CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION
Every country tries to evolve a political system that suits its needs and its genius. India has been making the experiment too. Democracy is her chosen mode of self-management. It is a system that generously acknowledges the possibility of ability and goodness in all men and makes provisions for all men to participate in the process of government. Modern thinkers who tried to find answers for the question of how to interest the majority of a people in political life speculated that the governments would be becoming increasingly experts-oriented. In any country, it is only a small minority who interest themselves in politics. "Fewer than one in ten of those who vote for a
party are prepared to become members, and fewer still to work for it actively," estimates Pickles, speaking of course of England. But the position is no better in this country. It is then the minority of the population who actively manage the country, though it is technically possible for an independent to enter the legislative forums because there are very few who enter politics that way. When a country is to be managed by this minority, on the strength of the votes of the majority, it is but just that we expect those few to be well-informed and to be genuinely democratic in outlook and style of functioning. Indian democracy is based on the party system, and therefore it becomes the responsibility of the parties to give their members the information and the training to undertake the responsibility of running this democracy.

Running a democracy is not just the problem of administration. The administrative machinery is manned by the professional cadre. The political parties that run a country have a different kind of responsibility. They should formulate the policies and principles by which the country is to be managed, both in its internal affairs and in its relations with other countries. The pace of changes in the modern world--socially, politically, economically and in all other ways connected with human life--is high, and any country
that wants to keep its relevance to the modern world has to change, too. To bring about this change without discontinuity from the characteristic traditions of the country, and without denying people their fundamental right to live their lives according to their tenets, is a difficult task. India, being a country with a long and powerful tradition and history, has naturally much that does not please everybody. So a political party that wants to bring about changes in society—changes for the better—has to be very careful. It is not a question of just continuing existence, but improving the quality of life in the country. A political party that takes up this responsibility takes on a very difficult job.

It is with this background that this study was taken up. A party that proposes to use political power in a democracy has to instil in its members the democratic instinct. It is an instinct difficult to develop because it has based on a sense of justice and concern with what is good for all the people of society. If it is difficult to develop this instinct in the common workers of the party, it is difficult to maintain it on the part of the leaders. So it was an inviting sociological phenomenon for the researcher; he decided to study the relationship between the leaders and members of a political party.
India is a vast sub-continent. The government at the centre and the governments in the states are naturally quite some distance from the people at the farther outposts. The people of the villages which form a large part of India do not know enough to participate in the act of government, and it is practically an impossible ideal. The government has to do much for them, especially because it is a welfare government, and therefore it is necessary that it has its very sensitive representatives in the villages. The bureaucratic representatives of the government may not have the ideological or conceptual orientation that the ruling party has. Therefore it has got to be the party's political representatives who have to do the sensitive job in the villages. It is thus necessary that every political party that aspires to play its role in the shaping of India should make the effort to get in touch with, and keep in touch with, the villages and other such small units of society. The researcher took up a unit which is neither at the centre of political power nor at the absolute periphery, but in between—he took up a Municipal town in the southern extreme of India. His purpose was to find out the motives behind members and leaders of a political party at this level joining the party, and to study the degree of effectiveness of their political relationship. He wanted to
see how much the party fulfils its democratic responsibility within its own structure. The degree to which the party implements democracy in its inner structure and functioning can be a fair indicator of the degree to which it would implement the democratic way of life in the country in case it came to power.

India's traditional society has to be transferred into many changes. Almost all contemporary political parties in the country have their own ideas to modernise this society. The Dravida Munnetra-k-Kazhagam that the researcher chose for his study is a party that has its definite ideas on the subject. It wants to give the people of the country equality in opportunity, irrespective of their racial, religious, communal, monetary or educational properties. It wants to revive Tamil culture, and bring about an egalitarian society. The researcher desired to see how far the party followed these ideals in the minds of its members. The researcher's observations, carried out from the point of view of a student of sociology, with the tools sociological research provides, have been recorded in the foregoing pages. An attempt is made here to come to valid conclusions on the basis of these observations, and to offer if possible suggestions to improve the state of affairs.

The Basic Social Concerns

The D.M.K.'s history is an index of the social reformist
mottives and aspirations of the political parties in the south of India. Continuing the move for social justice, starting with the opposition to the dominance of all walks of life by some caste groups which had been spearheaded in pre-independence days by the Justice Party, the D.M.K. (which split from the Dravida Kazhagam founded by E.V. Ramaswami) built its power on a variety of themes: Dravinda-nadu for the people of Dravidian origin, social justice for the oppressed groups, opposition to superstition, the fight for Reason, opposition to Hindi imposition and the struggle for exalting the Tamil Language. The fight against the casteist society and privileges is part of a national struggle that started in good earnest even during the pre-independence days. The D.M.K. in its espousal of the cause of the underdog spoke also of the financially poor. One of its basic self-descriptions during the elections and even after forming the government at the state level in 1965 was "the common people"—saamaaniyarkal.

