CHAPTER - III

FILM AND THE CONGRESS
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FILM AND THE CONGRESS PARTY

The aspirations of the people of the pre-Independent India for freedom expressed itself in two chief directions: one was political, the concern for the liberation of the nation from the imperial rule, and the other was social - the concern for emancipation from social evils like untouchability, alcohol, infanticide, dowry, restrictions on temple entry and so on. Gandhiji's 'non-violence' was the guiding philosophy for the nationalists and a weapon against the British rule. This chapter deals with the role played by film in the pre-independent India in the cause of (Indian) nationalism and in the cause of social awakening. It also attempts to show how the Congress Party (Congress) made use of the films after Independence.

The Indian National Congress formed in 1885 was the first organised movement of the Indian nationalists against the British rule in India. It is the oldest political party in Asia and the largest non-communist party in the world. The twin objectives of the Indian National Congress were political freedom and social reconstruction. Gandhiji, who had been accepted as the leader of the nation, had made

it clear that social reforms were closely related to the
efforts towards nationhood and that there could be no real
swaraj without social change. Issues like the removal of
untouchability and the emancipation of women were part of
the Gandhian programme.

'The Indian National Congress as a political
party soon became the vanguard of the National Movement
spearheading the struggle for independence, reflecting the
ambitions and aspirations of millions of Indians. The Indian
National Congress had a mass appeal and had within its fold
millions of men, young and old, who were willing to make
any sacrifice and pay any price for the sake of freedom.
The spirit of the Movement had to reach the masses somehow.
The Indian National Congress had to communicate to the
illiterate rural masses the ideas, objectives and philosophies of the Freedom Movement. The Indian National Congress
employed several media of communication - symbols, songs,
"villupaattu" (communication through a recital of song and
narration using an instrument which resembled a bow),
"therukkoothu" (crude form of folk plays performed on the
streets), drama, political platforms and the press. However,
these forms of communication could not help the movement
succeed in making a massive impact. When cinema emerged as
the most popular form of entertainment, it was slowly made
use of for political propaganda.
Apart from providing entertainment, this medium, viz., the film, often sought to reflect the social and political concern of the masses. Depending upon popular patronage for its very survival, the film industry has also to mirror the interests of the people whom it seeks to entertain. Moreover, the cinema envelops and combines within itself all other performing art forms of the time. Thus, when certain cinematic motifs are persistently repeated it can be safely presumed that these are the outward expressions of the inner urges of the people.\(^2\) The impact of a film can perhaps be summed up in the words of a noted film theoretician, Siegfried Kracauer who said "What films reflect are not so much explicit credos as psychological dispositions - those deep layers of collective mentality which extended more or less below the dimensions of consciousness."\(^3\)

Another special feature of the cinema as a medium is audience participation. The audience project themselves into situations they see on the screen and in a vicarious way share the experiences portrayed. Thus the Tamil films between 1931 and 1947 serve as a reflector of


the values and issues that preoccupied the minds of the people at that time. Although there was not much of political content in these films, they were geared towards provoking political action.\(^4\) To borrow that useful distinction made by Jean Lue Godard, the film-makers of this period did not make political film but made films of the day or at least to express unhappiness over the situation as it existed.\(^5\)

There was another dimension to the involvement of Tamil cinema in the nationalist movement. Actors and film makers as a community supported the nationalist cause and participated in the hectic political activities of the period. In fact this participation endowed their films with greater appeal than they otherwise would have possessed. The spread of movies as an entertainment form had by this time produced a new sociological phenomenon in the community of actors. They had become a new 'powerless elite' whose way of life and action aroused great interest among the audience for whom they performed. By their participation, they lent their popularity to the nationalist cause and thus widened the mass basis of the movement. In the process, their activities which would otherwise have

\(^4\) Theodore Baskaran, S., op.cit., p. 97.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 98.
been of little consequence gained greater political significance. 6

The challenge of foreign rule and awareness of the need for social reforms and people's participation in election profoundly affected the Tamil cinema. 7 Following the non-cooperation movement against the British rule in India in 1919, every drama staged was geared towards nationalistic propaganda. 8 When the talkie was introduced the popular stage moved into the studios and as a result, the Tamil cinema emerged as a powerful influence in the political life of the country. Stage actors, song writers and set-artiste all moved en mass into the studios. These artistes had political involvement either directly or indirectly before and after entering the cinema. N.G. Nataraja Pillai and Subbaiya Bagavathar arrested during the independence movement, were the earliest heroes of Tamil films. Sundaramurthy Ooduvaar who acted in "Pattinathaar" was an active campaigner for the removal of untouchability. S. Devudu Ayyar, an active volunteer in the political agitations and a participant in the Vedaranyam March who had been sentenced to jail for singing seditious songs,

6. Ibid., p. 98.
7. Ibid., p. 100.
was a film actor in his later days. M.V. Mani who acted in "Sathi Leelavathi" (1936) used to go with C.Rajagopalachari and appear on many political platforms. It is he who first organised all the film actors into an association and held their first meeting in the Congress Party Office at Madras in 1938. Anandanayagam, a noted actor, took a leading part in political demonstrations. [The famous T.K.S. Brothers who staged political plays like "Desabakthi" and "Kadar Bakthi" became actors when the talkie was introduced in Tamil Nadu.] S.G. Kittappa, the husband of K.B.Sundarambal, one of the brightest luminaries of the Tamil Stage and screen, took no direct part in political agitation, but always wore a Gandhi cap and dressed himself only in Kedar. Invariably his dramas ended with the popular prayer song of Gandhiji, namely, 'Raghupathi Raghava Rajaram'.

