapon in its politics of confrontation with the Centre, the Opposition biases the DMK for its inept handling of the crisis".²

There has been a dramatic change in the Tamil Nadu political landscape since the Fifth General Elections. The split in the Indian National Congress conditioned these elections which were held way back in 1971. The ruling Congress, under Mrs. Gandhi, wanted only ten Parliamentary seats and in the bargain left the field uncontested for the DMK. Thus, the Congress surrendered its right to play an active role in politics of Tamil Nadu. It would be appropriate to

1. Simons, Lewis M., "The Actor's Role in Politics in India", The Washington Post, March 9, 1975.

2. Balasundaram, S.N., "Tamil Nadu Politics and the 1976 Election", The Century, June 1-15, 1975, pp. 10-11.

quote Professor Balasundaram in this context: "The strategy of the Congress (R) then was to capture power at the Centre and to realise this objective it effaced itself temporarily from the politics of Tamil Nadu".³

Apart from the Congress, which forged an electoral alliance with the DMK during the 1971 poll, the Communist Party of India also joined hands with the DMK. For the CPI regarded the DMK as a "progressive party" in its quest for strengthening the "democratic left forces" in the country. The party which opposed the DMK-Congress-CPI combine was none other than the Congress (O), led by Kamaraj Nadar, once a king-maker in his own right but now a sadly neglected national figure.

Whereas the DMK-led "progressive" alliance achieved great electoral successes in Tamil Nadu in the 1971 elections, the Congress (R) under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership, won an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. From then on, the Congress (R) needed hardly the support of any extra-party group as was the case earlier. Moreover, the Congress felt the electoral understanding it had arrived at with the DMK in Tamil Nadu was a major miscalculation on its part as the famous Garibi Hatao slogan swept the polls in its favour. The honey-moon of the DMK, CPI and Congress alliance was short-lived. Soon afterwards, the euphoria generated in its wake was also shattered and there appeared radical changes in the political conditions in Tamil Nadu.

3. *Ibid.*

On top of these came the vertical split in the DMK's ranks in 1972. The ruling DMK, once considered impregnable, simply could not recover from this jolt. Further, the split produced a rival -- the Anna DMK -- led by N.G. Rameshchandra claiming allegiance to the ideals of late C.N. Annadurai, the founder-leader of the DMK. Many people consider the Anna DMK as the legitimate inheritor of the legacy left behind by Anna for posterity. "The successes of the Anna DMK in Parliamentary and Assembly by-elections held in Dindigul and Coimbatore respectively appear to have validated this contention".⁴

Another development in Tamil Nadu politics which merits mention has been the formation of the Tamil Nadu Communist Party; a sequel to a minor split in the CPI cadres in the state. The splinter party both sits and functions as an independent party in the Legislature. The CPI has been the Anna DMK ally as the former consider the latter "progressive" in its outlook. However, there still remain some basic ideological differences between these parties. The CPI strategy seems to be influenced by the popularity enjoyed by the Anna DMK party. The CPI appears to be using the Anna DMK "as a lever to pull down the DMK ministry".⁵

The Congress (R) wants now to play a more active role in Tamil Nadu. The Congress has lately set its house in order. For the Congress has not only been weak organizationally but is otherwise afflicted by

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

rampant factionalism in the state. But, the President of the Indian National Congress, D.K. Borooah, reconstituted the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) with a view to launching the election campaign more effectively. In fact, since the reorganisation of the Congress Executive, the relations between the two Congress parties in the state have been a subject of speculation. As the reconstituted TNCC executive accommodates a good number of dissident leaders, it appears that it might make a break with the past by getting rid of the Kamaraj crutch.⁶

However, if past experience is any indication, the Congress (R) in Tamil Nadu is reluctant to fight the elections on its own. It is afraid of going it alone; in 1971 it took DMK as its ally to demolish the Congress (O), but in 1974 it entered into an alliance with the Congress (O) in Tamil Nadu to cut the DMK to size. Those who were speculating over the probability of another change of ally by the Congress (R) had the Anna DMK in mind; as MGR has been very enthusiastic for such an eventuality. But for the stubborn resistance of Kamaraj, MGR might have been successful in bringing about a triangular alliance against the ruling DMK, his former party. For Kamaraj constantly maintains that there is no difference between the DMK and the wonder child it produced, i.e., the Anna DMK.

6. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), December 10, 1974.

