Chapter V

MARGINALIZED CONGRESS AND DRAVIDIAN POLITICS

The epoch-making elections of 1967 provided an unprecedented electoral defeat to the congress party in the state though the congress defeat was not all that humiliating and severe when we look at the percentage of votes polled by the party. The marginalization of the party in the politics of the country continues unchanged even after four decades. There are profound forces and factors working both within and outside the congress party and the state that ensure the exclusion of the party uninterruptedly from the corridors of power in the state.

Congress Defeat in the 1967 Elections

The 1967 elections proved to be a watershed in the politics of the State as it heralded the age of Dravidian dominance replacing the Congress system of the previous two decades. Though at that time the defeated Congress considered the electoral defeat as an aberration, only a small disruption to be followed shortly by an assertive congress comeback to the corridors of St. George Fort, yet destiny proved otherwise and there had been a continual exclusion of congress from the citadels of power in the State. It is widely believed that congress relegation to the marginal periphery of power in the State is essentially due to the ascendancy and continued sway of Dravidian regionalism. On the contrary a closer understanding of the political process suggests a different picture. The congress party in the State lost and continues to lose power due to a plethora of reasons having primarily electoral, organizational and psychological dimensions.

The DMK strategy of electoral alliance contributed crucially to the defeat of the Congress party in the epoch making elections of 1967. In fact the dominance of the Congress party in the politics of the country in that period was considerably due to the geographical method of electoral representation. As this system operated on the basis of relative majority and not absolute majority the Congress party with its spread all over the
country was able to establish its dominance over opposition parties that were fragmented and segmented.

This disproportionality between votes received in the elections and seats attained in the Parliament and State Legislatures heralded the dominance of the congress party in the multi-party system.

The political parties in the Madras State realized this electoral advantage of congress and began to evolve appropriate political and electoral strategies to counter it. The strategy of electoral adjustment and alliances seemed to be the most appropriate one.

In the first general elections of 1952 the Communist party of India and Forward Block entered into an informal understanding in a few constituencies. The apolitical Dravidia Kazhagam and its political offshoot DMK which had not still entered the electoral arena supported this informal understanding. As a result CPI emerged as the single largest opposition party in the Legislative Assembly of undivided Madras State winning 17 seats. In the second general elections of 1957, the Forward Block and Congress Reforms Committee (a breakaway group of anti-Kamaraj, upper caste dissidents) joined hands to become the largest opposition group with 16 seats.

As third general elections approached all opposition leaders in the State realized the enormous benefits accruing to the congress because of fragmented and divided opposition at the hustings. The former congress veteran and the leader of the recently formed Swatantra party Rajaji frequently articulated the political axiom that the multi-cornered contests and fragmented opposition constituted the pedestal of congress electoral supremacy. He, as leader of Swatantra advocated merger of compatible parties and electoral alliance among non-compatible parties to achieve the cherished goal of defeating the congress. Accordingly the Congress Reforms Committee that was later named as Indian National Democratic party merged with the Swatantra party in 1959. After some time the Tamil Nadu Toilers Party led by the Vanniyar leader S.S. Ramaswamy Padayachi merged with Swatantra.
The leader of Swatantra Rajaji on the eve of the 1962 general elections even held negotiations with DMK to forge an electoral alliance or understanding to combat congress electoral juggernaut. The need for an electoral alliance or understanding seemed to him so paramount that he was ready to overlook the anti-Brahmin ancestry of DMK and its adherence to separate Dravida Nadu. Ultimately the 1962 elections Swatantra, DMK, Forward Block and Muslim League combined together to make electoral adjustments and won 62 seats in the Legislative Assembly.

Though so far in the previous three elections electoral adjustments among opposition parties were made, yet no serious alliance had been formed to capture power in the State. At the Tanjore - Trichy Regional Conference of DMK, its chief C.N. Annadurai propagated the strategy of electoral adjustment with all other opposition parties irrespective of their differing ideological orientations. He concluded an electoral alliance that included ideologically incompatible parties like Communist Party of India, Swatantra. In this broad alliance DMK, Swatantra, CPM (Communist party, Marxist) the Praja Socialist Party, the Samyuktha Socialist Party and seven independents were included.

The consolidation of entire opposition in opposition to the isolated congress party operated decisively to end the congress system and to inaugurate the era of Dravidian governance. The decisive role of alliance in the electoral defeat of congress can be understood by a comparison between its performance in the 1962 and 1967 elections. In 1962 elections the congress received 46.1% of popular vote to win 139 seats. But in 1967 elections it received about 41.4% of the popular vote, a diminution of around 5%. But this reduction had a telling effect on the number of constituencies it won. It could manage to win only 50 constituencies. The consolidated challenge of opposition alliance could be adduced to be a vital factor in the defeat of congress party. While reviewing the performance of the party in the general elections the Congress leader Kamaraj himself considered the organized work of opposition as one of the most important factors precipitating the downfall of congress.
### TABLE -1

**IMPACT OF OPPOSITION ALLIANCE ON CONGRESS PERFORMANCE 1952, 1967 AND 1971**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elections</th>
<th>Congress</th>
<th>Main opponent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seats (in Numbers)</td>
<td>Votes (in Percentage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>15</td>
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Source: [http://www.eci.gov.in](http://www.eci.gov.in) (Website of Election Commission of India)
The Congress defeat was also due to the inept and harsh handling of the anti-Hindi stir that took place in 1965. The post-Kamaraj government in the State used excessive repression against the agitation, described as the most violent one since the Quit India Movement. A bit of resourcefulness and tact if had been shown by the Congress government during the agitation could have punctured the gathering momentum of opposition alliance.

The revolution of increasing expectations from the people also promoted the interests and prospects of the opposition groups much to the detriment of the Congress party. The unfortunate disadvantage of the situation for the State Congress government was the fact that "Many whose lives were objectively improved because of the congress policies became critical of the congress government because their horizons and expectations had been expanded and their political and social consciousness raised". 

The Congress ascendancy in the State was built around many pillars and the most significant of these pillars was the leadership of Kamaraj. The implementation of K Plan in 1963 and the concomitant renunciation of Chief Ministership by Kamaraj was also a negative catalyst in the Congress debacle. The Dravida Kazhagam leader Periyar had foretold the events of 1967 and thereafter in 1963 itself when he beseechingly implored Kamaraj to drop his renunciation of Chiefministership as part of the K Plan. Then he had forewarned that Kamaraj resignation would be suicidal for Kamaraj himself. The successor government failed to consolidate the advantages of the Congress party and unwittingly enhanced opposition prospects by the repressive handling of Hindi crisis.

**Regeneration Attempts**

Convinced that the Congress defeat could be set aside by organizational regeneration the State Congress leaders especially Kamaraj devoted their energies to achieve the objectives. Kamaraj proposed the constitution of new working committees at Village, Taluk, Town and District levels. The Congress also adopted proposals for organising labour, peasants, youth and women's wings of the party. As youth contributed crucially to
the DMK victory Congress party paid special focus to recruit youth volunteers and cadres.

There was special attention given to the student community. Fortunately within a year from the 1967 elections almost all the college student unions in the City of Madras and other urban areas elected congress oriented student leaders. The formation of the National Student's Council for Tamil Development - an organization specifically formed to enroll youngsters was the causative factor in this turnaround among the student community. Many youngsters joined Congress due to the efforts of this organization. K.V. Thangabalu, V. Ramamoorthy, V.K. Appasamy, K.Jegaveerapandian, K. Dandapani, R. Anbarasu, Kudanthai Ramalingam etc. joined the Congress party.

This organization conducted many conferences at various levels in almost all areas of the State. A year after the defeat the Regional Conference of the organization was convened at Madurai, the ancient city. Nedumaran who later became important leader of the State Congress organized this meeting. These meetings of this council contributed to the rejuvenation of the Congress party in the State.

Madras Corporation Council Elections

Being the capital city and the citadel of emerging DMK election to Madras Corporation always dominated the politics of the State. In 1959 the upcoming DMK got a boost as it won the Corporation council elections. This was the first milestone in the passage of DMK from a novice in 1957 elections to be the ruling party of the State in 1967. A year after the 1967 elections the elections to the Corporation council were conducted. The ruling DMK had an eight party alliance. But out of 120 total seats the DMK captured 54 and surprisingly congress captured 52 seats. In 1959 the Congress party in alliance with DK and Communist party of India could capture only 49 seats. But in 1968 an isolated, defeated Congress party could manage to capture 52 seats in the Corporation council. The impressive performance of the Congress party indicated that Congress had not been swamped out of TN Politics by DMK and Congress was still the party of the future in the State.
MADRAS CORPORATION COUNCIL ELECTIONS 1959 AND 1968

DMK

Congress

54

52

45

37

Seats

1959

1968

226
Nagercoil by-election

Soon after Corporation council elections by-election was held to the Negercoil Parliamentary constituency in the south. Kamaraj was put up as the candidate of the Congress party. The Swatantra party fielded its district unit President M. Mathias. Though initially DMK too put up its candidate, later on it withdrew him, on an appeal from Rajaji so that common United Front would be put up against Kamaraj. The DMK mustered all its strength and deputed its Minister for Public Works Department to ensure the victory of Mathias. Kamaraj won the election with a whopping margin of about 1.28 lakh votes. The triumph of the party in Nagercoil against heavy opposition convinced the party that it could dislodge DMK from power in the forthcoming election. Unfortunately soon after the elections Congress had a national, vertical split and the resultant fratricidal rivalry effectively was to bury Congress hopes for many decades to come.\textsuperscript{12}
NARGERCOIL (PARLIAMENTARY)
BY-ELECTION-1969

Source: Navasakthi, Madras, 2 December 1968
Congress Split and Electoral Politics

In 1969 the longstanding struggle between the organizational and governmental wings of the governing congress, which was simmering ever since the new Prime Minister started asserting her authority and independence of judgment over the dictates and directives of the Congress organizational leaders came to the fore over the question of choosing the Congress candidate for the Presidential elections.\(^\text{13}\)

This factional struggle for survival was provided with an ideological orientation whereby the Prime Minister was portrayed as a leader committed to socio-economic modernization and development and the organizational leaders as protectors of feudal, vested interests. The Prime Minister led fraction was christened as Congress (R), R standing for ruling and the organizational leaders led faction as Congress (O) where (O) stands for organization. The ruling Congress inherited the support of a majority of Congress members of Parliament and social base at the national level from the undivided party. In Tamil Nadu Congress (R) was supported by C. Subramaniam, the architect of Green revolution and the erstwhile confidante of Rajaji, Kannadasan, the famous Tamil poet who entered Congress stream from the DMK through the Tamil Desiya Katchi (Tamil Nationalist Party). The Congress Chief Minister in the post-Kamaraj phase Bhaktavachalam too joined this faction.\(^\text{14}\)

Though Congress (R) was powerful and popular across the country the Congress (O) was the dominant party in Tamil Nadu after the split. This faction inherited the State unit's organization, headquarters and preponderance of mass support from the undivided Congress.

Many members of the Prime Minister's faction in TN themselves accepted the poor membership, social base and inexperienced local leadership of Congress (R) in the State in comparison to the dominant Syndicate faction. For example Kannadasan said that only a few important leaders remained in Congress (R) and in contrast the Syndicate faction in the State was abundant in local talent, organizational strength and social base.
The preponderant support base of the Congress (O) was shown by its impressive performance in the Panchayat Raj elections of 1970. Though Congress (O) was out of power and isolated, it managed to perform impressively winning 50% seats in the Panchayat Raj elections. At the national level though Congress (R) mustered the support of majority of the Congress Members of Parliament the government lost its majority in Lok Sabha because of the split. The embattled Prime Minister wanted to save the government by seeking and acquiring the Parliamentary support from smaller parties. In this context the ruling party of the State DMK seemed an attractive proposition to Congress (R) leadership as it had a strong contingent of 25 members in the Lok Sabha. For the Prime Minister DMK seemed to be an automatic and natural choice as an informal understanding or formal alliance with it would not only give the much needed majority in the Parliament but also would enable her to undermine the popularity and prestige of the factional rival Kamaraj.

