CHAPTER VII

Regional Political Parties and Centre-State Relations

The growing presence and salience of regional parties is undoubtedly, the most important aspect of political development in India over the past few years. Regional parties have catalysed a realignment of political forces and their impact on the structure and process of politics has been multi-directional and far reaching. In the first place, the political clout they have acquired poses the most powerful challenge to India's one party dominance.

Another area in which regional parties have a natural stake and bound to make a strong impact is that of Centre-state relations. Until 1967, the Indian political scene didn't witness any such disparity as existing today in our federal system. With the emergence of many regional parties, more particularly, after fourth general election, the nature of party system & political control in the states has undergone change and the the Congress supremacy has gradually receded. The formation of governments in different states by regional parties like D.M.K., A.G.P, National Conference, Telugu Desam, AIDMK, Akali Dal on their own and in coalition with some other partners were development of
far reaching consequence in the sphere of Centre-state relations. This development created the space for the growth of pluralism in the political culture of India. The Congress government at the centre not attuned to the idea of non-Congress parties ruling in the states, tended to create all manners of obstacles for them and to topple them by any means. The latter, in the face of such a hostile stance of the centre, demanded more power for themselves with a view to ensuring their survival, if not to challenge the domination of the centre. This started a process of serious rethinking on the rebuilding of the India's federal structure. In the course of time, some non-Congress national parties like (C.P.M. and C.P.I.) which came to power in some states, have also clamored for more power to states vis-a-vis the centre in the style of regional parties. Thus, the tilt of Indian federation towards the centre has been subjected to severe criticism and serious debate largely due to emergence of regional parties.

The present chapter attempts to analyse the attitude of regional parties Akali Dal of Punjab and D.M.K. (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) of Tamil Nadu on Centre-state relations. Both the parties are very important regional parties of North and South India in terms of their support base and
sharing of power in their respective states. Their difference with the central government with regard to sharing or division of power has been the main plank of their electoral strategy and victory. Both the parties have demanded the restructuring of existing framework of Centre-state relations. The sole existence of these parties are dependent upon the anti centre campaign, which would be an important aspect to examine, besides their attitude and perception on the entire issue of Centre State relation in this chapter.

Akali Dal and Centre-state relations

The Akali Dal is both a regional and communal political party, regional because it is confined to the Punjab and communal because its membership is restricted to the members of the Sikh community. While the Akali Dal was first formed as a reform party to bring the Sikh shrines of Gurudwaras under unified Sikh control, a goal it succeeded in achieving way back in 1925. The party soon entered the political arena under the leadership of Master Tara Singh who demanded a 'Sikh State' as necessary to the protection of Sikh faith. Even Khuswant Singh in his observations says,¹

"the idea of a sovereign Sikh state has never been very far from the Sikh mind ever since the days of
Guru Gobind Singh, Sikh congregation have chanted the litany-'Raj Karega Khalsa', the Khalsa shall rule, as a part of their daily prayer, innumerable Sikhs gave their lives to achieve this ambition."

However, the demand for an independent Sikhistan made at the time of partition of the Indian sub continent was modified in the early fifties into the demand for a Punjabi speaking state of Punjabi suba in which the Sikhs would be in majority. Following prolonged agitation, the Punjab state reorganisation bill was enacted in September 1966, under which the state was trifurcated into Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The new state of Punjab, thus, created had a population of 54% Sikh and 44% Hindus. The Akalis achieved their long cherished goal of a Sikh majority in the Punjab. The Sikh majority, they believed, would provide the essential security for the maintenance of the Sikh communal entity, and also the possibility of the Akali Dal emerging as a governing party in the province.  

Akali Dal since the beginning has been faction ridden and its various factions have taken divergent stands in respect of collaboration, not excluding merger with the Congress party. The fortune of the party, therefore, fluctuated from poll to poll.  

Shiromani Akali Dal has been in the forefront of the demand for the autonomy of Punjab and often took a
confrontationist position towards an extremist end of the spectrum. A valid analysis of Akali Dal's concept of state autonomy must take cognizence of the party's commitment to the preservation of distinct Sikh identity, the achievement of an independent political status for the community, its perception as integral with the panth and as a political arm of religious body. Hence, the creation of Punjabi speaking state of Punjab was undoubtedly a major landmark in Akali Dal's pursuit of its political goal.

From 1947-1966, the Akali Dal had to fight for power in two simultaneously operating and mutually antagonistic political systems in the Punjab. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC) was the focal point of one of these political systems. Sikhs alone being legally entitled to participate in this, the Akali Dal managed to capture power and has retained a monopolistic control over it and this has given the party a powerful communication channel to the community and legitimacy of its claim to be the champion and sole spokesman of the Panth. Akali Dal had to compete with the Congress which operated from a very much broader regional and social base. In a virtual bipolar political competition, the Akali-Dal was at the loosing and most of the time failed to achieve a share of political power commensurate with the support it enjoyed among the Sikh
However, with the establishment of Punjabi speaking state, the Akali's found it necessary to redefine their political objectives and strategies. The party's interest in the federal question found a new focus particularly with regard to the quantum of state autonomy. The two groups in which Akali's had split (one led by Sant Fateh Singh and other by Master Tara Singh) revealed a sharp differences of their demand on the question of state autonomy.

The Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh (who spoke for the minorities of Akali's) continued to assert that there was no alternative for the Sikhs in the interest of self-preservation than to frame their demand for a self-determined political status within the Republic of the Union of India.

However, reiterating the charge of the centre's discrimination against the Punjab, the Akali Dal led by Sant Fateh Singh (who claimed the allegiance of an overwhelming majority's of the Akalis) merely asked for more powers to provinces. The moderate stance taken by the Sant Fateh Singh led Akali Dal on the question of state autonomy was reflected in the Batala resolution of September 1968 which declared,
"The Shiromani Akali Dal demands that the constitution of India should be on a correct federal basis and the state should have greater autonomy. The Shiromani Akali Dal feels that the Central government's interference in the internal affairs of the states and the obstacles it places in the proper functioning of the state machinery are detrimental to the unity and integrity of the country. Therefore, this conference demands from the Central government that necessary changes should be brought in this constitution and it also appeals to the state governments to raise their voice to protect and safeguard their right, so that the country may go smoothly on the federal system."6

Perhaps, the soft line taken through this resolution was at the time when the Akali Dal was feeling sore over the role played by the Congress in bringing about the downfall of the minority Akali government in Punjab. However, soon the merger of the two Akali Dal in October 1968 resulted in the radicalisation of the Akali's position. The merger agreement defined the political goal of the 'Panth' in the following terms.

"The order of the Khalsa, as ordered by Guru Govind Singh and in accordance with his commandants is a sovereign people by birth right and a sovereignty oriented party; suegeneris. A sovereign people within a free country to achieve this goal within a free India enjoying a constitutional autonomous status is the very foundation of the organisation and constitution of Shiromani Akali Dal."

In the subsequent years, the Akali Dal's main thrust had been in the direction of fundamental restructuring of Centre-state relations. The result of the 1971 election for
Lok Sabha and 1972 assembly election gave a staggering blow to the political position of the Akali Dal as it established the dominance of the Congress again. However, with the death of Sant Fateh Singh in October 1972, the frustrated, conservative and orthodox elements within the party grew stronger.

It was this changed context, in which the Akali Dal working committee in October 1973 at 'Anandpur Sahib' adopted its famous resolution on state autonomy. In coming very close to the demand for autonomous status to the Sikh community in its rationale and motivation the resolution said:

"In this Punjab (New) and in other states of the country, Center's jurisdiction should be limited only matter relating to the departments (subjects) of Defence, Foreign affairs, Post and Telegraphs, Railway, and Currency. All the remaining subject should be within the jurisdiction of Punjab and for the management of the Punjab, it should have complete autonomy to frame its own constitution Punjab's share of financial contribution to the Centre for the administration of Central departments should be determined by Punjab in proportion to the number of its representatives in the parliament."

The core of the Akali Dal's demands derived from this Anandpur Sahib resolution. The text of the Anandpur Sahib resolution became a subject of considerable debate and confusion due to factions in Akali Dal. However, in 1994 the
president of the Akali Dal issued an authenticated version of the 1973 resolution. This version reiterated that "the Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh nation and as such is fully entitled to its representation." 9 It stated that one of the principal purposes of the Akali Dal was "to strive, to preserve and keep alive the concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth and to create an environment in which national sentiments and aspirations of the Sikh Panth will find full expression, satisfaction and growth." 10

The primary political goal of the Akali Dal, the resolution further stated, was the "pre eminence of the Khalsa through creation of a congenial environment and a political set up." 11 To achieve this, the resolution outlined seven objectives. The most important of these were that Punjab's capital city of Chandigarh, which shared with neighboring Haryana state, and certain Sikh populated Punjabi speaking areas presently outside of Punjab be merged with it. In the new Punjab thus formed, the interest of the Sikhs and Sikhism were to be specifically protected. 12 Besides, the resolution stated that the new Punjab and other Indian states should be granted a degree of provincial autonomy under the existing constitution of the country. The resolution also stated that the Akali Dal would
strive for the enactment of an All India Gurudwaras Act. The new objective of seeking the enactment of an All India Gurudwaras Act was clearly intended to increase the Akali Dal's reach over the new substantial Sikh population of the country as a whole.

As a matter of fact, Akali Dal reiterated the maximal autonomy demand for Punjab on several occasion. In the All India Akali conference held at Ludhiana on 28-29th October, 1978 under the presidentship of Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi, the Akali Dal passed a political resolution. The resolution moved by G.S.Tohra, SGPC president and endorsed by P.S. Badal, the then Chief Minister of Punjab, demanded amendment of India's constitution to have a truely federal set-up in the country. The resolution said:

"The Shiromani Akali Dal realizes that India is a federal & republican geographical entity of different languages religions and cultures. To safeguard the fundamental rights of religious and linguistic minorities, to fulfill the demands of democratic traditions and to pave the way for economic progress, it has become imperative that the Indian constitutional infrastructure should be given a real federal shape by redefining the Centre and State relations and rights on the lines of aforesaid principles and objectives."

