CHAPTER VI

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION
While centrist political parties function with the sole aim of winning the elections, leftist parties do not believe in such an institutional arrangement. In the classic Marxist view parliamentarism was considered to be one of the institutions of the state, the sense of which was to decide once in three or six years which members of the ruling class was to represent and repress the people through parliament. However Marx expressed the hope that proletariat must strive all means available to them including the parliament, so that the instrument of fraud will be transformed into an instrument of emancipation. Lenin also held the same view.

But the Indian communists have come to possess the opinion, through their experience, that parliament can be a major instrument for the establishment of peace and socialism.


4. International recognition to this opinion was granted in the resolution of the Twentieth Congress of CPSU in February, 1956.
Now the CPI holds that in view of the changed situation where forces of peace and socialism are in a better position, parliament plays a most effective role in the coming of socialism. They attach so much emphasis to the parliamentary form of struggle that they virtually ignore the importance of other extra-parliamentary forms of struggle. The CPI(M) maintains that socialism cannot be established simply by winning a majority in the legislatures. Hence they give due emphasis to both parliamentary work and non-parliamentary mass struggles. The CPI(ML) does not believe in the parliament, which is an instrument of the propertied classes, and hence they reject it.

In Tamil Nadu the CPI(ML) groups strictly adhere to their basic principle of not participating in the elections irrespective of their policy of Mass Line or Base Line. The undivided communist party of India participated in the 1946 elections in pre-independence period and in 1952, 1957, 1962 General Elections in the post-independence period. After the split in 1964 both the CPI and the CPI(M) have worked with the 1967, 1971, 1977 and 1980 General Elections. Besides

6. Ibid., p.519.
7. Ibid., p.527.
they have participated in the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Council elections also.

The communist parties have arranged for coalitional efforts while contesting in the elections. Two distinguishing features of these coalitions in Tamil Nadu are: (1) The coalitions are restricted to electoral alliances only and they do not extend to the level of sharing power (2) In the electoral alliances the centrist and ideological parties freely mix together and depart.8

In this chapter Section I offers a summary of electoral history of Tamil Nadu, with emphasis on communist parties. In Section II a brief analysis of the electoral efforts of the communist parties are sketched. In Section III a few conclusions are drawn.9


9. For a resume of the major contents of the election manifestoes of both the CPI and the CPI(M) See Appendix 6.1.
SECTION - I : The Electoral History of Tamil Nadu:

B.T. Ranadive's adventurism in 1948 brought only suppression in the hands of the government. The Madras Government imposed a ban on Tamil Nadu Communist Party, 19 labour organizations and their branches, besides arresting as many as 152 communists.10 The armed struggle and guerrilla warfare launched by the CPI having failed, the party decided for a new tactical line in the second congress held at Calcutta from 11 to 16 October 1951. The party issued a statement of policy for the future, which was expressing the party's intention to employ peaceful methods as far as possible to fill the role of a constitutional opposition, thus marking the reappearance of what Bhabani Sen Gupta called "Parliamentarianism".11

The Chief Minister of Madras, Kumarsamy Raja quickly convened a conference of the Ministers on September 7, 1951 and discussed the policy to be followed with regard to the communists for the ensuing first ever General Elections in Independent India. He appealed that all communist detenus may be released to enable them to participate in the elections. The conference accepted his suggestions and further decided

that (i) detenus in Jail may be released on parole (ii) the warrants on communists need not be cancelled and (iii) there was no need to cancel the criminal cases. But then, it is interesting to note that C. Rajagopalachari objected to the release of communists because such a step would make the communists clamour for such a release in other provinces also, besides law and order problems. But Kumarasamy Raja went ahead with his earlier decisions. However he had issued strict instructions about underground communists. Communists wanted for detention were to be arrested when they appear before the Returning Officers to file their nominations or when they appear to vote in the booths on days of polling.

The detenus, who were freed, hurriedly established the contacts with the underground comrades, to find that their cadres were depleted and disorganised. They felt that their success in 1946 elections were only nominal and unless something worthwhile had not been done, there would be no meaning in contesting the elections. A return to right strategy had already been signalled by the party and at that time Periyar E.V. Ramasamy was the only person who was known to have had

leftist sympathies. Also in his antipathy towards the "princes"-like congressmen, Periyar was willing to help the communists. The two like-minded parties, viz. communists and the Dravida Kazhagam forged a united front from above.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1952, the communists contested in 52 Assembly seats and 5 Lok Sabha seats. The Dravida Kazhagam supported sixteen of the fifty-two communist contestants. While thirteen of these Kazhagam supported communist candidates were successful, only two other candidates, in Srirangam and Erode, were able to win the elections in all Tamil Nadu without Kazhagam support. Furthermore the sixteen Kazhagam supported candidates polled an average 37 percent of the vote in their constituencies. The thirty-six other candidates who were not supported by the Kazhagam polled only less than 20 percent.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1953 the communist party denied the right of secession from the Indian Union and it fell to Jeevanandam's lot to mount an attack on the Dravidian issue. The revised communist emphasis on Language and its denial of Dravidian