The party claimed that it was the representative of the common man. So the study goes into the question of the social background of the members and leaders of its universe with the idea of finding out how far the party has really fought free of communal, financial and educational considerations. So the
recording of the social background of the respondents serves a double purpose in this study. The finding of the study is that caste, money and educational status influence the partymen in the choice of leaders. The consideration for educational acquirement certainly is creditable, and in a country like India where literacy level is rather low (33 per cent), there is bound to be an exaggerated respect for education. But caste and financial status are found to have a strangle hold on the party’s working at this level.

This is an unfortunate state of affairs especially in a party which claims to be beyond all such considerations. These considerations are still part of India’s social life. This party, like many other parties, claims to be working for the elimination of such considerations. But it is seen to have succumbed to such pressures. The willingness of the party to compromise with realities forgetting its sworn principles gives the observer the pause. It leads to the question whether the party's pretensions are tenable and genuine at all. The researcher’s contacts with the respondents brought out any number of incidents in the party in which money and caste have played important roles.

The leadership potentiality of the highest dominant caste group among the universe is far higher than that of the other
caste groups. It can also be seen that these leaders coming from the highest caste groups belong to the highest income group too. Ultimately, this is a finding that questions the bonafides of the party's claims, and attributes hypocrisy as one of the ruling considerations of the party. This, however, may not be the unique quality of this party. All political parties in India are believed to be influenced by caste and money factors. But that is no consolation for a student of the political system of the country. So the researcher has to record that the party's preaching, claims and actual practice do not coincide.

Going into the field of role expectations and role performances of the members and leaders of his sample, the researcher came to other conclusions which support the findings detailed above. In the actual working of the party, it was seen that the elections do not give a genuine opportunity for the members to exercise their choice. Here again it is hierarchy that counts, and conventions have established themselves which give an exaggerated, undue respect to personalities and often with no reference to merit and experience. The personality cult is strong in all the levels of the party. Some individuals of the party have entrenched themselves because of it, and others are trying to put themselves under the wings of these powerful personages.
This again is an undemocratic practice. The hierarchical interventions in the basic levels of the party thwart the concept of democratic training for the rank and file of the party. This again is not unique in this party. But that again is no consolation. If the processes of democracy are falsified and perverted at this level of the party, such perversions are bound to magnify and perpetuate themselves at the highest levels. But there is every reason to say that they have perpetuated themselves at the higher levels and are corrupting the lower levels now. Activities like fund raising are very popular with the members and leaders at this level. This is a legitimate activity provided it is confined to reasonable limits and norms, but there seem to be no such governing norms and limits with the party. The party has all along been noted for its collection drives, and it may be recalled (see p. 275) that its first great crisis came when some of the members (headed by M.G. Ramachandran) asked for accounts of these collections. Seen along with the very many cases of corruption at a very high level and on a very large scale, proved by the Sarkaria Commission of Enquiry; this again is a disturbing finding. This cannot be good training for democratic rulers, either. These observations prove thus that the democratic system has not taken root in the party. Favouritism goes with casteism and respect for money. Ideals and principles and programmes of the party are a superficial facade.
There is a good lot of groupism and factionalism in the party. One gets the impression that the entire edifice depends on certain individuals and their influence, and that does not bode well for the country. When the individual dies or departs from the party or public life due to illness or any other reason, the party is crippled. The sudden fall of a party, verging on dissolution, creates a vacuum in the political field of the country. The members are suddenly left with no leadership or programme. Their confusion and their frustration can lead them to actions which may not be for the good of the country. This has been demonstrated in recent times by what has happened to the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra-K-Kazhagam which ruled Tamil Nadu for over ten years. On the death of its founder-leader M.G. Ramachandran, the party has shown signs of disintegration. The developments of too strong personalities in a party sets afoot hereditary ambitions, and there is no building up of a second line of leadership, nor any question of nurturing and developing talents at the lower levels. In principle, these are the duties of a political party. When a political party forms the government in a state or even in a panchayat, it must have people who could carry out administrative responsibilities and also plan greater things. But this party does not seem to be doing anything in that line.
This is not to say that there is no talent in the party. There are people with talent but they are not given the proper encouragement.

The tendencies noted here have also the effect of frustrating the genuine idealists in the party. This party is able to attract young people who are even willing to commit self-immolation for the sake of some principle. If only they are given the proper bringing up, the party will be strengthening itself and fulfilling a very important need of the country.

The study shows that the members and leaders of the party are interested in some of the activities and not in others. Elections of all kinds excite them. They offer them the opportunity to participate in important activities of the community. But elections are a temptation also. They are less willing to participate in activities the rewards of which are less tangible materially. There is a positive reluctance to participate in activities which involve suffering and privation.