Impact of "JP Movement"

The support extended by the Congress (O) to the movement led by the Sarvodaya leader, Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), has been an important factor in the nation's politics. In Tamil Nadu, of course, it encouraged speculation about an imminent breach between the Congress (R) and Congress (O). But, Kamaraj's loyalty to the Congress (O) politics has been selective and had some bearing on the political scene in the state. Nevertheless, the Congress (O) leader also brought the JP Movement to Tamil Nadu through his efforts first to assume the role of a mediator between JP and Mrs. Gandhi and then his offer of limited support to the Bihar movement.⁷

Corruption in Tamil Nadu is as rampant as it has been elsewhere in the country. At best, it differs only in degree.⁸ The Santanam Committee defined it as: "In its widest connotation, corruption includes improper or selfish exercises of power or influence attached to the public or to such position one occupies in public life While it is true that the securing of some kinds of pecuniary or other material advantage directly or indirectly for oneself or family, relatives or friends constitutes the most common form of corruption, other forms of evil are coming into existence in the ever increasing complexities of modern societies".⁹ Thus,

7. Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 10, 1974.

8. Ibid.

9. Cited in Moorani, A.C., Minister's Misconduct, New Delhi: Vikas, pp. 293-94.

broadly speaking, political corruption is the misuse of political power for private gain. In India, according to J.B. Monterio, rampant corruption in all walks of public life "has been adequately proved by various commissions of inquiry set up from time to time".¹⁰ It threatens to be a permanent feature of Indian public life.

The Time news magazine¹¹ also says that in India, government officials from top to bottom have become unashamedly corrupt. A cryptic comment from a New Delhi resident summarises the whole mood of the nation on this evil. "It used to be that you paid an official to do something that he was not supposed to do. Now you pay him just to do the job he is supposed to do."¹² The trouble was with the monolithic Congress government itself, which had not sincerely carried out its economic and social reforms enunciated in its Election Manifesto of 1971.

Rampant corruption continues to remain the principal political issue in Tamil Nadu. Also, according to MGR, "corruption is the dominating issue". He further elucidated it by saying, "what they (DMK leaders and followers) do is lie, give false accounts, take money. They have corrupted a party that was once incorruptible".¹³ As to

10. Monterio, J.B., Corruption, Bombay: Manaktaloo, 1966, pp.52-53

11. "India: After the Euphoria", Time, August 27, 1973, p. 12.

12. Ibid.

13. Weinraub, Bernard: "Movie-Makers' Feud Dominates Politics in South India", The New York Times, September 28, 1974. Insertion in brackets is mine.

the corruption charges, the prevailing feeling is that the Chief Minister made amends and cleaned up his administration. "But, he still suffers from the early — and then accurate — charges of corrupt practices."¹⁴

Karunanidhi appointed a one-man commission headed by a Madras High Court Judge, to inquire into the alleged involvement of his cabinet colleague, P.U. Shanmughan, in the rice export scandal of 1971. Apart from the Anna DMK and CPI allegations on this issue, the Estimates Committee of the State Assembly also confirmed that there had been a scandal in the export of rice from the state through bogus and false permits obtained by certain influential businessmen.¹⁵ Therefore, one of the corruption charges against the DMK ministry had at last been found fit for a judicial inquiry.¹⁶

As regards the anti-JP posture of the Congress (R), MGR assured his whole-hearted co-operation to the ruling party at the Centre. In fact, the Anna DMK launched a "Save Democracy" front against the JP Movement. But, its move was viewed primarily as a bait to the Congress (R). Initially, the latter was not very enthusiastic about it. The Congress (R) approach has been cautious

14. Simons, L.M., "The Actor's Role in Politics in India", The Washington Post, March 9, 1975.

15. The Times of India (New Delhi), May 27, 1975.

16. However, the one-man commission which inquired into the alleged misuse of office by Shanmughan, Tamil Nadu Public Works Minister, in the Thanjavur rice deal case, while he was in-charge of the Food portfolio, has exonerated him of the charge.

("Tamil Nadu Minister Not Guilty of Misusing Powers", The Statesman (New Delhi), August 30, 1975.)

vis-a-vis the Anna DDK. Possibly, the Congress might have been influenced by the fact that if JP succeeded in spreading his movement down South, political cadres, rather than fans of a film-star would be of greater help to it for fighting the JP Movement.¹⁷

The CFI, which has the dubious distinction of being an important ally of the Anna DDK in Tamil Nadu and the Congress (R) at the Centre, took steps to push the Anna DDK in the background with its own campaign against the JP Movement. But, its efforts to push through the "anti-JP Movement", when MGR was away abroad¹⁸ was not taken kindly by the Anna DDK; there generated considerable misunderstanding between the two parties.

Indeed, if the JP movement in Bihar has some significance in Tamil Nadu, it is because of its political implications. All the political parties in the state are making use of the covenant with a view to capturing power in 1976.

