ENTRY OF FILM PERSONALITIES INTO POLITICS

Cinema paved the way for the emergence of eminent personalities in the politics of Tamilnadu. As a matter of fact C.N.Annathurai, M.Karunanidhi, M.G.Ramachandran and J.Jeyalalitha being the deep rooted persons in the cinema industry became the successive chief ministers of the state. All of them used cinema as an effective media to communicate political ideas to the masses.¹

Cinema is relatively free, flexible and powerful media with more influence in politics than that of other medias.² It is also one of the easily understandable forms of entertainment. Cinema theatre was the first performance centre in which many Tamilians gathered under the same roof at a time.³ Its exploitation for political benefit began with C.N.Annathurai.

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2.1 C.N.ANNATHURAI

C.N. Annathurai was the founder of the DMK party. He was born at Kancheepuram. He was a good orator, writer and politician. His eloquent speeches both in Tamil and English attracted the mass. Annathurai joined Pachaippa college, Madras as a Student of the Junior Intermediate class in June 1928. He was a student of the college for five years from 1928 to 1933 and also secretary of the college union and secretary of the Economics Association each for one year. He emerged as the best parliamentarian during the anti-session bill debated in the Rajya sabha in 1963. His performance in the House earned for him the title the Bernard Shah of Tamilnadu.

C.N. Annathurai and M. Karunanidhi of the Dravida Kazhagam were the pioneers in the cinema field. In its history they dealt with social themes from 1952. Their

5. A.S.Venu, Anna and Crusade, Madras, 1987, P.15
6. Dravida Kazhagam is otherwise known as DK. It was started by E.V.Ramaswamy, otherwise called as EVR.Periyar. This organization was started to oppose the attitudes of the Brahmans in 1944. When Periyar was at the age of 72 he married 28 years old Maniammai. This led to a split in the party. The DK party activist use to wear black shirts.
dialogues in Tamil cinema revolutionized with a new vibration and succeeded in using this medium for political purposes. This trend enabled them to start a new political party called the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam taking advantage of the difference of opinion between E.V.Ramasamy, Periyar and his lieutenant C.N.Annathurai of Dravida Kazhagam. The 72 year old EVR's marriage with Maniammai of 28 years added fuel to the fire. This caused Annathurai and his followers to come out of the D.K to form the D.M.K.  

The DMK party at the time of its formation in 1949 was gifted with a number of talented and well experienced orators, writers and actors. They had conceived a definite role in films for their future in politics. Thus Tamilnadu Politics came to be linked with the cinema since the emergence of the Dravidian political party. C.N.Annathurai was mainly responsible for bringing the masses and cinema into active party politics. Hence cinema became the mainstay of the DMK to gain political power in Tamilnadu.

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2.1.1 C.N.ANNATHURAI AND THE FORMATION OF DMK

On 17th September 1949 in the Robinson Park at Madras, they founded a new political party called the “Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam”. Unexpectedly a large number of cinema actors and script writers associated with the Tamil cinema joined in DMK. Cinema actors like K.R.Ramaswamy, N.S.Krishnan, D.V.Narayanaswamy and writers like M.Karunanidhi, A.V.P.Asai Thambi, Rama Arangannal, A.K. Velan, and Kannadasan ventured for the development of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam through cinema media.

C.N.Annathurai, the architect of the DMK was a versatile genius. He was an eloquent speaker and ouracious reader. He made innovations in politics by introducing symbols and references to the party. The DMK cinemas were very much reflective in this political situation. As an orator of very rare ability in Tamil and English

Annathurai converted the educated students to his point of view. He successfully brought out their ideas in plays like ‘Chandrothayam’, ‘Chandra Mohan’, ‘Velaikkari’, ‘Or Eravu’, ‘Neethi Thevan Mayakkam’, and ‘Kalsumantha Kasadar’ by which a real change took place in the field of Tamil cinema.

2.1.2 ANNATHURAI IN DRAMA STAGE

C.N. Annathurai himself acted in ‘Chandrothayam’ along with his colleagues during party conferences. Most of his dramas which were published in ‘Dravida Naadu’ greatly helped the growth of DMK party. In writing field Annathurai occupied a unique place. He could write a number of pages on any topic. When Annathurai acted in cinemas he always criticized the activities of Brahmins. In ‘Chandrothayam’, Annathurai preached the ideas by which the property of temples must be used for public welfare. He also

21. Ibid., P.16.
encouraged widows re-marriage and self-respect marriages. In ‘Neethi Thevan Mayakkam’ he played the role of ‘Ravan’.
His dramas were excellent that even people in the opposite camp appreciated his talents. They were concerned with the current political problems and the stand of DMK on those issues.22 In the play ‘Kanneer Thuli’, Annathurai quoted the comment made by E.V.Ramasamy Periyar who referred C.N.Annathurai and his followers as ‘Kanneer Thuligal’. He vehemently attacked the congress party in his drama ‘Nankodai’ written in 1964. It pictured the difference between the congress party men of freedom struggle period and modern period.23

C.N.Annathurai was not only a dramatist but also a good critic of drama. His play ‘Kumasthavin Penn’ staged by TKS brothers was published in ‘Viduthalai’ Newspaper in 1940. In a speech under the heading ‘Kalaiyin Nilamai’ he remarked that the dramas should portray the real social problems and expose superstitions. He believed that drama could play a role in bringing about a political change.24