Even actresses involved themselves in political activities. For example, M.R. Santhanalakshmi picked toddy shops during the Civil Disobedience Movement and courted arrest in Madurai in 1931. M.K.Kamalaveni was also imprisoned for her nationalistic activities.

K.B. Sundarambaal used to accompany Sathyamurthy on his election tours and every meeting of his started with the rendering of nationalistic songs by K.B. Sundarambaal.  

Among the writers, K.S. Santhanakrishnan Naidu of Arya Gana Sabha, M.S. Balasundaram and Baskaradas, were the backbone of the popular stage and the main force behind its politicization.

The film producers were also like the actors and song script writers, committed to political propaganda and party activities. A. Narayanan, a sympathiser of the Congress Party envisioned a political role for the Tamil Cinema. He was closely associated with C. Rajagopalachari, Sathiyamurthy and T. Prakasam who were the important leaders of the Indian National Congress from the South. He took to wearing 'Kadhar' and also encouraged young people to come forward to act in films. He produced a number of silent movies and news reels highlighting the important

12. K.B.S. played the role of Avvaiyar, a legendary Tamil poetess, in the film "Avvaiyaar".


programmes of the Congress Party. He was quite aware of the effectiveness of the cinema as a powerful medium and the unique possibilities of its accelerating the pace of the freedom movement. Va.Ra. who formed a part of the highly politicised group of writers that grew around the Tamil monthly "Manikkodi" (a phrase describing the tricolour flag, borrowed from a Bharathiar song) was one of the major influences on Narayanan's political outlook. Yet another eminent figure in the film world noted for his participation in politics of the pre-independent era is K.S.Gopalakrishnan, who has won much acclaim as a popular film director and producer. He used to get help from the stage and film artistes for party activities. With the realization that the cinema could be a potent means for propaganda, he himself got into films. He acted in a number of patriotic films including "Desa Munnetram" (1938) (The Progress of the Nation) and "Jalaja" (1938) and later emerged as a director with "Chakradhari" (1948) one of his popular films.

A. Narayanan is considered a dominant figure in the silent era and the "Father of Tamil Talkie". He started his cinematic career in 1927. He was making documentaries whenever he had opportunity. His sound City Studio was the first to have equipment to make talkies in the South.


The exploitation of the cinema for political propaganda forced the intelligentsia, which has so far looked upon the cinema as a cheap and contemptible popular art, to have a rethinking. "Manikkodi", a Tamil monthly started in 1933, helped nationalist writers like K. Srinivasam, B.S. Ramaiya, Va.Ra.Chockalingam, S.D.S.Yogi and Ilangovan to come together. The journal took the cinema seriously and began serial articles and reviews on films. These writers understood the work being done by the cinema and tried to increase its effectiveness by directly involving themselves in the production of films. While Ilangovan and S.D.S.Yogi became script writers, B.S. Ramaiya became a film director.

Among the political leaders of these days, S. Sathyamurthy's participation and involvement in film world is quite significant. Himself an amateur actor and deeply interested in drama and music, he firmly believed that these arts could be creatively used for nationalist purposes. He freely associated himself with stage artistes in spite of the stigma attached to their profession at that time. As a result, a number of artistes led by stage actor M.M.Chidambaram gave active support to Sathyamurthy when he organised a non-violent agitation in Madras in 1921.

When dramas like "Veerupetru Nillada" of Sudhananda Bharathi and "Desingu Rajan and Sivaji" of Subramanya Siva were banned, Sathyamurthy raised the issue on the floor of the Legislature in 1924. Such an encouragement gave not only a fillip to the drama movement but also a respectability to the artistes which they had not enjoyed hitherto. Sathyamurthy had all along pleaded for exploiting performing arts like the drama and dance for political purposes. He himself acted in Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar's stage drama, "Manohara". He also acted in other dramas like "Mirutcha Kadigam", "Sabalar", "Venisamharam", "Vasantha Sena" and "Sagunthalam". He believed that for thirty years to come the cinema was going to be the predominant medium in a country like India where literacy was so low and that such an entertainment from should tackle contemporary social and

20. P. Srinivasa Varadan and N. Somayajulu, Congress Organisers from Madurai were in this group. (See N. Somayajuly Endowment Lecture, Madras University, 1981).


22. Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar, an advocate staged a lot of Social dramas through his drama company, 'Suguna Vilas'. He was called 'Nadaga Thanthai' (Father of Drama).

