Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

There existed a complex relationship between the nation and region historically in India as the country was a continent of many communities united through shared experience but powerfully motivated by regional considerations. When the modern nation-state emerged in India as a result of the impact of British colonialism and indigenous forces the regions continued to be perennially strong. The first wave of modern political action emerged from the region of Madras in the early half of the nineteenth century. This regional protest was conducted primarily by the commercial and trading classes belonging to the region. This political protest of the region was against some of the policies of the British center that affected adversely the religious sensibilities of the people. The withdrawal of government from the management of Hindu festivals, conversion of upper caste Hindu students to Christianity and the Lex Loci report were among the plethora of causes that provoked early political protest in the region against the British colonial administration.

The second wave of political awakening happened in the region in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The emerging modern professional middle classes almost exclusively constituted by Brahmins spearheaded this wave of protest in the region. In late nineteenth century the Brahmins constituted the regional elite of Madras presidency because of their intrinsic advantages in economic, social, religious and political dimensions. The traditional caste statuses, access to landed wealth, generations of involvement in administration and aloofness from agriculture were the important advantages they enjoyed over others. These regional elite gradually acquired national vision and aspiration to become part and parcel of national elite of India. They began their political journey essentially from the point of region reaching the destination of national elite later. The second wave of political protest from the region against colonial centre manifested through organizations like Madras Mahajana Sabha.
The third wave of modern political action emanated from Madras region in the form of Non-Brahmin protest. When the agricultural castes like Mudaliyars and Vellalars belatedly understood the significance of western education for socio-economic development they started paying more attention to English education. But in their attempt to achieve socio-economic upliftment they faced a plentitude of discrimination and prejudices from the already entrenched Brahmins. To protect and further their interests the Non-Brahmin communities started forming alliances and political formations, the incipient manifestation of which was seen in the formation of South Indian Liberal Federation popularly known as the Justice Party.

**Social Classes, Region and Congress**

The social structure of Tamil areas provided the congenial atmosphere for the emergence of the regional movement. The rather unique political phenomenon of an ascendant and assertive regionalism in Tamil areas, unparalleled elsewhere in the country then emanated from this social uniqueness. Though like elsewhere in India, Tamil areas were profoundly embroiled in the contentious web of caste system, the situation here was different. The intermediary castes and varnas bridging the gap between the numerically smaller Brahmins at the top and the heterogeneous phalanx of Sudra communities at the bottom were conspicuous by their absence. The Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were absent in Tamil areas despite the claims by some newly assertive caste groups to Kshatriyas status.

Their absence precipitated an unusual situation whereby the demographically minuscule Brahmins enjoyed preponderance of power, position and prestige in religious, social, political and economic spheres. Such preponderance led to the social, cultural and political exclusion of Brahmins from the rest of the masses. Their absence also led to a situation whereby no Non-Brahmin communities were present to dilute the opposition of the newly emerging caste groups against Brahmin dominance.

Furthermore because of linguistic, social and religious factors no caste in Tamil areas other than Brahmins was in a position to develop political linkages with other
groups nationally found outside the State. The Non-Brahmin communities because of linguistic constraints and restricted, geographical spread could develop only regional organization having largely no contact with national elites and groups. The Brahmins could develop nationally spread political and organizational linkages as they enjoyed the advantages in spiritual, linguistic (sanskritic) and psychological realms. The Brahmins came to represent the national elite, interests and ideology in the local politics and the non Brahmin communities assumed the regionalist postures in interest articulation, organizational networks etc. They began to advocate issues, concerns and strategies that were essentially regional in origin, spread and orientation against Brahmins with national reach.

As the leadership of both Mylapore and Egmore factions of Congress was overwhelmingly constituted by Brahmins the Non-Brahmin leaders like T.M. Nair, Natesa Mudaliyar vehemently attacked it as Brahmin Congress and after initial association walked out to form the aforementioned Justice Party. The Non-Brahmins forged a closer cooperation with the British government and opposed the freedom movement.

The regional Justice Party condemned the Home Rule League as Brahmin Rule League and argued that the selfish, greedy Brahmins would reap the fruits and rewards of the agitation as the Non-Brahmins were not still ready for self-government. There was a perceptible stream of animosity towards Annie Bezant and her agitation from some of the Congress Non-Brahmins too and the grounds on which they looked at her with suspicion and dissatisfaction were not dissimilar to the arguments of Justice Party. Many of them like P. Kesava Pillai and C. Karunakaran Menon evaluated her understanding of India as inadequate and questioned her ability to lead India.

As the Justice Party’s criticism of Congress became more and more belligerent, the nationalist Non-Brahmins felt that a corrective mechanism should be created to counter the attacks. They understood the validity of Justice Party’s criticism of Brahmin domination of Congress leadership but they could not accept their perception that Home
Rule would be more exploitative and inhuman than British colonialism. So they wanted to form an organization that would strive for the two apparently incompatible goals of Non-Brahmin welfare and national freedom. They formed the Madras Presidency Association with the objective of achieving Non-Brahmins’ interests inside Indian National Congress. This association primarily fought for Non-Brahmin quotas in the Legislature of Madras that was fulfilled by the Meston award.