G.S. Tohra, during his speech at the conference talked of multinational society in India and demanded the word federal and multinational to be included in the preamble of
the constitution. He said, that the Centre should not have the power to end the identity of a state, to affect the state's power during an emergency and to suspend or dissolve a State assembly. There should be reshaping of Governor's role, realistic financial autonomy to the states, representation in the Rajya Sabha on the basis of equality of states and whole right to the state to legislate on state subjects and the concurrent list. 14

The Akali leaders again reiterated the need to spearhead the struggle for more powers to the states at the 'Akali conference' held as part of 'Sahidi mela'. Both P.S. Badal and G.S. Tohra said that Indian constitution should be written on the lines of the American constitution. They demanded for strong States and it should enjoy the power envisaged in the Anandpur Sahib resolution. "No state ever thinks in terms of ceding unless curbs are put to control it, they told. 15

The other prominent leader, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, demanded decentralisation of power and greater share for the states in taxes. He asked the party to launch a powerful agitation to secure more power to the states. 16

On the economic front P.S. Badal, the Chief Minister of Punjab, strongly pleaded for the retention of the Gadgil formula for allocation of central plan assistance to states.
Speaking at the working group meeting of National Development council (NDC) on the question of central plan assistance to states, he said there is virtually no case for abandoning the 'Gadgil formula' in favour of any alternative formula proposed by the planning commission. Opposing the alternative formula, he said, that factors such as poverty, population ratio were proposed to be given considerable weightage. In the devolution of funds, the seventh Finance commission has already given due recognition to these factors, while determining the share of various states in basic excise duties. He, therefore, submitted his view that in the allocation of Central plan assistance to states new factors such as poverty, population ratio shouldn't be given further weightage, otherwise it would put states like Punjab in jeopardy.17

The Akali-Dal was a coalition partner with the Janata Party in the Punjab government between 1977 and 1980, but despite its alliance with the Janata party government, it did little to raise demands based on the Anandpur Sahib resolution with the central government. An Akali meeting in 1978 endorsed the principles and objectives of the 1973 resolution, but it was not until September 1981 that the Akali Dal presented a series of demands based partly on the
1973 resolution to the central government.

The beginning of 1980 once again witnessed the reassertion of Akali's demand for state autonomy. The Akali Dal manifesto at the time of Punjab Vidhan Sabha election in 1980, emphasised the old demand for autonomy for Punjab State and pledged to take away the Centre's power to dissolve the Vidhan Sabhas.\textsuperscript{18}

Meanwhile, in Feb 1981, the working Committee of Akali Dal met and its President, H.S. Longowal, reiterated that the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib resolution was the long term objective of the Party. In response, a prominent member of Talwandi group asserted that since the Sikhs were a nation, they must have the Sovereign State of their own.\textsuperscript{19}

The annual session of all India Sikh educational conference in March 1980, adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a sovereign Sikh State and the seeking of consultative status for the Sikh nation within the United Nations.\textsuperscript{20}

However, once the euphoria of the conference subsided, the organiser of the meeting, the chief Khalsa Diwan, dissasociated itself from the demand for a Separate Sikh State. A few weeks later, the President of Akali Dal stated that his party's concept of the Sikhs as a Nation was a purely religious one. The rival Talwandi group for its part
issued a statement that it was not in favour of a separate Sikh State but demanded the creation of Desh Punjab, or Punjab Country, within the Indian Union. The shifting stance of Akali leaders perplexed the whole issue. Commenting on this, the 'spokesman' noted in an editorial:

In the beginning, they supported the demand for Khalistan, which meant an independent and Sovereign state outside the Indian union when they found that there was little support for this demand the Talwandi faction contended that it was asking for a "Desh Punjab" without making clear what its boundaries and what its constitutional status would be. Now this faction is insisting on the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib resolution".

However, by 1983, the Akali Dal reduced its long list of demands from what it was until the seventies and beginning of eighties. The Akali Dal President, H.S. Longowal, in a letter written to members of Parliament on July, 1983, supporting the Anandpur Sahib resolution demanded:

1. Autonomous status for Punjab State.
2. Restoration of Chandigarh and remaining Punjabi Speaking areas to Punjab.
4. Allocation of due share of finance to Punjab from the central pool.
5. Granting of holy status to Sri Amritsar on the line of Kurukshetra, Varanasi & Haridwar.

6. Installation of high power transmitter at the Golden temple for the broad-casting of holy Gurbani.

These demands of Akali Dal however, couldn't get any positive response from the central government, but Akali Dal continued to pursue these demands on different occasions without any basic change.