\textsuperscript{15} The resolution intending to support the communists and such other candidates who have a chance to defeat congress candidates was passed by the Kazhagam Executive Committee at Trichy on November 15, 1951. See Viduthalai (Madras), November 27, 1951, p. 1.

racial claims compelled Jeevanandam to argue in a special tract, 'The Unity of Tamil Nadu'. And that was enough for the snapping of the electoral ties. BVR remarked:

Passengers travelling in a compartment become friends, their friendship lasts until they reach their destination. Each passenger gets down at his particular way station and goes his own way. That is the friendship between the communist party and the Dravida Kazhagam. We want to see the congress party defeated at the polls". 

The Congress party could not get an absolute majority in the First General Elections and Communists stood second in the tally. This roused their hopes of heading a united front ministry and they became busy in building it up. T. Prakasam, one of the former Chief Ministers of Madras, was elected as the leader of communist dominated united front. However the Governor of Madras distrusted this coalition and invited C. Rajagopalachari to form the Ministry. Soon after, the United front crumbled and the dream of the communists to isolate the Congress party, by means of an United front was

19. Fortnightly Reports, I half and II half of March, 1952.
reduced to ashes. The communists started their career of dwindling opposition.

Political events began to overtake communist aspirations now onwards. Most of their demands were conceded and worked out by the congress ministries in the centre and the states. The formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953, (where P. Sundarayya had done exemplary work in Circar districts to build communist cadres), reduced the communist party of the Madras Presidency to at least half its original size. Then came the formation of linguistic provinces in 1956, which saw Madras Presidency further reduced by the rearrangement of South Kanara and Malabar districts to adjoining Karnataka and Kerala states. Pioneering work was done by A.K. Gopalan and Keraaleeyan and others in the Malabar district, and its alignment with Kerala meant further reduction of communist strongholds. From now onwards communists of Tamil Nadu were to draw their support from the urban labour of Coimbatore, Trichy, Madurai and Madras, and from the agricultural labourers of Tanjore. The declaration of the Congress at Avadi in 1955 that it wants to build up a socialistic pattern of society in India jolted the communists and other leftist parties. In Madras, Kamaraj assumed the leadership and his extraordinary common sense brought several benefits to the people of Tamil Nadu. E.V.I. began to praise
the wisdom of Kamaraj and supported his administration as the 'rule of a True Tamilian'.

Thus when the Second general elections approached in 1957, the communists were blinking and they could muster the support of Socialist Party of Lohia only. They contested in 13 Lok Sabha seats and 55 Assembly seats. But their performance was poor with 2 Lok Sabha seats and 4 Assembly seats. The party polled 10.06 percent of the total votes polled for the Lok Sabha and 7.4 percent for the Assembly. The CPI admitted that it did not grasp the tremendous impact of the democratic significance of Nehru. With a nod to C.N. Annadurai's Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which had displaced Dravida Kazhagam to a great extent by 1957, the CPI declared that without doubt, the minimization of DMK factor by us helped that party to capitalize anti-congress sentiment in a big way.

But the communists in Tamil Nadu did not take this lesson to their heart. They were busy in their inner-party dialogues and quarrels, about the assessments of their right and left tactics and about the characterization of the Indian

bourgeoisie. The programme adopted in the fifth congress of the party at Amritsar in 1958 started a wild furor amongst its leaders and at the sixth congress at Vijayawada in 1961 the party moved to the brink of a split. In the meantime Congress had consolidated its position and the DMK was fast spreading anti-Congress feelings. Further the electioneering abilities of Kamaraj saw that anti-Congress forces were not kept in a single camp. At this juncture, with their disunity among the rank and file, with their enmity towards Congress and with their distrust towards the DMK, the communists could contest only 14 Lok Sabha seats and 68 assembly seats in the third General Elections. This bold venture was bound to result in total fiasco and it ended so. They had won 2 Lok Sabha seats and 2 assembly seats. These victories could be attributed more to the stature and personalities of the contestants than to the image of the party as such. The third general elections ended thus, causing utter humiliation to the communist party.