Though it was in existence only for a brief period of three years the Madras Presidency Association became historically important as it initiated the process of Tamilization or regionalization of the Congress party in Tamil Nadu, a process by which the Congress party came to acquire certain unique features like Non-Brahmin dominance, Tamil centric ideas etc. The members of this association demonstrated unbounded attention and affection for the Tamil language in contrast to the largely Sanskrit centric Brahmins. The Madras presidency Association in one of its annual conferences passed a resolution demanding the compulsory use of Tamil as the medium of political organization, mobilization and communication to awaken the political consciousness of the people.

Regional Revolt in Congress

The regional Brahmin-Non-Brahmin conflict within congress gradually built up momentum and exploded into a massive revolt in the 1920s over a series of events like Vaikom struggle, Gurukulam issue, Communal Reservation issue and Varanashnna Dharna. In Vaikom a place in Travancore state the socially dis-privileged community of Elavas faced invidious discrimination from orthodox Brahmins and E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, a Non-Brahmin Congressman conducted an agitation there to secure their legitimate rights and recognition. Though he was eulogized as Hero of Vaikam by the regional communities, he was bitter that the powerful Brahmins in Congress party conspired to deny him the credit he deserved in the settlement of the issue.
The Cheranmadevi Gurukulam, established by Congress with a lion’s share of funds from Non-Brahmin Congressmen with the objective of developing youths with national character became a battlefield as the Non-Brahmin children faced discrimination from the Brahmin management. A host of congress leaders belonging to the regional communities like Dr. Varadarajalu Naidu, S. Ramanathan and E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker conducted a rigorous agitation against the orthodoxy of Brahmins at the Gurukulam.

The Kancheepuram conference precipitated a crisis of mammoth proportions for the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee as the Brahmins thwarted the attempts of regional communities to incorporate communal reservation principle in Congress resolution. They demanded that public offices and positions should be distributed on the basis of population strength of individual communities. As Brahmins refused to concede to this demand, the bitterness between them and Non-Brahmin grew.

The controversy over Varnashrama Dharma delivered the coup de grace to the simmering Brahmin-Non-Brahmin conflict in the Congress party and a Non-Brahmin revolt leading to the departure of leading Non-Brahmin Congressmen in the province happened. When Mahatma Gandhi visited south, he profusely glorified the Varnashrama Dharma, the fourfold classification of castes by duties and immediately the local Non-Brahmin Congressmen reacted in anger stating that Varna order contributed to the exploitation and downfall of Non-Brahmins in the South. During the course of his visit he also eulogized Brahmins as the repositories of knowledge and embodiment of sacrifice. The Non-Brahmins already disappointed at the hostile attitude of Brahmins towards Communal Reservation issue could not accept the Gandhian glorification of Brahmins. They argued that Gandhiji had exhibited complete ignorance and indifference about the nature of caste exploitation, Brahmin intransigence and untouchability. Many Non-Brahmin Congressmen angered by the pronouncements of Gandhiji refused to address him as Mahatma anymore and some of them ridiculed his clarification and glorification about Varnashrama Dharma as Gandhi Ashrama Dharma.
These contentious events had a cumulative impact on the organizational cohesiveness of the Congress party in the province and the disappointed leaders of regional communities like E.V. Ramasamy Naiker and S. Ramanathan along with their supporters departed from the party vowing to destroy it along with Brahmanism and untouchability.

**Onset of social regionalization**

As these regional Congressmen walked out of Congress citing its Brahmin hegemony, more profound forces and processes were at work at subterranean levels causing the massive Non-Brahmin regional infusion into Congress. The defeated Justice Party after the disastrous election performance conducted its annual confederation in Madurai where in its search to maintain electoral relevance in the province instead fighting the Congress party chose to get assimilated into it. The defeated party started undergoing an ideological Gandhizisation and Congressization process as it sought to adopt a number of popular policies of Congress and Mahatma.

At a Special Confederation of the party at Coimbatore in 1927 the party chose to deliberate over the question of joining the Congress party and passed a resolution authorizing its members to join the Congress party so that through such Non-Brahmin flooding Congress could be converted into a Non-Brahmin organization. Subsequently numerous Non-Brahmins enlisted as Congressmen and the social composition of Congress leadership came to be significantly altered.

The group of Non-Brahmins who had a minimum ideological commitment with the Non-Brahmin movement and who were influenced by the concerns of political power rather than social reforms began to join the Congress party in the mid 30s. The imminent implementation of provincial autonomy and assumption of power by Congress and the increasing strength of Non-Brahmins within Congress party attracted them in large numbers.
On the eve of the 1937 elections a number of Non-Brahmins like Dr. Varadarajulu Naidu, S. Ramanathan, V.I. Munuswamy Pillai etc either joined or rejoined the Congress party. The provincial Congress Committee too decided to provide preponderant consideration to the winnability of candidates and hence many Non-Brahmins with no or inadequate experience in Congress movement joined the party and later succeeded in getting elected to the Legislature.

The very success of the Justice Party in the development and political empowerment of regional groups heralded ironically the mass exodus of Non-Brahmins to the Congress party, thereby promoting the process of non-Brahmanization and regionalization of the party. In spite of its many limitations the Justice Party greatly consolidated the position of the Non-Brahmins. Because of its functioning the Non-Brahmins had acquired immense self-confidence in their capacity to face the political process without the support of the bureaucracy and colonialism and were no more overwhelmed by the prospects of competing with Brahmins in public and electoral domains.