For instance, the Anna DDK had accused the Congress (R) in no uncertain terms; it charged the Congress (R) as being a corrupt party and Mrs. Gandhi of misusing her position to woo voters at the time of Pondicherry poll and by-elections in Tamil Nadu, held in February 1974. It then appears that it suddenly realized that

17. Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), December 10, 1974.

18. M.C. Rameshchandra visited the United States on a lecture tour for three weeks in October-November 1974, at the invitation of the Asian Studies Project of the University of Wisconsin.

there is no other alternative to Mrs. Gandhi's leadership.¹⁹ For quite some time, MGR has been trying hard to forge an electoral understanding between the Congress (R) and his party.

Perhaps, not to be left behind in the race, or fearing invasion of the JP Movement into Tamil Nadu, the DMK responded to the call given by JP and accorded him a honorable reception when he visited the state. The DMK went all out to host Jayaprakash Narayan and mobilized its partymen to receive him. Moreover, the DMK, the only non-Congress party heading a state government, has actively supported the JP movement. In his turn, JP felt that Karunanidhi, unlike any other Congress Chief Minister, was different. This gives an impression that he had exonerated the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister of the charges of corruption made against the DMK cabinet by the Anna DMK and the CPI. It also gave an impression that the charges against the DMK government are politically motivated. More than the Anna DMK and the CPI, the Kamaraj-led Congress (O) took serious exception to JP's 'good chat' to the DMK government. However, it must be noted that during JP's tour of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi offered to face a probe for which JP, he said, can name a panel.

Accordingly, JP appointed a Sarvodaya Committee to identify the people's issues and make efforts to get them solved by the state government. While in other states he charged the Sansharah Samities with the chief task of agitating against corruption, he had not done

19. "MGR Explains Anna DMK's Policy in U.S.", The Hindu, November 19, 1974.

no in Tamil Nadu. His directive to the Sarvodaya Committee was to open a dialogue with the Chief Minister on "people's issues".²⁰ This limited objective has thus made the Committee quite ineffective.

Kamaraj, during his recent fund-raising campaigns, has been lashing out at the DMK regime as "the most corrupt in the country".²¹ The appointment of a one-man commission of inquiry by the DMK government against one of its own ministers should, however, give comfort to those who want to see a responsive government in the state.

The DMK enthusiastically responded to the JP Movement. Though the party fought against any possible Central intervention in the affairs of the Tamil Nadu government when the Anna IAI and the CPI petitioned to the President calling for the resignation of the DMK government, it did not mind leading limited support to the JP Movement that called for the resignation of the Bihar government and the Central government on charges of corruption. Karunanidhi, thus, saved his government from the embarrassment of Bihar-type agitation. JP's Bihar-type agitation did not make such headway in Tamil Nadu. Though JP's Movement has made little or no impact at the popular level in Tamil Nadu, it has, all the same, caused a rapid and dramatic re-alignment of all parties in the state in anticipation of the next general elections, to be held in early 1976.

20. The Times of India (New Delhi), May 27, 1973.

21. Ibid.

Complex Tamil Nadu Politics

The political atmosphere in Tamil Nadu appears to be rather confusing and surcharged with expectancy. At any rate, the ensuing general election of 1976 is likely to be different from that of 1971 as it may be affected by the new political forces, which may influence the poll alignments in the state. The four major political parties in Tamil Nadu — the DMK, the Anna DMK, the Congress (O), and the Congress (R) — obviously with an eye on the next elections in the state, have been engaged in a game of chess, "the result of which is as obscure as some of the moves made by the parties".²² The impact made by JP's movement on national politics will be severely tested because political corruption is a sensitive issue and is bitterly debated on the rival platforms, chiefly those of the Congress (O) and Anna DMK against the DMK.

One can rule out the possibility of all opposition parties forming a united front against the ruling DMK. It is also difficult to think of the coming together of the two Communist Parties or the Anna DMK and the Congress (O). Though there has been sufficient cordiality and discussion between Mrs. Gandhi and Kengasaj, there is probably little chance of a merger between the two Congress parties. In Tamil Nadu, the Congress (O) continues to be a force to reckon with and has a strong base. Organizationally, the Congress (O) is stronger than the Congress (R). It is only the leaders of the ruling

22. Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 10, 1973.

Congress party who talk about merger and not the other way round. "The oddity of Congress is that it is a party of leaders without a mass following."²³ In the recent Gujarat elections, Mrs. Gandhi undertook a whirlwind tour of the state to canvass support for the Congress without any evidence of marked success.

As the prospect of a united opposition front to the ruling DMK is a remote possibility, the opposition parties may enter into electoral adjustments to fulfil their mission of toppling the DMK regime by hook or by crook. The 1971 snap poll showed how such electoral adjustments may be concluded without compromising the ideological stances of the various poll partners. The formation of the Janata Front to fight out the Congress in Gujarat and its subsequent formation of government there, gives a possible clue to the shape of things to come. On the basis of the present stance of various political parties in Tamil Nadu, several possible alliances appear feasible for the 1976 poll. However, one cannot rule out surprises on the eve of elections.