In the opposition parties (Non-Congress parties) conclave held in October 1983 at Srinagar to discuss the Centre-state relations, Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab, vehemently attacked the existing Centre-state relations. He alleged that systematic encroachment of the Centre upon the financial and constitutional powers of the state has been taking place for the last three decades. The Akali Dal in this conclave demanded that, only four subjects such as Defence, Communication Foreign affairs and Currency should remain with the centre in order to restructure the Centre-state relations. All the remaining subjects should vest with the states. The post of Governor should be scrapped so that the State Assemblies would have the real authority.23

However, with the increasing demand for restructuring
Centre-state relations by opposition parties and more particularly in the wake of Punjab problem, Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, announced the appointment of Sarkaria Commission in 1983 headed by retired Justice R.S. Sarkaria and two members to look into the issue of Centre-state relations. The Akali Dal welcomed the decision of Central government and in its reply to Sarkaria Commission reaffirmed its views envisaged in the historic Anandpur Sahib resolution. The Akali Dal favoured the restructuring of Centre-state relations on the federal line and asked that decentralisation of power is imperative, if the national political system is to realise the directive principles of state policy in an effective way. A basic change in the organisation of political power is a must if the Nation is to resolve the crisis in which it finds itself today. It is in this context that the real essence and significance of the historic Anandpur Sahib resolution becomes manifest, pleading for really autonomous states characterized by decentralisation of power, with the centre retaining the federal functions in respect of Defence, communication, Foreign affairs and currency. 24

The Akali Dal member of Parliament Lt. General Jagjit Singh Arora (Rtd) in an interview emphasized the need for a change in the present set up of Centre-state relations. He
alleged that whatever powers given to the States by Indian constitution are denied in practice to the states by transferring slowly the important power to the centre itself.25

Akali Dal is of the view that the preamble of the constitution should be amended so as, to incorporate the expression federal to characterize the Republic of India and to halt the gradual drift towards unitarian set-up. Akali Dal wants the redistribution of subject in the VII Schedule of the constitution on the basis of federal principles. It wants the residuary powers to be vested in the state. The Centre shouldn't have the power or competence to destroy or dilute the ethnic, cultural and linguistic self-identity of a federating constituent unit. The imposition of emergency should be only in the event of exceptional circumstances like foreign aggression and during this period, federal set-up should remain intact.26

The Akali-Dal M.P., Lt General J.S. Arora expressed the opinion that the state should have greater autonomy to preserve its heritage and culture and to control its resources. He wanted that the transferred power from the state list to concurrent list should be restored to the states and more power from the centre list should be
transferred to the state list. He felt that the states were not permitted to grow in accordance with their own capability. States are tied down with the Centre for not having the financial autonomy.\(^{27}\)

The Akali Dal wants that the institution of Governor and his powers, functions and duties should be brought in line with a federal polity, so that the Governor doesn't remain an executive agent of the Centre but becomes a truly constitutional head of the state.\(^{28}\) But Lt. General Arora M.P. Akali Dal, the Governor should be above politics, which means a political Governor should be avoided at any cost. The Governor should be a fair and non-partisan person and should not be involved at all in active politics of Centre or State.\(^{29}\)

In the sphere of financial relations, the Akali Dal wants that the taxing power should be federalised, the Union taxes, duties should be demarcated from the state domain of taxation. Income tax should be provincialised, though it may be levied by the Centre for the sake of uniformity, the collection should be through the state agencies. The Finance commission should be reactivated to discharge its constitutional duties, thus dispensing with the extraneous role of the planning commission, which has not only imposed Centralised planning but also made the state dependent on
The Akali Dal favours the decentralized and democratized planning enabling the state to draft their respective plan according to their needs, imperatives and priorities. The sphere of All India services should also be demarcated from the sphere of State executive machinery.

However, Lt General Arora, M.P. Akali-Dal feels that due to dominance of the Congress party for more than two decades after independence, a kind of power structure came into practice, where the central authority became all powerful and couldn't be challenged. This led to the weakening of the status of states in Indian union and its authority to handle the multi-faceted problems.

The Akali Dal is perhaps one of the most vocal and ardent supporters for the restructuring of Centre-state relations. The Akali Dal since the fourth general election has projected the Centre-state relations as an important issue. The seventies witnessed the famous Anandpur Sahib resolution and the resolution of Ludhiana conference of Akali Dal, demanding the autonomous status for Punjab. The sharing of power in the state during the coalition period in 1967 and Janata regime in 1977 made the Akali's to demand more powers to the state. The eighties saw even greater
assertiveness of Akali-Dal for restructuring the Centre-state relations in the wake of Khalistan demand by extremists. By reiterating the acceptance of Anandpur Sahib resolution on various public occasions and seminars, the party wants a complete change in the entire structure of Centre-state relations through the constitutional amendment.