The relationship between members and leaders is, thus, not all that could be desired. It is found that members are more critical of the functioning of their leaders than leaders of the members. A sound, successful relationship at this level between the two cadres has certain prerequisites. For leaders of this level to be democratic in letter and spirit,
there should be the model and incentive of the district level and for the district level, of the next higher level. The system of democracy is like an organic chain all the links of which are of equal importance. There should be reasonable accessibility to information, and decision-making power should be responsibly shared. But what happens now in the party is that the members feel that decisions are foisted upon the lower levels on all matters. Willing workers in our study are excluded from the coterie in power, and some of them are even alienated, and many become dispirited and their energies are undirected or unused.

The value system that the respondents have is also influenced by the attitudes. That is something that almost goes without saying. That means that the entire value system is corrupted by the practical compromises that the party has worked out for its immediate gains and for the gains and advantage of its higherups.

Naturally the question arises as to how this or any other political party becomes strong and even forms governments, if it is so full of defects. As has often enough been pointed out, in the course of this study, the bad trends in this party are not peculiar to it. How do they gain power and support among the people?
There are two explanations. One is that political parties are protected by the ignorance level of the people. The last section of the study shows how ignorant partymen are on issues relating to the party and to the country. Ignorance promoting gullibility is the great protection political parties enjoy especially in a democracy like India. The way in which the electoral system helps political parties to steal the power vested with the uninformed majority need not be described or evaluated here.

In places where ignorance is not so much to blame, there is evidence for selfish prudence for short term but immediate gains. This is one of the root causes of factionalism in this political party and of growing sense of cynical practical wisdom. The study has shown that many leaders and members are motivated by such considerations.

The second reason is the literal lack of options in the democratic system. In our country especially the tendency of the educated people—the intelligentsia—is to stay away from the political institutions and processes. So the field of politics is left largely to those who choose to enter it. The phenomenal dip in the intellectual and ethical standards evidenced in the legislative assemblies and even the
Parliament of the country is sufficient indication of the standard of politicians and political parties. That some party comes to power need not indicate the positive support of the people to its policies and programmes. It is only a choice among poor alternatives because a country cannot exist without a government, and a democratic government except in emergencies and extraordinary situations, has to be "popularly" elected.

Suggestions

A sociological study like this does not serve its purpose if it stops with the description of a social scene. It must be able to suggest remedies for the defects laid bare. For making such suggestions the student of sociology must consider the ideal motives for social action and convention and compare them with possibilities, no less than with the realities.

A political party, as already has been seen, is a significant basic unit of a country's political constitution. It has to build up its strength in order to capture political power. But it must remember that its ultimate purpose is not the mere capture of political power. Political power is only the means to certain ends. The ends that a political party must prescribe itself are the political and social betterment of the country, and the improvement thereby of the quality of
the life of the people of the country. So a political party has to do two things: to make responsible party men and to make responsible citizens of the country.

The unfortunate fact that stares a student of sociology in the face now is the utter absence of this awareness among leaders of parties. Mr. Brass, in Caste, Faction and Party in Indian Politics, studies the political working of the country and comes to the following conclusion:

Thus, behind the screen of ideological conflicts between the parties, there lay not only opportunism and personal ambition but cross-party alliance of landed and caste interests and inter-party struggles for power at different levels in India's federal system. ...

I have argued that an increase in the effectiveness of party organization, of the attachment of politicians to ideology, and of the hold of party discipline would enhance rather than reduce the prospects for stability in Indian politics. 3

Or it may be that the leaders ignore these important factors. They are more worried about the winning of power than about how to use the power once it is won, and on what. A student of sociology cannot help making value judgements. The reality in India seems to be that political parties are bent upon making profits for the personalities involved and are only incidentally, if at all, interested in the destiny of the country.
The study shows that both leaders and members of the party at the level studied are ignorant of vital aspects of the country's life. They observe their own small regions and to some extent absorb the events and their implications for themselves and the party. But they are not bothered about anything beyond. The party has not taken the trouble to give them political awareness. If people who have taken the trouble to become members of a party are not made to understand the country and its life, there is no possibility of the country getting responsible rulers.

It is imperative, then, that political parties should take it as one of their most important duties to their members and to the country to educate them in all affairs concerning the country. The price of a good democracy is eternal vigilance as the slogan goes, and the vigilance must be mounted by people who know and not be people who do not know nor care to find out. People who join a political party are people who voluntarily take upon themselves the responsibility of being the watchdogs of democracy on behalf of the country. Hence the inescapable responsibility of the political parties.
But in the final analysis, the political consciousness of the people of a country cannot be left solely in the hands of political parties. Society, in forming its educational norms, must insist on a reasonable amount of importance being given to social and political life. Such education must sensitize the coming generations to purposes and principles which are basic to the life of the (and any) country. The researcher with all humility presents that as the conviction that his study has given him. The political system, the quality of life, and the education of the future generations are all inextricably intertwined and the sooner we realise it the better, and the sooner we act on that realisation the better for the country, too.