Moreover the Non-Brahmins had outgrown the ideological and organizational apparatus of the Justice Party and with their newfound confidence they found the Justice Party with limited objectives and possibilities less attractive than the Congress party. Therefore early 1930’s witnessed significant non-Brahmanization and regionalization of the Congress party and the election of a Non-Brahmin Muthuranga Mudaliyar as the President of TNCC symbolized the ongoing changes.

The gravitation of many Non-Brahmin communities to the Congress organization in the 1930s also provided ample scope for the emergence of Non-Brahmins as a major force in Congress. The nadars, one of the most popular Non-Brahmin communities in Tamil areas got assimilated into the national movement because of the Temple Entry Legislation of the Congress ministry, magnetic personality of Mahatma and gathering momentum of the independence movement. The gradual emergence of Kamaraj as one of the leading Congressmen in the state too hastened the pace of their assimilation.
Maravars, another popular Non-Brahmin community in the southern districts in the 1930s saw the emergence of a new charismatic leader called Muthu Ramalinga Thevar. This community was bitterly opposed to the colonial government for the introduction of the Criminal Tribes Act and the Justice ministry for the harsher implementation of the Act. Thevar converted the anger of Maravars into a source of support for the Congress Party.

The Kongu Vellala Gounder, a Non-Brahmin community of western Tamil Nadu too joined the national movement as its community leaders mobilized it extensively during the anti-liquor agitation days of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Unlike other dominant Non-Brahmin communities this community did not have any incentive to join the anti-Brahmin Justice Party, as it never faced any discrimination from Brahmins who were conspicuously absent in the less fertile areas of western Tamil Nadu.

The depressed classes who had established initial association with Non-Brahmins gradually became disillusioned over their marginalization in the Justice Party especially after the Pulianthope events. In the aftermath of the Communal Award and the subsequent Poona pact they began to enter the Congress organization. The various Congress leaders and organizations had undertaken under inspiration from Gandhiji Harijan welfare measures that brought to the Congress the support of the leaders of depressed classes like Manusamy Pillai who after the 1937 elections was appointed as a minister in the Rajaji ministry. Therefore as freedom struggle marched on the congress party in Tamil areas became rooted among the social classes of the region. Though the national elite of Brahmin dominated the leadership realm the social base of the congress was planted among the regional classes, a trend that laid the foundation for the emergence of congress system in the post-independence period.
Tamilization of Political Discourse

The deep penetration of nationalist movement in the region promoted the modernization of Tamil language and the resultant Tamilization of political mobilization strategies in the province. The national movement contributed greatly to the vernacularization of political discourse of Madras Presidency in Tamil speaking areas. The Swadeshi Movement, Home Rules League, linguistic organization of congress structure etc were the great milestones in the early regionalization of political discourse in the Tamil areas. Many congressmen of both Brahmin and Non-Brahmin origin like Subramania Bharathiyar, T.V. Kalyana Sundaranar, Ramalingam Pillai played the role of pioneers in the Tamilization of political discourse in the state. In the 1930’s and 40’s as congress became rooted among regional communities in its social base, it also witnessed simultaneously the crucial processes of regionalization and Tamilization of the political discourse.

Regionalized Congress and Dominance

After independence for around two decades the phenomenal dominance of the congress party in Indian politics in the backdrop of existence of the plurality of political parties came to be established primarily because of the recognition and representation given to regions and their interests in the party organization and government. The party was more or less a coalition of regional chieftains and groups who exerted strong pressure on the central leadership. The regions and their representatives functioned as the adventitious prop roots of the banyan tree called congress. The party successfully functioned in a heterogeneous society as it was intrinsically federalized and regionalized in its leadership, organization and social base. The Tamil region found its appropriate place in the congress system as its famous son K. Kamaraj occupied powerful positions in the party at the national level becoming the president of All India Congress Committee and playing the role of a king maker twice.
The Congress party had undergone adequate regionalization in the 1950s and 1960s. There was the complete regionalization of the organizational leadership of the party. In the domain of ideology, policies and programmes too the Congress party was influenced greatly by the currents of regionalism emanating from the general political atmosphere of the state. It greatly contributed to the growth of Tamil language as Non-Brahmin leaders and communities dominated it organizationally. Through a legislative enactment Tamil was declared as the official language of administration at all levels in the state in 1956. The Congress government led by Kamaraj was the first in the history of the state to prepare and present the budget in Tamil in the Legislative Assembly.

In 1959 it established Tamil Development Research Council (TDRC) that was constituted by the Tamil scholars and researchers to achieve the objective of providing college education in Tamil. The sub-committee of TDRC called as Collegiate Tamil Council prepared and published Tamil lexicons in many subjects like Psychology, Commerce, Chemistry and Statistics. In 1961 the Congress government changed the name of the state from Madras to Tamil Nadu in Intra-state communication and administration to demonstrate its love for Tamil.

On the contentious question of Hindi the Congress leaders from Tamil Nadu had successfully introduced significant modifications in the official policy of the party. In the Constituent Assembly itself many Tamil Congressmen vehemently protested against the unilateral adoption of the Hindi language as the solitary official language of India.