The Akali Dal in the historic "Punjab accord" between the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and then Akali chief Harcharan Singh Longowal in 1985 incorporated in para 81, "Shiromani Akali Dal states that the Anandpur Sahib resolution is entirely within the frame work of the Indian constitution, that it attempts to define the concept of Centre-state relations in a manner which may bring out the true federal characteristics of our unitary constitution, and that the purpose of resolution is to provide greater autonomy to the states with a view to strengthening the unity and integrity of the country, since unity in diversity forms the corner stone of our country".33

The Punjab accord followed by State Assembly election in September 1985, where Akali Dal achieved a spectacular victory by capturing as many as 73 out of 115 seats and polled 38.5% of total vote casted.34 Akali Dal's victory in this election was because, for the first time Akali Dal vigorously projected itself as more of a regional party and
secondly a sizeable section of non Sikh Punjabi believed that an Akali government in Punjab is the best guarantee of peace, stability and development. But this couldn't sustain for long. However, the trends which are discernible in Punjab politics after 1985 elections are significant for analysis of Akali politics. The first trend to notice is that in a situation where Sikhs and Hindus are numerically in the ratio of 60 to 40, the political power is completely in the hands of only Sikh community, which didn't happen during the last 40 years. Secondly, although right since 1920, the Akali's have often split into moderates and extremists with the former being always numerically preponderent, but after the 1985 elections, there have been serious dissensions among the moderates with an influential section of them getting closer and closer to the extremist, and making the extremist numerically preponderent in intra Akali politics. Such a situation did not exist earlier. The third trend which one notices is that the support base of the B.J.P. is increasing among the Hindus of Punjab. On the other hand the leadership and support of the Akali party is concentrated among Sikhs. Finally, one also notices that other political parties which had a few pocket of influence in the state are increasingly marginalised. In brief it can
be argued that there are two different urges that Akali's are simultaneously fighting the urge to preserve the Punjabi identity as a distinct socio cultural group in a definite territory and the urge for Sikh identity as a distinct religious group. The first is a regional urge and second a religious one which Akali Dal has blended in their political demand for more power to the state.
Dravida Munnettara Kazhagam (D.M.K.) was born under the leadership of C.N. Annadurai came out of the parent fold of E.V.R. Naicker's Dravida Kazhagam (D.K.) and formed an independent party called D.M.K. in 1949. The initial goal of D.M.K. as advocated by its founder 'Annadurai' was the attainment of Dravidstan till early sixties. However, the Chinese attack compelled the party to give up its demand for a separate Dravidstan. The Indo-China war made many D.M.K. M.P.'s realize the difficulties and expenses for a country's defence. But the other important reason for giving up the secessionist demand by D.M.K. was the passing of the 15th amendment of constitution by Parliament making secessionist propaganda an offense. The D.M.K. leader Annadurai accepted the constitutional amendment and said that his party wouldn't violate it, since it would be suicidal to his party. He said that in the altered circumstances consequent upon the passing of the constitutional amendment the constitution of the party would be amended suitably to function within the Indian constitution.\(^1\)

However, with the growth of D.M.K. party, Annadurai and his close associates realized that with the linguistic
states formed and with more and more state autonomy emphasized, their dream of a separate Dravidanad comprising of a four southern states would never become a practical proposition and that, at best, they can only hope for bringing about greater mutual co-operation, and understanding among them. Annadurai also realized that there was ample scope for state level parties in each of the three other Southern States of Kerala, Mysore and Andhra. Hence the D.M.K, as such, will not be able to penetrate and any attempt on their part would meet with resistance from these states for the reason of Tamil’s domination over them.2

The D.M.K. with the abandoning of its demand for Dravidstan concentrated on fighting the imposition of Hindi in the South by the central government. When Hindi became the official language of the union on 26th Jan 1965, the D.M.K. proposed a day of mourning and a display of black flags to protest the Centre's decision. However, the fourth general election in 1967 was a landmark for the D.M.K. because it wrested power from Congress party on the platform of the anti-Hindi campaign, state autonomy and cultural nationalism to preserve the Dravida culture.

The D.M.K. manifesto at the time of 1967 general election emphasized the need for the preservation of state rights without infringement by the Centre and insisted on
uniform economic development in all the states. More specifically, it demanded that the constitution be amended to vest the residuary powers in the states." 3 The focus on more powers for the states was sharp and clear in the D.M.K. manifesto but it didn't provide a detailed program of action.

However, the first D.M.K. government under the Chief Ministership of C.N. Annadurai, on different occasions, pursued the demand for change in the Centre-state relations. Dr. Annadurai while presenting the Tamil Nadu's budget for 1967-68, pleaded against the financial dependence of the states on the Centre. He said—

"We have obviously had to take note of the limitations under which the state governments have to function in our federal set up. Apart from the provisions of the constitution which are themselves weighted in favour of the Centre, the practice and convention, which have evolved in the last 15 years of economic planning have also tended to strengthen the role of the Central government at the expense of the states. The house is aware that there is need for rethinking on the relations between the Centre and the States. I have no doubt that every one will agree on the need for placing existing relations on a satisfactory basis. No one can deny that the experience so far in regard to distribution of revenue delimitations of power and allocation of assistance for plan has been such as to cause bitterness. It has become an urgent necessity to eliminate this bitterness and evolve ways and means for promoting fruitful relations between Centre and State". 4
The Chief Minister, C.N. Annadurai, at a press conference in New Delhi on 8th April 1967 observed, "it will be sufficient if the Centre retains only such powers as are necessary for preserving unity and integrity of the country leaving adequate powers to the states. In order to distribute the powers, to suggest the method of working out the constitution, a high power commission should be appointed.\(^5\)

However, in pursuance of these observations, Karunanidhi who succeeded Annadurai as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, announced at a press conference at New Delhi on 17th March 1968 that the D.M.K. government would soon constitute a committee of experts to go into Centre-state relations.\(^6\) Accordingly a committee was constituted by the government of Tamil Nadu known as "Rajmannar Committee" to examine the entire question regarding the relationship that should exist between the Centre and the states in a federal set up.