Between third and fourth general elections, so many events passed into the history of India and the communist party as well. The sino-Soviet schism in the international

23. The efforts of the communists to bring about a constituency wise understanding with the Dravida Kazhagam failed. See the Mail (Madras), September 9, 1962, p. 4.
communist movement, the outbreak of the Sino-Indian war, and the tussle over the communist programme for future India—all these brought differences in the communist party leadership to the point of total collapse. Consequently the party was split in 1964. Also the imprisonments and sufferings of the leaders of the left faction in the CPI during the Sino-Indian war in 1962 and the Indo-Pak war in 1965 stood in the way of their active work for the growth of the party.

At this juncture the communist party of India was in a dilemma: it saw the growing contradiction inside the congress but it was not sure whether Mrs. Gandhi and her supporters were of sufficient leftist stance, so that they might support her. Their uncertainty was seen in their treatment of DMK also. They distrusted DMK's separatist intentions, but yet they could not ignore its immense populism. However the CPI(M) had made up its mind. It wanted to collaborate with all regional forces which exhibit anti-congress outlook. Non-congressism and the desire to evoke marxist political consciousness based on the structural conditions of every region—these two aims began to pervade the CPI(M)\(^{24}\) and accordingly it declared that its attitude to DMK would be a fraternal party in government. At the same time, the CPI(M) wanted to function as an independent party making constructive

and fraternal criticisms of all government measures. With this understanding the CPI(M) and the DMK reached an accord on December 15, 1966.25

However, before the DMK - CPI(M) alliance emerged, the CPI(M) held dialogues with CPI for leftist unity. But the CPI insisted that it would like to contest as many as 17 Lok Sabha seats and 81 assembly seats after which the talks broke down.26 On hearing the DMK and CPI(M) accord, the CPI lamented: "The basic negative side of the split was particularly aggravated by the election strategy of the CPI(M) in relation to the CPI. To show the international communist movement outside that it is the main body of communism, the CPI(M) acted in a way to bring us down".27

The National Council of the CPI remarked that "Tamil Nadu elections had revealed the wrong understanding of our party programme by some of our leading comrades. The refusal to change persisted virtually unto the end. The Coimbatore resolution of November 1966 seeking to approach the DMK for electoral alliances was not really implemented. The hangover of treating the DMK as a rightist party continued. We sought

26. Ibid.
the negotiations with the DMK by sending a registered letter and by waiting for a reply, which of course never came. In Tamil Nadu we overestimated our strength and that of the congress. We underestimated the DMK, CPI(M) and the anti-congress upsurge. We did not pay any heed to when CPI(M) asked us to go and settle a coalition first with DMK. Our isolation was complete.28

Actually the initiative for forming United Front in 1967 against the congress party came from C.N. Annadurai, the founder of the DMK. The leaders of the various opposition parties were first informally approached with a view to sounding the possibility of forming a UF against the ruling party. When they reciprocated sympathetically, formal negotiations began. The sailing was not smooth at first. The CPI(M) and Swatantra were opposed to each other and were initially unwilling to become partners.29 The CPI did not join at first

28. Ibid.

29. Making a statement at a press conference on the Swatantra policy and on the UF in Tamil Nadu, Rajaji expressed his undisguised displeasure at the inclusion of the communists in the UF. He emphasized that the Swatantra party had not directly negotiated any arrangement with the communists, either right or left. However his pragmatism overcame his ideological prejudices. He was prepared to use any stick, red or black, to beat down the congress. He observed: "We could not dictate to the DMK what they should do. It was not a merger or alliance in the proper legal sense of the term. If they gave away a few of their (DMK's) seats to some communists, the Swatantra party could not make an issue of it and break the front". The Mail(Nacras), February 9, 1967, p.1.
and tried to enter at the eleventh hour after the seats reserved for it were allotted to the CPI(M). The political realism of the parties, as well as the patience and perseverance of Annadurai, successfully overcame the initial difficulties and the UF came into existence. The seven members of the UF were (1) DMK (2) CPI(M)(3) Swatantra (4) Praja Socialist Party (5) Forward Block (6) Samyukta Socialist party and (7) Muslim League.

The results of the Fourth General elections were stupendous as they brought big changes in political development. The DMK was voted to power, which was the first ever occasion of a regional party coming to acquire power. The seven member UF led by the DMK polled 7900187 votes in the Assembly averaging 52 percent. The percentage of votes polled by the members of UF in 1962 when each of them contested separately is 46.37. The CPI which was not a member of the UF contested 6 parliamentary seats and 32 assembly seats. It lost all seats in the parliamentary elections with 1.8 percent of total votes polled and obtained just 2 seats in a 234 member house with 1.78 percent of votes. 30

On the other hand the CPI(M) was richly benefitted by the formation of the UF. This party contested 5 parliamentary seats, winning four of them with 6.85 percent of the total votes polled. It contested 22 assembly seats for a win of 11 seats with 3.89 percent of total votes. Thus the election strategy, the search for potentially powerful partners and the assessment of the existing political situation - these had boosted the morale of the one and dwindled the other.