The Congress leaders of Tamil Nadu were mainly instrumental in extracting the linguistic concessions and assurances from the Prime Minister regarding the continuance of English as the official language. Again it was the Congress Working Committee under the leadership of a Tamil Congressman in 1965 that passed the resolution reiterating the firm resolve of the party to adhere to the assurances given by the late Prime Minister regarding continuance of English in addition to Hindi for all the official purposes of the Union, not withstanding the expiry of 15 year period provided by the constitution. Further more as a result of the recommendations and resolutions passed initially by Tamil
Nadu Congress Committee and later on Congress Working Committee the candidates appearing in the Union Public Service Commission exams were allowed to write in their regional languages, including Tamil.

In 1965 as the zealous Home Minister sought to take administrative and constitutional measures to achieve the status of Hindi as only official language of India precipitating a dangerously disruptive anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu, the Congress ministers in the union ministry tendered their resignations to demonstrate their solidarity with the agitation. They retracted from their resignation only when the Union Council of Ministers agreed to adhere to the Nehruvian assurances. The Congress leaders in the state repeatedly sought to impress upon the national leadership of the party the need to dilute its rigidity on Hindi issue and largely succeeded in diluting it.

Even in the era of Dravidian regionalism dominated Tamil politics the Congress party in the state had responded in measured fashion to the ubiquitous forces of regionalism. In 1989 Legislative Assembly elections, though critical of Dravidianism but aware of the overwhelming sway it had over the people of the state the Congress party consciously adopted regionally relevant strategies and issues. It repeatedly projected issues and concerns that were manifestly and decidedly regional. It emphasized on the adoption of three-language formula. On most of the issues concerning the state like language policy, reservation system, Cauvery river water the party competed with Dravidian outfits rather effectively on their own planks. On the emotionally important issue of Cauvery water frequently the state unit and leaders had taken a stand that was antagonistic to the postures of the national leadership. The Tamil Congress leader Valapadi Ramamoorthy even resigned from the union ministry protesting against the inordinate and intentional procrastination on the part of the central government to force Karnataka state government to release water in the river.
**Congress and Dravida Kazhagam**

A close symbiotic relationship started building up between Dravida Kazhagam and Non-Brahmins in the congress with the advent of independence and the increasing ascendancy of the Non-Brahmin faction within congress. The alliance became more profound after the assumption of chiefministership by Kamaraj who was glorified as a *Patchai Tamilan* (True Tamil) by the leader of Dravida Kazhagam. The cancellation of the controversial education policy of Rajaji government, restoration of the interview system that benefited greatly the backward classes, induction of a Dalit into the council of ministers, Kamaraj’s views on caste, God, religion, society and economy, congress contribution to the growth of Tamil language, increasing representation of Non-Brahmin Tamils in education, industry, economy, society and bureaucracy all could be adduced as causative factors of this ever deepening relationship.

Though both Periyar and Kamaraj had differing motivation to forge and continue this symbiotic alliance, there can be no denial of the fact that this alliance contributed to the congress recognition of the region of Tamil Nadu in its scheme. While analyzing the congress dominance in the party system of 1950’s and 1960’s the noted political scientist Rajani Kothari has stated that congress party in the politics of India acted as a party of consensus and opposition parties as parties of pressure. He advocated that opposition parties functioned outside the system and made use of the factional leaders and groups of congress for influencing the policies of the government. The relationship between Dravida Kazhagam and congress party in Tamil Nadu (especially the Kamaraj faction) substantiates this view and it is pertinent to note here that the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee had absorbed many of the policies and programmes of Dravida Kazhagam like backward classes reservation, love for Tamil language etc. This symbiotic relationship could be adduced as one of the factors for the establishment of congress dominance in the politics of Tamil Nadu then.
Andhra Demand

As nationalist consciousness penetrated deeply and freedom movement marched on in the sprawling Presidency the disparate linguistic communities started demanding the creation of linguistically homogenous states. The demand arose because of the political ambitions of the educated elites of these different communities in the Presidency. As Tamil Brahmins dominated the modern educational institutions and professions, these linguistic movements were anti-Tamil in orientation.

Telugus agitated for the creation of a separate Telugu organization in Congress, Telugu university and a separate Telugu state called Andhra. The struggle for the formation of a Telugu unit within Congress organization came to fruition in 1917. They achieved a separate Telugu university a decade later. But they had to wage a protracted struggle to achieve the separate Andhra state.

Rajaji and Region

The far-reaching impact of region on Congress party affected even Rajaji, a consummate cosmopolitan and nationalist. The Tamil-Telugu conflicts and the resultant pressure made Rajaji himself as much the victim of the dual and sometimes conflicting loyalties of Indian and regional nationalisms as his fellow Indians.

The Telugu leaders accused him of making shrewd and stubborn efforts to frustrate the emergence of an Andhra state. They believed that Rajaji adopted a three pronged strategy of exploiting the differences between the Northern Circar and southern Royalseema within the Telugus, selective allotment of ministerial berths to Andhra politicians and finally utilizing his contacts with central government to avert the creation of Andhra state.

Once the creation of Andhra state seemed imminent, Rajaji pooled all his resources to retain the Madras city in entirety with the truncated Tamil State. There is considerable validity in the argument that Rajaji stood by his unreasonably high demand
of maintaining the integrity of the state only as a bargaining counter for his ultimate, real objective that Madras city should be for Tamils. He proved for more sentimental in his defence of Madras city as the capital of the Madras state shown off its Andhra districts.