23. Kamala V.S., "Thalaivar Sathyamurthy", op.cit., p.33
political questions. He associated himself with all film functions. He was then the spokesman of the artistes in the legislative forum and also encouraged drama and film artistes to participate in direct political actions. Hence he inducted many of them officially into the Congress, for instance, V. Nagaiah was persuaded to go as a delegate to the Gauhati Congress.\textsuperscript{24} His aim was to make the film industry an integral part of the freedom movement. As the President of the Indian Motion Pictures Congress hold in May 1939, in Bombay, he stressed that film industry must be "Cent per cent Swadeshi" in every respect. In his capacity as the President of the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce\textsuperscript{25} and as the Mayor of Madras Corporation, he stressed the role of the cinema in bringing about changes in society.

Given such a leavening political climate the Tamil cinema began to reflect the political aspirations of the people. To begin with, symbols of nationalism like the "Chaika", "Gandhi Cap", "Kaadhi", "Tricolour Flag" of the Indian National Congress "Bharatha Matha" were deliberately introduced in the visuals. Not only in social films but even in mythological films nationalistic symbols came.

\textsuperscript{24} Thinamani Kadhiri, February 9, 1978.

\textsuperscript{25} Kamala, V.S., "Thalaivar Sathiyamurthy," op.cit., p. 9.
be introduced, albeit in a very uncinematic manner. In "Naveena Sarangathara" (1936) the citizens of Hastinapura who were demonstrating against the tyranny of Navendra were shown wearing the "Gandhi Cap". "Bombay Mail" (1939) opens with a scene which showed the Congress volunteers carrying the "Tricolour Flags" in their hands. In "Sathi Anusuya" (1937), there is a scene depicting the heroine working on a "Cha'rdka". In "Thiagaboomi" (1939) Sastri, a character, is sitting on a dias spinning on a "Cha'rdka" in a posture reminiscent of Gandhiji.

One of the characteristic features of the Tamil Talkies was the generous inclusion of songs. "Pavala-kodi" for example had 52 songs. Nationalistic song writers of the popular stage who wrote songs for films employed songs on the model of those popular songs that had been widely used during the Civil Disobedience Movement.

27. Ibid., p. 201.
30. In India unlike in the West, the performing arts have never been clearly separated from one another. Indian drama has always had music and song embedded in it.
In "Anaadhai Penn" (1931) a song runs as follows:

Mother India
Will she ever be liberated absolutely?
So many castes and religion
Will they ever rise
Into a single will
And smash her shackles down?

In "Valli Thirumanam" (1933) a mythological film the heroine Valli sings the following song when she drives away the birds that had come to pick the corn in the field.

Oh shamless white cranes
Ye have entered uninvited

Here the White Cranes refers to the British. Velan the hero of the film sings in favour of "Swadeshi Goods" (indigenous goods).

Oru masillatha Indhu nesa Valaiyal
Vachiram Pathitha utchitha Valaiyal
meaning that the bangles made in India are indeed spotless and excellent as they are diamond-studded. In "Bhagya Leela" (1938), a social film, the final song was in praise of the tricolour flag. Even the stunt movies had the obligatory nationalistic song.
In "Sathi Leelavathi" (1935), in which M.G.R. had played the role of a Police Inspector\(^{31}\) there is a song which gives publicity to the symbols of "Charika" and "Kadhar".

Kai Raattiname  
Kadhar Booshaname

This film also stresses Gandhiji's ideas on prohibition.

In "Uthama Puthiran" (1940) Bharathi's (the celebrated national poet, Tamil Nadu) song,

Senthamizh Nadenum  
Pothenile Inbath Then  
Vandu Paayuthu Kaathinile

was sung by P.V. Chinnappa. The song means that the moment the word 'Tamil Nadu' is uttered it flows like sweet honey into the ear. Whatever was the theme, a few nationalistic songs were included in films. Besides those songs and symbols, even dialogues were skillfully used to arouse patriotic feelings.

The cinema was also used as a vehicle for social reforms. The first ever talkie film to hand a

\(^{31}\) Ramachandran, M.G., "Naan Yen Piranthen" - Ananda Vikatan, Madras, M.G.R. published his autobiography in a series of articles under the title "Naan Yen Piranthen" (Why was I Born?) in a Tamil Weekly, 'Ananda Vikatan'.
contemporary theme was "Dambachari" (1935), the story of a wealthy play boy. In the same year "Menaka" (1935) was released. "Menaka" was staged as a drama by the T.K.S. Brothers. In the film, "Menaka" the T.K.S. Brothers, N.S.Krishnan (N.S.K.) (a talented and most sought after comedian of yester years), K.R. Ramasamy (K.R.R.), S.V. Sahasranamam and T.M.Sivathanu played leading roles. An important point about them is that all of them were congressmen. The story advocated better status for women in the society. T.K.S.Muthuswamy acted as a Brahmin widow (male playing the role of a female). It was for the first time in "Menaka" that Subrahmanya Bharathi's famous

32. "Dambachari" was a drama by an actress Balambal. The drama was very popular in Tanjore District. So the train which started from Tanjore to Kumbakonam was passed as Balambal special. Even sarees were branded as Balambal Saree and cosmetics as Balambal Santhu. "Dambachari" was a failure, because of the hero M.R. Krishnamurthy and P.S. Rathna Bai. The audience could not accept them, because they used to see M.R. Krishnamurthy as God in mythological dramas, so the star image started developing from the beginning of the talkie.