Stormy political developments took place in the period between 1967 and 1971. Probably the announcement of mid term poll in 1971 saw the congress(R) at its peak of leftist stance. The Presidential elections of 1969, the issue of Bank Nationalization, and inner-party struggles were responsible for the split of the congress into two parties: Congress(U.) and Congress(O). As the Congress(O) began to make adjustments with Jan Sangh, BSP, SSP, RKD, Swatantra and Akali Dal, the Congress(R) perceived an increasing danger of the rightist forces and hence began to consolidate the leftist forces. In September 1970 it formed a united front with CPI to contest mid term elections in Kerala, and succeeded in installing the CPI-led united front ministry under Chutha Nenon. In October, 1970, the CPI national council also adopted a resolution in favour of an alignment with the congress. Consequent on
the dissolution of the Lok Sabha on 27 December 1970, Fifth
general elections were announced during 1-7 March 1971. For
these elections, although the congress(I) did not enter into
any alliance with other parties at the national level, it
still entered into electoral adjustments at the state levels.
In Tamil Nadu, the ruling DMK promised to support the
congress(I) candidates for nine Lok Sabha seats, and the
congress(R) undertook not to contest the elections to the
State Assembly.

During the period 1967-71, atleast two important
developments took place in Tamil Nadu. One was the DMK's
growing disenchantment with the CPI(M) and the other was
the increasing understanding in the DMK - CPI relations.
The shooting incident (9.1.1968) at Wimco factory at
Thiruvottiyur, and the strike in the Simpson Limited, hadras
became the thorny problems in the industrial front in the
relations between DMK and the CPI(M).

Thinking that the DMK would support them on all
occasions, the CPI(M) started militant agitations in Tanjore
district demanding increased share of the produce for the
agriculturists and increased wages for agricultural labourers.
The result was an increasing situation of deterioration of law and order. On October 5, 1967, police shot of CPI(M) worker Pakkiri.\textsuperscript{31} On this ...Govindasami, Minister for Agriculture spoke: "By controlling a few hundreds of labourers and by dictating terms and raising one problem after another, the communists were only practising another form of capitalist control."\textsuperscript{32} Matters became worse, when Pakkirisami Voikkaran, Secretary of Sikkil Communist branch was killed and 11 others were injured severely in a clash between members of the DMK and the CPI(M).\textsuperscript{33} From this onwards the relationship between the parties reached the point of no return. When 1971 elections approached, the CPI(M) was ideologically committed to opposing the congress(C) and forced by circumstances to counter the DMK. Thus the voice of CPI(M) became a lone furrow in the 1971 elections and it received a pitiable support only from S.S.P.

The awareness that a wrong line was pursued in the fourth general elections and the very danger of losing their base if something meaningful was not done, prompted the CPI to search for a progressive alliance. Emboldened by the

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\item[31.] The Hindu(Madras), October 7, 1967, p.8.
\item[32.] The Hindu(Madras), September 5, 1967, p.11.
\item[33.] Statesman(New Delhi), April 6, 1972, p.3.
\end{itemize}
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existing alliance with congress(I), Kalyanasundaram, the Chief architect of progressive front of Tamil Nadu, approached the DMK which was enthusiastic to have an alliance. Much later the national council of CPI declared that by correcting the errors of 1967 and by taking a correct line, our party in Tamil Nadu has reversed the process of 1967. 34 This time the progressive front consisted of DMK, Congress(I), CPI, Muslim League, Forward Block, Praja Socialist party and Tamil Arasu Kazhagam. The Democratic Front opposition, which was carefully nursed by congress(I) leader K. Kamaraj, consisted of Congress(I), Tamil Nadu Toiler's party, Swatantra, Samyukta Socialist Party and Republican Party.

In this election year CPI(I) contested 6 parliamentary seats and lost them all, polling only 1.63 percent of the votes. The Assembly results were much more dismal. It lost all the 37 seats it contested and the percentage of votes was again a mere 1.65. No doubt, the CPI was jubilant for its own success and more so for the defeat of the CPI(I). CPI had won all the four parliamentary seats it contested with 5.41 percent votes. It improved its position in the Assembly

by winning eight out of 10 seats with a poll percentage of 2.32.35

Interesting yet unexpected events took place in the middle of the seventies. Many congressmen inside congress(r) agitated for fulfilment of the pledges given to the people. Even while they were vociferous, Jaya Prakash Narain, started the Bihar movement and expressed radical views about the nature of Indian democracy. After hearing Raj Narain's petition, Justice Jag Bhavan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High court ruled that Mrs. Gandhi had indulged in corrupt practices while contesting election for the Lok Sabha in March 1971, and that, therefore, she was disqualified for membership of either house of Parliament or of any State Legislature, for a period of six years. In the wake of this judgement the opposition parties and many congressmen began to demand the resignation of Mrs. Gandhi from premiership. The infuriated Mrs. Gandhi promulgated internal emergency in the country under Article 352, on the morning of 26 June 1975.