The Andhra demand and Madras controversy clearly showed that the consummate cosmopolitan Rajaji too was influenced by the concerns and forces of the region. Even on the question of Hindi language the region had ultimately captured the heart of Rajaji. As the leader of the conservative Swatantra party he convened the Madras State Anti-Hindi Conference in Trichy and resolutely proclaimed the determination of Tamils to resist the unwise, unjust imposition of Hindi. Though his opposition to Hindi only was grounded on his realization about the indispensability of English, his Tamil sentiments were not masked entirely during the course of the protracted anti-Hindi agitation.

**Tamil Arasu Kazhagam**

The cultural nationalist organization of Tamil Arasu Kazhagam represented the extreme regionalization of Congress party on issues like Tamil language, homogenous state etc. It successfully combined the apparently incompatible ideas of nationalism and Tamil centric regionalism by advocating the concept of Pudhiya Tamilagam where linguistically homogenous Tamil State with extensively federated powers would function within the framework of a united sovereign India.

The nationalist credentials of Tamil Arasu Kazhagam or its leader M.P. Sivagnanam could not be doubted yet its commitment to Tamil language, nationalist fighters from Tamil state, renaming of Madras as Tamil Nadu could not be criticized even by the manifestly regional organizations like Dravida Kazhagam or DMK. M.P. Sivagnanam had many times deplored the deliberate indifference and discrimination in the official history of the Congress written by the Telugu Congressman Pattabi Sittaramaya against Tamil contribution to nationalist struggle.
When the Dar Commission visited the volatile Madras state the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam argued before it that the demand for the creation of a Tamil speaking state was neither isolated nor marginal but broad based. It reiterated its steadfast, implacable opposition to any diminution of Tamil rights over the Madras city. When the commission recommended the exclusion of major cities like Madras from any particular, linguistic state on the ground that diverse ethnic groups inhabited these cities, Tamil Arasu Kazhagam demonstrated its opposition by observing linguistic state demand day. Many Tamil Congressmen argued that a distinction between the cosmopolitan Bombay and Madras should be made and Madras should not be converted into a centrally administered area.

When the JVP committee comprising of the Prime Minister, Home Minister and the President of Indian National Congress recommended the creation of Telugu state that included the Chittoor district even through it excluded the Madras city, Tamil Arasu Kazhagam organized a Tamil Border protection conference in Chennai to forcefully demonstrate its opposition. The former finance minister of the Union R.K. Shanmugam chettiyar condemned the President of the Indian National Congress Pattabi Sittaramayya for his misinterpretations about the recommendations of the committee regarding the city of Madras.

The Tamil Arasu Kazhagam leader worked hard to convene the Madras Corporation Council twice in 1949 and 1953 to explicitly declare the democratic opinion of the people of Madras through their elected council substantiating the arguments for the retention of the city. In its special session in 1953 M.P. Sivagnanam augmented the Tamil credentials over the city by advocating extensively cultural, demographical, religious and historical arguments. After the announcement of the Prime Minister about the creation of Andhra state the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam convened the second state level conference in Madras where the literary and political deliberations emphasized the Tamil claims over the city in entirety.

In this backdrop when the Wanchoo Committee, established to discuss the issue of capital city for the new state of Andhra recommended the retention of Madras city as
the temporary capital till alternative infrastructure was made for the emerging new state. Tamil Arasu Kazhagam and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and other affiliated organizations painstakingly mobilized opinion to thwart the decision. Only yielding to the massive popular pressure from Tamil Arasu Kazhagam and TNCC the central government announced that the capital of Andhra state would not be in the Madras city and would be located within the territory of the new state.

**Kanyakumari Issue**

An intense Tamil movement was conducted in the south Travancore areas for the incorporation of Tamil majority areas with Tamil Nadu. In first half of the twentieth century there was joint participation of both Tamils and Malayalees in the formation of the nationalist Congress in the princely state. But the formation and functioning of Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress with the purpose of incorporating the Tamil majority taluks with the adjoining Tamil state decimated the nationalist politics in the Tamil areas of South Travancore.

All the important nationalist leaders of Tamil origin dissociated themselves from nationalist politics and plunged into the politics of Tamil regionalism. After achieving the unification of the Tamil majority areas with Tamil Nadu as a result of linguistic reorganization carried out in 1956, the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress decided to merge itself with Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, another instance of a regional organization of Tamil people dissolving in the ocean of Congress.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee had shown adequate concern to the deplorable plight of the Travancore Tamils and in 1946 itself at its political conference in Ambasamudram it passed a resolution for the unification of these Tamil areas with Madras state. The President of TNCC Kamaraj had appointed a Border Protection Committee under the leadership of C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliyar to protect the Tamil border areas in the wake of aggressive regionalism in the neighborhood. He had
expressed steadfast opposition to the repressive measures of the Malayalee government towards Tamils of South Travancore.