22. Arantai Narayanan, Thiravidam Paadiya Thiraipadanga] [Tamil], Madras, 1994, P.63.
He gave due respect to cinema actors. He had a soft corner for cinema and stage activists which he had exposed by inaugurating the statue of N.S.Krishnan on January 14, 1969.\textsuperscript{25} It was only after Annathurai’s dramas, M.R. Radha started staging drama like ‘Porval’, ‘Thookku Medai’, and ‘Ratha Kanneer’. Other drama companies started staging dramas with reformist themes like ‘Mullil Roja’, ‘Uyiroviyam’, and ‘Anthamann Kaithi’. K.R. Ramaswamy, was one of the popular film actor of DMK who staged ‘Or Eravu’ and ‘Velaikkari’ written by C.N.Annathurai continuously for 50 weeks.\textsuperscript{26}

In all the DMK conferences C.N.Annathurai’s dramas were acted by S.S.Rajendran, K.R.Ramasamy, N.S.Krishnan, Shivaji Ganesan and M.G. Ramachandran. He also encouraged his party leaders to write and act in dramas to propagate the ideas of his party. In his play ‘Kalsumantha Kasadar’ he made V.R.Nedunchezian, M.Karunanithi, E.V.K.Sampath and Kannadasan to take roles during Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam conference in 1950.\textsuperscript{27}

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\begin{tabular}{l}
25. P.C.Ganesan, \textit{Arasiyal Methai Anna} [Tamil], Madras, 1972, P.22. \\
27. P.V.R.Pandian, \textit{Arignar Annavin vazkai Varalaru}, [Tamil], Madurai, 1953, P.23. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{flushright}
believed that dramas based on party ideals were used by the party members in a meaningful way during the nights when the party conferences were held. He wrote ‘Nallathambi’ to render financial help to N.S.Krishnan who had just then been acquitted in Lakshmi Kanthan murder case.\textsuperscript{28}

Annathurai’s dramas became very popular. So cinema producers approached him to write script for cinemas. C.N.Annathurai wrote the script for the cinema ‘Nalla Thambi’ which was staged by N.S.Krishnan a number of times. This was the script that C.N.Annathurai wrote for a film in 1948. His script set a new style and trend in Tamil films.\textsuperscript{29} The film was a passionate and powerful propaganda against alcoholism and prohibition policy. It also strongly advocated the abolition of the jameendari system and the eradication of untouchability.\textsuperscript{30} Another popular drama of C.N.Annathurai transformed into cinema was ‘Velaikkari’ to be screened in 1949. It was noted for its powerful dialogues. ‘Velaikkari’ was

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\item[28.] N.A.Velayutham, \textit{kalaivanar Patti Thamizh Arignarkal}, [Tamil], Nagercoil, 1979, P.23.
\end{itemize}
a movie that revolutionised the Tamil cinema. The Tamil cinema field had not known a cinema of this kind before. It expressed C.N.Annathurai’s open and daring criticism of the judiciary which was functioning without much utility to the poor and the down trodden in society.\textsuperscript{31}

\subsection*{2.1.3 \textsc{Annathurai in Cinema Stage}}

C.N.Annathurai’s ‘Velaikkari’ and ‘Ore iravu’ were staged for many months in Tanjore by Nadippaisi pulavar K.R.Ramaswami troupe.\textsuperscript{32} An important dialogue in Tamil as follows ‘Sattam Enbathu Oru Erutarai, Athil Vakkeelin Vatham Oru Vilakku, Yezhaigal Peramuduyatha Vilakku’ meaning ‘Law is a darkroom, the argument of a lawyer is a light which the poor cannot get’. Thus the film ‘Velaikari’ proved a turning point in the history of Tamil cinema.\textsuperscript{33} Another cinema of C.N.Annathurai which carried the social and political ideas of the DMK was ‘Oru Eravu’. It was staged earlier as a play by K.R. Ramaswamy. A.V. Meiyappan, a notable cinema producer met C.N.Annathurai and expressed his desire to make it into cinema and requested him to write the script suitable for a full

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{31} C.N.Annathurai, \textit{Natiya Valarchi Thittam}, [Tamil], Tamilnadu Arasu, Madras, 1979, P.25.
\textsuperscript{32} A.P.Janarthanam, \textit{Anna- A Sketch}, Madras, 1968, P.29.
\end{flushright}
length cinema.\textsuperscript{34} In 1950 C.N.Annathurai came to the AVM studio in a particular evening and stayed there for a full night and wrote the entire script running over 300 pages. \textsuperscript{35} Another popular film for which C.N.Annathurai wrote the script was ‘Sorgavasal’ in May 1954. It attacked the superstitions of people seeking paradise.\textsuperscript{36}

Annathurai created a new style for modern Tamil which attracted the hearts of many young men.\textsuperscript{37} For the first time the medium of cinema was used to glorify the Tamil Language. C.N.Annathurai’s personal image rose to the pinnacle after the release of ‘Sorgavasal’, because the titles of a cinema, appeared with the prefix ‘Arignar’, a title which was conferred earlier on him by Kalki Krishnamurthy.\textsuperscript{38} Though his cinemas were only a few in number they could propagate the ideals of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. His involvement in drama and cinema gave dignity and respect to the artists. C.N.Annathurai’s writings, speeches, dramas and cinemas

\textsuperscript{34} Dinathanthi, Tamil daily, Chennai, dated 4-1-2005.
\textsuperscript{35} P.C.Ganesan, \textit{op. cit.}, P.27.
\textsuperscript{37} M.Adhiyaman., \textit{op. cit.}, 15, P.34.
\textsuperscript{38} Maraimalaiyan, \textit{Perarinjar Annavin Peru Vazhvu}, [Tamil], Madras, 1980, P.300.
played a vital role in the growth of his Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party. Finally in the 1967 general election the party won the majority and formed the ministry with Annathurai as the chief-minister of the state. In like manner many persons emerged to power and one among them is Karunanidhi.