In Tamil Nadu the electoral alliance of 1971 began to crumble. The Land Grab movement initiated by the CPI in

August 1970 was conceived as a personal assault to Karunanidhi, the DMK Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{36} The agitation by the CPI to demand the fixation of ceiling on land holdings at 15 standard acres per family and not per individual,\textsuperscript{37} the defying of the police ban on meetings by Kalyanasundaram and K.T. Pajju,\textsuperscript{38} CPI's refusal to support DMK candidates in Council and Rajya Sabha elections\textsuperscript{39} and above all the CPI's new relationship with the newly formed AIADMK - these enraged the DMK leadership. For the CPI, the DMK's unilateral decision to snap ties with Congress(I) was a principal issue. It declared that the concept of autonomy is nothing but mortgaging of Tamil Nadu to foreign monopolies. Finally when CPI submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister alleging several corrupt practices on various issues by DMK, the alliance crumbled beyond any retrieving.\textsuperscript{40}

The CPI(M) was hesitant to support M.G. Kamachandran, who founded AIADMK because of his personal clash with Karunanidhi. But CPI went ahead with its decision of supporting Kamachandran.

\textsuperscript{36} The Hindu (Madras), August 18, 1970, p. 11.  
\textsuperscript{37} The Hindu (Madras), September 10, 1971, p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{38} Patriot (New Delhi), November 4, 1971, p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{39} Times of India (New Delhi), March 22, 1972, p. 7.  
\textsuperscript{40} The Hindu (Madras), December 19, 1972, p. 12.
and a new alliance between AIADMK, Congress(I) and CPI began to take shape. Both CPI and AIADMK supported the emergency while DMK opposed it vehemently along with CPI(M). The dismissal of DMK Ministry in 1976 added a new dimension in the relations between Congress(I) and DMK.

Because of the strenuous efforts of Jaya Prakash Narain, a new 'Janata' party was born in 1977, just before the Sixth General elections. In Tamil Nadu there were two alliances, namely, Progressive Front and the Democratic Front. The Progressive Front consisted of AIADMK, Congress(I), CPI, Tamil Nadu Muslim League, Revolutionary Forward Bloc, Backward classes Progressive Federation, and Tamil Nadu Toiler's party. The Democratic Front consisted of Janata, DMK and CPI(M).

In the sixth general elections of 1977, the progressive alliance came out victorious in Tamil Nadu, although the Democratic front achieved power at the national level. The CPI had won all the three seats it had contested with 4.6 percent of the votes. The CPI(M) lost both the seats it had contested and the polling was just 1.56 percent.41

After achieving power the Janata party dismissed several ministries in the states and ordered for assembly elections. In Tamil Nadu the progressive front of the parliamentary elections was headed by AIADMK. The split in the congress(F) into Congress(I) led by Mrs. Gandhi and Congress(U) led by Devaraj Urs had complicated the matters. The Congress(I) did not enter into the Progressive Front. The CPI chose to remain with Congress(I) for the assembly elections. However CPI(M) became wise and it switched over to AIADMK's camp. When AIADMK was swept into power, the CPI(M) was richly benefitted with its 12 wins of 20 contests, the percentage of its votes being 2.79. Although the CPI received 2.91 percent of votes, it drew a poor response winning just five seats out of the 32 contests. 42

After the Assembly elections, the Congress(I) and the AIADMK picked up the thread of friendship and their ties continued till the Thanjavur Lok Sabha by elections, at which the Congress(I) candidate emerged victorious over the DMK nominee who was backed by Janata, CPI, CPI(M) and other parties.