The Rajmannar Committee made several recommendations (discussed in detail in third chapter) of far reaching implications. These were basically aimed at changing the balance between the Centre and the States. The basic thrust of the report was to alter the theme of subordination of states. The committee felt that the prevailing unitary
trends in the Indian political system were a feature of the constitution and were further strengthened by the phenomenon of one party dominance and the inadequacy of the state's own fiscal resources. Whereas the dominance of the Congress Party, for the first two decades of independence made the constitutional machinery for Centre-state relations operative, the increasing dependence of the states on the Centre further weakened the autonomy of the states. Given these perspectives the committee demanded changes in the legal constitutional structure to achieve reversal of the trend.

Among its major recommendations, the Rajmunnar Committee suggested certain changes in the Union, state, the concurrent list of VII schedule of the constitution. It said that for setting up a true federation, the Centre should continued with the subjects relating to Defence, Foreign policy, Inter state communication and currency and the remaining subjects including residuary powers should be with the states only.7

The suggestions of Rajmunnar Committee were for total restructuring of Indian constitution to make the states autonomous in true sense. Tamil Nadu was the first state to set-up Committee to inquire into Centre-state relations.
Though the recommendations of Rajmunnar Committee did not have much impact on Central government, it certainly opened up the debate for a serious discussion of many aspects of Central-state relations among all the major political parties of India.

The demand for more power to the state was mentioned in the 1971 D.M.K. election manifesto. It said, "though the constitution of India is described as a federal one but the balance is more tilted towards the Centre, and hence the states are not able to function in the administrative and financial spheres. Only such powers as are necessary for the Centre to preserve the strength of India should be assigned to the Centre and all the other power should be left to the states without impairing the ideal of a strong India and for this purpose, the constitution should be amended." It further said," after receiving the report of the expert committee appointed for this purpose, the D.M.K. would seek support at the national level for the movement of state autonomy." 8

The D.M.K. Chief Minister Karunanidhi moved a resolution on state autonomy in the legislative assembly of Tamil Nadu on 16th April 1974, stating: "The house taking into consideration Rajmunnar committee report and the Tamil Nadu government views on state autonomy, resolves that in order to
secure the integrity of India with people of different languages, civilization & culture to promote economic development and to enable the state governments having close contact with the people to function without restraints, and in order to establish a truly federal set up with full state autonomy, the central government to accept the views of the Tamil Nadu government on state autonomy and the recommendations of the Rajmunnar committee and proceed to effect immediate changes in the Constitution of India."

The Tamil Nadu assembly later discussed the report of Rajmunnar committee and passed a resolution on 20th April 1974 to send the report to union government for follow up action. The D.M.K. relentlessly pursued the demand for state autonomy without any positive response from the Centre. At times, Karunanidhi warned that any delay in giving state autonomy would endanger the unity of the country. He dismissed as meaningless the talk that the grant of autonomy to the states would lead to balkinization. He said, in fact such a catastrophe could be prevented only by the state autonomy. The D.M.K. Chief Minister denied that the state autonomy demand was one of confrontation with the Centre, but if Tamil Nadu gets it, the other states would not lag behind in demanding autonomy. Karunanidhi even went to the extent of saying that any special rights granted to Kashmir should be extended to other states also.

The D.M.K. in furthering the demand for more powers and
autonomy to the states gave the call for joint rule at the Centre. The Chief Minister Karunanidhi demanded full autonomy for all the states in India with joint rule at the Centre. He explained, that constitutional definition of India as a union of states can be given meaning and content only if decisions are taken openly and jointly by the Centre in complete partnership with the states. Full autonomy to the state includes fiscal autonomy and giving larger tax powers to states.

However, when Central government continued to show its apathy towards the D.M.K. government of Tamil Nadu on the demand of state autonomy, it encouraged Karunanidhi to take an aggressive posture. He said, that he would have to give up Parliamentary methods to achieve the objective of state autonomy, if the Centre did not change its posture towards the state government and continued its insulting attitude to requests from the state on various matters. He alleged that the Centre had not sanctioned several pending projects including power generation scheme in the state. The Centre did not allow the state to maintain monuments at Mahabalipuram, Gangaikondon, Cholapuram and other historical places. These issues involved the self-respect of Tamils and insult couldn't be taken lightly.

