CHAPTER TWO

Methodology
Importance of the study

In a democracy, political parties are of supreme importance. They have to undertake the responsibility for governing the state either through leadership or through responsible opposition. A democratic government has to be a popularly elected government. All political parties, ruling or opposition, have to maintain close links with the people at large if they are to remain politically relevant. The way in which a party does this can be a clue to the political behaviour of a people. This is the rationale behind the present work which may be described as a study in Political Sociology.
A political party needs certain structural prerequisites like an ideological foundation, a strong organisational structure and a sound financial position. The close link between leaders and members is also important. When close and durable bonds exist between leaders and members, the party is organisationally strong and viable and can steadily grow. And it can implement its programmes for enrolment of members, expansion of units, propagation of its ideology, contesting elections and organisation of demonstrations. It can then be in a position to influence non-members to sympathise with its principles and programmes. The general public may then favour it and put it in power.

Choice of Unit

For the purpose of this study, the Dravida Munnetra-Kazhagam (D.M.K.) has been selected as the unit. In its history of less than five decades, it shows remarkable growth. In all its vicissitudes it has retained its hold on the public mind. A breakaway group of the Dravida Kazhagam (D.K.), the D.M.K. was founded by C.N. Annadurai in 1949 with the following objectives:

1. bringing about social reform;
2. propagating the Tamil language and culture amongst Tamilians;
3. defending democracy;
4. fighting for socialism through constitutional means; and
5. striving for the establishment of a Sovereign Dravida Nadu independent of Indian sovereignty.
It kept itself off the election arena and remained a non-political organisation till 1956. Conducting and winning an opinion poll, it entered the election fray in 1957 and won fifteen seats in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly and two seats in the Lok Sabha. It improved its position in 1962 winning fifty seats in the Assembly and seven seats in the Lok Sabha. In 1967, it emerged as the ruling party of the state bagging 138 seats in the Assembly out of a total 234 seats and all the 25 it contested out of the 39 Lok Sabha seats allotted to the state.

It remained in power for nine years till 1976. It was removed from power by its splinter group, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra-Kazhagam (AIADMK) in the 1977 elections and became the opposition party in the Assembly with 48 seats. The D.M.K. fought the by-election in 1980 as an electoral ally of the Congress(I) but won only 35 seats in the state's Assembly though it sent sixteen of its men to the Lok Sabha. The Congress(I) itself did not do well in the state in this election, winning only 28 seats. In 1984, the Congress(I), fighting the election as an ally of the AIADMK, became the second largest party in the Assembly with 62 seats. The D.M.K.'s floor leader lost the status of the Leader of the opposition since the party secured only 22 seats.

Though since 1977 the D.M.K. has lost its official status as the leading opposition party in the state Assembly and has
suffered reverses in the polls, it has not lost its image among
the people. It retains the public image as the chief opposition
party in the state and remains a political force to reckon with.
The election reverses have not had any impact on its organisational
structure and functional order. The main reason for its remaining
organisationally strong and politically active seems to be the
existence of a strong and durable network of relations between
leaders and members in the party. Its sway over the masses
still remains and its popularity and strength are increasing
in the recent years. For instance, in the civil polls held
in February 1986, the D.M.K. captured the chairmanship of 64
out of the 97 municipalities and 198 out of 380 panchayat
union councils. Out of the 626 town panchayats in the state
184 have D.M.K. Presidents. The party's continued influence
on the people as a party of alternate power induced us to
undertake the present study.

Objectives of the study

To realise the above interest, the following objectives
were formulated:

i) to find out the socio-economic characteristics of
leaders and members of the party;

ii) to analyse the role-expectation and role-performance
of both groups;

iii) to examine the nature of interrelationship between
them during different occasions;
iv) to analyse the variables involved in their interrelationship; and

v) to study the process that emerges in the course of the development of their interrelationship.

Field of Study

In order to fulfil our objectives, Palayamkottai, a municipal town of the state has been selected as our field of study.

Palayamkottai is situated on the eastern side of the Tamiraparani river which is also called the Porunai. The town is in the Tirunelveli--Kattabomman District of Tamil Nadu. There are wet lands in its northern part and its south is covered by hills and dry lands. Its eastern block is comprised of dry lands. Its western limit is marked by the Kasi-Kanyakumari Road. It is covered by both National Highways (viz., NH 7--Nagercoil; NH 7A--Tuticorin) and State Highways.