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However, even during the Thanjavur by-election, the relationship between AIADMK and Congress(I) was delicately balanced, as the Congress(I) circles had not reconciled themselves to what they felt was a "last minute back out" by the AIADMK leader, M.G. Ramachandran, from his offer of support to Mrs. Gandhi's candidature for Thanjavur. But what led to their breakup was the changing stand adopted by AIADMK with regard to the Delhi developments resulting in the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. The AIADMK's offer of support first to Janata leader, Morarji Desai, and its subsequent participation in the coalition ministry headed by Charan Singh added a new emotive force to their growing estrangement. Apparently Mrs. Gandhi thought it would be no longer advisable to rely on AIADMK's support and so plumped for an alliance with the DMK.43

Thus by the Seventh general elections of India in 1980, all the major parties in Tamil Nadu were lined up in two fronts, the one led by DMK and the other by the AIADMK. With the Congress(I), the DMK and the Muslim League shared the Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry Lok Sabha seats in the ratio of 23 : 16 : 1. In the meantime, the eleventh congress of CPI

43. The Hindu (Madras), December 7, 1979, p.8.
at Batinda in April 1978 switched to a new line of attacking the emergency and the authoritarian trend of Mrs. Gandhi. Hence it gravitated to anti-Mrs. Gandhi fronts in the Seventh general elections. As a result, the second front in Tamil Nadu consisted of AIADMK, Janata, CPI, CPI(M), Congress(U), Lok Dal, and Tamil Nadu Congress(Kamaraj) led by Radumaran. The result of these elections were a decisive rout to the front headed by AIADMK. The CPI and CPI(M) had lost, all the three seats contested by each of them. While CPI polled 2.67 percent of votes, the show by CPI(M) was slightly better with 3.1 percent.44

When Mrs. Gandhi chose to dismiss the Janata ministries in various states after the style of Charan Singh, the Tamil Nadu Government was also dismissed, largely at the instance of the DMK. For these Assembly elections, once again two fronts emerged as main rivals for powers. The DMK, Congress(I) and Muslim League combine shared the 234 seats in the Assembly in the ratio of 109:109:16. Another point of accord in this coalition was that the Chief Ministership was to rest with DMK. The other front of 12 partners had

agreed to the AIADMK contesting the majority of seats thus implicitly conceding the right of forming a government to AIADMK if the front secured absolute majority. The elections proved a conclusive victory to AIADMK's front. The CPI had won seats in double figures since the first general elections. It had obtained 10 wins out of 16 contests with 2.98 percent of votes. The CPI(M) achieved 11 seats out of 16 contests with 3.12 percent of votes.45

A brief analysis of the electoral history of Tamil Nadu brings out several interesting points. First of all, it was conclusively proved in these elections, that if an opposition could build up an alliance resisting the division of votes, it was voted to power. The DMK in 1957 and the AIADMK in 1977 had proved this. Secondly, it was also proved that if a ruling party could make right type of alliances, it retained its power base. The congress in 1957 and 1962, the DMK in 1971 and the AIADMK in 1980 had proved this. Therefore, what mattered in these elections was the right type of alliances and an understanding of the political developments that were taking place.

45. Government of Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Elections Results, 1980 (Madras : Public (Elections) Department, 1980), pp.6-236.
One can see pretty well that the CPI had stuck to its policy of anti-congressism up to 1964. Thereafter, according to its ideological perception, the CPI, had gone to favour the policy of 'Congressism', until 1980 elections. In the same way the CPI(M) was ideologically committed to the policy of non-congressism. The ideological beliefs of these communist parties were instrumental in choosing their poll partners. A careful analysis of the election results shows that neither CPI was benefitted by the policy of congressism nor the CPI(M) by its policy of non-congressism.\textsuperscript{46} The CPI-C n-press(I) and CPI(M)-DMK reTTiionships in 1977 hadproved this Therefore ideology did not pay these parties, in the absence of other requirements. What paid them was a commonplace grasp of the existing political realities.

Section II: Electoral efforts of the communist parties:

Apart from the ideological commitments, the way in which a political party assesses the political realities and its efforts in choosing candidates to contest in places which are favourable to them, decide to a large extent the outcome of the elections. Nevett argues that the fundamental

\textsuperscript{46} See Appendices 6.2 and 6.3.
reasons for the communist gains in the first general elections seem to be: (i) vague, ill-defined, illogical and often emotional admiration for things communist. This admiration has been the greatest among the educated middle classes (ii) The communists carefully planned and worked hard for their success. They proved again how a small, compact well chosen force with a clear cut programme can succeed, and on election day saw to it that their supporters voted en masse. (iii) The electorate were tired of speeches and seemingly empty promises, wanted results. The communists promised them what they wanted and what was equally important with a simplicity that all could understand (iv) Finally the communists had cleverly exploited the existing discontent over bad and insufficient food, poor wages, and every other form of material and local discontents. That means a well disciplined teamwork, exploiting the local distresses, and communicating it to the people in simple and understandable language, had been well placed to achieve power. And precisely, that had not been done by the communists from first elections to seventh elections. Their team spirit and leadership dwindled; their work among the electorate shrunk; and their

poor show resulted in several weaknesses in other fronts.