2.2 M.KARUNANIDHI

Karunanidhi was born in Thirkkuvalai in Tanjore district on June 3rd, 1922 to orthodox parents Muthuvelar and Anjugam. He was a good orator, writer and politician. The notable film ‘Parasakthi’ released in 1952 marked a turning point in the life of Karunanidhi. He participated in the Kallakudi agitation and got imprisonment for several months. He is the founder editor of Murasoli, one of the best-known dailies in Tamil. Following the death of Annathurai in 1969 Karunanidhi became the Chief-Minister and still occupies the same as his fifth term.

M.Karunanidhi popularly called as ‘Kalaignar’ by the Tamilians was an orator, editor, novelist, and short story writer for cinemas and plays. He has written stories and scripts for 44 films 150 short stories and hundreds

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of poems. Most of his powerful writings are meant for attacking the evils of tradition, superstition and brahminism. His revolutionary ideas as Sivaguru in the play ‘Shanti’ provoked Congressmen to assault him on the roads of Pondicherry. He studied up to XI std and failed more than twice. At the early stage Karunanidhi was sent to study Gurugula education.

During his early period he was highly interested in acting and politics. With the cinema ‘Parasakthi’ Karunanidhi made a remarkable change in the cinema field. During 1938 when the anti-Hindi agitation was going on he and his friends issued pamphlets condemning the imposition of Hindi. He composed a song which he used to sing in the procession with his friends as ‘Vaarungal Ellorum Porukku, Cheruvom Vanthirukkum Hindi Peyai Viratta Purapaduvom’. In 1953 at the age of fifteen he edited a book named ‘Manavar Nesan’, Which gave him the confidence and training to start ‘Murasoli’ Newspaper later.

2.2.1 KARUNANIDHI AS A SCRIPT WRITER FOR DRAMA

His drama ‘Palaniappan’ was staged for collecting funds for the ‘Tamilnadu Maanavar Mandram’. As the income was focused insufficient for the said purpose he sold his drama to R.V. Gopal for Rs. 100 who started a drama troupe called ‘Nagai Dravida Nadigar Kazhagam’. He himself camped with the drama troupe at places like Villupuram and Pondicherry and acted as Sivaguru.44 Karunanidhi’s unique talent in Tamil writing enabled him to get association with the ‘Kudiarasu’ magazine. He wrote three plays for stage ‘Ore Mutham, ‘Manthiri Kumari’, and ‘Parasakthi in 1952 for Devi Nataka Sabha.45 His drama ‘Palaniappan’ denoted his failure in love. Later it was renamed as ‘Santha’ and Nachukoppai’.46 Several plays he wrote for the stage such as ‘Parabrahman’, ‘Udhaya Sooriyan’ ‘Mani Magudam’ and ‘Kaagitha Poo’ brought finance to his party. 47 Shivaji Ganesan played the role of the hero in ‘Parabrahman’ and S.S.Rajendran in ‘Mani Magudam’. The plays were popular and

44. P.Lenin, Yazhum Sakaptham Kalaignar, [Tamil], Trichy, 2001, P.206.
45. Lena Tamizhvanan, Kalaignar Karunanidhi, op.cit, P.35.
47. Murasoli, Tamil daily, Madras, dated 25-8-1956.
the party members were over flowing in cinema theatres when ‘Parasakthi’ was released as a cinema.48 C.N.Annathurai himself appreciated Karunanidhi for his play ‘Udaya Suriyan’ which was staged in the Salem and Vellore conferences against Nehru’s statement for using the word ‘Nonsense’ against the Tamilians.

A Black flag demonstration was organized against Nehru in 1958. According to C.N.Annathurai the play ‘Udaya suriyan’ marked a turning point in the propagation of the DMK ideas through dramas.49 It also brought a great deal of money to the party. In ‘Kuravanchi’ cinema too Karunanidhi noted the udaya sooriyan symbol.50 For the furtherance of the organization Karunanidhi organized meetings and himself acted in the political drama ‘Kaagitha Poo’ (paper flower), for the propogation of the principles of the DMK. It portrayed the story of a young congress man who joined the Kazhagam because of his love for the Tamil language.51 Other social dramas

49. T.M.Parthasarathy, DMK Varalaru,[Tamil],Chennai, 1961, P.22.
of Karunanidhi like ‘Vellikizhamai’, ‘Manohara’ [1954] ‘Malaikallan’[1954], ‘Poompuhar’ and ‘Poomalai’[1965] largely enriched the stage drama. Karunanidhi entered into the cinema world under a special circumstance. It is said that seeing his dramas and powerful writings, A.S.A.Samy, a cinema producer of Coimbatore invited him to write screen dialogues for the cinema ‘Rajakumari’ to be released in 1947. Accepting the same Karunanidhi left to stay at Coimbatore for the said purpose.52

When the cinema was released, he was shocked to see that his name did not find a place in the titles of the cinema. Thus disappointed returned to his own town Tiravarur where he wrote ‘Manthiri Kumari’ for ‘Modern Theatres’, Salem to be released in 1950.53 The cinema ‘Manthri Kumari’ was produced by Ellis. R. Duncan. After seeing this cinema N.S.Krishnan requested Karunanidhi to write the script for his own cinema ‘Manamagal’. This brought N.S.Krishnan and Karunanidhi closer to each other.54 In the film ‘Ammayappan’ which was released in 1954, Karunanidhi

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52. See Appendix-III. (Film script written by Karunanithi.)
openly criticized religion and religious practices. The dialogues and the songs of the cinema also carried the DMK message. Moreover, the oratory of the speaker of the party also acted effectively to capture political power.\textsuperscript{55} Rama Arangannal, R.M. Verappan, Kovaichezian and some of the notable cinema producers extended wholeheartedly support to DMK.