Palayamkottai is significant in the history of the region. During the reign of Viswanatha Naicker at Madurai in the 14th century, his Chief of Army, Ariyanatha Mudaliar, constructed a fort here. He housed his palayam (armed force) in it. When the Britishers became the rulers they made use of this fort. Camping there they began tackling the Palayankarars (local chieftains) and the haughty zamindars. To entrench themselves in the region they renovated the fort and made it very strong.
Welsh, a British Chief of Army of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, wrote about the Fort of Palayamkottai and the details of the happenings there. During the reign of the Nawabs the Fort was used by Muslims. When the struggle for political supremacy was over, the fort lost its significance to the British and it began to suffer neglect. It is stated that stones from this fort were used for the construction of dams situated in the district.

The government offices of the Tirunelveli Kattabomman District are located in Palayamkottai. This town is at the centre of the district. All the corners of the district are within a radius of 45 miles of Palayamkottai. It is a unique feature of this district. It became an 'A' grade Municipality in 1965. Its area is 7,536 square miles and according to the 1981 census calculations its population is 87,302. Of them 43,618 are men and 43,684 women. Literacy among the sexes is found to be 35,547 (40.72 per cent) and 30,516 (40.27 per cent) respectively.

Palayamkottai is called the Oxford of South India. There are three colleges for men and one for women. There are four higher secondary schools for boys and four for girls, a Teacher Training College for men and another for women. A Medical College, an Engineering College, an Agricultural College and a Siddha Medical College are situated here, along with 31 primary schools. The Madurai-Kamaraj University's Post-graduate Extension Centre functions from here.
Palayamkottai is part of the ancient southern kingdom, and Hinduism flourishes here. It is also one of the prominent Christian centres in the state. Muslims live in large numbers here, too.

This Municipal Town consists of 32 wards. There are 2,083 accredited members of the D.M.K. party in these 32 wards. In 1866, Palayamkottai was made into a Municipality. Wards eight and fourteen are reserved for the schedule castes and Ward 25 is reserved for women. Its total revenue, at present, is around Rs. Forty Lakhs. Madurai is its nearest major town, at the distance of 153 kilometers.

Unit of Study

In Palayamkottai, the D.M.K. was formed on September 17, 1949 when the party was founded by its founder-leader. In 1967, Mr. A.L. Subramanian, a D.M.K. party man was elected to represent the Tirunelveli Constituency (which comprised of both Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai) in the State Legislative Assembly. In 1971, Dr. V. Padmanabhan, also of the D.M.K., was elected as the M.L.A. from the constituency. Mr. Nanjil K. Manoharan of the AIADMK was elected as the M.L.A., from Palayamkottai constituency in the year 1977. In 1980 and 1984, Mr. V. Karuppasamy Pandian of the AIADMK and Mr. S. Samsul Alam of the Muslim League with D.M.K. alliance were elected M.L.As respectively.
The first three chairman of the Palayamkottai Municipality after independence were Congressmen. The fourth one belonged to the D.M.K. He assumed charge as Municipal Chairman but subsequently joined the AIADMK. The present Municipal chairman belongs to the D.M.K. We have selected the Palayamkottai Town unit of the D.M.K. party as the unit of study.

Selection of respondents--Procedure

The respondents of our study were selected from the D.M.K. party unit of Palayamkottai. The party operates at three levels viz., local, district and state. At each level, there is a well-established leadership structure. The leadership structure at the local level constitutes the base of the entire leadership structure of the party. The edifice of the party leadership has been built upon the infrastructure of the local level leadership. The state level leadership is chosen by the district level leadership which, in turn, is elected by the local-level leadership. Thus, the local level leadership constitutes the primary base of the party and forms the infrastructure for the party's top level leadership.

The local level leaders are selected to represent the party leadership. The local level leadership operates on two tiers viz., ward-level and town-level. The ward-level and town-level leadership comprises of four office bearers viz., Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer.
But our respondents at the ward-level and town-level leadership belong to the cadre of Secretaries. The Chairman presides over the Committee meetings. He has no other responsibility in the party machinery. The Treasurer keeps the accounts of the party funds. He has no right to administer or utilize the funds. The Deputy Secretary is just a nominal office bearer. He has no significant role in the actual set up of the party. Only in the event of the death or resignation of the Secretary, he enters the scene. He is always in the back line. Thus, though the Chairman, Deputy Secretary and Treasurer also have leadership status in the party set-up at the ward and town-levels, they have no significant roles to play and hence this principle of selection.

The Secretary is the most important functionary of the party. Executive responsibilities are vested only in him. Convening meetings of the executive committee, mobilising and administering party funds, organising public meetings, executing the decisions and resolutions of the party and controlling its affairs are the responsibilities of the Secretary. So the 33 ward and town-level Secretaries are selected to represent the local-level leadership.