The TNCC was instrumental in the organization of negotiations between Malayalee government and Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress that led to the signing of Palayamkkottai pact. In 1954 it had officially passed a resolution seeking to merge these Tamil areas with Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee reacted with regional spirit to the plight of Travancore Tamils even though as in the case of Andhra issue, the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam was more aggressive. The different congress factions reacted with varying degrees of concern for the plight of Kanyakumari Tamils. While Tamil Arasu Kazhagam took an extreme regional stand the mainstream Kamaraj faction also sought to address the concerns of Tamils in ample measure. Therefore the Kanyakumari district became a congress bastion in elections and even now in the age of congress marginalization elsewhere, in Kanyakumari the party is relatively powerful.

**Congress Defeat in 1967 Elections**

The Congress defeat in the landmark elections of 1967 could not be attributed to the emergence of Dravidian regionalism alone. The electoral defeat could not be explained confidently as a case of an assertive regional party subjugating the national party of Congress as the Congress itself had traveled a sufficient distance in the path of regionalism. The defeat and the continual relegation of Congress party to the marginal periphery of politics in the state could be adduced by a different set of factors having primarily electoral and organizational dimensions. The Congress party faced unprecedented defeat in the 1967 elections because it faced an unprecedented, consolidated opposition as almost all the entities of political spectrum of the state had a kind of rainbow alliance against it. Suddenly the Congress party was deprived of the traditional advantages it derived in the era of Congress system from the relative majority based geographical method of representation.

349
Structural Dualism

The continual exclusion of the Congress from the citadels of power in the state was due to intra-Congress factors like structural dualism and suicidal electoral strategy of alliance. The Congress comeback in the 1970’s was undermined by the phenomenon of Congress structural dualism. The long-standing factional struggle between the organizational and governmental wings of the party culminated in a vertical split on the eve of the Presidential elections in 1969. Again after the massive defeat nationally in the 1977 parliamentary elections the party was subjected to a vertical split. This Congress dualism or the existence of two powerful but antagonistic factions precipitated mutually assured destruction and in the process ensured the consolidation of the Dravidian parties. Whenever any one of the two factions of Congress attempted any sincere comeback the other faction derailed it by joining with opposite political parties of Dravidian movement leading to the defeat of its estranged faction.

In 1970 Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly elections the Congress (R) entered into a patently humiliating poll alliance with DMK in the face of overwhelming objection from cadres with the singular objective of defeating the rival Congress (O). When the disappointed matinee idol broke away from DMK to form his own Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam the Congress (R) refused to accept the unification proposals of Congress (O) and allowed the political vacuum about to be created by the imminent defeat of DMK to be filled by ADMK. A unified Congress endeavor in the mid seventies would have enabled the party to plant itself in the corridors of the St. George Fort.

Alliance Strategy and Demoralization

The centralization of power and deinstitutionalization of the party operated somewhat differently in Tamil Nadu. Though these deleterious forces affected the method of appointment of congress office bearers in Tamil Nadu like elsewhere, here in the state
they had a huge impact in the domain of electoral politics precipitating the marginalization, fragmentation and regionalization of the party.

The baneful strategy of iniquitous alliances pursued by the national leadership of the Congress, dictated by its own national level considerations acted as the singular catalyst in the marginalization of the party in the politics of the state and the resultant demoralization of its cadres. In the post-emergency elections the unified Congress in Tamil Nadu could have regenerated and reorganized itself if it had made a determined bid to capture power because the party had conducted extensive mobilization campaigns based on its twenty point and five point programmes. But concerned about the possible adverse impact of emergency on its electoral fortunes in the north it decided to forge an alliance with ADMK in TN even though there was no perceptible adverse reaction from the south to the emergency rule. Unfortunately the alliance cemented the ascendancy of ADMK in the political theatre of Tamil Nadu and downsized the significance of Congress party.

By the dawn of the new decade in the 80's there was the emergence of unified Congress shedding its inimical feature of dualism and with the emergence of Congress (1) as the only Congress party the Congress prospects for a comeback seemed bright. But the party again chose to get embroiled in the quagmire of electoral alliance. As Congress-ADMK relationship got soured and strained Congress leadership sowed the seeds of an alliance with DMK.

In the 1984 elections the Congress party renewed the alliance with ADMK as its southern strongholds of Andhra and Karnataka became its new Achilles heels, because of the phenomenal emergence of Telegu Desam party in Andhra Pradesh and the problematic rise of Janata party to the echelons of power in Karnataka. With its leader assassinated the party was desperate to capture a larger share of Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu and therefore it renewed its alliance with ADMK, notwithstanding the strong opposition from its regional stalwarts like G.K. Moopanar.
The party came to be trapped in the quagmire of MGR formula that sought to balance between the national priorities of Congress and state level priorities of ADMK. Congress was given roughly 2/3 of the Lok Sabha seats and 1/3 of Legislative Assembly seats and ADMK received 1/3Lok Sabha seats and 2/3 of Legislative Assembly seats.

After a short stint with independent bid in 1989, the Congress again came back to MGR formula. The beleaguered party was facing the united challenge of opposition parties especially in the backdrop of the debilitating controversy over Bofars. Not showing any patience or passion to capture power independently in the state it returned to MGR formula and forged and electoral alliance with the unified ADMK. In 1991 again with its leader assassinated it continued to adhere to its alliance with ADMK.

From 1977 to 1991 the party was reduced to the status of a pressure group of election times. It accounted for only about one fifth of the total electorate while the Dravidian parties ADMK and DMK were near equally matched, appropriating around 2/3 of the electorate. In this triparty system with Dravidian dominance the Congress party realized that it could decide the course of electoral battles between the two parties of Dravidian colour as the party it supported seemed well positioned to reap the electoral rewards.