Besides C.N. Annathurai and Karunanidhi, there were other script and story writers like Bharathidhasan, A.V.P. Asai Thambi,\textsuperscript{56} Rama Arangannal,\textsuperscript{57} Kannadasan and Murasolimaran\textsuperscript{58} who contributed their share to the growth of

\textsuperscript{55}Dinathanthi, Tamil daily, Chennai, dated 21-1-2005.
\textsuperscript{56}A.V.P. Asai Thambi, a leading figure in the DMK party was a script writer and editor of the daily “Thani Arasu”. He wrote the script for one of the important DMK propaganda films ‘Sarvathikari’ in which MGR acted as the hero.
\textsuperscript{57}Rama Arangannal was the chairman of the T.N slum clearance Board during the period of MGR. Arangannal was also the editor of Dravida Naadu when CNA was put as publisher. He wrote the script for Annadurai’s ‘Thai Magalukku Kattiya Thaali’. He also wrote the script for ‘Pon Vilayum Boomi’.
\textsuperscript{58}Murasoli Maran was one of the frontline leader of the DMK party. He was the editor of the daily ‘Murasoli’. He wrote the script of ‘Vanangamudi’. He acted as the member of the Parliament. He served as the Union Minister for Trade and Commerce during the BJP rule.
The dramatic role interpretation offered to Thirukural by Karunanidhi increased the influence of cinema in the DMK and increased simultaneously the dominance of film actors over the party.

2.3 KANNADHASAN

Kannadhasan was one of the remarkable poets of Tamilnadu. He studied up to VII std. His first song was for the cinema 'Kalvanin Kaathli'. He wrote more than 5000 songs and contested the 1957 election as a DMK candidate from the Thirukazhizur constituency. MGR honoured this poet by appointing him as the poet laurete of the Tamilnadu Government on 28-3-1978. The entry of Kannadasan a lyric poet of versatile talents and remarkable personality into the cinema world marked the beginning of an era in the Tamil cinema in which the songs constituted an important ingredient. The first cinema for which he wrote the song was “Illara Jothi”.

60.K.Kesavan, Dravida Eakathil Pilavugal, [Tamil], Chennai, 1994,P.43.
Kannadhasan actively involved in the party affairs of the DMK. N.S.Krishnan was confident that Kannadasan should write songs for his cinemas. Accordingly Kannadasan wrote the scripts for ‘Raja Desingu’.\(^{62}\) He entered into politics because of his association with M.Karunanidhi. Both of them stood together for a cinema produced by ‘Modern Theatres’ Salem.\(^{63}\) Other than writing songs he wrote scripts for a number of cinemas like ‘Madurai Veeran’ (1956), ‘Mannathi Mannan’ [1960], ‘Naadodi Mannan’ [1958], and ‘Maha Devi’ [1957]. All these cinemas were acted by M.G.Ramachandran as the hero. He had to work for the DMK party’s success in the Madras corporation elections to be held in 1959.

Slowly difference of opinion arose in between Kannadasan and DMK leaders like Annathurai and Karunanidhi. As a consequence of this he did not write songs for two of Shivaji Ganesan’s cinemas, ‘Bhagappirivinai’, and ‘Padikkatha Meithai’.\(^{64}\) In the cinema ‘Padithalmattum Pothumaa’ Kannadhasan indirectly criticized Annathurai

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by the verse ‘Arivatra Kootam Aruginil Irunthaal Arignanor Komali’. On account of this Kannadhasan received lot of condemnation from the DMK. However the contribution of Kannadasan marked an important phase in the history of the Tamil cinema world. His cinema songs were effectively used for propagating political and social ideas. He also played leading roles when those dramas were made into cinemas.

Being an active party man he effectively participated in the DMK agitations. During the Anti- Hindi agitation he erased the Hindi-letters on the sign boards at the Coimbatore railway station. He also used to address public meetings organized by the DMK.

2.4 N.S. KRISHNAN

N.S.krishnan known as NSK was one of the best comedians in the cinema field. He was born on November 29, 1908 in Ozhuginaserry of Kanyakumari District to Sudaliyandi and Esakki. He joined the TKS brothers drama company and Sri.Bala Shangumanatha Sabha in 1925. His first

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65. Lena Tamizhvanan, Kalaignar Karunanidhi, op. cit., P.80.
first cinema was ‘Sathi Leelavathi’. NSK won the admiration of
the people and they called him Kalaivanar. He was a good
singer and a Villupattu performer. He had a dramatic troupe
called the NSK Nataka Sabha. He started a cinema company at
Coimbatore in 1939 called ‘Ashok films’. N.S.Krishnan could
rightly be regarded as a pioneer to exploit cinema for political
advantages. Though basically a Gandhian and believer in the
ahimsa method of struggle, N.S.Krishnan extended whole
hearted support to Annathurai to form the party of DMK in
1949. In his film ‘Panam’, by an effective fun, he brought the
name Ti.Mu.Ka. It is an abbreviation of ‘Tirukkural Munnani
Kazhagam’.67

N.S.Krishnan was not only an actor but a
producer also. He produced cinemas like ‘Puthiman Balavan
Avan’, ‘Naveena Vikramatihan, ‘Chandra Hari’, and ‘Ezhandha
Kathal’. His ‘NSK films’ produced ‘Nalla Thambi’.68 By his
dramatic troop ‘NSK Nataka Sabha’ he produced dramas like
‘Irupathum Arupathum’ and ‘Nalla Thambi’. His
‘Gandhimahan Sarithram’ was an outstanding piece of Villupattu

while ‘Kinthanar Sarithiram’ was the best of his Kalatchebams.  