The Chief Minister Karunanidhi declared "we approach
the question of state autonomy through Parliamentary methods. But if the Centre pushes us to a situation when this weapon is of no avail, we have to think of other ways. D.M.K. has made it clear time and again that its demand for state autonomy was for greater powers to the states and there was no ground to link it up with the demand for "Dravida Nadu" a demand given up by the party long ago. The demand for state autonomy don't revolve around his personal ambitions but on principle which had wide support."16

The demands of the D.M.K. for state autonomy were accentuated towards the end of Karunanidhi's tenure as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. However, by this time the national emergency (June 1975) was declared by Indira Gandhi's government. In the changed political situation of emergency all powers were centralized in the hands of Indira Gandhi pushing the whole controversy of Centre-state relations behind the political scene.

In another political development at the end of 1975, the central government dismissed the Karunanidhi's government of D.M.K. The Governor of Tamil Nadu in his report mentioned "The attitude of the state government to the proclamation of emergency has been one of lack of cooperation, if not of total disregard of instructions of the
Central government. Hence on the ground of secessionist ambition and corruption, Karunanidhi's government inspite of enjoying the confidence of the House and with only fifty days left for the expiry of the five year term of state assembly was brought down by the Centre in December 1975.

However, the dismissal of D.M.K. ministry by the Centre provoked reactions. The Times (London) newspaper commented, "By dismissing the D.M.K. ministry the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had perhaps pushed a button. But that button far from setting off militant regional chauvinism has only closed the door firmly against session and retained Tamil Nadu in the mainstream of national life." The D.M.K.'s ministry removal changed the whole tenor of the debate of state autonomy between Tamil Nadu and the Centre. The 1977 election witnessed the crushing defeat of D.M.K. in Tamil Nadu assembly and Parliamentary election by AIDMK led by M.G. Ramachandran. In the successive election of 1980 and 1984 the D.M.K. couldn't alter the situation and replace the AIDMK from power due to M.G.R's charismatic personality and leadership in the state. It was only in the 1989 assembly election, that the D.M.K. once again came back to power after remaining out of power from 1975 to 1988. This was mainly due to the death of AIDMK supremo M.G.Ramachandran and the inner fight between the factions of AIDMK to take
over the leadership.

The D.M.K, by remaining out of power for 13 years, could not pursue the demand for state autonomy or restructuring Centre-state relations forcefully. But the party's position on this issue continued to be the same during this period. This became manifest during Srinagar conclave of opposition parties to discuss Centre-state relations in October 1983.

The D.M.K.'s party general secretary Sadiq Pasha in his address to the conference stated categorically that "it is our firm belief that national unity should be based on state autonomy. National unity and provincial autonomy must not be thought as competitions for the citizens allegiance for they are but two facts of the same thing, the same federal system. The DMK believes in the strong Centre, but strength does not lie in the width of assorted powers assumed by the Centre but in the depth and the efficiency in the chosen fields, necessary to maintain the unity and integrity of the country".19

The D.M.K. position on the Centre-state relation at Srinagar reaffirmed that the party firmly believed in state autonomy and a true federal structure. This was further proved by the D.M.K's response to Sarkaria Commission which
was set up to look into the Centre-state relations by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1983.

DMK and Sarkaria Commission

The D.M.K. in its reply of questionnaire to Sarkaria Commission attached all its earlier documentation on State autonomy and Centre-state relations. D.M.K. spelt out the necessity of a federal polity for India which can keep India together and strengthen her from within and without.

The D.M.K. expressed the belief that "Union and the states must have complete freedom from mutual control and encroachment in the determination of their policies and the way in which they are implemented. This freedom is soul of federalism and D.M.K. call this freedom as autonomy. D.M.K. firmly believes that national unity should be based on state autonomy. Political autonomy for the states by adequate fiscal autonomy and financial resources." 20

However the D.M.K member (Rajya Sabha) Viduthali Verumbhi, in an interview wanted an amendment of Indian constitution to establish a true federal polity in both letter and spirit. He thinks that to achieve state autonomy and federalism there is need for transferring more items in the state list from other lists including residuary powers which are at the disposal of the Centre. He feels that India
is not a federal state at present. What India needs is a stable Centre rather than a powerful or strong Centre. He believes that state should be allowed to develop their own genius without any interference by the Centre. 21

The D.M.K. expressed strong reservation on the language issue. The party demanded that Hindi as an official language of the Union, court and legislature should be deleted and English should continued as the official language of the Union till all the language in the eighth Schedule are made official language of the Union. 22

The D.M.K. favoured the abolition of the post of Governor because it is a legacy of the British colonial system. But, Viduthali Verumbhi, D.M.K., M.P, is of the opinion that if the post of Governor is not going to be abolished, then the appointment method of Governor should undergo change. He suggested that the appointment of Governor should be based on the recommendation of an advisory council with the consultation of the Chief Minister. The Governor should not act as an active politician and therefore a political Governor should be avoided as far as possible. 23

The D.M.K. stated in its reply to the Sarkaria Commission that, if there is no provision for President's
rule at the Centre, then there shouldn't be any provision for President's rule in the state. Hence, article 356, 357, 360 and 365 should be deleted from the constitution. The party's M.P. Viduthali Verumbhi also favours the abolishing of article 356 since it has been misused and overused by Centre for its political end. 24

The D.M.K. has alleged that the Centre has virtually transferred 93% of industries from the state list to the Centre without amending the constitution. The party wants that the basic scheme of the constitution with regard to industries and commerce should be in the purview of the states primarily and only those industries be regulated and controlled by Centre, which are in public interest.