In this volatile backdrop the 1971 Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly elections were announced and the ruling Congress fought on the issue of poverty alleviation, while Congress (O) sought to fight on the plank of saving democracy. The Congress (R) entered into an electoral alliance with DMK along with other smaller parties. The seven party alliance was named as Left Democratic Front. The national leadership of Congress (R) asked the local State leaders to conduct and conclude the alliance negotiations with the DMK. Accordingly negotiations between Congress (R) and DMK were held and firstly the distribution and allocation of seats in the Parliamentary elections were decided whereby the Congress (R) received a somewhat whittled down share of just 9 seats out of the total 39 seats in the State.

There was a protracted negotiation over the distribution of seats in the Legislative Assembly elections. The DMK chief was willing to give Congress a maximum of 60 seats while Congress (R) leaders argued for a higher share. Incidentally there was no consensus on the part of the Congress leaders as to the exact number of seats expected and to be demanded by them. While the former Chief Minister Bhaktavatchalam
demanded 100 seats, C.Subramaniam demanded 90 seats and the nationalist poet Kannadasan demanded 70 seats. As the protracted negotiations seemed to head towards a stalemate and even breakdown, the Congress (R) haunted by the dauntless prospects of a rival congress (O) victory, in a moment of fatal indiscretion and desperation altogether gave up its claims about Legislative Assembly seats. This was in return for the secure allocation of 9 Parliamentary seats in the State and the lone seat of Pondicherry Union Territory.\(^\text{17}\)

The distribution of seats and the allocation of constituencies in this alliance were greatly discriminatory. The Prime Minister accepted this patiently discriminatory and humiliating poll arrangement even when local congress unit protested. The central leadership brushed the opposition of local unit aside with its mind set upon safeguarding its national level interests at any cost, even if it involved sacrificing the State unit.

This suicidal electoral arrangement of 1971 later unfortunately became the general strategy of the dominant Congress faction in most of the elections whereby to secure national level interests the local interests of Congress unit were sacrificed.\(^\text{18}\)

In opposition to the Progressive alliance consisting of DMK, Congress (R), the rival Congress (O) and Swatantra party of Rajaji had Grand Alliance. The Progressive Front swept the elections and the Congress (O) Leader Kamaraj was the only successful candidate of the grand alliance elected to Parliament from Nagercoil. While DMK captured 182 seats in the Legislative Assembly, the Congress (O) was able to capture only around 15 seats. The Congress (R) was greatly satisfied at the result as it achieved its objective of defeating Congress (O) even if it did not contribute to its growth in the State.

The elections though precipitated a huge defeat to Congress (O) in terms of seats its performance was not totally dissatisfactory as it had attracted about 35% of the popular support. The electoral alliance of Congress (R) and DMK and the subsequent pooling together of their support precipitated Congress (O) defeat. Like a silver lining in the dark cloud the continued possession of popular support of around 35% greatly
enthused the leader of Congress (O) Kamaraj who started believing that unification of Congress segments and ending of internecine rivalry could upstage the DMK from the echelons of power in the State.¹⁹
DINDUGAL (PARLIAMENTARY) BY-ELECTION-1972


AIADMK: 51.6%
Congress (O): 24%
DMK: 18%

233
Formation of ADMK and Congress Dualism

The matinee idol M.G.Ramachandran, popularly known as M.G.R. broke away from DMK in 1972 to form his own political party called Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam meaning Annadurai DMK. In the last two decades M.G.R. was passionately associated with the politics of DMK and proved to be an indispensable instrument of DMK's political and electoral mobilization. After the death of Annadurai there emerged a relationship of tension and rancour between the Chief Minister Karunanidhi and the matinee idol. It was believed in the political circles in early 70's that M.G.R. wanted a berth in the cabinet that was instantly turned down by the leadership contributing to his estrangement.

M.G.R. was also critical over certain policies and programs of the DMK government generally and against the abolition of prohibition in particular. M.G.R. dreaded that the poor people who thronged to theatres to watch his films might be diverted to liquor if prohibition was removed. M.G.R. was also aggrieved over the actions of the Chief Minister in the film world. The Chief Minister aggressively promoted his son through the films scripted by him as a rival to M.G.R. and many M.G.R. fan clubs were pressurized to convert into his son's fan clubs. These simmering issues smoldered in the party and they came o the surface soon in 1972 over the misuse of party funds.

M.G.R. demanded that he should be given control over the party finance. As he was the treasurer he asked for explanation whenever he perceived discrepancies in the party accounts. He began to criticize the insidious growth of corruption and nepotism in the party. As his critical attitude increased gradually the DMK executive committee expelled him from the party. There were spontaneous demonstrations, protests from all over the State led by the fans of M.G.R. over his expulsion and he soon formed his own party called Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. The name was chosen to emphasis the point that D.M.K. under Karunanidhi's leadership had transgressed far away from the original ideals and objectives of Anna and D.M.K.
Impact on Congress

The formation of ADMK rearranged the parameters of party politics in the State and had differential degrees of dysfunctional impact on other political parties. Its birth effectively destroyed the scope for the reunification of two congress segments in the State. In due course of time the ADMK successfully achieved so much of prominence and popularity that Congress factions had to forever lose their significance in Tamil Nadu.

Congress (R) approached ADMK for friendship and cooperation. In fact the central leadership of Congress (R) was perceived by the DMK to be responsible for the formation of ADMK. It was alleged that Congress (R) intimidated MGR through Income Tax Department. It is pertinent to note that the Income Tax Department moved for the attachment of the property of MGR for his income tax irregularities. Once MGR started his party the Income Tax case was totally ignored by the Central Government. The expelled leader of DMK had a secret meeting with the Prime Minister in Kashmir and many leaders of Congress (R) like C.Subamaniam, Shankar Dayal Sharma had repeated meetings with him. The Congress (R) was favourable to ADMK "as the perception had grown within the party that its alliance with the DMK for the 1971 polls had hindered its prospects in the State." Though no formal alliance was made between the Congress (R) and ADMK till the 1977 General elections still these parties maintained close rapport. The Congress (R) gave indirect encouragement to ADMK to criticize the DMK in the acrimonious exchanges in the post-split period.

The attitude of Kamaraj and Congress (O) was hostile from the beginning towards ADMK. He said that "ADMK leaders were as involved as DMK leaders in corruption, ethnic chauvinism and populist gimmicks". He called them as two rotten fishes of the same pond.

Congress Unification and 1977 Elections

As contours of politics in the State changed and the Congress-DMK alliance disintegrated, there was a series of attempts made by Congress leaders to patch up their
differences and to present a unified challenge to Dravidian dominance in the State. Initially an electoral alliance was forged between the two parties to fight the Pondicherry Assembly election. But these unification attempts ran into roadblocks as national emergency was proclaimed by the Central Government and Kamaraj condemned it as a violation of democratic freedoms.

The Chief of Congress (O) passed away suddenly in 1975. Immediately the Congress (R) sent an open invitation to the Congress (O) leaders to rejoin Congress. Accordingly at the Tiruchirappalli meeting of Congress (O) a resolution for the merger of both Congress parties was passed. But the President of Congress (O) in the State Ramachandran, backed by the central leaders rejected all such moves and even suspended the supporters of the merger resolution from the party. But he could not prevent the inevitable erosion in the support base of the party in the absence of the charismatic leader Kamaraj.

Ultimately overwhelming majority of the Congress (O) party members joined Congress (R) in the State. The nature of organizational structure of Congress (O) induced such a quick merger of the party with Congress party (R). The party organization generally under Kamaraj meant not a formal party structure but rather having a loyal individual in a position of power. Soon after his death the element of loyalty collapsed and the leaderless party men chose to go to Congress (R).

The national emergency was lifted and the confident Prime Minister announced elections to Parliament. The elections were held at a particular historical juncture deemed to be conducive for Congress comeback in the State. For the first time since 1969 national split the Congress presented a unified picture and confident posture. Moreover the Congress party was not unpopular in the State as it was in the northern India because here only opposition party activists were repressed during emergency. The party had also conducted intensive mobilization campaigns based on its Twenty Point and Five Point programmes.
The party could have regenerated and reorganized itself if it had made a determined bid to capture power. Though the prospects of ADMK always seemed to be in ascendancy ever since its creation, the Congress could have filled up the void about to be created by the imminent electoral defeat of the DMK. Though in many by-elections like in Dindugal parliamentary by-election after its birth ADMK won, the second position was held by congress. This historical opportunity to re-capture power and social base in the State was rather squandered by the party as it went for an electoral alliance with ascendant ADMK in the Parliamentary polls. The party concerned about the possible adverse impact of emergency on its electoral performance in the north chose to forge alliance with ADMK to secure as many Parliamentary seats as possible in the southern State. 28

The alliance with ADMK was forged, notwithstanding the protests from the local leaders. For example Kannadasan the famous poet vehemently protested against the alliance. Kannadasan, despite being a longtime associate of ADMK leader M.G.R. met important leaders of Congress party in Delhi and emphasized the need to be insulated from the ADMK in the forthcoming elections. But the Central leadership, concerned over national equations decided to pursue the alliance with ADMK to the logical conclusion of success in Parliamentary election. The disappointed Congressman decidedly against the alliance on grounds of party interests chose to withdraw from the campaigning in the elections to mark his displeasure. 29

The Congress-ADMK front, described as the Progressive Front performed exceedingly well in the Parliamentary elections. While ADMK won 18 seats out of contested 20 the Congress (R) won 14 seats out of the 15 contested seats. The CPI another constituent won three seats taking the tally of the front to 35. The rival Democratic Front consisting of DMK, Janata and CPM won only 4 seats. This was in total contrast with electoral picture everywhere outside TN and south where Congress was decimated.
The Congress (R) as it chose to contest only 15 seats received only 22% of the electoral support, a decrease of around 13% from the Congress (O) performance of 35% in the previous elections. The union of two streams of Congress must have led to an increase in their vote share but because of electoral alliance with ADMK the scope for such increase was negated as the unified Congress competed only 15 of the 39 Lok Sabha seats in the State. The electoral alliance strategy adopted differently in two different elections of 1971 and 1977 brought down the Congress support base from 35% in 1967 to 22% in 1977. The process of marginalization of Congress, its status reduction from a dominant party to "pressure group of election times" was completed, to which the suicidal electoral strategy of alliances contributed single handedly.
**TABLE -2**

GRADUAL MARGINALIZATION OF CONGRESS PARTY

1967 to 1977 (LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elections</th>
<th>Congress</th>
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</tr>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>1977</td>
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Source: [http://www.eci.gov.in](http://www.eci.gov.in) (Website of Election Commission of India)
Legislative Assembly Elections 1977

In the 1977 Parliamentary elections the Janata party, a political child arising from the amalgamation of five ideologically organisationally distinct groups, defeated the ruling congress. Soon after the assumption of power the Janata government dismissed many State governments led by congress on the ground that the congress defeat in the Parliament elections indicated loss of public support to these governments. Along with these States, Tamil Nadu also went to the Legislative Assembly polls in 1977. The defeat of Congress (R) in the Parliamentary elections had deleterious impact on the successful Progressive Front in the State constituted by ADMK, Congress (R) and CPM. The ADMK supremo M.G.R. decided to exclude Congress from Progressive Front, as he was concerned over the antagonistic attitude of newly formed Janata government in the Centre. Left with no choice the congress (R) fought the Legislative Assembly elections independently and won 27 seats with a popular vote share of 18%. The gradual diminution of congress social base from 41% in the 1967 elections to 18% now materialized, much to the detriment of party’ position in the politics of state.
1977 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Post Election Congress Split

After the 1977 Parliamentary elections as Congress was defeated by the newly formed Janata party it had to sit in the opposition after being in power uninterruptedly for 3 decades. The first ever defeat of the party at the national level brought to surface the volatile factionalism within the party and it underwent another split. Here too like in the earlier split of 1969 the Indira Gandhi faction inherited social and organizational strength.  