NSK is considered as a pioneer in exploiting cinema for political advantage. He worked hard for the victory of Karunanidhi in Kulithalai.

N.S.Krishnan was closely associated with most of the political leaders, but his association with the leaders of the DMK was more intimate. He lived as a Philanthropist who gave up most of his wealth for charity to the poor and died in poverty on August 10, 1957. The statue opening ceremony of N.S.Krishnan which took place in 1969 at Nagercoil was the last function of Annathurai, as the chief-minister of the state.

2.5 SHIVAJI GANESAN

Shivaji Ganesan was born on 1st October 1928. Mr.Chinnaswamy Thevar and Mrs.Rajamani were his parents. He was the 11th child in the family. At the age of 7 he joined as an actor in the drama company. He acted in drama

69.V.C.Narayanan, Kalaivanar, Chennai, 1979, P.27.
70.Lena Tamilvanan, Kalaignar Karunanidhi, op.cit., P.77.
72.Lena Tamilvanan, Kalaignar Karunanidhi, op.cit., P.111.
named ‘Shivaji Kanda Indu Samrajyam’ in the DK conference. From that day he was called by E.V.R as Shivaji Ganesan. He entered the cinema world through ‘Parasakthi’ which could dominate the cinema world for more than three decades. He was also a member of the DMK.  

The powerful dialogues of his cinema were written by M.Karunanidhi. He sold clothes for DMK party to raise fund for storm and flood relief at Virudhunagar in 1956. His first double act cinema ‘Uthamaputhran’ was released in 1958.  

He acted in the cinema ‘Veerapandiya Kattabomman’ which exposed nationalistic feelings among the viewers. Shivaji’s 200th cinema was ‘Thirisoolam’.  

Shivaji introduced his son Prabhu in his 223rd cinema ‘Sangili’ which was released on 14, April 1982. He was honoured with ‘Sevalie Award’ by the French Government. Shivaji Ganesan was associated with DMK for a short period and he quit the DMK in 1957.  

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76.Ibid., dated 24-3-2005.
77.Karthigesu Sivathamby, op.cit., P.49.
departure from the DMK is said to be his strong religious sentiments. After his success in the early stages he went to Tirupathi to offer his hair to Lord Venkatachalapathy. For that he was condemned by the frontline leaders of the DMK party. So he left the DMK Party and joined the congress party. Within a short period, he started a new political party called ‘Tamilaga Munnetra Munnani’ on 2, October 1975. His last film was ‘Padayappa’, he died on 21st July 2001. He was a dynamic personality loved by all sets of people.

2.6 S.S.RAJENDRAN

S.S.Rajendran was popularly called as ‘Ilatchiya Nadigar. His first film was Parasakthi. He acted in 70 films, with Parasakthi as the first and ‘Erathai Manithan in 1982 as the last. SSR staged ‘Manimagudam’ for thirteen continuous years. It was taken to every nook and corners of Tamilnadu to spread rationalistic ideas. He was elected in 1957 from the Theni constituency to Madras Legislative Assembly. In 1969 he became Rajya sabha member of the Parliament and his membership lasted till 1975. He was appointed 

78. The Hindu, English Daily, Madras dated 3-10-1975.
79. Ibid., dated 7-10-1975.
as the vice-chairman of the Tamilnadu small savings advisory board in 1980. He joined the P.K. Subha Reddiyars ‘Puli Manager Boys company’ at the age of seven. His first role was in ‘Veera Abhimanyu’.  

In the field of art he had been competing with M.G.Ramachandran and Shivaji Ganesan as a popular hero of this period. His ability to speak dialogue with clarity and conviction made him prominent in cinema and politics.  

He joined the T.K.S. Brothers Madurai Sri Bala Shanmughanada Sabha in 1940 and came into contact with E.V.Ramasamy and Annathurai when TKS company was encamped at Erode. Later he joined the Dravidian party.

The rationalistic ideas of E.V.Ramasamy and Annathurai instigated him to leave the TKS company in 1943. As a member of the Dravidian party he got married with Pankajam on December 1, 1946 in the presence of Bharathi Dasan and Annathurai. In his cinema company ‘SSR Pictures’

81. T.M. Parthasarathy, op. cit., P.17.
82. T.K.S. Muthuswamy, T.K. Shanmugham, T.K. Bhagvathi and T.K.Sankaran popularly known as T.K.S. Brothers whose profession was stage acting. Their drama troupe used to go from one place to another. When the talkie was introduced they started acting in cinema also. They were staunch congress men and used Khadar.
he showed the emblem of a ring in the DMK flag.\textsuperscript{84} His first film was ‘Parasakthi’. The first cinema of SSR pictures was ‘Thangarathinam’\textsuperscript{85} which was released in 1960. He was awarded the President’s shield for ‘Kumudam’, ‘Sarasa’ and ‘Kaikodutha Deivam’. He acted in 70 cinemas. His popular cinemas were ‘Kalai Deivam’, ‘Muthalaali’ and ‘Thai Piranthal Vazhi Pirakkum’.\textsuperscript{86} He was the most active and prominent actor in the DMK.