Analysis of contestants: The listing of the contestants for all the Lok Sabha elections shows two streams of contestants. The first stream consists of tested veterans of the party— who have considerable influence among the people because of their steadfast work. The second stream consists of the new elites or promising leaders of the party. However, a look into the successful candidates shows the fact that it was always the first stream that had won. The new elites were allowed to contest the seats which were discarded by the old guards. The top leadership of the party being the old guards, their decisions were generally obeyed, facilitating them to win in 'sure' constituencies. The new elite moved on to difficult contests, losing them almost on all occasions.

Secondly the parliamentary contests had become the monopoly of the old guards alone. They did not fail to contest time and again. But if a new entrant had lost even in one election, he was not selected for the next contest by the party.

Another interesting aspect of the communist contestants was that they were not allowed, on most occasions, to compete from their home constituencies. Being mass parties, they
believed that persons were not important but only ideas. However, in a highly personalised system of Tamil Nadu politics, this principle had worked to the detriment of the communists.

Yet another issue of communist candidates was that even old guards were changed from one constituency to another. They were not allowed to stabilise themselves in one particular constituency. However a few top leaders had a tendency to go back to the places where they had built up the organization or where they had been vitally concerned.

The listing of contestants for Assembly elections had also revealed these tendencies. But here the first stream of old guards were small in number. The new recruits pour in very much and also go out of scene within one or two elections. Here the communists generally contested from the home constituencies and were allowed to stabilise themselves from particular constituencies. However the alliances the communists entered with other parties, had always limited their number of constituencies they could contest, and as a result even old guards found themselves difficult to be accommodated.

Analysis of constituencies: The plotting of the constituencies, for both the Lok Sabha and the Assembly, from where the communists had competed had revealed two
interesting aspects. Firstly, the coalitions had limited the number of seats from where they could contest, to a very considerable extent. Given the option, the communists chose only the constituencies, where urban industrial labour dominates, or where they had done considerable work among the agricultural labourers or where their leaders had a personal influence and stake. The other parties of the coalitions, normally accepted the demands of the communists, implicitly conceding the superiority of the communists in these areas. But then, communists had not always won from these places and victory depended on the coalition to which they belonged. Therefore the credit for the communist victories had gone over to the dominant partner of the coalition. On the other hand, if communists had lost, even the few who had the faith in communist policies, lost their hearts, which worked as a cross current for the next elections.

Secondly, communism is said to represent the poor and communists could easily work their way through backward areas. The social and economic status of the scheduled castes are low indeed and the government has sanctioned reserved seats for both the parliament and the Assembly, for the effective representation of the scheduled castes. In Tamil Nadu 7 parliamentary seats and 32 Assembly seats are reserved
for scheduled castes, and 2 assembly seats are reserved for scheduled tribes. However communists had never worked seriously in these constituencies. Right through all the general elections the CPI had contested 1:3:3:2:1:1:1 Lok Sabha seats, and won 1:0:0:0:1:1:0. In the Assembly elections the CPI had competed 6:11:13:3:4:6:4 seats and had won 2:0:1:0:2:1:4. The CPI had never contested from the two scheduled tribe constituencies.

The CPI(M) got into the electoral field from fourth general elections onwards. Its contests from reserved constituencies for the Parliament were: 1:2:0:1 and it had not drawn a single member from these contests. With regard to the Assembly, CPI(M) had allowed 1:5:4:5 contests and had won 1:0:3:3. As far as the scheduled tribes seats were concerned the CPI(M) had contested from Senthamangalam in the fourth general elections and had lost it. With that one experiment, the initial enthusiasm of the party was gone and thereafter there was no attempt to contest from the two scheduled tribe constituencies.

Section III : Conclusion:

During the 1977 parliamentary elections, the CPI theoretician, N.K.Krishnan wrote: "In the coming Lok Sabha
elections, our party has to follow electoral tactics in different states which correspond to the specific situation and the nature of the specific political forces operating in each state. Our overall aim of course everywhere is to help secure a clear mandate in favour of progressive and democratic forces, wherever they are positioned either inside or outside the ruling party, and of defeating, the reactionary forces whenever they are stationed. In applying this overall line to the specific conditions of each state, we have to correctly identify who these forces are in each states". Unlike this vague statement, the CPI(M) had made its object forthright. It stated, "the party will strive generally for electoral adjustments with other parties, so that opposition votes may not get split and the defeat of the congress party may be ensured in the maximum number of constituencies, leading to the breaking of the congress monopoly of power and (1) to the formation of alternative governments wherever possible; (2) to the reduction of the members of the congress party in all the legislatures and the parliament; and (3) to enhance the representation of the communist party and to strengthen democratic opposition.