While the dominant group was known as Congress (I), I for Indira, the other group was known as Congress (U), U for Devaraj Urs. The Congress (U) conducted a vigorous and aggressive campaign to capture organizational and social base of Congress in Tamil Nadu. It appointed Alagesan, the former Central Minister who had resigned over Hindi controversy in 1965 as the President of the State unit of Congress (U). The Indira Congress group appointed G.K. Moopanar as State Unit President. One of the important leaders of Congress (U) Brahmananda Reddy, in his campaign against rival congress leader Indira Gandhi repeatedly focused attention on two significant issues namely Brahmin hegemony and north Indian exploitation of South India. He sought to project himself as a Non-Brahmin southerner fighting for the welfare of non-brahmins and southern states against North Indian Brahmin Indira Gandhi. The decision to paint India Grandhi as anti-non-brahmin and anti-south was a politically shrewd one as these two issues dominated the politics of the State from many defeats.  

The confusion as to who represented Congress then was cleared after the mini-convention called by the leader of Indira Congress G.K. Moopanar. In this convention most of the Congress members of Parliament, members of State Legislatures, Presidents and other office bearers of Congress Committees at District, Taluk and Town levels attended. This democratic convention convened by Moopanar elected him through a transparent electoral procedure as the President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. The Indira group defeated the rival group in this convention and came to be the only Congress
party of the State eliminating altogether its rival Congress (U) from the political scenario of the state.

By the dawn of the new decade the Congress (I) came to be established as the most dominant Congress party in the State, notwithstanding the continued existence of various other groups and individuals without any organizational or social strength, professing to adhere to the ideals and goals of Congress and Kamaraj. The emergence of Congress (I) as the only Congress party of Tamil Nadu ended the period of Congress structural dualism in the State. From 1969 to 1977 there were two Congress factions in the State - Congress (R) and Congress (O) and from 1977 to 1979 there were two Congress factions Congress (I) and Congress (U). This structural dualism proved to be an important factor in thwarting any sincere attempt to bring back the Congress rule in the State as the faction attempting a comeback had to fight not only opposing Dravidian parties but also its own internecine rivals. The emergence of unified Congress shedding its inimical feature of dualism enhanced definitely the Congress prospects in the coming decade of 80's. But again the inimical bane of iniquitous alliance spoilt the prospects of such a comeback. 33

1980 Elections and Congress-DMK Alliance

The defeat of the Congress party in the post-emergency period reshaped the political landscape of the State. Though ADMK, Congress inclusive Progressive Front was successful in the Parliamentary elections, once Congress was defeated nationally, ADMK decided to exclude Congress in the subsequent Legislative Assembly elections in 1977. The ADMK considered the defeated Congress a political liability and concerned about the possible adverse reaction from the new Janata government decided to exclude Congress from its Progressive Front in the 1977 Legislative Assembly election. In the intensely fought three-cornered contest, ADMK won a resounding victory. After coming to power in the state ADMK consciously maintained a distance from Congress so that the Central government could be befriended.
In 1979 By-election was held to Tanjore Parliamentary constituency. The leader of Congress (I) Indira Gandhi, fresh on the wave of retrieving the lost popularity decided to contest the elections. The Chief Minister MGR asked the former Prime Minister not to stand from Tanjore constituency as she might face a security threat there. But it was clear to everybody then that the Chief Minister wanted to avoid the anger of the Janata government. The ADMK's hesitation to support Mr. Gandhi's candidature from Tanjore and its subsequent participation in the coalition ministry headed by Charan Singh at the center created unbridgeable gap between Congress and ADMK.

As Congress-ADMK relationship got soured and strained, inevitably seeds of Congress-DMK alliance started germinating. Renouncing its earlier rancour against India Gandhi held because of dismissal of DMK government in 1976 by Congress Central government, DMK welcomed Congress and its leader Indira Gandhi and in true DMK style catchy slogans were coined to cement and symbolize the new relationship. The DMK and Congress decided to contest the Parliamentary elections of 1980 in the wake of disintegration of Janata party government caused by internal contradictions.

The DMK-Congress Front, which included Muslim League also won 37 of the 39 Parliamentary seats in the State. The massive mandate received by the alliance could be attributed to people's antipathy to the Janata party and their sympathy to Mrs. Indira Gandhi. When the victorious Congress party formed its government at the center, it dismissed around eleven State governments ruled by opposition parties, including ADMK government in Tamil Nadu. The new Congress government cited the reasons advocated by Janata government in 1977 to justify the dismissal of these State governments. The DMK-Congress alliance continued for the Legislative Assembly elections too. But unlike the smooth sharing of seats in the recently concluded Parliamentary elections, in the Legislative Assembly elections seat distribution and identification became a cantankerous process. Both main parties decided to contest an equal number of constituencies, exactly 110 each leaving the rest to other allies of minor standing.
There was a protracted quarrel over the issue of Chief Ministership in the event of alliance achieving success at the hustings. DMK maintained that the office of the Chief Ministership was informally allocated to it in the beginning itself. In the face of continued and mounting assertion from the Congress that party having more seats in the Legislative Assembly after the elections should get the office of Chief Ministership, DMK threatened to walk out of alliance if official confirmation from Congress over Chief Ministership to DMK did not come. Though after some time Congress accepted the demand of DMK, yet the rankling controversy exposed the fissures in the alliance to the electorate.

When election results were announced the Congress-DMK alliance was routed by the resurgent ADMK. DMK won 38 seats, Congress (I) won 30 seats, Muslim League one seat. The alliance thus contrary to expectations won only 69 seats. Their defeat was attributed to factors like uncoordinated electioneering, internal contradictions over the issue of Chief Ministership, mutual indifference, reformed attitude of ADMK etc.²⁵

**Nedumaran Revolt and Tamil Nadu Kamaraj Congress**

The alliance between DMK and Congress in 1980 Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly elections precipitated a minor crisis in the Congress Party and subsequently a front ranking leader Nedumaran walked out of Congress to form his own party. This disconcerting phenomenon of a disenchanted Congress leader forming a party fighting over the question of alliance with either of the Dravidian parties began to emerge on the political landscape of the state contributing to the fragmentation, marginalization and regionalization of the Congress Party in the State.²⁶

Nedumaran had been actively associated with the organizational and political activities of the Congress party since his student days. He had held various positions in Tamil Nadu Congress party. He was the organizer of the Madurai District Youth Congress Committee, President of Madurai District Congress Committee, Secretary of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.²⁷ Hailing from a wealthy family in Madurai, he first came to limelight when he organized district level conference of Congress youths in 1966
in which Kamaraj, the President of All India Congress Committee participated. His rise in the party thereafter was steady and in 1976 he was widely perceived to be a strong contender for the Presidentship of the reunited Congress party.

Towards the end of 1970's as relationship between ADMK and Congress became strained because of the participation of ADMK in Charan Singh Ministry, the Congress sought to cultivate a new alliance with DMK. Nedumaran opposed these alliance moves. As the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee he advocated continuance of ADMK-Congress alliance to face the 1980 Parliamentary elections. Because of his vehement, steadfast opposition to renewal of DMK-Congress alliance the central leadership of Congress removed him from the Presidentship of Congress unit in the State and Mr. Swaminathan, an enthusiast of DMK- Congress alliance was installed as the President.

The disappointed Congress unit leader began to undertake tours all over the State mobilizing party workers and public opinion against the alliance. As the Central leadership on disciplinary grounds removed him he convened a Congress workers conference at Thamukkam grounds in Madurai. The deliberations in this conference led to the formation of a new party by the breakaway group. This fledgling party was named as Tamil Nadu Kamaraj Congress. Nedumaran was elected as the President of the party. Kannadasann and other close confidants of the leader were given senior positions in the new party. 38

Renewal of Congress-ADMK Alliance and 1984 Elections

The victorious supremo of ADMK in 1980 realized the significance of harmonious rapport with the ruling party at the centre. Though ADMK had won in 130 Legislative Assembly constituencies around 40 of these constituencies were won with a margin less than 2000 votes. The Chief Minister understood the significance of a friendly relationship with Congress not merely for future electoral combats but also for the present stability of his government. He even appealed to his jubilant supporters to celebrate the victory in a manner not offending the defeated candidates of the Congress Party.
A year after his electoral victory MGR convened World Tamil Conference in Madurai and invited the Prime Minister to attend the conference. He took special interest in extending invitation to the Prime Minister so that the past enmity between them could be eliminated and the dreaded sword of domicile called article 356 could be avoided.

In 1981 there arose a vacancy in the Legislative Assembly from Thirupattur as its Congress Legislator had passed away. Congress decided to field a candidate in the ensuing by election and called for support from different groups and parties. The ADMK, which was waiting for an opportunity to get into the good books of Congress decided to extend its cooperation to Congress. It issued a statement that whenever a Legislative or Parliamentary seat becomes vacant due to resignation, death of the member, then that seat should be given to party to which the earlier member belonged and no other political party should contest against the candidate of that party in the by-elections. This strategy of ADMK though strange was calculated to woo back Congress. It is pertinent to note here that ADMK either earlier or after this particular by-election neither advocated nor applied that strange thesis.

As Congress had gleefully accepted the strange logic of ADMK, its ally DMK was faced with a predicament. It also decided not to disagree with ADMK thesis and stayed away from the electoral contest. As a result the Congress candidate won resoundingly in the by-election. This election represented the pinnacle of Congress strength as electoral partner in the State especially as the two antagonistic Dravidian parties were more or less even matched.

As gradually the Congress and ADMK started reestablishing relations the imminent arrangement had its impact on the internal affairs of the Congress party. The Moopanar faction was clearly uneasy at the evolution of this partnership. There were two reasons for Moopanar's disenchantment with any alliance with ADMK. Firstly ever since the reunion of Congress (O) and Congress (R) in 1976 he always cherished the independent electoral path for Congress so that the golden concept of Kamaraj rule could
be re-established. There was additional reason for his manifest repugnance towards alliance with ADMK. In 1980 MGR government passed a legislation popularly known as the Benami Land-holding Bill to illegalise several transfers of land that had taken place earlier to circumvent the land ceiling act. M.G.R. through this legislation wanted to hurt the political and personal interests of Moopanar.\textsuperscript{41}

But being a strong Congressman Moopanar did not precipitate any problems for the party. Another faction in the Congress to which the union Minister R.Venkatraman was closely identified convinced the central leadership to re-establish the alliance with ADMK. The pro- ADMK group could succeed in their endeavor because of the relatively weakened position of Congress in the Southern States. The South was the saviour of Congress in 1977 and 1980 Parliamentary elections. Karnataka and Andhra pradesh remained as citadels of Congress even as Communist parties overtook Congress in Kerala and Dravidianism ruled the roost in Tamil Nadu. But as 80's dawned the popular film actor of Andhra N.T.Rama Rao launched his own regional political party to protect Telugu pride especially in protest against the overbearing attitude of central leadership of Congress towards the State government and local unit of Congress. At that time of formation of the new party named as Telegu Desam Party by N.T. Rama Rao, in Tamil Nadu DMK-Congress alliance was strong, so NT Rama Rao came to Madras and had extensive consultations with MGR, his close friend. The newly formed regional party of Andhra within a short period of less than a year, in shining display captured power in the State. His success undermined psychologically Congress leadership, as Andhra Pradesh was a traditional bastion of Congress.