Any immediate possibility of a re-union of the two Congress parties in Tamil Nadu is ruled out by the recent drastic overhauling of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee by the Congress President, D.K. Barooah. A fair number of dissidents have been accommodated in the new executive who would prefer to have ties with Anna DMK. The appointment of E.V.K. Sampath, a confirmed political turncoat, as Vice-President has been interpreted to indicate that the Congress (R) is seeking Anna DMK's co-operation in 1976. Sampath's initiative

23. Balasundaram, S.N., Op. cit., p. 10.

might be useful to get the most favourable terms with the Anna DMK for the 1976 poll. After the reorganization of the INCC, Kamaraj has become very skeptical of Congress (O)'s ties with the Congress (R) in the state. Obviously, he is no more charmed by the possibility of working with the Congress. Earlier he had warned that any alignment with the Anna DMK "would be suicidal".²⁴ It was an answer indirectly to the Prime Minister about the future of the Congress in Tamil Nadu.

Further, the chances of a Congress re-union received a jolt when C. Subramaniam, the Union Finance Minister, gave an ultimatum to the Congress (O) in Tamil Nadu fixing a deadline to join the Congress by February 15, 1975, or keep off for ever. "We cannot wait indefinitely for Kamaraj to make up his mind. He should decide whether or not he wants to merge his party with the Congress before 15th of February."²⁵ At the PCC session held at Gobichettipalayam, Subramaniam said that Kamaraj should end his indecision on the question of merger before February 1975. While addressing a Press conference, he made it clear that "only a merger was acceptable" to the Congress (R). He further emphasized that "the Congress was not interested any more in a mere election alliance like the one forged for the Pondicherry and Coimbatore poll as it will not deliver the goods".²⁶

Inevitably, the Congress (O) leadership took exception to Subramaniam's ultimatum and branded him "arrogant". It also felt that the Congress (O) can fend for itself without the "gratuitous

24. Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), December 14, 1974.

25. Patriot, January 9, 1975.

26. Prasadrao, V.G., "New Alignments in Tamil Nadu: Preparing for the Polls", The Times of India (New Delhi), February 15, 1975

support of the non-existent Indira Congress in Tamil Nadu".²⁷ Moreover, in retaliation to Congress "ultimatum", the TNCC (O) executive ruled out any dialogue with the Congress by committing itself to the AICC (O) resolution supporting the JP movement.²⁸

One cannot, however, rule out the possibility of an electoral understanding between the two Congress parties on the basis of the Pondicherry experience. Moreover, the two parties have no ideological differences and still can opt out for an alliance for the limited purpose of winning an election together. But, any such adjustment cannot be worked out on the premise of equality, as the Congress (R) is weak in Tamil Nadu. For achieving success in the elections, it has to depend entirely upon the organizational strength of the Congress (O) which boasts of committed workers in its ranks.

However, it is a debatable point whether, in case the two Congresses succeed in bringing off an electoral alliance, the Anna DMK and the CPI would participate in such an alliance. But, they might not have any objection to align themselves with the Congress parties in such an eventuality. MGR categorically reiterated the Anna DMK policy to have an electoral alliance with the Congress. He said that "we shall not be worried about who joins the Congress".²⁹ As regards CPI, merger would remove the "reactionary" character of the Congress (O) because it would lose its identity in the "progressive" soul of the Congress.³⁰

27. Patriot, January 9, 1975.

28. The Times of India (New Delhi), February 15, 1975.

29. Indian Express (New Delhi), February 3, 1975.

30. Balasundaram, S.N., Op.cit., p. 11.

An alternative to a triple alliance amongst the Anna DMK, the CPI and the Congress (R) may be visualized in case a merger or a political alliance between the Congress (O) and Congress (R) fails to materialise. The present political situation in Tamil Nadu augurs well for such an alliance. As matters stand now, the real fight in the state for 1976 elections will be between the ruling DMK and its prodigal splinter, the Anna DMK. For reasons best known to it, the Anna DMK has been most anxious to cultivate the Congress.³¹ A deal with the Anna DMK may well make sense to the Congress with or without Kamaraj in it. But, once again such an electoral understanding between the Congress and Anna DMK underlines the isolation of Tamil Nadu from the mainstream of national politics if the Congress accepts the situation of fighting the election with the support of a regional, parochial, political party. "Of course, it is entirely possible that the Congress eventually hopes to play the camel to the Anna DMK's Arab and let time and somewhat indeterminate politics of Anna DMK to do the rest."³²

Mrs. Gandhi has not so far indicated her preference for an alliance with Anna DMK, even though MGR has been maintaining in his utterances, from time to time, that the two parties "have come closer in their thinking".³³ On the other hand, some Congress leaders in Tamil Nadu, who were erstwhile antagonists of Kamaraj in the undivided Congress, favour an electoral alliance with the Anna DMK. They think that the chances of Congress coming to power, of course, as a junior

31. Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), January 8, 1975.