2.7 M.G. RAMA CHANDRAN

Maruthur Gopala Rama Chandran was affectionately called as ‘MGR’, ‘Makkal Thilagam’, ‘Ponmana Chemmal’, ‘Puratchinadigar’, ‘Vaathiyar’, ‘Puratchi Thalaivar’.\textsuperscript{87} He was called as ‘Idhyakani’ by Annathurai due to the affection towards him.\textsuperscript{88} He was born on 17\textsuperscript{th} January 1917 as the fifth child of Gopala Menon and Sathyabhama at

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{84} K. Veeramani, \textit{Dravida Iyakka Unmai Varalaru} [Tamil], Madras, 1975, P.13.
\item \textsuperscript{85} ‘Thangarathinam’ film was released in 1960. It was directed by SSR pictures by S.S.Rajendran. In this film he showed C.N.Annathurai addressing a party conference.
\item \textsuperscript{86} T.B.Nataraja Pillai \textit{op.cit.}, P.32.
\item \textsuperscript{87} K. Kesavan, \textit{op.cit.}, P.69.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Aranthai Narayanan, \textit{Tamil Cinemavin Kathai}, \textit{op.cit.}, P.267.
\end{itemize}
Srilanka.\textsuperscript{89} His father expired at Srilanka in 1919. So Sathyabhamma shifted her family to Kumbakonam.\textsuperscript{90} Due to the poor economic condition MGR joined the ‘Madurai Original Boys company’ for a meager pittance of four annas per day at the age of seven. After some time MGR’s salary was enhanced to Rs. 5 per month.\textsuperscript{91} He learned dancing and sword fighting in the Boys company. These experiences later helped him to act well in cinema.\textsuperscript{92}

MGR entered the cinema field at the age of 19. In his first cinema ‘Sathi Leelavathi’ released in 1936 he was given the role of a sub-inspector of police.\textsuperscript{93} Till he appeared as a hero in ‘Raja Kumari’ (1947) scripted by Karunanidhi he acted only in minor roles. At the age of 61 his last film ‘Maduraiyai Meeta Sundara Pandiyan’\textsuperscript{94} was released in 1978. Totally MGR acted in 136 cinemas. He was in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89}Mohan Dhas, \textit{MGR, The Man and the Myth}, Bangalore, 1992, P.17.
\item \textsuperscript{90}Dinathanthi, Tamil daily, Chennai, dated 31-1-2005.
\item \textsuperscript{92}Vidwan.V.Lakshmanan, \textit{Eduththadhai Mudippavar MGR}, [Tamil], 1981, P.6.
\item \textsuperscript{93}Dinathanthi, Tamil daily Chennai, dated 2-2-2005.
\item \textsuperscript{94}Madurayai Meeta Sundara Pandiyan is the last film in which MGR acted. It was released on 14, January 1978. It was produced by Soleeswarar Combines Group. The heroine of this film was Latha.
\end{itemize}
cinema world for 42 years. From 1947 to 1978 he acted in 117 films as hero. His development as a hero in cinema attained perfection with the help of scripts written by his intimate friend M. Karunanidhi and his political guru Annathurai.

MGR’s luck began with Raja Kumari cinema. His steady identification with the DMK along with the influence of Annathurai made him a hero in the cinema ‘Malaikallan’ released in 1954. The script was written by Karunanidhi and the film was released in 1954. The script written by Karunanidhi indirectly carried the social and political message of the DMK to the masses. The success of the cinema gave a boost to MGR.

The first song “Tamizhan Endoru Inamundu Thaniye Adharkori Gunamundu” speaks of the glory of the Tamil language and culture. The song was sung by T.M. Sounderrajan and music was performed by M.S. Subbia Naidu. It was written by Namakkal Kavingar and Tanjai Ramaiah Dhas.

Another song “Yethanai Kaalamthan Yemaatruvaar Inda Naatilee”, [How many days could be cheated in the country] acted as warning to the black marketers and exploiters of the society.\textsuperscript{98} The song also goes on to say that schools should be started everywhere and illiteracy, poverty and hunger should be wiped out.

MGR made it a point to have at least one song carrying the socialist ideology of the DMK in the film he acted. He acted on different roles like a peasant, a fisherman, a carter, a taxi-driver and a butler.\textsuperscript{99} The hero MGR neither smoked nor drank in the cinemas.

The DMK slowly began to introduce the party symbols and party colours in ‘Naadodi Mannan’\textsuperscript{100} which was released in 1958.\textsuperscript{101} MGR got the credit of showing DMK flag first in the Tamil cinema. Later on the motive of depicting

\textsuperscript{98} M.S.Manian, \textit{op.cit.}, P.22.
\textsuperscript{99} Karthigesu Sivathamby, \textit{op.cit.}, P.42.
\textsuperscript{100} Nadoodi Mannan film was released on 22-8-1958. It was produced by MGR pictures. In this film MGR had acted in double role. The heroine of this film was Banumathi. The film got a tremendous victory. He was presented with a 110 kg wt.goldVeera vaal in a meeting at the Madurai Thamukkam Maidanam by Navalar Neduncheziyan. The meeting was arranged by Madurai Muthu. For the first time the emblem of MGR pictures with the DMK flag in red and black was shown.
the rising sun as the party emblem, was often displayed in cinemas. The word ‘Anna’ referring to C.N. Annathurai was also used very frequently in dialogues and songs of cinemas. In the cinema ‘Anbe Vaa’ released in 1966, the rising sun was shown in colour and MGR himself appeared in black and red dress. In the film ‘Chakkravarthi Thirumagal’ released in 1967 the name of the character played by MGR was ‘Udaya Sooriyan’.102

MGR said art and politics are the two sides of the coin. The symbol which MGR used in his cinema was the colour of the flag used by the DMK. The popularity of the party spread all over the villages through the cinemas in which MGR acted. In order to project a full fledged image of himself, and to popularize the social and political ideas of the party he produced the film ‘Naadodi Mannan’ in 1958. MGR provided the story for the cinema and also for the first time he directed a cinema. This cinema effectively conveyed the DMK ideology.103 MGR used his dialogue to show his faith in