In the neighbouring State of Karnataka too the Janata party had captured political power in the Legislative Assembly elections. As these two southern strongholds became new Achilles' heel for Congress and as Kerala was always uncertain, the pro ADMK group easily convinced the national leadership to renew the ADMK alliance, as out of the two Dravidian parties it seemed to be more powerful.
As elections approached, the Prime Minister was assassinated by her own bodyguards in retaliation for the Blue Star operation of 1984 in which the army was ordered by the Prime Minister to flush out the Sikh terrorists hiding in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. The new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi decided to seek a mandate from the people immediately. Meanwhile in Tamil Nadu the Chief Minister came to be afflicted with severe health problems. He was taken to USA to receive specialized treatment. In this situation the eighth general election and State Legislative Assembly election were held. ADMK and Congress decided to distribute seats between themselves on the basis of a scheme called MGR Scheme. This electoral formula sought to balance between national priorities of Congress and State level priorities of ADMK. Congress was given roughly one third of Legislative Assembly seats while ADMK received 2/3rd of the Assembly seats. In Parliamentary seats Congress received 2/3rd of the seats while ADMK received 1/3rd. The interests of minor parties as electoral alliance partners were also accommodated.

The ADMK-Congress Front swept the elections winning 37 Parliament seats with 12 to ADMK and 25 to Congress (I). In the Legislative Assembly elections the Front won a whopping contingent of 198 seats. The two issues of Prime Minister’s assassination and Chief Minister’s hospitalization dominated the electoral campaign of the alliance. The DMK chief, disappointed with the outcome commented that the people had given Parliamentary vote to the deceased (Indira Gandhi’s Congress) and Legislative Assembly vote to the diseased (MGR’s ADMK).

As in previous elections the Congress national leadership was satisfied with achieving national level interests of the party and the State unit's future was sacrificed. The solitary benefit was the greatest number of Members of Parliament from the state belonging to either Congress or its allies.
TABLE -3  
PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS INCLUSIVE ALLIANCE IN  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 1977 TO 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elections</th>
<th>Congress Alliance</th>
<th>Opposing Alliance</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Partners</td>
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<td>1977</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.eci.gov.in](http://www.eci.gov.in) (Website of Election Commission of India)
ADMK Factionalism and Congress Politics

The death of the Chief Minister MGR in December 1987 precipitated a crisis of mammoth proportions in the internal dynamics of ADMK. The party was subjected to a vertical split. The wife of the deceased leader Janaki Ramachandran was chosen as the Chief Minister by a majority of ADMK members of State Legislative Assembly. Though she had a majority support in the Legislature, the rival group led by a close friend of the late Chief Minister Jayalalitha enjoyed overwhelming support of the party cadres, lower leaders and masses. Her youthful personality, close personal association with MGR and party (MGR had made her Rajya Sabha MP and party's Propaganda Secretary earlier) enabled her to score over the rival organisation. There was a fratricidal squabble between the two factions of ADMK in the Legislative Assembly and the resultant commotion constituted the causative factor for the imposition of Article 356 by the central government.

There were distinctly three different factions within Congress reacting in their own manner to the factional crisis in ADMK. The faction led by Shivaji Ganesan wanted Congress to recognize the Janaki faction of ADMK as the heir to MGR tradition. The Moopanar faction wanted equidistance from both factions so that energies of Congress could be channelized to usher in Kamaraj rule in the State. The third faction consisting of leaders like M.P. Subramaniam, Ramamoorthy wanted Congress to establish political rapport with Jayalalitha faction. As the Moopanar faction impressed the central leadership to plough independently to capture power, the other factions reacted differently. The Janaki supporting faction broke away from the party. The Jaya supporting faction had a split response as its leader M.P. Subramaniam joined ADMK and some others kept a low profile but within Congress.

Congress Independent Endeavor

The Moopanar group successfully inculcated in the minds of the central leadership and Prime Minister the need to plough an independent path in the Legislative Assembly elections so that Congress rule could be established in the void left by the death of MGR.
and the resultant disintegration of ADMK. The Moopanar line in Congress faced tremendous odds in persuading the central leadership to take the plunge. The supporters of Jaya faction had influential positions within Congress. They had striven hard for forging an alliance between Congress and Jaya faction. The alliance talks failed primarily because of the unbridgeable contradiction on the issue of Chief Ministership. The Congress wanted the post of Chief Minister while Jayalalitha demanded the same. After some hard bargaining at one time reports appeared in the press that Jayalalitha had conceded the Chief Ministership to Congress in return for the post of Deputy Chief Minister. But ultimately both sides retreated into their rigidity and the alliance talks broke down. As part of the pro- Jaya group in the Congress left and joined the Jaya - ADMK on the eve of the election, the other supporters kept a low profile within Congress. With the formation of TMM by pro- Janaki faction led by Shivaji Ganesan, Moopanar group achieved in advocating an independent bid o capture power in the State.

**Congress Mobilizational Strategy**

A significant feature of Congress election campaign was the projection of the Prime Minister to the center stage of the campaign. The Congress party realized that the politics in the State always revolved around strong, charismatic personalities. For example from 60's to 70's it was around Kamaraj and Annadurai. Then in the post-Congress phase it revolved around MGR and Karunanidhi. Hence it projected Rajiv Gandhi to fill the void created as a result of MGR's demise. Repeatedly the party emphasized that after MGR's death, the people of TN particularly women, Adi Dravidas should find solace and care in the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi.

The Congress portrayed the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as "One leader who wants to improve the lot of the Tamils, one who admires their art and culture, one who is keen on drawing them to national mainstream, one leader who understands their basic attitudes and life styles, as one leader who loves them as equals entitled to a respectable share in the national cake".45
As part of this carefully cultivated strategy the Prime Minister toured Tamil Nadu repeatedly. No other Prime Minister had toured the State as frequently and as elaborately as Rajiv Gandhi. The series of tours of the Prime Minister induced a sarcastic remark from the leader of DMK to the effect that as Rajiv Gandhi was definite that he would not come back to be the Prime Minister of India, he wanted to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. In fact when some Congress leaders themselves questioned the wisdom of conducting the uncertain campaign entirely by projecting Prime Minister especially in the context of imminent elections to the Parliament. But definitely the aggressive mass contact programmes of the Prime Minister influenced a new wave of vigor and vitality in the State Congress party.

**Autonomy of Local Unit**

The Congress leadership since 1967 for the first time came forward to provide total autonomy to the local leadership in the State. It rightly decided that it should project a strong local level leadership if it wanted to counter the powerful leadership of the Dravidian outfits. Hence it relived Moopanar from the post of General Secretary of All India Congress Committee and appointed him as Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President.

It also portrayed him as the true heir of Kamaraj. Then Moopanar started his poll work by taking the Parliamentary constituency as the unit of operations. He appointed a convenor and a three-member committee for each constituency. The autonomy granted to Moopanar matched the autonomy enjoyed by the regional stalwarts of Dravidian outfits over their cadres.

The Congress leaders concentrated their campaign in attacking the rule of the Dravidian parties in the last two decades. The Prime Minister said that there was only nepotism, inefficiency and rampant corruption in the rule of Dravidian parties. He frequently spoke about the need to compare the performance of regional parties with the golden rule of Kamaraj. The Congress said that Congress rule promoted educational
excellence, industrial and agricultural development, and corruption-free efficient government. It exhorted the people to bury the Dravidian rule as in the last 20 years from 1967 to 1987 corruption, nepotism and inefficiency were ruling in the State. The Dravidian rule was criticized to be responsible for the educational institutions and standards reaching their nadir, industries becoming sick, irrigation system becoming uncared for. In this massive campaign the Congress issued a clarion call to the cadres and people to strive to re-establish the golden rule of Kamaraj.

Regionalization of Congress

Critical of Dravidianism, yet aware of the overwhelming sway it had over the people of the State, the Congress party in the State consciously adopted regionally famous campaign strategies and issues. While addressing a public meeting in Tamukkam grounds in Madurai the Prime Minister peppered his speech with Tamil centric statements. He said that he was extremely delighted to be with the people in Madurai, the land of Silappadikaram. Extensively quoting from this masterpiece of Tamil literature the Prime Minister said that like Kannagi in Silappadikaram, the Congress stood for justice. It stood for the justice of backward class, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the poor etc. Echoing the tactics of the late Chief Minister MGR who used to give a special attention to women calling them as "Mother race", Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said in his speech that he would strive to get the justice in society denied to the mothers and sisters of the State. He repeatedly attempted to convey to the women folk that he was a suitable successor to M.G Ramachandran to represent the aspirations and grievances of women.

In another meeting in Namakkal on the fringes of Western Tamil Nadu the Prime Minister recollected the services of Namakkal Kavignar (Namakkal poet). He often quoted from the great poems of the poet who had creatively fused love for Tamil language and patriotism in the previous era. In many of his campaign meetings the Prime Minister asked the crowds, in the manner of Dravidian leaders to tell loudly which party they were going to vote. He used the Tamil slogan "Namadu Sinnam - Ungal Sinnnam" (Our symbol, your symbol) profusely in his contact tours. A political commentator wrote in the Indian Express that Congress had started copying the style of
these Dravidian parties in election campaigns. DMK and ADMK were known for their cinematic style of campaign. Congress used that extensively. Giant sized cut-outs of leaders were put up in every meeting sponsored by the party. Naming the babies, visiting the poor in their houses and after a long lapse of time harmony among local leaders were the salient features of this regionalized campaign of the congress party. The most pertinent feature to be noted here was that the congress party gave a completely unified, harmonious appearance like Dravidian parties. After the exit of Shivaji Ganesan and M.P. Subramaniam the party under the leadership of Moopanar presented a picture of unity, harmony and commitment like the Dravidian parties and in the run up to the elections there was no public statement of dissension in the party.52

Not merely in campaign strategies but also in the projection of issues the Congress was decidedly and manifestly regional. Moopanar, the Chief Ministerial candidate charged the DMK leader Karunanidhi with neglecting the interests of the farmers in the Cauvery Delta. He described the attitude of DMK as seen in its manifesto towards Cauvery as ambivalent. He said that DMK was ambivalent and indifferent to the issue, as any opposite stand would displease DMK's friends in the National Front.53 Similarly the Prime Minister too accused the DMK of mortgaging interests of TN to Karnataka. He asked why DMK did not use the influence it had with National Front to force Karnataka to agree to the establishment of a Tribunal to solve the crisis.54

On another controversial issue, the language policy the Congress party in the poll manifesto emphasized its support for the adoption of two language formulae. It also attacked DMK for joining hands with Hindi chauvinists in the National Front.55 The Congress party also took credit for the establishment of North Eastern council in Srilanka and the devolution of powers to Tamil community as a result of the Indo-Srilankan agreement signed in 1987 between Rajiv Gandhi and Jeyavardana the President of Srilanka.
Electoral Performance

There were four fronts operating in the elections of 1989. The DMK front, ADMK (Jaya) front, ADMK (Janki) front and the Congress front. In the four-cornered electoral contest DMK front, getting the advantage of split opposition came back to power after 13 years in political wilderness.