33. Menaka is the first talkie to have a kissing scene. T.K. Shanmugam kisses Vijayal, the heroine from her hand to the shoulder. (T.K.Shanmugam "Yenathu Nataka Vaazhkai").

34. T.K.S. Muthuswamy, T.K.Shanmugam, T.K. Bhagavathi and T.K.Sankaran are popularly known as T.K.S.Brothers whose profession was stage acting. Their drama troup 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 took to 'khaadar'.
song praising the Tamil language was included.

Vazhga nirantharam
Vazhga Thamizh Mozhi
Vazhiya Vazhiyave

Sathiyamurthy, the then leader of the Congress Party in the legislature of the Madras Presidency, met the T.K.S. Brothers and appreciated them for including Bharathi's song in their film.

"Sathi Leelavathi" (1935), stressed Gandhiji's ideas on prohibition. M.K.Radha played the role of the hero who as a drunkard ruined his life. T.S.Balaiah and N.S.Krishnan also acted in this film. C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) himself saw this film and appreciated it very much.

"Balayogi" (1936) attacked the caste system exposed the hypocritical and pleaded for better treatment of widows. "Jayakodi" condemned the evils of the dowry system.

The story of "Chandramohan" or "Samugathondu" (1936) had as its background Gandhi's non-co-operation movement and rural development programmes. "Harijan Girl"


36. M.K. Radha, who studied only upto VIII standard joined the Madurai Original Boys Company alongwith his father M. Kandaswamy who was a B.I. Graduate. Then he moved to Madurai Bala Sri Baleshamugananda Sabha and Pragathambal Thasavathara Company.
(1937) treated the theme of untouchability and the problem of conversion of Harijans to Christianity. "Sevasathanam" (1938) criticised certain social evils like the dowry system which prevailed in the Brahmin Community. Kothamangalam Subbu, an ardent follower of Gandhiji played the lead role in "Anaadhai Penn" (1938). Subbu besides being an actor was also a poet and script writer of repute.

The resignation of the Congress-led governments in states as a protest against India's participation in the II World War and the renewed tightening of censorship marked the end of films with a nationalist bias. The government encouraged films which portrayed "War efforts" such as "Burma Rani" (1944).

Although nationalistic overtones began to disappear from films, reformist themes persisted. For example, "Bhaktha Seetha" (1940) had as its theme, untouchability.

The T.K.S. Brothers' "Gumasthavin Penn" (1940) was a popular social drama. C.N. Annadurai had reviewed the drama in his "Kudiyarasu". This was probably the first time that a drama was reviewed and published.37 In 1941, S.S. Vasan (famous producer and film director and founder of

Gemini Studios) made "Gumasthavin Penn" into a film in which T.K. Shanmugam, T.K. Bhagevathi, M.V. Rajamma and others acted. It dealt with the social evils of dowry and the sufferings of the widows in society. By 1945, when a popular government was once again reinstated in the Madras Presidency, the wave of nationalistic films subsided as Independence was in the offing. The occasional sentimentally patriotic films like "Naam Iruvar" or "Thyagi" (1941) marked the embers of this fire.

Meanwhile Sathiyamurthy who had provided a meaningful link between Congress leadership and the Tamil film world died in 1943. Further, the signs of a meaningful interaction between the intelligentsia and the cinema did not develop on sound lines, but disappeared with the advent of independence.

During the period (1947-52) covering five years after the Independence, the Madras State saw three Chief Ministers, Prakasam, Omandur Ramaswamy Reddiyar and Kumarasamy Raja.

In the first ever General Election held after the Independence though the Congress Party was a popular and broad based party it could not get absolute majority in the Assembly. So an 'artificial' majority was created by the inclusion of Manickavelu Naicker's
Common Weal Party, which had a strength of 6 members and a few independent members. Manickavelu Naicker became Revenue Minister in the Congress-led coalition Ministry, headed by C. Rajagopalachari.

**TABLE - 3:1**

**GENERAL ELECTION TO THE MADRAS STATE ASSEMBLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties contested</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praja Socialist Party</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent and Other Parties</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1674</strong></td>
<td><strong>375</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1954 Rajaji resigned as the Chief Minister of Madras following widespread opposition to his policies like "Kulakkalvi Thittam" (Caste based system of education). K. Kamaraj succeeded Rajaji in April 1954. The composition of the Madras Legislative Assembly also underwent drastic changes following the formation of Andhra Pradesh as a separate State in 1953. As a result, the Congress Party which had been heading the coalition Government was able to form a majority government of its own, and it also got the support of the 19 member Tamil Nadu Toilers Party of which S.S. Ramasamy Padayachi was the leader. This gave the
Congress Party an inflated strength of 152 in a house of 190.