32. The Hindustan Times, January 2, 1975.

33. The Hindustan Times, February 3, 1975.

partner are bright if such an alliance takes shape. In such a contingency, MGR might claim a lion's share of the Assembly and Parliamentary seats by virtue of his sway over the Tamil masses.

In spite of MGR's efforts to forge an electoral understanding with the Congress, the Prime Minister's first choice appears to be a merger of the two Congress parties. Professor Balasundaram feels that "such a merger would dismantle the bastion of the Congress (O) in Tamil Nadu and would help her realise her long-term objective that the Congress (O) should disappear from the Indian political scene".³⁴ Also, merger would help the Congress to function with redoubled vigour in the state. It would raise the stature of the Congress to that of an equal partner vis-a-vis the Anna DMK and further facilitate its bargaining capacity. These possibilities entirely depend on whether the Congress (O) leader is agreeable to surrendering his dominant position in the Tamil Nadu unit of Congress (O) and be content to play second fiddle to the Prime Minister. Apart from these factors, much would also depend upon the role of Anna DMK to prove its bona fides to the Congress leadership as a genuine political force.

Despite the dominant position of the Congress (O) in Tamil Nadu politics, and the Congress (R)'s eagerness to merge with it, C. Subramanian's ultimatum to the Congress (O) had created a stir in the latter's ranks. Perhaps, Kamaraj wants an assurance that

34, Balasundaram, S.N., Op.cit., p. 11.

after the merger the united party would fight not only the ruling DMK but also the "more dangerous" Anna DMK. Kamaraj has indicated that the Anna DMK is not different from the ruling DMK and is firmly against any alliance with it. On the other hand, the Congress High Command is not willing to give such an assurance since the entire issue will have to be considered at the time of elections, taking into account the overall poll strategy for the country as a whole.³⁵

A merger of Congress (O) and Congress (R) is not in the best interests of the former. Alternatively, an electoral alliance with the Congress (R) could provide it greater leverage. This again depends upon how Congress leadership values any such move. For, the Congress is now in a comfortable position, with the opportunity of choosing between the Anna DMK and the Congress (O) as its ally. But, the final choice for the Congress would be dictated by the potential of either party -- the Congress (O) and the Anna DMK -- in its quest to refurbish its image which was badly tarnished by the DMK in 1967. Though the Congress (O) leader, Kamaraj, regards the Anna DMK as a congregation of admirers of a cine-star³⁶ to which disgruntled DMK partymen have defected for personal aggrandizement, Mrs. Gandhi appears to consider it as a political party and its leader, MGR, a politician of standing.

35. "DMK Studying Congress-Anna DMK Alliance", Patriot, January 3, 1975.

36. Probably, Kamaraj is in agreement with Velur Narayanan, Editor of Alai Oasi, who calls the Anna DMK a "bigger MGR Manram" (fan club), comprising of discontented DMK leaders. Interestingly enough, Narayanan was one of the staunchest supporters of MGR when the latter was suspended from the DMK. Subsequently, Karunanidhi was able to win him over to his side.

Interview with Velur Narayanan, Madras, July-1974.

If the Congress (R) and Congress (O) settle down for an electoral alliance, it might possibly alienate the CPI, which is supporting the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Manipur and Bihar besides at the Centre. If these factors are taken into consideration, the Congress (R) would welcome a merger with the Congress (O) rather than a tenuous poli alliance. But, with the Anna DMK, the Congress may opt only for an alliance which would bring in the solid backing of the CPI, which has been in close co-operation with the latter party ever since its emergence. Moreover, such an alliance can be translated into a continuation of the one formed in 1971 to fight the so-called Grand Alliance. Now the Anna DMK would simply replace the DMK in the alliance, for the former is regarded as the genuine DMK, preaching Anna's ideals and also the true inheritor to his political legacy.