An objective comparison between the performance of Congress in 1977 and 1989 in the Legislative Assembly elections showed that there was no cause for Congress party to get enveloped by gloom and pessimism. In 1977 the party won 27 seats of the 198 contested, lost deposit in 82 and polled 29.94 lakhs votes, accounting 17.51% of the total valid votes polled. In 1989 it polled 47.25 lakhs votes accounting for 19.77%. It lost deposits only in 55 constituencies. It captured 26 seats. So in 1989 the Congress had marginally performed better than its previous performance.

There was appreciable increase in the number of people who voted for Congress in 1989 over 1977, an increase of 27 lakhs votes. It almost doubled its voters in 20 years. Yet there was all-round disappointment in 1989 as the party expected a quantum phenomenal jump in figures that would have enabled it to capture power in the State. The party wanted to win the State in one year forgetting the old maxim that Rome was not built in a day.
1989 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats in Numbers</th>
<th>Votes in Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeya (AIADMK)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janaki (AIADMK)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Hindu, 26 January 1989
Impact of Result

The disappointed Tamil Nadu Congress Committee executive council led by Moopanar decided to quite their posts in the aftermath of the electoral outcome. The dissidents who were reconciled to an independent path in the elections because of Prime Minister's directives began to raise their voice. These dissidents led by Valappadi Ramamoorthy revolted against the leadership of Moopanar and successfully upstaged him. Valappadi Ramamoorthy was appointed as the President of TNCC (I) and he promptly secured an alliance with ADMK for the Parliamentary elections on the basis of historically evolved unequal formulae called MGR formulae. The central leadership disappointed with the Legislative Assembly results, wary of facing Parliamentary elections in the shadow of Bofars controversy easily was convinced to re-establish alliance with ADMK.

Shivaji Ganesan and TMM

As the ADMK in the post MGR phase split into two antagonistic segments of ADMK (Jaya) and ADMK (Janaki) the Congress (I) in the State came to be subjected to intense pressures and contradictions. The famous actor Shivaji Ganesan advocated that Congress (I) should extend the hand of friendship to the widow of the late Chief Minister. As the Central leadership under the firm influence of G.K. Moopanar decided to travel in the independent path, the dejected thespian walked out of the Congress Party.

Shivaji Ganesan was a popular rival to MGR both in the reel and real world. His original name was Ganesan and in 1940's he acted in a drama called "Chandrodayam" in the role of Maratha King Shivaji and one of the spectators Periyar was impressed by his performance in the drama and rechristened him as Shivaji. He was one of the founding leaders of DMK in 1949. In the initial period of their cinematic and political life both MGR and Shivaji Ganesan adopted rival stands. While MGR was in the national stream of Congress, Shivaji was in the regional stream of Dravidianism. His closeness to the Dravidian leaders led him to play the lead role in the epoch making "Parasakthi" film scripted by Karunanidhi. He broke away from Dravidian moorings in the 1960's along
with Sampath, Kannadasan etc. when they decided to form a splinter party called Tamil Desiya Katchi (Tamil Nationalist Party).

As it was not financially and politically viable to run the new outfit, the former Dravidian leaders EVK Sampath, Kannadan and Shivaji Ganesan joined the Congress. The magnetic leadership of Kamaraj attracted Shivaji in the 60's. Claiming that he was a 200% Congressman Shivaji toured extensively in the 1967 elections favouring Congress candidates.

After the Congress split in the late 60's Shivaji Ganesan remained, as most Congressmen in the State with Kamaraj. His fan clubs were crucial in their contribution to the electoral campaign of the Congress. He became one of the front ranking leaders of Congress after the death of Kamaraj when Congress (O) merged with Congress (R). He stayed with Indira Congress in the wake of split in the party after the post emergency elections.

In the first half of the 80's Shivaji became the leader of anti-Moopanar faction and boycotted the regional conference of Congress (I) held at Madurai in protest against the undue importance given to the rival faction. The Shivaji Fans association organized an important conference in 1984 where Union Defence Minister R. Venkatraman, dissident MPs and MLAs participated. In the run up to the 1984 elections his faction had bitter fights with dominant Moopanar group over the alliance issue as he advocated an alliance with ADMK.

After the vertical split in ADMK in 1987 the sympathies and support of Shivaji Ganesan and his fan clubs were with Janaki faction. He even questioned the imposition of article 356 in the State in the aftermath of unruly scenes and fights in the Legislative Assembly between the two ADMK factions. As the central leadership of Congress came under the sphere of influence of rival Moopanar group. Shivaji Ganesan walked out of the party to form his own political party call Tamilaga Munnetra Munnani meaning Development Front of Tamilagam (TMM).
The executive council of TMM met in Nov. 1989 and decided to align itself with anti-Congress forces for the ensuring assembly elections. Though TMM executive council decided in favour of alliance with anti-Congress forces it authorized its chief Shivaji Ganesan to take the final decision.

As Jaya faction seemed an anathema to him the TMM President chose Janaki faction as alliance partner. The Janki faction of ADMK allotted 50 seats in the Legislative Assembly elections to its new ally TMM. The fledgling party of Shivaji Ganesan accepted the offer even though he demanded in the beginning 90 seats. Anti-Congress issues and speeches dominated the election campaign of TMM. Perhaps as the leader felt aggrieved over the attitude of Moopanar group the TMM attacked Congress more than any other party in the electoral fray. For example TMM attacked the demand of AICC for a reduction in the voting age from 21 to 18 years and described it as a ruse to get the impending elections in Tamil Nadu postponed. The leader of TMM Shivaji Ganesan ridiculed the poll promises of Congress star campaigner and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by saying that if all poll promises of the Prime Minister were to be implemented, the entire revenue of Government of India should be spent solely in Tamil Nadu. To eliminate poverty and to bring in equality and prosperity, ideological commitment was also expressed by TMM. The party had promised to demand and take steps for the setting up of cooperative farms where promboke lands would be brought under cultivation. Swearing that he would have nothing to do with Congress after this great betrayal inflicted on him, Shivaji Ganesan chose to link emotionally to the electorate by describing himself as younger brother of MGR and devoted cadre of Kamaraj.

The extensive and vigorous anti-Congress campaign of Shivaji Ganesan and TMM in the Legislative Assembly election did not bring the expected results to the party. The results were disastrous for the party. Though the party bagged around 5 lakhs votes in the 50 constituencies it fought, it had lost deposit in all the constituencies. The disastrous electoral results forced Shivaji Ganesan to wind up his party and after that he
never took active interest in the political affairs of the Congress and political process in
the State.

**Tamil Maanila Congress**

**ADMK-Congress Strains**

There appeared irreparable strains in the ADMK-Congress alliance within a year after the
spectacular electoral performance in the 1991 Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly
elections, which led to a complete decimation of rival parties. The Chief Minister
addressing a mammoth political rally of ADMK in Madurai announced, much to the
chagrin and consternation of its ally Congress that the electoral victory of 1991 was not
due to the alleged sympathy wave created as a result of assassination of former Prime
Minister Rajiv Gandhi. She said that the electoral victory was entirely due to the
popularity of ADMK and charisma of its leader. The provocative speech of the Chief
Minister stirred hornest nest in the Congress ranks as its leaders responded indignantly to
the provocative speech.

As the inflamed tempers began to settle down the perennial problem of Cauvery
emerged on the political horizon and the Chief Minister took vehement stand against the
Central and Karnataka Governments and even she had undertaken a fast to reiterate her
displeasure. The Tamil Congress leader Valappadi Ramamoorthy resigned from the
Central Ministry protesting the inordinate and deliberate delay of Central Government to
force Karnataka to release water in the river. This resignation of Valappadi Ramamoorthy
endeared him to the Chief Minister and the State Government felicitated him in the State
for his "courageous, selfless display of commitment to TN". His resignation enhanced the
already existing harmony between ADMK and Ramamoorthy faction.

Another Union Minister from the State P. Chidamparam was not as vociferous as
Ramamoorthy in supporting the belligerent stand of the Chief Minister on Cauvery water
dispute. The enraged ADMK cadres launched a physical attack on the Union Minister
when he arrived at the Trichy airport to visit his constituency. The attacked Union
Minister and his supporters took umbrage at the attack and arraigned the district administration for not taking adequate measures to prevent the untoward incidents. The local Congress organization sought to impress upon the Central Government the need to discipline the ADMK Government but was disappointed with the lukewarm response of the centre.

In the backdrop of increasing hostility between Congress and ADMK the Congress party organized a conference in Madurai in 1995. The Prime Minister Narasimma Rao delivering his speech in the Congress conference appealed to the assembled cadres to dedicate themselves for the renewal of Kamaraj rule in the State. Many frontline leaders of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee criticized the authoritarian government and leadership of ADMK. Moopanar, the senior leader had declared that Congress could not be perpetual palanquin bearer in the State.

The appointment of a new Governor Chenna Reddi, a frontline Congressman hailing from the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh State aggravated the already existing problems between ADMK and Congress. The Governor gave sanction to Dr. Subramania swamy to prosecute the Chief Minister. The Congress party adopted a vehement opposition to the ruling party in the Legislative Assembly proceedings. They mounted a scathing attack on the government marshalling a series of corruption charges including the cement sheds and the free dhoti saree scams. The agitating Congress Legislators including the leader of the opposition S.R.Balasubramaniam were named suspended and bundled out from the House. The Chief Minister even described the agitating Congress Legislators in a sarcastic tone as "zero hour heroes". The party repeatedly argued that the authoritarian government gave little consideration to the elementary democratic principle that however miniscule the opposition might be, it had a right to be heard in the House.

The leader of the opposition S.R. Balasubramaniam submitted a memorandum to the Governor charging that the State Government was using the police to throttle the voice of the opposition and to silence democratic institutions. Meanwhile the Eighth
World Tamil Congress was organised in Tanjore, the erstwhile capital of Cholas. The Congressmen accused the government of extravagant expenditure and deliberate sidelining of Tamil scholars. The Prime Minister was invited as a special guest of the State government. The Congressmen implored the Prime Minister not to come and attend the extravagant celebrations. Notwithstanding these intense requests of cadres, the Prime Minister chose to attend the conference, causing widespread disenchantment among Congressmen in the State. The Prime Minister assured the workers of Congress that his visit did not have any political significance as far as the revival of alliance with ADMK was concerned.

**Attitude of Congress High command**

The Congress leaders and cadres in the State appeared to have concluded that the Congress high command was appreciative of their anger and hostility to the ADMK government in the State. The high command always tolerated, even allowed the open expression of cadres' anger against the perceived misdeeds of State Government. The fact that neither the Prime Minister nor the high command gave any hint of disapproval of their demonstrations against ADMK persuaded the Congress unit in the State to continue its vehement stand against ADMK.

**Congress-ADMK Pre-Alliance Moves**

The intensely anti-ADMK mood of the State unit got disturbed over the moves of ADMK to revive the alliance as the elections approached. There was a sudden decision of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to support the Prime Minister in Parliament and not to join hands with the opposition to vote against the Congress government in the centre. Moreover the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister had chosen to attend the marriage of the grandson of the Prime Minister in Hyderabad. This gesture of the Chief Minister was crucial as only a year before she had ignored another invitation from the Prime Minister's family. The inordinate procrastination in the decision making process of high
command to reciprocate the offer of the famous film star Rajanikanth induced legitimate suspicion about the moves of the Prime Minister in the minds of local Congress unit.65

The provincial leadership of Congress was against any alliance with ADMK as such an alliance would have devastating impact on their credibility. For as recently as March that year, the Union Minister of State for Commerce P. Chidambaram had said rather emphatically in his constituency that there was no possibility of an alliance with ADMK, as he did not believe that the Prime Minister would give that kind of punishment to T.N. His colleague Arunachalam had also been equally forthright in his expression of absolute distaste for the ADMK's politics and governance. These leaders believed that their personal, political and electoral fortunes would be severely undermined as it was almost certain that should these leaders stand for election in their constituencies, the ADMK would work overtime to see them defeated, if only to score a political point.