103.Naveenan op.cit., P.27.
non-violence and his great concern for the poor. In one dialogue he expressed his concern for the poor and attacked the rich.\textsuperscript{104} Through various characters in ‘Nadoodi Mannan’ he communicated the political ideas of the DMK. It was found that mainly people from non-professional classes chose MGR as their hero.\textsuperscript{105}

In 1961 MGR acted in a cinema ‘Thirudathe’. It was a grand success. This was the first film of MGR with a social theme. MGR’s involvement with the DMK became deeper and his cinema image increased. His association with the DMK and C.N.Annathurai opened up a new phase in MGR’s life. His growing popularity with the masses made him a valuable asset to the DMK.\textsuperscript{106}

In the film ‘Kudumbathalaivan’ released in 1962 he mentioned about inter-caste marriage as a noted ideology of the DMK party.\textsuperscript{107} ‘Enga Veetu Pillai’ was

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105]Karthigesu Sivathamby, \textit{op.cit.}, P.44.
\item[106]Thandavan, \textit{All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam}, Madras, 1987, P.94.
\end{footnotes}
romantic and comedy film released in 1965 denoted the ideals of DMK as an imperative to the social and economic upliftment of the poorer masses of Tamilnadu. The dialogue was written for the victory of Murasoli Maran when MGR was in the DMK.

In all his cinemas MGR created the impression that the roles portrayed by him reflected his actions and attitudes in real life. In ‘Petralthaan Pillayaa’ released in 1966 MGR argued for the upliftment of the poor of Tamilnadu. He also stressed that a leader should possess a high sense of duty, self control and honesty. It argued that the guilty must be corrected and stressed the need for the habitation of the poor and for rendering Social, Justice to them. The ‘Nam Naadu’ film released in 1969 was one of the popular cinemas to expose the exploitation of the masses.

The following song from the cinema ‘Nam Naadu’ described Annathurai as the ‘Gandhi of the South’ and also carried a reference to the rising sun. In a song ‘Annavin Thambi,

108. R. Thandavan, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, op. cit., P.98.
111. Mohandhas, op. cit., P.27.
Unmayin Thozhan, Yezhaiyin Thalaivan, Nangalaiya’. MGR was referred to as Annathurai’s younger brother, friend of the truth and the leader of the poor.\textsuperscript{112} MGR began to help the poor directly. Since he had no children, he adopted the poor as his wards. The DMK cinemas were very much reflective. The cinema stressed the duty of the youth to help the aged and to work for the upliftment of women in the society.

MGR cinemas also indicated gap between the rich and the poor in the Tamil society and also exposed the political corruption in Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{113} In ‘Engal Thangam’ released in 1970, the story and script were handled by Murasolimaran, a nephew of Karunanidhi. In it Annathurai was praised as the Godfather of Tamil Nadu.

Annathurai taught the Tamils to face any burden with strong heart (Ethayum Thangum Ethayam) and advised every Tamilan to be stored by the glory of the Tamil language.\textsuperscript{114} A song in the cinema depicted the escape of MGR from a shooting incident and the attempt on his life on the eve of 1967 elections. ‘I died and came back alive’, ‘I laughed at yama’, it meant that he was saved from death for saving the

\textsuperscript{112}Dinathanthi, Tamil daily, Chennai, dated, 22-2-2005.
\textsuperscript{113}Thandavan, AIADMK a – review, op. cit., P.99.
\textsuperscript{114}Karthigesu Sivathamby, op. cit., P.33.
people. In ‘Thai Sollai Thattathe’ released in 1961 MGR portrayed the sense of devotion and responsibility of a police officer. Along with the cinema image MGR had the capacity of projecting himself as a political leader. His real image and film image were identical. People did not accept him as a mere actor.

The distinctive feature of MGR’s films stressed the dignity of labour, agriculture and other manual works. In his film ‘Rickshakaran’ released in 1971 he played the role of a rickshaw puller. Karunanidhi the, then Chief-Minister of Tamilnadu praised him to skies. The main theme of the cinema was that intelligence associated with physical labour can make a man honourable in the society.

Some of his legendary and immortal films are ‘Kanchi Thalaivan’, ‘Naadodi Mannan’, ‘Adimai Penn’, ‘Mannathi Mannan’, ‘Arasa Kattalai, ‘Vikramathithan’, ‘Marutha Naatu Ilavarasi’ and ‘Arasilan Kumari’. MGR had been a film actor since 1936 but it was during 1950, with films like ‘Maruthanattu Ilavarasi’ and ‘Marmayogi’ that his association

with the DMK became a full fledged one. In ‘Mannathi Mannan’ the song ‘Atcham Enbathu Madamaiyada Anchamai Dravida Udamaiaida’ portrayed the fearless progedy of Dravida Nadu. There were films in which MGR had successfully built up the image of being the protector of the common man. This image helped him immensely as a political asset after his separation from the DMK. In cinema and politics MGR acted as the backbone and financial supporter of the DMK party.

The charisma and personality of MGR was built through a series of cinemas enabled the DMK a strong political power in Tamilnadu. MGR was considered as a vote capturer of the DMK. Annathurai once remarked about MGR that if MGR showed his face Annathurai could get 40,000 votes and when MGR addressed a meeting Annathurai could get 4 lakhs votes.