As the political priorities of Congress and regional parties were not incompatible, in the sense that the Congress main priority of continued hold over central government was not incompatible with the desire of regional parties to have control over the state government, a satisfactory alliance system could be formulated. In this strategy the Congress disowned its claims to a share in the state government and in turn the regional parties were reconciled to the prospects of conceding majority of parliamentary seats in the state to Congress. In other words this strategy demanded the sacrifice of state level interests of Congress for protecting its national level concerns, which the central leadership of the party readily obliged.
The strategy no doubt brought forth rich electoral dividends for Congress in the parliamentary elections. Barring the state of Maharashtra no other state in the country had sent an overwhelming majority of Congress Members to Parliament with enviable uninterrupted consistency as Tamil Nadu. Either Congress or its allies bagged about 97% of the parliamentary seats in the state.

Apart from this benefit, this strategy of iniquitous electoral alliance brought more harm than good for the party. The foremost disadvantage arising from the strategy of electoral alliance was the marginalization of the party in the politics of the state and the subsequent sense of demoralization prevailing among cadres and leaders.

Regionalization and Fragmentation of Congress Party

The impact of the electoral alliance strategy on the organizational structure and cohesiveness was dysfunctional. It injected factional rivalry into Congress replacing the earlier waves of factionalism based on the social issue of caste. The party came to be afflicted with various factional feuds and whenever Congress enters into electoral adjustments with any one of the major political parties, invariably factional struggles arise within the party. While one group supports the preservation of the existing pattern of alliance the other group demands a change in the pattern. Many times in the history of Congress in the Dravidian era of the state politics the alliance based factionalism exploded into a major or minor split leading to the formation of a new regional party of Congress tradition. On all these occasions the cutting off of umbilical cord with the congress party by the rebellious fledgling party was not complete as all of them retained in partial form the nomenclature of congress. This political phenomenon was congruent with politics in other regions where the regional groups revolting against the centralization of power in the congress party usually formed a new party adopting a nomenclature combining both its regional and congress traditions like Kerala congress, Utkal congress.
In the 1977 Parliamentary elections as alliance was forged between ADMK and Congress, the leading Congressman Kannadasan, a long time associate of MGR denounced the alliance and chose to withdraw from active politics. On the eve of the 1980 Parliamentary elections when the party revived the alliance with DMK, one of the front ranking leaders Nedumaran vehemently opposed the alliance moves. When he was removed from the presidentship of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee he walked out to form a new regional party called Tamil Nadu Kamaraj Congress. 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.

When the alliance was revived to face the Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly elections in 1984 the Moopanar group in the Congress was distinctly uneasy. After the death of the Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandhran the ADMK underwent a major vertical split that immediately began to have its dysfunctional impact on the internal dynamics of the Congress. The faction led by the thespian Shivaji Ganasan wanted Congress to recognize the Janaki faction of ADMK as the heir to the MGR tradition. Another faction led by M.P. Subramanian wanted Congress to establish political rapport with Jayalalitha faction.

As the Moopanar group successfully impressed the central leadership to plough independently to capture political power other disgruntled factions reacted adversely. The veteran actor Shivaji Ganesan criticized the central leaders of the party for imposing article 356 in the state in the aftermath of unruly scenes and fights in the Legislative Assembly between the two factions of ADMK. Irked by the independent bid made by the party to capture power and for not choosing an alliance with Janaki faction, he walked out of the party to form Tamilaga Munnetra Munnani and to fight the elections along with Janaki faction of ADMK.

Again in the 90's the party was subjected to a split as the central leadership did not heed to the demands of party men to reexamine the relationship with ADMK in the
context of the provocative speech of the Chief Minister rejecting the sympathy wave arising from the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi as the catalytic factor for the landslide victory of Congress-ADMK alliance in 1991. The President of TNCC(1) Valappadi Ramamoorthy broke away from the party to form Congress (Tiwari) initially and Tamilaga Rajiv Congress later on. On the eve of the 1996 elections when the central leadership chose to ally with ADMK, the rank and file of the party deserted to form Tamail Maanila Congress. Again when TMC chose to fight the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections in alliance with ADMK, its main leader P. Chidamparam broke away to form another party of Congress tradition in the state called Tamil Maanila Congress-Democratic Forum.

Finally when TMC in the post-Moopanar phase decided to pursue the course of integration with the Congress party, a group of legislators led by Killiyoor MLA Kumaradas protested and formed another regional party of Congress tradition called as Tamil Maanila Kamaraj Katchi. Thus the Congress party in the era of Dravidian regionalism pursued the strategy of electoral alliances that in turn precipitated not merely the marginalization of the party but also its regionalization and fragmentation.