**TABLE - 3:2**

**PARTY POSITION IN THE MADRAS STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AFTER THE FORMATION OF ANDHRA PRADESH IN 1953**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Elected members in the Legislative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent and Other Parties</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the period 1947-54, Madras State had an uncommon phenomenon of having to see five Chief Ministers, thus leaving the question of State leadership very fluid. As such it may be said that as the question of state leadership itself was unsettled, no concerted attention was given by anyone to this area (film). Moreover the Congress Party was in a position of a political monopoly, controlling political power in all the States and at the Centre at the same time. The Party was perhaps very complacent and therefore did not see the need to project and improve its image through films. These could perhaps be the reasons for the neglect of the film media by the
Congress which used it so enthusiastically for propaganda purposes during the British rule.

It may also be said that the Indian National Congress, after achieving independence, felt no need to propagate any ideology. It was quite content with getting publicity for social welfare programmes and it relied entirely on the press and the government-controlled radio and news reels. Hence the bulk of the artistes and film world personalities who were associated with the Congress Party gradually started to rely on other parties, which could give them proper recognition and popularity.

(Also the Congress Party did not show any particular interest in involving cine actors in active politics and particularly in electoral politics. For example, when the name of the popular comedian N.S. Krishnan was suggested as a possible Congress candidate for Legislative Assembly Election in 1952 neither N.S.Krishnan who was not a Congressman himself, nor any of the leaders of the Congress Party showed any interest. At this point it may be relevant to note a remark made by a leader of the Congress Party whose identity is not clearly known "Komaligalum Koothadigalum Sattasabaikkul Pugunthuvittal Kadavulthan Kappaatra
Vendum” (meaning that God alone should save the Legislature if buffoons and actors made their entry into the Legislature). This remark perhaps indicates the contempt with which the Congress Party looked down upon actors making their way into politics.

K. Kamaraj (Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from 1954 to 1964 and President of the All India Congress Committee 1964-65) who as a political heir of Sathiyamurthy took over the leadership of the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu, did not have a proper understanding of the effectiveness of the cinema in mobilizing mass political support. It is interesting to note that even the T.K.S. Brothers who were closely associated with the Congress Party and its freedom struggle were not used by the Congress Party for political purposes during the Congress rule in Madras (1947-67). They leaned towards the Thamizhharasu Party founded by M.P. Sivagnanam (Ma.Po.Si.). It is a paradox that T.K. Shanmugam (One of the T.K.S. Brothers), an actor associated with the Congress was nominated to the Madras Legislative Council only by the DMK Government in 1967.

The Congress Party which during the British days made an impact on the masses by using the film as one

of its propagating weapons, started ignoring the medium when it came to power. Moreover, the ruling Congress Party failed to patronize the artistes who were ideologically committed to the Congress during the struggle for independence. For example, P. Kannaamba, an actress, produced two Tamil films "Navajeevanam" and "Yezhai Ullam" on the themes of land-reform, abolition of Zamindari system and Gandhian ideals. She not only lost her wealth, but was also left unrecognised by the Congress Party. 39

The Congress Party which gave little patronage to the artistes, neglected also film producers and story writers. For instance, the script of "Thiagaboomi" (1939) was made by Kalki Krishnamoorthy, an ardent supporter of the Congress and the editor of a popular Tamil Weekly "Kalki". It was produced and directed by K. Subramaniam who was also a staunch Congressman. The film had been denied exhibition certificate by the British Government because it carried nationalistic ideas. But the film was not released until five years after Independence for want of patronage. This illustration alone would perhaps suffice to indicate the attitude of the Congress Party towards film media and the people associated with the film world.

39. Aranthai Narayanan, op.cit., p. 491
P.R. Panthulu, who was a Congressman, produced a number of films with nationalist themes. His "Kappalottia Thamizhan" (1961) is a story about V.C. Chidambaram who boycotted the foreign goods and lost his wealth in starting a National Shipping Company at Tuticorin. The Congress Government could and should have given exemption for this film from the entertainment tax as this film definitely forged the nationalist ideas of the Congress, but the Congress Government did not do so. But it was the DMK Government which exempted the film from the entertainment tax when it came to power in 1967.

Panthulu, who was disappointed and disillusioned on account of the heavy losses which he incurred by producing films projecting Congress and Nationalist ideas later started booking M.G. Ramachandran who enjoyed the benefit of the DMK Party patronage, for his films "Ayirathil Oruvan" (1965), "Ragasiya Police 115", and "Naadodi".

When the DMK was becoming more and more popular, making the fullest use of the media, drama and cinema for propagating its ideas, A.P. Nagarajan (A.P.N.) an actor, writer, director and producer with a Congress leaning used cinema to mock at the DMK. In his film "Mangalyam", he introduced a song which begins as
"Vana Muna Kana"\(^{40}\) (meaning the party of filtered fools) as a counter to a song beginning ("Theena Muna Kana"\(^{41}\) indicating the DMK) in the film "Panam" produced by N.S.Krishnan who by now had identified himself with the DMK Party. In spite of his efforts to project the image of the Congress, A.P. Nagarajan could not find the support and patronage he expected from the Congress.