in parliament and the state legislatures.\textsuperscript{49}

To what extent the CPI was able to achieve its rather vague aim of supporting the progressives and defeating the reactionaries irrespective of their party affiliations? Whether the CPI(M) was able to break the congress monopoly of power, instal other parties or democratic forces into power and increase its own representation? It is not possible to know whether progressives had won and reactionaries had been defeated. But the congress monopoly of power was broken in 1967 and regional parties had been installed into power. Only communist parties could not increase their representation and influence. Actually their poll percentage and victories decreased election after election. This is clearly discernible from the district voting trends in assembly elections in Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{50}

If so what were the reasons for the continued decline of the communist parties? Perhaps they may be looked into the organizational disabilities of the party also. It is surprising to note that the communist parties themselves had

\textsuperscript{49} CPI(M), Resolution of the Central Committee (Tenali: CPI(M), June 1966), p.24.

\textsuperscript{50} See Appendix 6.4 and 6.5.
mentioned several of these, in their post-election reviews. Major weaknesses of the communist parties are. (1) Even in states where these parties are strong, their strength is negligible in many districts of these states. (2) Party lags behind mass organizations, which themselves are weak. (3) Innerparty controversies have arisen because of the long time taken to evolve a political line. (4) Inner-party controversies have led to groupism and personality clashes in the party. (5) The weakness of the peasant movement has made the peasants to remain under congress banner. (6) Women cadres have not been organized at all. (7) Minorities and backward communities are not given adequate

51. CPI, Statement on the General elections and after, Crossroads, April 1952.
CPI, Forward to postelection struggles, (New Delhi : CPI, 1971).
CPI, (Reports and Resolutions on Seventh General Elections, (New Delhi : CPI, 1980).
CPI((M)), Politbureau statement on General Election Results, People's democracy, March 12, 1967.
CPI((M)), Politbureau statement on General Election Results, People's democracy, March 21, 1971.
attention. (8) Localism, careerism and personal ambitions have developed inside the party to a large extent. (9) In majority of the districts the party has overreached by contesting far more seats than has been justified by its strength. (10) More often than not CPI and CPI(M) and other leftist parties have quarrelled among themselves instead of uniting to fight others. (11) There has been lack of co-operation between state units and the agit-prop instrument. (12) The insubordination of the district units to the state unit, and the state unit to the party centre has a telling effect on efficiency. 52

These organizational inefficiencies had resulted not only in the under-representation in the Lok Sabha and the Assembly, but also in two other important venues of representation. Firstly, as representation in the second chambers of India is based on the strength in the Assemblies communists could not get the representation proportionate to the votes they had obtained. In 1952 council elections communists obtained 4 seats and thereafter there was no

52. Perhaps paucity of funds might have caused these organizational inefficiencies and timid electoral efforts. The Government reports on elections reveal this aspect. The maximum expenditure allowed for the parliament is Rs. 35,000/- and for the Assembly is Rs. 12,000/-. See Appendix 6.6.
representation until 1980, when the CPI had elected P. Manickam and the CPI(M) had elected A. Nallasivam as their lone voices. 53

Secondly the representation in Rajya Sabha was extremely poor. P. Ramamurthi was first elected to Rajya Sabha for the period 1960-66, when the split did not take place, and switched over to CPI(M) when the CPI(M) had made its successful debut in 1967 elections. M.R. Venkataraman was elected to Rajya Sabha for the period 1968-1974. Again P. Ramamurthi was elected for 1978-84 after the Sixth general elections. The CPI had sent its lone representative M. Kalyanasundaram for 1980-86. Most of the time even these representatives were elected with the understanding of the dominant partner of the coalitions to which they belonged. 54

In the post-Independence period, the record of Tamil Nadu in Local Administration has been extremely poor. The Government has passed Panchayat Act, in 1958 and has held just two civic elections. In the first civic elections of 1964-65, the congress party held the sway and had captured


54. See the Chapter on Elections in the Administrative Reports of Tamil Nadu for the years 1952 to 1980.
all the 374 panchayat unions. In the second civic election of 1969 CPI had captured 34 seats out of 110 contests. The CPI(M) had won in 35 places out of 120 contests. As part of urban administration, elections to the 62 municipalities in the state were held during April 1969. (The total number of municipalities in the state are 73 with 1851 seats). The CPI success in these elections were 39 wins in 135 contests. The CPI(M) victories were 36 out of 170 contests.

Only the improper assessment of the existing political situation coupled with organizational inefficiencies have resulted in the dismal electoral show of the communist parties in Tamil Nadu. However these parties claim that only the loopholes in the prevailing electoral system prevent their effective representation. Accordingly they want to make drastic changes in the electoral laws of the country. But will these measures, if carried, are alone capable of putting the communists into power? Or at least, will they provide the necessary climate and impetus to work for a more successful end? Only the communists are bound to answer these vital questions.