Independent Bid to Power

In the post 1967 period Congress party had made two independent bids to capture power in the state. In the 1977 Legislative Assembly elections as the ADMK, wary of antagonizing the new central government led by Janata evicted Congress (R) from its alliance, the party had to make an independent bid rather unwillingly. The 1989 Legislative Assembly elections witnessed the only serious bid for power in the state made by Congress party. It demonstrated regionalized electoral campaign strategies, ideas and methods to capture power. It consciously sought to regenerate its social base by assiduously cultivating the largest caste community of Vanniyars in the state. It repeatedly brought the Prime Minister down to the state to cash on his personality and portrayed him as the suitable heir to the MGR tradition. Though the party failed in this independent endeavour, it could capture nearly 20% of the popular vote and 26 seats in the Legislative Assembly, a record nearly equal to that of the Jaya faction of ADMK.
Though its performance in terms of concrete data was not a disappointing one the party began to lose confidence in its ability as it expected a quantum 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.

Deradicalised Dravidian Movement and Congress Response

The Dravidian movement in the last two decades had undergone the twin interrelated processes of ideological deradicalisation and coalitional disintegration resulting in the creation of vast disenchanted social groups, which offered fertile opportunities for national parties like congress to mobilize and capture power in the state. Many populous communities like Vanniyars of northern Tamilnadu, Parayars of north and central Tamilnadu, the Devendrakula Vellalars of southern districts, the Telugu speaking Arunthathias of the western districts, the religious minorities of Islam and Christianity began to dissociate themselves from the rainbow like coalition the Dravidian movement had built and maintained in the previous decades. But the response of the congress party was tentative, reluctant and at times suicidal and this nonchalant attitude contributed to the continued marginalization of the congress party. And concomitantly various new players based on caste and religious identities have emerged to fill up the vacuum heralding a new age of socio-political mobilization based on caste and religion and competitive multi-polar electoral alliance system.

Congress, Region and Contemporary Politics

The arrival of BJP in the corridors of power at the centre through the medium of National Democratic Alliance in the last decade reflected the increasing ascendency of regional forces in national politics. Chastened by its inability to achieve a stable coalitional support at national level the BJP quietly modified the ideological and electoral strategies to woo various regions. A party that since inception was identified with a strong centre came to openly embrace coalition politics, alliance with regional parties and the principle of decentralization of power to the states.
In Tamil Nadu BJP entered into a seemingly impossible alliance with Dravidian parties so that the thirst of the regions would be satisfied. It deliberately placed on the backburner all the controversial issues to assist the evolution of alliance with parties like DMK. The local unit of the party embraced region specific demands, concerns and political aspirations, a process that was fortuitously assisted by its regionalized social base in the state. But after the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections BJP began to show indifference to the concerns of the Tamil region as it was mesmerized by the growing relationship with ADMK on ideological and practical grounds ultimately leading to the disintegration of NDA in the state. The nonchalant attitude of BJP towards the burning issues of the region like anti-conversion law, law banning animal sacrifice in temples, mis-application of POTA, and mass dismissal of govt employees worked to bring above the alienation of region of Tamil Nadu from NDA and sowed the seeds of defeat and disintegration of NDA alliance in the 2004 parliamentary elections.

Towards the end of the previous century the congress was greatly emasculated as many regions, regional leaders and groups revolted. The party was oblivious of the commanding position occupied by regions in the dynamics of national politics. It continued to stubbornly entertain the improbable thoughts of re-establishing its dominance in the country as reflected in the Kolkata and Pachmarhi resolutions. This negative posture of the congress party continued in the 1999 parliamentary elections too. But as new millennium dawned the party began to undergo gradual changes in its attitude towards coalitional relationship with regions. The AICC session in Bangalore, Conference of Congress chief ministers in Guwahati, party conclave in Srinagar all diluted the party’s rigidity against coalitional strategy.

The culmination of this long evolving process took place in Shimla in 2003 where the Shimla Sankalp was adopted favoring electoral alliance with regional parties to effectively combat communalism and religious fundamentalism. The Shimla Sankalp gave impetus to the party to implement an electoral strategy that recognizes and respects the political significance and aspirations of diverse regions and their political parties.
Leaving aside the bitterness and memories of the past the party established alliances in a number of states and in Tamil Nadu with a number of political parties. The series of state specific alliances in Bihar, Maharastra, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu contributed handsomely to its electoral victory in 2004 and the subsequent formation of United Progressive Alliance government under its leadership at the centre.

In the last two years the congress led UPA had satisfied many of the longstanding demands of the Tamil region like the implementation of Sethusamudram project, provision of classical language status to Tamil, Passage of 105th constitutional amendment law to provide reservation in unaided educational institutions. Additionally a record number of 13 ministers in the union ministry come from the state and some of them occupy crucial portfolios like finance, health etc. But the general accommodation of Tamil region in the political ambience at the centre had not unfortunately contributed to any tangible enhancement in the electoral and political strength of the party. The congress has justifiable reason to feel aggrieved at the deliberate sidelining of its contribution to the development of Tamil Nadu by the alliance partners in the state. The contemporary political scenario at the national and regional levels validate correctly the perception that congress came back to power at the centre as subsequent to the Shimla Sankalp resolution it had accorded representation to assertive regions in the electoral and political strategies. Nevertheless there is considerable validity in the assertion that in the politics of Tamil Nadu the party’s interests continued to be sacrificed at the altar of national interests of the party. In the 70’s the exodus of the Tamil region from congress occurred because of centralization and deinstitutionalization in the party and the Shimla Sankalp had not provided any antidote to the problem in favour of the regional regeneration of the party and as a result the unenviable spectacle of congress marginalization remains unaltered in the politics of the state.