As a result of losing heavily on the electoral front to Anna DMK and its ally, the CPI, the DMK virtually has become a doubtful quantity in Tamil Nadu politics today. No doubt, it still controls the apparatus of power but lacks the usual élan shown by a party in power. This is all because of the clumsy handling of the party machinery by the Chief Minister, Karunanidhi. With undue haste he 'crossed the Rubicon' by suspending a person of unusual standing. MGR's exit from the DMK and the emergence of Anna DMK as an offshoot recoiled on the entire DMK. The Tamil Nadu government is at odds with the student community. And consequently, the challenge to Karunanidhi's leadership persists. So far, in some important

districts like Ramanathapuram, Madurai, South Arcot and Coimbatore, the party cadres have switched their allegiance over to the Anna DMK. The DMK strongman, S. Muthu, has turned hostile to Karunanidhi and he is not on talking terms with the Chief Minister. Certainly, all this cannot be ascribed to the "NCR wave". A good deal of the Chief Minister's trouble has had its origins in his attempt to assume the role of a father-figure, after the late Annadurai's fashion. For, 'Anna' was regarded by his followers as the Gandhi of the South in the post-Independent India, "though wrongly".³⁷ No other leader is anywhere near Anna's towering stature in the present DMK hierarchy. Karunanidhi, in his attempt to emulate Annadurai, has only succeeded in antagonising his partymen. And in the process, "he has stepped on too many people's toes".³⁸ On top of his troubles came the unprecedented drought in the state. The DMK has also earned the odium of being a corrupt administration in the country.

It would be of interest to visualize what would be the ruling DMK's counter-moves to avert its imminent down-fall in the face of opposition's persistent onslaught, led by the Anna DMK, the Congress (O), the Congress (R) and the CPI. The once invincible seven-party alliance, which was responsible for DMK's resounding victory in 1971 elections has been wrecked when the CPI parted company with it and with the gradual estrangement of the Congress (R). Now the DMK-led "progressive

37. Interview with 'Cho' Ramasamy, Madras, July-1974.

38. "Karunanidhi's Troubles", The Statesman (New Delhi), March 15, 1974.

front" consists of only four junior partners — the Forward Bloc, the Muslim League, the Praja Socialist Party and the Tamil Arasu Katchagam — whose significance is negligible at any rate. This front is likely to continue till the next elections.

As far as the CPI(M) is concerned, the party thinks that it is ideologically pure and does not need to enter into opportunistic alliances. Karunanidhi sought its co-operation with the conviction that the CPI(M) will not join any camp of which the "arch revisionist" CPI is a partner. Also, the CPI(M) considers the Congress (O) "reactionary". The party's attitude is difficult to assess. It may prefer to plough a lonely furrow as in the 1971 general elections and in 1974 when the third general elections to the Pondicherry Assembly and some by-elections were held in Tamil Nadu.

Karunanidhi has already extended an invitation to the Congress (O) and CPI(M) for full understanding on the basis of their support to the JP movement. He propounded the thesis that alliance with other parties has always been a "historic necessity" for the DMK.³⁹ But, neither appear to have yet considered the proposal favourably. Perhaps, at the time of elections they would come to an agreement for co-operation to avoid splitting up of votes. If by any chance this happens, these two parties, in effect,

39. "Party Line-up Indicates Tamil Nadu Polarization", Patriot, January 9, 1975.

will be the invisible partners of the DMK-led front. But, the possibility of Kamaraj seeking another round of dialogue with the Congress leadership is not altogether ruled out, in which event there is bound to be a bigger anti-DMK front in Tamil Nadu.

Thus, the current political imbroglio in Tamil Nadu points "to a polarization comprising a DMK front and an Anna DMK front and the Congress (O) between them, each staking claims to victory in 1976".⁴⁰

Anna DMK: Prospects for Future

The Anna DMK is the other most popular political party in Tamil Nadu today. Though primarily centred on a single leader, the party draws sustenance largely from his devoted fans. It had also achieved its objective when one of its cherished goals, namely, prohibition, was re-introduced on September 1, 1974, by the DMK government. Perhaps, Karunanidhi, seeking to outwit his rival in morality, decided to ban horse-racing as well in Tamil Nadu, thus killing two birds with one shot. According to the Chief Minister, Tamil Nadu would lose Rs. 56 crores a year on account of prohibition and an additional Rs. 2 crores in betting tax.⁴¹ On his part, the Congress (O) leader, Kamaraj, had openly applauded the DMK for re-introducing total prohibition in the state. However, he regretted that by suspending prohibition for two years, the DMK made one generation take to the evil.⁴²

40. Balasundaram, S.R., Qu. Aff., p. 11.

41. Prasad Rao, V.C., "DMK Moves Upset Tamil Nadu's Financial Stability", The Times of India (New Delhi), August 22, 1974.

42. National Herald (New Delhi), November 9, 1974.

Its second goal, battle against political corruption, has also been acknowledged by the ruling party itself, when the DMK government ordered a judicial probe into the "rice scandal" involving a senior Cabinet Minister, P.U. Shanmughan. Though the Anna DMK is not happy about the constitution and the terms of reference, etc., of the Commission of Inquiry, that the ruling party at last conceded its charge must indeed be considered a feather in its cap.