Therefore, frustrated with the Congress, A.P. Nagarajan chose to join the "Thamizharasu Kazhagam" which accepted him after his film "Naalvar" and gave him the necessary support and patronage. It may be noted here that the "Thamizharasu Kazhagam" also was opposed to the DMK. It is indeed interesting to note that at a certain point of time A.P. Nagarajan stopped using films for political propaganda. The films that he produced and directed after 1958 (Lakshmi Pictures) were either social films or mythological. In fact A.P. Nagarajan even booked M.R.Radha (M.R.R.) of the DK for "Nalla Idathu Sambandam" (1958), and the DMK Star M.G.R. and S.S.Rajendran (S.S.R.), for his later films (S.S.Rajendran in "Alli Petra Pillai", (1959) and M.G.R. in "Navarathinam" (1976). Nagarajan's long association with the Congress and his service to the Party through his films did not get him

\(^{40}\) "Mangalyam", Song book.

\(^{41}\) "Panam", Song book.
any reward or position in the Congress Party though it was in power. In fact, it is M.G.R.'s "Navarathinam" (last film of A.P.N.) that more than compensated his loss in his earlier films.

Chinna Annamalai of Devakottai, a film producer and book publisher was an ardent worker and leader of the Congress Party. He was one of those who raised their voice along with M.P. Sivagnanam (Ma.Po.Si.) against the anti-nationalistic politics of the DK and the DMK parties. They toured all over Tamil Nadu in 1950. The Congress considered them only as good speakers and did not give them due recognition in the party. When M.P. Sivagnanam started his party, most of the important actors who played a role during the Independent Movement joined the "Thamizharasu Kazhagam". For instance, A.P.N., the T.K.S. Brothers and T.N.Sivathanu came into the fold of M.P. Sivagnanam though they were originally committed to the Congress.

M.P. Sivagnanam who had suffered imprisonment on a number of occasions during the independence movement, suffered a great deal due to the indifferent attitude of the Congress. His Party the "Thamizharasu Kazhagam" could not gain much ground in the politics of Tamil Nadu, and

frustrated, he went into the DMK fold as one of its allies in the election to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly in 1967 and even contested under the symbol, "Rising Sun", of the DMK Party and won. Later on, he was elected Deputy Chairman of the DMK Party controlled Legislative Council. Presently, he is the Chairman of the Legislative Council in which the ruling AIADMK Party enjoys the majority.

Of the film actors who actively involved themselves in the party activities of the Congress Party, special mention must be made of Sivaji Ganesan. Sivaji Ganesan was born on October 1, 1928 at Villupuram in South Arcot District to Chinniah Pillai, an official in the South Indian Railways, who was arrested for anti-British activities. Sivaji Ganesan did not study beyond II Standard. Inspired by a street drama called "Veera Pandiya Kattabomman", he ran away from home to join a drama troupe at Madurai. He played both minor and major roles and also female roles like "Sita", "Anarkali" and "Noorjahan" in the dramas. His brilliant portrayal of Chatrapathi Sivaji in C.N. Annadurai's drama "Sivaji Kanda Hindu Samrajyam" earned him the prefix "Sivaji". This title "Sivaji" was officially conferred on him at a public function presided over by E.V. Ramasamy (E.V.R.) the one who galvanised the Dravidian Movement in the South. Sivaji Ganesan is also known as "Nadigar Thilagam" (ornament
among the actors). This title was popularised by the leading cinema magazine "Pesum Padam".

At first Sivaji Ganesan identified himself with the DMK Party. He broke away from the DMK in 1958 and joined E.V.K. Sampath's Party "Thamizh Thesiya Katchi" (Tamil Nationalist Party founded in 1961) in 1962. When Thamizh Thesiya Katchi merged with the Congress Party in 1964 after the General Election in 1962, Sivaji Ganesan also joined the Congress Party. When the Congress Party was split into Congress (O-old) and Congress (R-Ruling) in 1969, he joined the Congress (O) under the leadership of K. Kamaraj. After Kamaraj's death in 1975 he joined the Congress (R or I) led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Sivaji Ganesan's first film was "Parasakthi" (1952) in which he played the lead role. This film was a box office hit and in that process catapulted the stage actor Sivaji Ganesan, to the status of a most sought after film hero. "Parasakthi" attacked daringly several social evils and sought to drive home far reaching revolutionary social ideas. The script for this film was written by none other than the front rank DMK leader M. Karunanidhi who had already established himself as a story and script writer. This film became the meeting point of two of the geniuses, Sivaji Ganesan who since then has been dominating the Tamil
film screen for more than three decades now as an actor and M. Karunanidhi who has quite a number of hits to his credit as a story and script writer of the Tamil film world. The coming together of these two talented artistes not only provided many more box office combinations of the Tamil silver screen but also proved to be the beginning of a new dimension in the film-politics relation. This perhaps marks the beginning of an era where film exerts its profound influence on politics and society.