The anti ADMK group began to mobilize the opinion of the party high command and cadres against any alliance with ADMK. On March 17 the State Congress leaders including Moopanar, the TNCC (I) President Kumari Anandan and the leader of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly S.R. Balasubramaniam etc. went to New Delhi and held deliberations with the high command. This dominant faction of TNCC (I) reiterated its steadfast opposition to any more revival of electoral alliance with ADMK.66

Finding it hard to convince the Central leadership these leaders returned to Madras and issued a public statement requesting the high command not to revive alliance with ADMK. The statement was signed by 20 MLAs, 5 MPs, DCC (I) Presidents, heads of the State minority cell, students' wing, SC/ST Cell, legal cell etc. This statement warned that the party discipline would be buried deep if the Congress (I) entered into an alliance with ADMK.67 This group also accused that the rival, relatively minor pro-ADMK Group had been purchased by the ADMK and through this purchased group ADMK had been spreading rumors about an imminent ADMK-Congress alliance. It even called the pro-ADMK group led by the party MP Anbarasu as made up of "professional defectors and power brokers".
Even veteran Congress leaders, who were not very active then cautioned the party not to have any alliance with ADMK. For example C.Subramaniam, former Governor of Maharashtra said that elimination of corruption should be on the agenda of all political parties and there should not be opportunistic alliance that would perpetuate the scourge. Earlier the district level Congress Presidents from the State who had reached capital to attend the national convention of DCC (I) Presidents met various Central Ministers and argued against any alliance with ADMK.

The pro-ADMK group was also active to cement the historically tested alliance with ADMK. A delegation of seven Congress MPs, a few MLAs, and other party functionaries called on the Congress President and Prime Minister to argue for the continuation of alliance with ADMK. The members of the delegation included leaders like Maragatham Chandrasekar, Anbarasu, Thangabalu etc.

As there was considerable opposition to the revival of alliance between Congress and ADMK, the Congress Working Committee had two hurried and informal meetings to discuss the cantankerous issue. Karunakaran, the Union Minister hailing from neighbouring Kerala who had shared profound sympathies with the anti-ADMK faction in Tamil Nadu, criticized these meetings. He even protested that he, a member of CWC was informed of the first meeting after it had been held.

The factions in the State were summoned to Delhi to present their arguments in favour of any alliance in the State. Once the presentation of views by antagonistic factions were over, the CWC took the official decision to revive the alliance with AIDMK for the General and Assembly elections subject to the conditions that the dominant faction of the State unit led by Moopanar should be persuaded to accept the agreement. At the instance of the Congress President and Prime Minister the leader of dominant faction was asked to meet the two emissaries of TN government, who had earlier arrived in New Delhi to negotiate with Congress. The Central leadership also maintained that in case the emissaries of ADMK failed to convince the dominant faction
about their desirability and sincerity to revive the alliance, the Congress party would examine other alternatives like alliance with DMK.

But the leader of dominant faction Moopanar refused out rightly to meet the emissaries of ADMK as the overwhelming mood of the State unit pressurized him not to even talk to the ADMK emissaries. The next day the Congress Working Committee met and passed the resolution about the revival of alliance with ADMK.

The Congress Working Committee resolution said "The challenges before the country are many and therefore the Congress party in the larger interests of national politics and of the people of Tamil Nadu has decided to have an electoral arrangement in TN and Pondicherry with the ADMK in the impending elections." The aforementioned decision of CWC precipitated a spontaneous outpouring of emotions from the State Congress leaders and cadres. The flag of the party at Satyamoorthy Bhavan was lowered and a black flag was hoisted. The cutouts of the central leaders were burnt. The spontaneous revolt of the party startled both the central leadership and the generally anti ADMK factional leader of the State unit Moopanar.

The aggrieved faction brought out five reasons to justify the rejection of decision of Congress Working Committee. Firstly they pointed out that according to Congress rules an informal meeting of the Congress Working Committee was not authorized to pass any resolution. The hurried manner in which the CWC was convened not only smacked of some invidious conspiracy but also was unconstitutional. Secondly they complained that the Congress Working Committee, though apparently heard the opinions of the State leaders yet it did not respect the near unanimous and intensely stated reservations against the revival of alliance with ADMK. Thirdly they argued that at the end of the first meeting of CWC where the decision about revival of alliance with ADMK was taken, the CWC said that alliance would be forged only subject to the conditions that dominant factions in the State should be persuaded to accept the deal. But the end of the second meeting the CWC conveniently ignored the objections of the anti-ADMK group, which for all practical purposes constituted the Congress unit in the State. Fourthly even
if the alliance was to be accepted the distribution of seats was patently unreasonable. Broadly 1991 seat distribution was revived but the dissidents pointed out that 1996 was not 1991. They insisted on a lion's share of not only Parliamentary seats but also Legislative Assembly seats. They demanded that if the alliance was revived then the demand about sharing power in the State should be insisted. The failure of Congress central leadership to insist on this demand made the local leaders realize that the alliance was not favourable to the Congress either in the short term domain or in the long term interests.

Fifthly the Congress dissidents were not ready to accept the high command's rejection of alliance with DMK on grounds of its LTTE association. They felt that citing LTTE angle was a ploy to revive alliance with ADMK. They argued that the segment of DMK with strong, staunch LTTE fervour had gone out of the party to form MDMK and the remainder of DMK had totally disassociated itself from the LTTE. Moreover LTTE and Srilankan issues were no longer significant issues in the politics of the State. They argued that the past association of LTTE had no relevance in the contemporary politics in the State and rejection of DMK over this issue and acceptance of ADMK as alliance partner would prove to be suicidal for the future prospects of the party in the State. The dissident leader Moopanar had emphatically stated that LTTE issue had no relevance in Tamil Nadu.

**Tamil Maanila Congress formation**

The leaders of Moopanar faction broke away from Congress, a development that was wholly unexpected by the central leadership. The AICC spokesman V.N. Gadgill in a clear underestimation of the subaltern revolt nonchalantly described it as initial reaction and maintained that ultimately local leaders would accept the decisions taken by the party leadership. The central leadership believed that the Moopanar group after airing its reservations openly and loudly over the alliance strategies would retreat, as he was known for unshakable loyalty to the party discipline.
Once the crusading Congressmen led by Moopanar walked out of the party the process of formation of a new party and its registration with the election commission began. Some people suggested the old name of Congress (O) to emphasis the loyalty of its leader and cadres to the heritage of the veteran leader Kamaraj. Some suggested the name of Tamilaga Makkal Congress meaning Tamilaga Peoples Congress. But ultimately the fledgling party was named by the breakaway group as Tamil Manila Congress.

**Episode of Rajani Kanth**

The political inclinations and postures of the charismatic film star Rajani Kanth succinctly and aptly brought out the self-destructive potential of Congress alliance politics. A Marathi speaker hailing from the neighbouring State of Karnataka Rajani Kanth achieved phenomenal status straddling both film world and politics in the 90's. At the silver jubilee celebration of his film, "Badsha" the film star stirred a hornet's nest by criticizing the spread of bomb culture in the State. This statement had impact on the ADMK party itself, as the producer of the film was R.M.Veerappan, a minister in ADMK government. The irked ADMK leadership immediately expelled the minister for his commercial and personal association with the film star.

Again, in October in the same year he openly came out against the ruling party by taking a categorical stand against the Chief Minister. He said that the Chief Minister, after receiving a massive mandate in the last elections had squandered away a God given opportunity by not serving the people but using it for selfish ends and displays of extravaganza. Moreover he made it clear that his disillusionment was with the ADMK high command and its style of functioning and not against the MGR fans of ADMK.

The Congress party in the State considered the disenchantment of the film star with ADMK as a golden opportunity to fashion an alternative non-Dravidian front in the State. It was believed that the film star would mobilize the front composing MGR fans, former Janaki faction of ADMK and Congress (I) against the Chief Minister. Sensing the
opportunity Congress high command held a deliberative meeting in New Delhi by summoning the State level office bearers.\textsuperscript{76}

But inexplicably the Congress high command later began to procrastinate on forming a third front in the New Year as elections started approaching. As there was no active response from the Congress party high command, despite pressure from the State level leaders the film star said that "Having waited for so long, I am fed up and I have no patients to wait any longer" and stayed aloof from Congress party.\textsuperscript{77}

As a result of the controversial alliance between Congress and ADMK, the dissatisfied faction broke away to form Tamil Maanila Congress; Rajani Kanth actively extended his support to the new fledgling party. His statement that if TN elected the Chief Minister again back to power then even God could not save the people was used by DMK-TMC alliance to mobilize the people. The fledgling party chose bicycle as its symbol as the film star in his blockbuster Annamalai used cycle.\textsuperscript{78} The close support extended by Rajani Kanth to DMK-TMC alliance enabled it to convert its electoral victory into a massive landslide.

**Electoral Performance**

The TMC forged an electoral alliance with DMK in the 1996 General and Legislative Assembly Elections. This alliance aided by the famous actor Rajani Kanth swept the elections. The TMC, which was allotted 40 Legislative Assembly seats and 20 Parliamentary seats, won all of them as it had a massive mandate from the people.

**Search for an Independent Identity**

The TMC in a happy mood after the success in the Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly Elections genuinely undertook measures to achieve an independent position and identity. The cadres of the party believed that Moopanar should be "The head of a mouse rather than the tail of a tiger as he has to protect the self-respect of the Congressmen in the State."\textsuperscript{79}
The party paid conscious attention aimed at the consolidation and stabilization of status as a regional party with a manifest destiny in resolving issues relating to the State.

Within duration of four months since its formation the party organized the first State Conference in Trichy, Central Tamil Nadu. From the Rock (Trichy city is known for the rock atop which a temple is located) to the Fort (Chennai's St. George Fort is the seat of the State government) was the theme of the Conference. For the first time in two decades in a Congress rally there was a huge participation of the large number of youths and women with a plentitude of enthusiasm.

Regional party with a national outlook was the mini motto of the party as advocated in the Conference by the President Moopanar. The resolution of the party convention underlined the commitment of the party to take up the causes and interests of all sections of the State, agriculturists, farm labour, students, women, minorities, ST/STs and backward classes. It also assured that the party would commit itself towards securing the legitimate riparian rights of TN in the Cauvery imbroglio. The party identified corruption as the single biggest obstacle to governance and development and accordingly promised to eliminate it from the State.

In its assertion and determination to capture power in the State the party was cautious and careful not to jeopardize its relationship with its ally ruling DMK and hence instead attacking the DMK government it concentrated on rebuilding the party. It conducted the organizational elections and a huge drive for membership of young, energetic people. Being cautious that opportunistic elements did not flood the party attracted by its power and positions the party set up a screening committee. The party within four months distributed around 50 lakhs membership forms. The big rush for the enrolment became so huge that a special counter for enrolment was established at the Satyamoorthy Bhavan.

Local Body Elections
In October 1996 local body elections were conducted, another test for the DMK-TMC alliance. The TMC second rung leaders demanded the leadership to ask for 50% of the seats in local bodies from the ally DMK so that the TMC could prepare for the future Legislative Assembly Elections. The DMK-TMC alliance won all the six Municipal Corporations with TMC winning the Trichy and Coimbatore Corporations. The alliance won 79 posts of 102 posts in Municipal Council chairmanship and the TMC had in share of 28 seats. In Municipal council wards, town panchayat chairman posts, too the alliance performed extremely well, with the performance of TMC being as a tonic for its future emergence as an alternative.84

1998 Parliamentary Elections and TMC

The Congress Party demanded the expulsion of DMK Ministers from the Central government because of the alleged links of DMK with LTTE as brought out by the report of the Jain Commission enquiring in to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The Central government refused to yield the demand of Congress and the Congress party withdrew its outside support to the minority government at the centre precipitating the 1998 Parliamentary elections. In Tamil Nadu the DMK-TMC alliance continued. But this time the electoral outcome was drastically different from the complete landslide the alliance achieved in the 1996 elections. The DMK won 5 seats; TMC won only 3 seats and the alliance partner CPI won one seat. The alliance won only 9 seats while the opposite front led by ADMK won the remaining 30 seats.