Also, the fact that MGR has a massive following among the people behind him was clearly shown by the electoral successes the party had recorded. To begin with, the party won a resounding victory in Dindigul. Almost every leading political personality was cut to size in Dindigul. It also won the Quimbatorc (West) Assembly constituency seat in February 1974. In Pondicherry, it was the single largest party when it bagged 12 out of 30 seats in its maiden appearance in the Union Territory. MGR and his followers are satisfied by their party's showing in the elections. Asked about the prospects of his party in the 1976 elections, MGR replied that he did not know and added that he was only being modest in saying so. This again is an indication of his confidence about the prospects of Anna DMK in the coming elections.⁴³

The ruling DMK too has realized its position vis-à-vis its splinter, in popularity. After the electoral rout in Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu, a feeler was put out by the DMK strongman, S. Muthu,

43. Interview with M.G. Ramachandran, Madras, July-1974.

for merger with Anna DMK. However, the offer was promptly rejected by MGR. It was perhaps unfortunate that the move should have come from Muthu. Because of the role he played in MGR's expulsion from the DMK in 1972, he is not acceptable to the leadership of the Anna DMK. Further, of late, Muthu has become a POKORNA DON SEATA to the ruling DMK leadership as well. This was borne out by the fact that he was not among those invited when the DMK Executive Council met at Tiruparankundram, near the temple city of Madurai, in December 1974.⁴⁴ Thus, he had apparently become an enemy of Karunanidhi. Muthu, while publicly declaring that the ruling clique in the state ignored him at "DMK's peril" has not yet spelt out his future plans.⁴⁵

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu deputed his ministerial colleague and a trusted lieutenant, Madhavan, to meet MGR and propose a merger of the DMK with the Anna DMK.⁴⁶ It was widely believed that Madhavan proposed that all the terms and conditions imposed by MGR would be agreed to by Karunanidhi, provided there is an unconditional re-union of the two parties. MGR, on the other hand, countered the proposal by saying that the "decent elements" still left in the DMK should quit Karunanidhi's camp and join Anna DMK. Evidently, Karunanidhi could not accept political hara-kari.⁴⁷

44. "Developing Discontent in DMK", Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 25, 1974.

45. Ibid.

46. "Karunanidhi Fears Treachery in DMK", Patriot, August 6, 1974.

47. Ibid.

The Anna DMK, after its heady successes in Dindigul, Coimbatore and Pondicherry, was in no mood to lose so soon its identity by a merger with the parent organization. Probably, the party also believes that the DMK is fast losing popularity and that to ally itself with it would be foolish and a liability.⁴⁸ It is apparent that all along the stress on the part of MGR or his followers was on the removal of Karunanidhi.

The merger move between DMK and Anna DMK came about not only because of the ruling party's failure in some recent by-elections in the state but also because of the example provided by the two Congress parties in Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu. However, the electoral understanding reached between the two Congress parties proved rather brief as the recent developments in the state indicate, firstly as a sequel to the "ultimatum" served by C. Subramaniam, and secondly by the limited impact the JP movement achieved in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere.

The Tamil masses are politically extremely articulate.⁴⁹ The growing disenchantment of the masses with the DMK rule, however, does not necessarily mean disillusionment with its ideology. This explains the triumph of MGR-led Anna DMK which provides an alternative to those who are disappointed with Karunanidhi's political style. The basic

48. "Abortive Merger Bid", The Indian Express (New Delhi), March 7, 1974.

49. "The (film-loving) masses are solidly behind the Anna DMK — not the politically conscious working class organized in Trade Unions. But the vast mass of Harijans and depressed classes and the disillusioned urban middle classes are definitely anti-Congress." See Young Indian, 4:23, May 16, 1974, p. 14. The insertion in the brackets is mine.

difference between the Anna DMK and the DMK is much the same as that between the two Congress parties; personalities predominate. As the Pondicherry elections and by-elections in Tamil Nadu have proved, none of the other parties can hope to exploit the ruling party's difficulties in the state.

In the words of a political commentator:

" Tamil Nadu continues to defy the pattern of national politics and will do so in the foreseeable future. For the Congress party is not even a third force in the state.

" Over the years the split in the Dravida Kambham, resulting in the formation of DMK followed by the formation of the Anna DMK, as a result of yet another split, fragmented the Dravidian Movement but did not liquidate it. Neither the DMK nor the Anna DMK is a secessionist party in the formal sense. Both are, however, separatist in the sense that they underline Tamil identity vis-a-vis the rest of the country. The Congress (O) in Tamil Nadu is no less separatist, though technically it is part of an all-India party.