Sivaji Ganesan has acted in 211 films upto 1980. He has also acted in 3 information films and 2 Television films. Apart from these he has appeared as guest actor in 16 films. In all his films, he has played only the lead role, a unique feature indeed. Between 1962 and 1980 alone he has acted in 125 films as hero against M.G.R. who has acted as the hero only in 120 films. However, Sivaji Ganesan was popular only among 30 per cent of respondents against M.G.R.'s popularity among 41 per cent in a survey conducted in 1972. In a survey conducted in 1976 the support for M.G.R. was 17.9% whereas for Sivaji Ganesan it was only 5.2%.

In 1976 Sivaji Ganesan the cine actor turned politician had the support of 19% of respondents from Tirunelveli District and that too the highest among all districts. More than a third of the respondents in N.A. District, Dharmapuri, Trichy and Coimbatore Districts were strongly opposed to him as a politician. Moreover in Dharmapuri, Madurai, Nilgiris and Coimbatore Districts there was not a single respondent who supported Sivaji Ganesan as a political leader. Thus, as a political leader, he did not appear to have much of a following in Tamil Nadu. After his departure from the DMK he has always tried to project a national outlook and his films carried national ideas, for example, "Pavamannippu", "Bharatha Vilas", "Sivantha Mann", "Ratha Thilagam", "Rajapart Rangadurai", "Thangapadakkam", "Veera Pandiya Katta Bomman", "Kappalottiya Thamizhan" and so on.

As already pointed out, the leaders of the Congress Party failed to realise certain facts with regard to political changes and tried to blame the people for being carried away by films and film artistes. For instance, when the DMK captured the Madras City Corporation for the first time in 1959, unwilling to face the facts in an objective way, the leadership of the Congress simply attributed DMK's success to the propagandist attraction of film actors like M.G.R. and S.S.Rajendran who were in the DMK camp.
The following table shows the party-wise break up of the seats contested and won in the Madras City Corporation Election held in 1959.

**TABLE - 3:3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>No. of Seats contested</th>
<th>No. of Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh Congress</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents*</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>399</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Abdul Samad, an Independent, supported by the DMK also won.

During the next election to the Madras City Corporation held in 1964, Kamaraj, keeping M.G.R. and S.S.R. in mind, warned the City electorate to be careful of the coming of "Vettaikkaran" (Hunter) a role M.G.R. had played in the picture bearing the same title. In spite of Kamaraj, the DMK captured the City Council bettering its previous record in the Corporation Election and also captured 49 of the 56 Municipal Councils in the State the same year. Again the Congress attributed DMK's victory to
film glamour. The following table shows the party position in the Madras City Corporation Election held in 1964.

**TABLE - 3:4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>No. of Seats contested</th>
<th>No. of seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents*</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>315</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2 Independents supported by the DMK alliance also won.

**NOTE:** In this election the DMK and Muslim League were in alliance and the Congress and the Communists formed the other alliance.

Probably, struck by the success of the DMK in the Corporation elections held in 1959 and 1964, and in the civic elections held in 1964, and its increased strength from 15 in 1957 to 50 in the 1962 General Elections to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, the Congress Party decided to make use of the film medium and its personalities in the next General Election which was to be held in 1967. Hence, just before the 1967 General Elections the Congress invited a few film actors to party conferences and to participate in the election propaganda. For example, Sivaji
Ganesan, who had earlier been conferred the title "Padma Shri" in 1966 in recognition of his talents as an actor and Padmami, a popular actress who was the heroine in several films of Sivaji Ganesan and others were called upon to make available their services for political propaganda by E.V.K. Sampath who had earlier defected from the DMK and joined the Congress. The famous lyric-poet Kannadasan, whose lyrics were popular hits in Tamil films plunged into the election scene as a full-time propagandist of the Congress Party during the 1967 General Elections. Kannadasan had earlier glorified Kamaraj in a lyric as "Padikkaatha Methai" (Unlettered Genius). Sivaji Ganesan also undertook a whirlwind election tour campaign throughout the State. He also undertook a similar tour throughout the State, campaigning for the Congress Party during the General Elections in 1971. However, the undivided Congress Party in 1967 and the Congress (O) for which Sivaji Ganesan and others had worked, lost badly in the elections. It may be noted that the involvement of actors in Congress politics was just limited to election campaigns in the 1967 and 1971 General elections. They were not fielded as party candidates and were not actively associated with the party discussions and decisions. However, in spite of their involvement, the party faced miserable defeats in both the elections.
### TABLE - 3:5

GENERAL ELECTION TO THE MADRAS LEGISLATIVE
IN FEBRUARY, 1967

Total No. of Seats for which election was held: 233

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties Contested</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Communist</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents on their own</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED OPPOSITION ALLIANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Communist</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents (supported by alliance)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 673 233

### TABLE - 3:6

GENERAL ELECTION TO THE lok sabha in 1967

No. of Seats allotted in the Lok Sabha: 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist (M)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 114 39
### TABLE - 3:7

GENERAL ELECTION TO THE TAMIL NADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, MARCH, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (O)</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>540</strong></td>
<td><strong>234</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE - 3:8

GENERAL ELECTION TO THE PARLIAMENT, MARCH, 1971

Total Seats: 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LMK</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (R)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (O)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward Block</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>104</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast, the DMK was clever in allowing film artistes a near full participation in the regular activities of the party, and in fielding them as candidates in General Elections right from the beginning, for example, S.S. Rajendran in 1957 and 1962 and M.G.R. in 1967 and 1971, M. Karunanidhi from 1957 onwards, Kannadasan in 1962, Murasoli Maran, A.V.P. Asai Thambi, Rama Arangannal, Nanjil Manoharan, Kovai Chezhiyan and so on.