The unexpected defeat of the party and alliance had thoroughly demoralized the leaders and cadres of TMC. The failure of the alliance was primarily due to the Coimbatore serial explosions on the eve of the elections. A brief historical sketch of the communal relations in the State would put the Coimbatore blasts and the disappointing electoral performance of TMC, DMK and CPI alliance in clear perspective.

The emerging Dravidian movement in 1930's attracted the support of the Tamil Muslims in spite of it’s profusely atheist orientation.85 They were attracted as Self Respect Movement attacked Brahmanism, Casteism promoting equality among the
people. The founder of Self Respect Movement Periyar had often advocated that to cure the evils of Casteism, Brahmanism and untouchability Islam was the right medicine. The political offspring of DK, DMK had always drawn the support of the Islamic minority ever since its formation as it had always staunchly supported secularism and opposed steadfastly Hindu communalism. As Muslims formed an integral part of non-Brahmin collectivity, the Dravidian dominance of the State politics promoted perfect communal peace and harmony in the State. The idyllic communal peace came to be disturbed first in 1981 in the southern districts as in a place called Meenakshipuram, the aggrieved Dalits, in protest against caste Hindu oppression chose to convert into Islam. These conversions "led to a wave of Hindu revivalist mobilization concentrated in the two southern most Tamil districts Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli". Many Hindu organisations like RSS, Hindu Munnani emerged on the political landscape of the State.

The destruction of the disputed structure at Ayodya in 1992 provided another source of fuel to the insidious spread of the cantankerous communal virus in the State. The western Tamil Nadu especially the industrial city of Coimbatore came to be afflicted with communal conflicts. The geographical proximity of the city to Kerala, resultant migration of Malayali Muslims from the adjacent Malabar region, the presence of a large contingent of North India business class with a general proclivity to support Hindu revivalism created the conducive atmosphere for the virulent emergence of communalism. As economic rivalry increased among these groups the city became a battleground. Many Islamic fundamentalists' organizations like Al-umma, Jihad Committee sprang up and in response Hindu fundamentalist organizations like Hindu Munnani also came up.

A series of bomb explosions convulsed TN in November-December 1997, just two months before the elections. The bombs exploded in Cheran Express, the Pandiyan Express and Alleppey Express on December 6, 1997, anniversary of Ayodya disputed structure demolition. Bombs set of by disgruntled Islamic fundamentalist outfits went off in different places like Tanjore, Chennai throughout 1997 and in November the Al-umma activists killed a constable in Coimbatore precipitating a violent backlash in which many
Muslims were killed. To take revenge the Islamic outfits set off a series of bombs in the textile city of Coimbatore on Feb. 14, 1998. The serial blasts decisively influenced the electoral process in Tamil Nadu and ADMK front enormously benefited from the blasts as it had held the lukewarm, lethargic attitude of DMK government towards Islamic fundamentalism responsible for the blasts. The BJP candidate of the ADMK alliance won in Coimbatore constituency with the largest margin in the entire State. The blasts influenced not only the electoral outcome of TN but entire country too as the victorious ADMK-BJP-MDMK-PMK-TRC contingent of 30 MPs tilted the national balance in favour of the BJP led National Democratic Alliance.

The serial blasts had a debilitating impact on the electoral fortunes and the very future of the TMC. More than DMK TMC was affected, as the later was a fledgling party attempting to germinate and grow in the politics of the State.

**TMC on Secularism and Corruption**

As soon as the BJP led National Democratic Alliance government was formed at the centre, its local ally in the State ADMK began to put severe demands on the new dispensation. It pressurized the BJP led central government to impose article 356 in TN on the grounds of failure of constitutional machinery in the State. It argued that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence had infiltrated the State through local terrorist organizations like Al-Umma, Jihad Committee etc. The intensely pressurized central government deputed a fact-finding mission to find out the State of law and order in the State. As the high level committee reported the law and order situation to be satisfactory in the State, ADMK began to mount covert and overt pressure on the government. It argued that the alliance between ADMK and BJP in the State was signed on the basis of BJP's commitment to dismiss the State Government.

The central government was reluctant to impose article 356 in the State as such a measure would not stand a judicial scrutiny especially in the backdrop of Bommai case judgment of the Supreme Court. Moreover the mandatory passage of a resolution in the
Parliament to dismiss the State Government under article 356 would become a Herculean task as the ruling dispensation lacked majority in the Rajya Sabha.

The crisis ridden Central Government led by BJP came to be dissolved as the demanding ADMK withdrew its support. The Central Government lost its confidence in the Lok Sabha by a mere solitary vote. When ADMK chose to withdraw from the Central Government DMK came forward to support and sustain the BJP led Central Government. As DMK departed from its historical moorings to support BJP led government, its political and electoral ally TMC faced a political imbroglio. The TMC was pressurized by DMK, some other parties and the famous actor Rajani Kanth to vote in support of the confidence motion of the BJP led government or at least to abstain away from the vote. But the TMC leader Moopanar emphasized his commitment to secularism and cultural pluralism and voted against the confidence motion of BJP led coalitional government. The TMC broke its alliance with DMK as Moopanar argued, "we will not accept anybody partnering communal forces".

The central government led by BJP fell in the confidence motion by a solitary vote and the need to form alternative government came to the centrestage of politics. The TMC declared that it was opposed to both communalism of BJP and corruption of ADMK in equal measure. The TMC asked its parental party Congress (I) to adhere to the principles contained in Pachmarhi declaration to fight the twin evils of communalism and corruption.

Merger of TMC with Congress

A plethora of factors convinced the leadership of TMC to abort its independent identity and direction to come back into the national stream of Congress (I). The personality of Moopanar himself contributed crucially to this merger of like-minded parties. Even after the split in 1996 Moopanar always believed and behaved as a Congressman. He even said that the saddest moment in his political career of more than three decades was the parting of the ways with Congress (I).
He said "I am not really enamored of leading a regional party after having remained a nationalist all through my political career. But compulsions of time had forced me to take this new course. This is why the ideology of regional approach with a national outlook has been adopted as the bottom line for the TMC".  

The Congress President Sonia Gandhi while paying the last respects to expired Moopanar said that he was the standard bearer of the Congress flag all his life. These opinions show that Moopanar was a reluctant rebel of Congress even when he was the President of TMC. A critic wrote in the Hindu "If the TMC broke away from the Congress and shoot like a meteor into TN politics in 1996 falls like an avalanche now, it is principally because it functioned just like another Congress unit." The fading health of the leader convinced him that TMC's hope and future was in the merger with Congress. He believed that with his failing health it would be an uphill task to keep alive TMC independently.

The weight of pressure from the lower level leadership and cadres of the party too forced Moopanar to walk in the direction of unification with Congress. The cadre was enormously disappointed with the attitude of DMK in 1997 towards the TMC in the aftermath of the resignation of Deva Gowda government. Though the TMC leader Moopanar refused to accept the mantle of Prime Ministership in 1996 as the third front came to power with the outside support of the Congress (I), his cadres forced him to accept the proposal made by the allies after the resignation of Deva Gowda as Prime Minister in 1997. The TMC felt greatly aggrieved over the uncooperative and lukewarm attitude of DMK to the proposal to make Moopanar Prime Minister. These disappointed segments of TMC opposed steadfastly any alliance with DMK in the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections and forced the ailing Moopanar to go for alliance with Congress (I).

The merger of TMC with Congress took place in two stages. The first stage was the alliance of the party with Congress (I) in the Legislative Assembly elections of 2001. The Congress (I) entrusted the electoral work of its unit in the State to the TMC and Moopanar. Hence Moopanar negotiated with the ADMK party the alliance as a leader of
TMC and Congress (I). He secured a total of 47 seats from the alliance partner for his TMC and State unit of Congress (I). He distributed 15 seats from this share to Congress (I) while retaining the remaining 32 for TMC. Though the idea of the third front led by TMC-Congress (I) combine was advocated on the eve of the elections especially after ADMK gave Pondicherry on a platter to PMK. Moopanar was forced by TMC cadres not to chart out an independent course. They also vigorously scotched the idea of an alliance with DMK, as they were still perturbed over its lukewarm response in 1997 to the proposal of Moopanar Prime Ministership. The ADMK-TMC-Congress alliance swept the elections. 92

The second stage was the stage of official merger of TMC with Congress in August 2002. Soon after the Legislative Assembly election the ailing leader of TMC Moopanar passed away and earlier he had dissolved all the Committees of TMC all over the State, when he was in his deathbed. In the post-Moopanar period the TMC elected G.K. Vasan as the leader. He was elected with mandate to gradually merge TMC with Congress. The attitude and approach of the Congress (I) had provided the congenial atmosphere for the merger. It promised the TMC leaders that their interests would not be affected in the event of the merger. The unhelpful attitude of ADMK after the elections especially its refusal to aid TMC to get elected to Rajya Sabha to fill the vacancy caused by death of TMC leader hastened the merger of TMC with Congress.

Soon after the merger a coordination committee was constituted with equal representation to TMC and Congress (I) to oversee the functioning of Congress (I). The Congress President Sonia Gandhi on the occasion of the merger said, "Now we are one, we will go from strength to strength. It is our goal and aim to fight it alone in the State minus the Dravidian parties". 93 On August 2002 the ambitious project of TMC to capture political power in the State to reestablish Kamaraj rule launched by its founder some six years ago came to an unrealized end.
The Union Finance Minister in the Deva Gowda led council of Ministers P. Chidambaram broke away from the TMC on the eve of the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections protesting the unprincipled alliance of the party with ADMK. P. Chidambaram hailing from a wealthy family belonging to the trading caste of Nattukottai Chettiars has been elected repeatedly to Parliament from Sivaganga constituency in the South. He was the Union Commerce Minister in the Narasimha Rao led Congress Ministry. Since 1990's he had been severely critical of the functioning and attitude of the ADMK Chief both as Chief Minister and as leader of the alliance in the State. He belonged to the Moopanar faction of Congress and had been conspicuously strident in the advocacy of a strategy whereby Congress was to be projected as an alternative to both Dravidian parties. He had taken part with zeal and enthusiasm in the 1989 Legislative Assembly electoral experiment of Congress.

In the early 90's as the gulf between Moopanar faction and ADMK leadership widened it had its fissiparous manifestation within the Congress too as the anti-Moopanar group led by Valapadi Ramamoorthy became a strong supporter of ADMK. Over the Cauvery issue when the Chief Minister fasted against the Central government the Union Minister Ramamoorthy resigned from the Ministry and was congratulated by ADMK profusely. But the other Union Minister from TN P. Chidamparam did not resign his post and hence incurred the wrath of ADMK chief. When he attended a reception hosted by Governor in 1991 a dozen women MLA's of ADMK gheraoed him and accused him of behaving as though he hailed from Karnataka.94

The ADMK boycott of the Union Minister became violent later and the irate ADMK supporters physically attacked him in Trichy where he came to pay a visit to his constituency. When the attacked minister complained to the Congress leadership and Prime Minister no action was taken to punish the ADMK government of the State.95 Since then he had been a strong opponent of ADMK in the State Congress. When the TMC was formed in 1996 in protest against alliance with ADMK, the hurt Union
Minister P. Chidamparam played a crucial role in the registration of the party, formulation of election symbol, election manifesto and electoral alliance with DMK.