" Since 1952, every major political force in Tamil Nadu has benefitted from the Dravida Kambham or its offshoots Politics in Tamil Nadu has thus continuously maintained a separatist tendency and a separatist identity The viable alternative to the DMK today is the ADMK which is separatist though not secessionist (like the DMK itself) or the Congress (O). " 50

As the election curtain is soon to rise, one can foresee that there will be more desertions to the Anna DMK and vice-versa. It is inevitable that in their anxiety to find a secure political future, the younger elements in the ruling party will switch over to the Anna DMK

50. Mohan Rao, "Ramaswami Naicker and the Dravidian Movement", Economic and Political Weekly, X : 6, 7 and 8, February 1974, pp. 217-24.

on the eve of general elections as it happened in Pondicherry.⁵¹ Many of the DMK rank and file seemed to have realized the tragic mistake of Karunanidhi in dismissing MGR from the party, which sparked off the emergence of Anna DMK. Any party that splits from a parent organization always "has the advantage of taking a radical image and the Anna DMK got away with the banner of Anna high above the DMK with charges of corruption".⁵²

Despite the fact that Karunanidhi's vain attempts to tarnish MGR's image as an alien and Malayalee and an enemy of Tamil race, the latter has emerged both as a viable and radical alternative to the discredited DMK leadership in Tamil Nadu politics.

Meanwhile, MGR is content to bide his time, pending word from the Congress (R) for "co-operation" in the ensuing Sixth General Elections. Through his utterances from time to time, he has made his position clear. Recently he met the Prime Minister,⁵³ presumably to express his solidarity with her in the wake of the proclamation of Internal Emergency. He wants a close and meaningful alliance between his party and the Congress (R) on terms mutually acceptable to both the parties.⁵⁴ Further, MGR wants his Anna DMK to be the king-pin in Tamil Nadu politics, for the mass appeal it enjoys in the state.

51. Young Indian, 4 : 23, May 16, 1974, p. 14.

52. Isvarnurti, V., "DMK: Then And Now", Young Indian, August 1, 1974, p. 18.

53. The Times of India (New Delhi), July 18, 1975.

54. Prasad Rao, V.G., "New Alignments in Tamil Nadu: Preparing for the Polls", The Times of India (New Delhi), February 15, 1975.

indications are that he will not brook any rival and has often mentioned that the Anna DMK will contest a majority of seats in the 234-member State Assembly. According to him, there can be no question of forming a coalition government as his party hopes to win a sizable majority of seats in the Legislature.⁵⁵ He also made his position clear regarding the national leadership. He said during his U.S. tour, in October-November, 1974, that there is no alternative to Congress. On the basis of this, it can be assumed that he is prepared to allow the Congress (I) and the CPI to contest most of the 39 Lok Sabha seats from Tamil Nadu.⁵⁶ But, it is difficult to predict definitively about Tamil Nadu.⁵⁷

However, one of the significant factors in Anna DMK's successes has been the "MGR charisma", for the film-star is variously known as Vadhyar ("teacher"), Makkai Thilagam ("idol of the masses") and as Puratchi Madigar ("Revolutionary actor"). Now, in tune with his role as the leader of a political party in the state, the last mentioned appellation has undergone a change, namely, Puratchi Thairivar ("Revolutionary leader"). He is mainly seen as a symbol of hope for the down-trodden and poor in that part of South India, Tamil Nadu. The DMK founder-leader, Annadurai, was once stated to have remarked about MGR: "When we show his face, we get 40,000 votes; when he

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. In Tucikku, a Tamil drama, written and produced by 'Cho' Rameswamy, considered to be one of the best satirical plays on contemporary Tamil politics, a character says: "This is Tamil Nadu; anything can happen here".

speaks a few words, we get four lakhs".⁵⁸ One could even say that when MGR founded the rival party in 1972, he had captured the imagination of nearly four crores of people living in the state.

To sum up, each political party that held the reins of power at some time or other, must live down the burden of its past, i.e., its errors of omissions and commissions, committed while in office. As regards Tamil Nadu political scenario, the undivided Congress, which had governed the state for nearly two decades, is yet to recover from the trauma, which the loss of office dealt it. Also, the DMK is already old in the sense that for nearly a decade it occupied the seat of power. At present, all eyes are focussed on the Anna DMK party and its "hero-leader" M.C. Ramachandran.

58. Cited in Hardgrave Jr., Robert L., 'Politics and the Film in Tamil Nadu', Asian Survey, XIII : 3, March-1973, p. 302.

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* Since the material on the theme is of very recent origin, I have had to rely heavily on leading national newspapers and magazines. Also, personal interviews conducted with M.G. Ramachandran, "Che" Rameswamy and Velur Narayanan were very helpful in the preparation of this dissertation.

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