Tamil Nadu has the unique feature of having "Rasigar Mandrams" (Fan Associations), organised by the fans of actors and actresses most often financed by the actors themselves. For example, there are fan associations in the names of M.G.R., S.S.R., Sivaji Ganesan and so on. The Fan Associations of actors like M.G.R. and S.S.R. had played significant roles during the General Elections. Most of the members who belong to the fan associations are not more fans of the actors in whose name the fan associations are established but they are also members of the party to which their actor belongs. So, during elections they come forward as volunteers to work for the party candidates. Sivaji Ganesan had thousands of "Rasigar Mandrams" which remained as associations consisting of fans of Sivaji Ganesan. Chinna Annamalai, a leading Congressman took an active role in consolidating the Sivaji Ganesan Fan Associations all over the State. After the Congress defeat in the 1967 elections
to the State Assembly, Chinna Annamalai along with his friend Anandan, decided at Madurai, to bring a number of youngsters to the Congress fold using the Sivaji Fan Associations. Hence, he organized the All India Sivaji Ganesan Fan Association in August 1969. The Association was inaugurated on the 43rd birth day of Sivaji Ganesan (October 1, 1969). After much persuasion, Kamaraj agreed to attend the inaugural function of the "Mandram". Chinna Annamalai brought about 1500 fan associations under the All India Sivaji Ganesan Rasigar Mandram. He became its first President and remained as the President for 7 continuous years.

The youth force of the Sivaji Ganesan Fan Club got involved in the party activities of the Congress. However, the relationship between the Congress leadership and cine actors was only in the nature of its being used for election propaganda. Within the Congress, a group known as "Kalignar Congress" consisting of singers and other artistes was formed to conduct cultural programmes during the public meetings of the Congress Party. During the Nagercoil by-election in which Kamaraj contested in January 1969, the support of the local Sivaji Ganesan Club balanced that of the supporters of M.G.R. on the DMK side.

45. Aranthai Narayanan, "Tamil Cinemavin Kathai", op.cit., p. 496.

Although Sivaji Ganesan has attacked powerfully the DMK and its policies through his roles his primary passion was that of an actor who aimed at artistic success. Only a few of his films carry a political message, that too of a non-regional and non-parochial nature.

In a few films like "Yengal Thanga Raja", "Thirisoolam" and "Pattaakathi Bairavan", Sivaji Ganesan undertook roles similar to the ones played by M.G.R. His Fan Clubs were even critical of this imitation. It is not easy to say what his political aspirations are. In his recent interview with "Sunday" after his nomination to the Rajya Sabha, he just laughed away the question whether he aspires to be the future Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu? Already the press in Tamil Nadu has started speculating whether Sivaji Ganesan would become the next Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. In a recent issue of 'Bommai' he advised co-artistes that they should not deeply involve themselves in politics, although he has expressed the opinion that

he would not give up politics. 52

Among the song writers, Kannadasan needs mention here as he has written a number of songs for films featuring Sivaji Ganesan and M.G.R. As far as songs are concerned a distinction can be struck between songs in M.G.R. and DMK oriented films and the songs in the Sivaji Ganesan films. The Congress Party never considered it necessary to make use of the films in order to spread its ideals. Even Kannadasan and Sivaji Ganesan just sang the glory of Kamaraj whom they had accepted as their leader. Beyond that both had not exploited the medium for the benefit of the Party. Later Sivaji Ganesan had the mortification of seeing Kannadasan being taken away from the Congress fold by the ingenious M.G.R. when he appointed Kannadasan as the "Poet Laureate" of the Government of Tamil Nadu after the AIADMK came to power in 1977.

The Congress Party, which prior to Independence had the benefit of the association of a number of film world personalities, failed to cash it on to the advantage of the party after Independence. It is not clearly known whether it did not believe that it could exploit the medium of its advantage. But ironically, whenever the DMK

won an election, local or State, with the active involvement of film personalities in political campaigns, the Congress Party would hasten to characterize the victory for film glamour.

The fact is that the Congress Party which continued to enjoy unquestioned popular support all over the country for 20 years after Independence, slowly lost its grip over the people of Tamil Nadu. Although several reasons can be attributed to the defeat of the Congress Party by the DMK from 1967 onwards, it should be said that while the DMK Party had exploited the film medium to the fullest advantage, the Congress Party failed to make use of this medium for its own political purpose after Independence.

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