In 1962 Karunanidhi contested for the Tamilnadu legislative assembly from the Tanjore constituency. His opponent Parisutha Nadar was not only rich but also a very

120.Naveenan, Naan Kanda MGR, op.cit., P.63.
122.K.Kesavan, op.cit., P.55.
popular figure in Tanjore. \textsuperscript{123} It was believed that Karunanidhi would be defeated in the election. This news reached MGR while he was touring in Kanchipuram where Annathurai was contesting. MGR immediately rushed to Tanjore and started campaigning for Karunanidhi. As a result Karunanidhi won the election and Annathurai failed in Kanchipuram. Honouring the victory of Karunanidhi, MGR remarked that Karunanidhi’s victory was his victory. \textsuperscript{124} MGR himself secured the highest margin of votes in his first election when he contested in the St.Thomas mount constituency in 1967 as a DMK candidate.\textsuperscript{125}

The heroic position enjoyed by MGR in the Tamil films earned for him fame and name in the DMK party. In January 1965, the frontline party leaders of the DMK met at Arivagam to conduct a condemned meeting for anti-Hindi on January 26, 1965.\textsuperscript{126} The violent anti-Hindi agitation was led by the DMK in which more than fifty people were killed owing to police firing. He never missed any opportunity to propagate

\textsuperscript{125}S.Sadsivam, op.cit., P.10.
the political ideals of his party. In 1967, an attempt on the life of MGR was made by M.R. Radha, his co-actor as villain in many cinemas. Fortunately, MGR survived but he had to be hospitalized for more than two months.

In fact at the time of the elections MGR was still in the hospital taking treatment for the bullet wounds. This incident came as a blessing in disguise for the DMK. Full page advertisements in the leading dailies, wall posters and hand bills bearing the picture of MGR in the hospital were displayed to get the support of the voters. The mass sympathy for MGR and the mal administration of the Congress Party paved the way for the victory of the DMK party in 1967 general elections.

After the 1967 elections the DMK with Annathurai as the Chief-Minister formed the first non-congress Government in the state. When the DMK ministry was formed and sworn MGR was still in the hospital. Annathurai had sent the list of his council of ministers to MGR for his opinion. This proved the priority in the party given to MGR by Annathurai.

127. V.R. Neduncheziyan, op.cit., P.27
130. Lena Tamilvanan, Kalaignar Karunanidhi, op.cit., P.93.
The DMK suffered a terrible blow on February 3, 1969, the founder leader of the DMK and the then Chief-Minister Annathurai died of cancer.\textsuperscript{131} Annathurai’s death created a great vacuum in the party and the government. Then the question raised as who would lead the party and the government.

The chief contestants for the post of Chief-Minister were V.R. Neduncheziyan, General Secretary of the party and Karunanidhi, the then Public Work Department minister. But it was due to the diplomatic role played by MGR Karunanidhi became the Chief - Minister.\textsuperscript{132} Agitated Neduncheziyan wanted to quit the cabinet. But to appease him the new post of party General Secretary was created and given to him and thus he agreed to continue in the ministry of Karunanidhi.

MGR was the greatest beneficiary in this bargain. He emerged as a King maker and was appointed as the treasurer of DMK by Karunanidhi.\textsuperscript{133} But within a short period rift started between M.G.R and other leaders of the D.M.K.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item K.Kesavan, \textit{op.cit.}, P.61.
\item AIADMK Origin Growth and Structure \textit{op.cit.}, PP.24-26.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The rampart corruption prevailed in the D.M.K. administration was the sole cause of the rift. At its climax M.G.R came out of the DMK party to form the rival party called Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. This party in the 1977 elections emerged victorious to change the destiny of Tamilnadu with an actress as the Chief-Minister of Tamilnadu is Jeyalalitha.

2.8 J. Jeyalalitha

J. Jeyalalitha was born to Jeyaram and actress Sandhiya on 24 February 1948. After completing her school education in the Church Park convent school, Mount Road Madras, she entered into the cinema field. Her first cinema was ‘Vennirai Adai’ in which she acted as a young widow. Then she began to act with M.G. Ramachandran and acted in 28 films with him.

M.G. Ramachandran brought her into politics and she became the propaganda secretary of the AIADMK in 1982. She acted very interestingly and came for the election campaign for the Tiruchendur bye-election in 1983 and the party won in that election. After returning from

135. P.C. Ganesan, Vetti Selvi Jeyalalitha, [Tamil], 1987, Madras, P.47.
America in 1984 Jeyalalitha was not admitted to see MGR in the Tamilnadu Guest house at Delhi. She was insulted in the funeral procession of MGR disallowing her to sit near the body of MGR. She was a very talented personality than Janaki and very fluent in English. After the death of MGR in 1987, she utilized the opportunity and captured power.

In the 1991 general election her party got absolute majority and she became the Chief-Minister of Tamilnadu in 1991. When Jeyalalitha came to power in 1991 she told that Brahmins were living in the world for doing social work to the people. The Brahmins were trying to tell their caste name but were unwilling to say as Tamilans. When Jeyalalitha was the Chief-Minister of Tamilnadu in 1992 she encouraged the unlawful activities related to brahminism.

After becoming the chief-minister of Tamilnadu in 1991 she kept the schemes implemented by the former ruling party in a corner and gave more importance to religious activities. The followers of Jeyalalitha and religious priests insisted to participate in Mahamaham festival at kumbakonam by which she was poured with holy water in the

137.Ibid., P.109.
silver vessels.\footnote{P.C.Ganesan, \textit{op.cit.}, P.49.} Due to crowd many people lost their lives. When Jeyalalitha entered into the Holy Mahamaham tank. She was insulted by some of the frontline leaders of the AIADMK party. But after becoming the Chief-Minister of Tamilnadu she honoured them and appointed them as ministers.\footnote{Puratchi Dhasan., \textit{op.cit.}, P.66.}

Thus C.N.Annathurai, M.Karunanidhi, M.G.Ramachandran, and J.Jeyalalitha, the film personalities became the Chief-Minister of Tamilnadu since the 1967 general election. This is a clear evidence of the evolution, influence, and impact and evolution of cinema in Tamilnadu politics.