Again, on the role of planning commission, the D.M.K. feels that it has become the hand made of the Centre and National Development Council has been reduced to be a rubber stamp in the hands of Centre. The approval of the plan by N.D.C. is merely a ritual. Both the Planning Commission and N.D.C. are statutory bodies only. Therefore, the recommendations of Finance Commission should be mandatory for the Union to accept and implement. 25

However, D.M.K. M.P. Viduthali Verumbhi wants that Planning Commission should not act as another Cabinet at the Centre and states must not be dictated about their planning.
But N.D.C. is a useful body since it provides a forum for interactions between the State Chief Ministers and Union Ministers and resolves the misunderstanding among them.26

The D.M.K. concluded up its reply to Sarkaria Commission by stating that the Centre doesn't want to change the existing pattern of Centre-state relations since this gives dominance to it in financial and other powers. But the present provisions should be changed in the interests of the country as the present arrangements cuts at the root of federalism.27

Vidhuthali Verumbhi feels the urgent need for a thorough reappraisal of the Indian constitution to achieve a true federal polity. The Centre requires the powers only to the extent of protecting the unity, integrity and sovereignty of India and to preserve federal democratic structure of country.28

D.M.K. as a regional party emerged as a formidable political force in the state politics of Tamil Nadu since 1967. It is mentioned earlier that the D.M.K. strongly advocated state autonomy since the fourth general election, when it defeated the Congress Party at the elections. The D.M.K. apart from political issues, also sought to establish a caste and class less society to bring about
social and economic equality. The D.M.K. also gave a slogan to propagate and preserve Dravidian culture and language in its election manifesto:

The D.M.K., in the initial stage stood for the establishment of separate Dravidanad. However later on, the party abandoned its secessionist demand and consolidated its base on anti-Centre policies, Caste (Brahmin non-Brahmin) and language (against Hindi imposition) issues. The D.M.K., in its election manifesto always projected Centre-state relations as a major irritant and confrontational issue. The party consistently demanded a radical change in the existing Centre-state relations. The D.M.K. is in favour of more power to the states. The party wants the constitutional amendment to bring about a change in the existing Centre-state relations. The D.M.K. believes that except, Defence, Foreign affairs, Communication and Currency, all powers should be vested with the states only. It wants the redistribution and division of power mentioned in the seventh Schedule of the Indian constitution. The D.M.K's electoral performance has been best in 1967, 1972 and 1989 elections, when it returned to power in Tamil Nadu by defeating the Congress and AIDMK party.

Both the regional parties, Akali-Dal and D.M.K, have managed to influence the working of federal polity in India.
Both have demanded the greater autonomy for the states. But the demand for more powers to the states by Akali Dal is linked with the other religious demands (Akali Dal itself is a product of Sikh religion), whereas demand for change in the Centre-state relations by D.M.K is a political demand. (After giving up the demand for separate Dravidanad). The Akali's demand for state autonomy is a part of Anandpur Sahib resolution, where religious & other resolutions were also adopted and in recent years the Khalistan demand is also supported by the few factions of Akali Dal. D.M.K. contrary to this, has mobilised the people of Tamil Nadu on the plank of more power and autonomy to state, the better governance and development of the state without linking the religious and separatist demand. As a matter of fact, both these regional parties could secure the support and vote of the people in their respective states on the issue of neglecting the state's economic development and political interference by the Centre. Both these regional parties are regional not only in terms of their electoral support base, but also in their political ambitions and policy perspective with no apparent prospect of capturing power at the Centre or, except in extraordinary situations, of even playing a balancing role in the power structure at the national level.
They are obliged to articulate and mobilise regionally based interests and to agitate on local issues. Charges of discrimination by the Centre against their respective regions are their most potent electoral appeals to capture power in their states.29
FOOTNOTES

(Akali Dal and Centre-state relations)


12. Ibid.


22. Das Hanhar and Mohapatra, S., Centre-state relations Ashish publishing House, New Delhi 1986, p.244.
27. Interview with Lt General J.S. Arora, M.P. Akali Dal.
29. Interview with Lt General J.S. Arora, M.P. Akali Dal.
30. Sarkaria Commission report on Centre-state relations part II p. 858.
31. Ibid.
32. Interview with Lt General J.S. Arora, M.P. Akali Dal.


(D.M.K. and Centre-state relations)

4. Sati - Sahni - Centre state relations 1984 p.49.
5. The Hindu, 10th April 1967.
7. Rajmunnar report on Centre-state relations, Government of TamilNadu, Madras.


23. Interview with Viduthali Verumbhi, M.P, D.M.K.


26. Interview with Viduthali Verumbhi, D.M.K, M.P.

27. Sarkaria report on Centre-State relations, part II p. 737.

28. Interview with Viduthali Verumbhi - D.M.K. M.P.