In this backdrop when TMC decided to re-establish an alliance with ADMK in the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections, he campaigned against such a strategy. He formed TMC – Democratic Forum. He challenged TMC alliance with ADMK as dishonorable and unprincipled. He also said that he would not quit from TMC, as his forum was only a group and not a political party. As his only grievance was against alliance with ADMK, he would rejoin TMC after the elections when as he hoped the alliance with ADMK would end. His main argument was that good governance was needed in the State but ADMK could not provide it. He said that ADMK leadership had not given any indication in its policies, programs and attitudes that would guarantee good governance.

He wanted the formation of a third front with TMC, Congress, CPI, CPI (M) to provide an alternative to ADMK and DMK. If such an alliance could not be effected then alliance with DMK rather than ADMK should be forged as DMK respected the aspirations of the people, the democratic spirit of the assembly and the views of the opposition.

He could not agree with the Congress that communalism was more dangerous than corruption and instead he stated that corruption primarily contributed to India's degeneration and hence it should not overlooked or condoned. As he continued to work against TMC-ADMK alliance he was expelled from the party and subsequently he converted his forum into a political party called Tamil Maanila Congress – Democratic Forum. His party entered into an alliance with DMK in the Legislative Assembly elections. The new party hoped to be supported by Rajani Kanth, the estranged actor. The party was for the regeneration of Congress party or the Congress tradition to capture power in the State. But it performed miserably in the Legislative Assembly elections.

As the TMC merged with Congress and the alliance between Congress and ADMK disintegrated the raison d'etre for the Tamil Maanila Congress – Democratic Forum ceased to exist. Its leader was given Congress ticket to contest from Sivaganga.
Lok Sabha constituency in the 2004 Parliamentary elections and was made the Finance Minister in the United Progressive Alliance Government. After the Parliamentary elections the party passed a resolution to have a reunion with the parental Congress (I) in the State.

Tamil Maanila Kamaraj Katchi

The merger of TMC with its parental party again induced a split in the Congress stream in Tamil Nadu. A group of Legislators, known for their close linkage with ADMK government in the State decided to oppose the merger of TMC with Congress. There were five members of Legislative Assembly belonging to TMC in this group. They were Kumaradas (Killiyur), M.A.Hakeem (Madurai Central), R.Easwaran (Vasudevanallur), Mani Nadar (Sathankulam) and Tamilarasan, a Dalit leader getting elected on TMC platform. They decided to continue to function as TMC members even after the merger of TMC with Congress. The speaker of Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly recognized them as TMC MLAs.

The TMC requested the Election Commission not to allow any association or group to register its party as TMC and not to allot to that party the cycle symbol of TMC. As a result the revolting group of TMC decided to form another political party called Tamil Maanila Congress Kamaraj Katchi. The new party had Kumaradas as President and Easwaran as Vice-President and Hakeem as General Secretary. This party also planned to organize its first conference in Madurai. But as it was not feasible to run a small party, the leaders of this group decided later to merge with ADMK and the President of TMKK justified this merger by saying that they saw Kamaraj rule in Jayalalitha regime.

Tamilaga Rajiv Congress

The former President of TNCC (I) Valappadi Ramamoorthy founded another party of Congress content in TN as a result of his dissatisfaction with the submissive attitude of the Congress high command towards its alliance partner ADMK. Valappadi
Ramamoorthy a Vanniar leader hailing from Salem district became actively associated with Congress politics from 60's onwards. His initiation into Congress politics was through the National Student's Council for Tamil Development.99

His prominence in the politics of the State took place in 1980's when he was an active trade union leader once being the President of INTUC. In the 1989 Legislative Assembly elections when Congress under the leadership of Moopanar strove independently to capture power in the State, Ramamoorthy then a Member of Parliament advocated an alliance with ADMK. Throughout 80's he had been always in the anti Moopanar group and was part of M.P.Subramaniam group. As Congress efforts bore no fruit in the 1989 elections, Ramamoorthy demanded the resignation of Moopanar led TNCC (I).100 He was appointed the President of TNCC (I) by Prime Minister after the resignation of Moopanar in the aftermath of poll debacle and was given a free hand by the Central leadership. Soon he established an alliance with ADMK in the Parliamentary elections of 1989. As the alliance was victorious he continued to enjoy the confidence of the Congress high command. In the Narasimha Rao government, Ramamoorthy was made a Central Minister. In 1991 as TN government demanded water release in the Cauvery River from Karnataka and as Karnataka refused to yield the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs of Narasimha Rao government referred the issue to the Supreme Court. Protesting this decision Ramamoorthy resigned from the Union Ministry and the ADMK government in the State felicitated him over this 'courageous' step. This instance brought closer the already existing relationship between Ramamoorthy faction of TNCC (I) and ADMK.101

But the speech of the Chief Minister in Madurai rejecting the sympathy wave due to the assassination of former Prime Minister as the causative factor for the electoral victory of ADMK-Congress alliance sowed the seeds of animosity and mistrust between Ramamoorthy faction and ADMK. At President of TNCC (I) he had to respond vociferously to the provocative speech of the Chief Minister and he responded. Over the three years after this disruptive incident Ramamoorthy became from a staunch friend of ADMK government to an implacable enemy of ADMK in Congress. He had submitted a
memorandum containing 38 corruption charges against the ADMK government to the Governor. The most important of these corruption charges was the one relating to the coal deal. He was disappointed with the central leadership of Congress that had ignored not merely all these corruption charges but also continuing litany of ADMK humiliations imposed on Congress.\textsuperscript{102}

The discontented Ramamoorthy faction waited for an opportunity to strike at the central leadership. The much-awaited opportunity came in the form of a conflict between the Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and his Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh. The later continuously attacked the Prime Minister over the perceived slackness and dubious commitment to secularism from the Prime Minister. The protracted rivalry culminated in a Congress split nationally with the Human Resources Minister forming his own party called Congress (Tiwari).

The Ramamoorthy faction broke away from Congress (I) in Tamil Nadu and Ramamoorthy was appointed as the President of Congress (Tiwari) unit in the State. As the Moopanar group walked out of Congress protesting the alliance with ADMK Ramamoorthy extended an olive branch to them. He offered an unconditional cooperation with the Moopanar group and even suggested to the breakaway group to achieve the defeat of ADMK might use the symbol of his party.\textsuperscript{103}

But the Moopanar group ignored the gesture of Ramamoorthy and formed a new party called TMC. The disappointed leader of Congress (Tiwari) then forged a new front to face the 1996 elections that was titled as Anti-corruption and social justice Front.\textsuperscript{104} He became the convener of this third front in the State. The front included parties like Congress (Tiwari), PMK, Tamil Desiya Katchi, MGR Munnani, Human Rights Party, Republican Party of India (Prakash Ambedkar) etc. But this front was totally defeated in the elections.

Disappointed with the electoral result Ramamoorthy disbanded Indira Congress (Tiwari) here in Tamil Nadu and floated a new party called Tamilaga Rajiv Congress
professing to adhere to the principles and visions of Rajiv Gandhi. When ADMK leader Jayalalitha cobbled up a formidable front in the 1998 elections Ramamoorthy's party became a partner. In the aftermath of the Coimbatore blasts a wave of anger swept the State against DMK-TMC alliance and TRC President won the Salem Parliamentary seat located in the same Kongu region in which the bomb hit Coimbatore is located. In the NDA government led by BJP Ramamoorthy was inducted into the Central Ministry and was allotted Petroleum Portfolio. His close relationship with ADMK came under strain, as ADMK demanded that he should be removed from Petroleum Portfolio. This demand of ADMK was to express its anger at TRC for its reluctance to condemn Central Government for not dismissing the DMK government in the State.

In the 1999 Parliamentary elections TRC fought at the hustings alongside DMK, PMK, BJP and MDMK. DMK unwilling to reduce its share of seats in the alliance distributed 9 seats to PMK and TRC combine and asked them to divide it themselves. PMK was unwilling to give more than one seat to TRC. Ramamoorthy stood from Salem and put up his own party from the adjacent Rasipuram in opposition to PMK, which had refused to give the seat to TRC. As Ramamoorthy and PMK leader Ramados came from same Vanniyar community they had to be wary of each other's growth in social base and political stature. Being a party with larger grass roots support PMK won the war for the Vanniyar vote and heart with TRC.105

After the defeat in the Parliamentary elections TRC was without a future in the politics of the State. When the TMC-Congress informal alliance materialized TRC chose to rejoin the Congress party. The merger of TRC with Congress happened a few months before the TMC merger.

**Tamil Nadu Makkal Congress**

Vallivelan, a Congressman disappointed with the activities of Congress started a political party called Tamil Nadu Makkal Congress (Tamil Nadu Peoples Congress). He registered his party with the election commission on 24.04.1995. He believed that the policies and attitudes of central leadership of Congress were detrimental to the future growth of the
party in the State and hence he decided to form a new political party that would represent
the true Congress tradition in the State. A sincere Congressman, who could not stomach
the overbearing attitude of ADMK towards Congress and the submissive attitude of
Congress leadership, formed the party.

In the wake of the upheaval on the eve of the General and Assembly Elections in
1996 the Congress dissidents led by Moopanar formed TMC. As the breakaway group
was apprehensive of getting recognition as a political party due to the limited time before
the elections they decided to make use of the already registered party of the former
Congressman Vallivelan. Hence a meeting was held in the house of the leader of the
breakaway group where leaders like P. Chidamparam, S.R.Balasubramaniam etc. had
discussions with Vallivelan. During the meeting minutes were prepared to the effect that
the Tamil Nadu Makkal Congress party's working committee met thrice and Moopanar
was elected as the President of the party in place of Vallivelan who had decided to step
down. The party also prepared a new flag and the leaders went the election commission
for registration. This arrangement was conceived to be an alternative to be adopted if
registration of the new party could not be realized before the election. But the
registration of a new party Tamil Maanila Congress was achieved within the short
available time by the breakaway group and this alternative of making Tamil Nadu
Makkal Congress as the party of the breakaway group was given up. Later on the old
splinter party merged with the new party of the Congress dissidents.
NOTES

2. Harrison, Scigel. Op-cit, pp.81-83
3. Spratt, P. Op-cit, p.88
5. Ibid. p.215.
8. Ibid. p.37.
19. Ibid., p.38.
21. Ibid., p.53.
22. Ibid., p.54.
23. Ibid., p.55.
28. Ibid., p.67.
33. Ibid., p.42.
40. The Hindu, 7 November 1981.
41. Indian Express, 29 December 1988.
42. Pai, Sudha. op.cit, p. 200.
46. Indian Express, 18 November 1988.

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47. Indian Express, 23 December 1988.
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52. Indian Express, 23 December 1988.
53. Indian Express, 7 January 1989.
60. Indian Express, 21 November 1988.
63. The Hindu, 29 March 1996.
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70. Vallivelan, C. Op-cit, p.50.
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72. The Hindu, 29 March 1996.
73. The Hindu, 12 April 1996.
74. The Hindu, 29 March 1996.
75. The Hindu, 30 March 1996.
77. The Hindu, 6 March 1996.
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82. The Hindu, 17 July 1996.
83. The Hindu, 7 July 1996.
87. Ibid., p.308.
89. The Hindu, 15 April 1996.
90. The Hindu, 18 July 1996.
91. The Hindu, 14 August 2002.
95. Ibid.
102. The Hindu, 28 March 1996
103: The Hindu. 1 April 1996.
104: The Hindu. 5 April 1996