To represent the members, the grass-root level workers, the workers who operate at the ward-level have been selected as respondents. Men and women above eighteen years of age who
promise to adhere to the ideologies and principles of the Kashtagam are allowed to become members of the party. They should not have enrolled themselves as members of any other political party or caste/religious organisation. If anybody wants to become a member of a particular kilai (ward) he should be a resident of that kilai. If no Kashtagam unit functions in the place of his dwelling, he is entitled to register his name as member in the nearest unit. A member cannot hold membership in more than one unit. At the time of his enrolment as a member in a particular kilai, he should remit ₹1.0-50 P as membership fee. It is these members who come into immediate and frequent contact with the party leadership at the local level.

There is a nexus of proximity and close relation between Secretaries and workers. The ward-level workers constitute the electorate for the selection of Secretaries at the ward-level and this link brings them together. Bound by the ties of proximity, both of them work in collaboration and conduct the party affairs and run the organisation at the primary level.

Two hundred and eight card-holding members of the 32 wards of Palayankottai have been selected as respondents out of the 2083 at the rate of 10 per cent from each of the 32 wards. The simple random sampling procedure has been employed in the selection.
Data Collection

The field work took nine months. To start with, the Researcher got himself well acquainted with the respondents. After meeting some important leaders and members of the wards, he was able to establish rapport with all the respondents. Interviews were carried on in the conventional manner and according to the convenience of the respondents. On an average, an interview took two hours. In the course of interviews, respondents were encouraged to express their opinion freely.

For the collection of data from the selected respondents many tools were employed. The principal instrument was the interview schedule. It was designed so as to cover inter-alia socio-economic characteristics of leaders and members; their role-expectations and role-performances; nature of link between them during different occasions; variables involved in their interrelationalship and the process that emerges in the course of the development of links between them.

Observation was also employed as a tool in data collection. The nature and degree of interaction between leaders and members on occasions like elections to party posts, elections to local bodies, party observances, party conferences, political rallies etc., were observed from close quarters.
The Sociometric Technique has also been used for collecting data on the personal preferences of the leaders/members in their relations with others in interactional situations. Case studies have also been supplied to substantiate the researcher's observations. In addition, questionnaire has been administered in order to assess the level of social and political awareness of respondents.

Apart from these primary sources of data collection, secondary sources were also used. Library and archive resources were extensively used for collecting material. Party literature was collected from the party offices and from the persons who held positions in the party. For these purposes extensive tours of different places had to be undertaken. Many difficulties were faced in the course of collecting party literature and conducting interviews with the leaders and members. They had to be overcome by perseverance and persuasion.

Data processing and interpretation

First of all, the structured interview schedules were edited and codified. Then they were scrutinised to see whether there were any omission of relevant facts or inconsistencies in the answers. Mistakes were corrected before field work was completed.

After this, a scoring scheme was evolved for quantifying some of the variables. The scoring was done carefully and checked for errors. The tables were then prepared. The tables comprised of those used for statistical analysis and others
which helped in explaining and interpreting the results of the study. Other items which were tabulated included the personal information relating to the leaders and members. Other information collected through observation and Sociometric Technique were also processed and tabulated. After the tabulation, aids like Maps were provided wherever necessary in order to demonstrate the position clearly.

This study has been divided into nine chapters as follows:

The first chapter deals in detail with the introduction of the study. The second chapter explains the methodology.

The profile of the D.M.K. is presented in the third chapter and the socio economic characteristics of both leaders and members are furnished in the fourth chapter.

The role-expectations and the role-performances are detailed in the fifth chapter and the nature of interrelationship between them during different occasions is explained in the sixth chapter.

The seventh chapter examines the variables involved in their interrelationship and the process emerging in the course of development of their interrelationship is discussed in the eighth chapter.
The final chapter sums up the important findings and conclusions of the study.

The text of the interview schedule and bibliography are given in the appendices of the report.

Limitations

Despite extensive planning, the following difficulties were faced in the conduct of the study.

A very few respondents failed to furnish reliable accounts of their income. However, this did not materially affect the depth of the study. Mostly interviews were conducted at the respondents' houses and at public meeting places. A very few respondents refused to provide answer to the questions relating to role-expectations, role-performances and the nature of relationship with the leader. They appeared to be inhibited by company. So such respondents were interviewed in private. Only then those respondents furnished their responses to the queries. Seeing the greater sense of confidentiality that privacy provided all the respondents were then interviewed in private.

This study is restricted to one Municipal Town out of a complex of Municipal Towns in Tamil Nadu. It does not analyse the District and State levels. It means that it has not examined the entire spectrum of the party but only the political link
between leaders and members at the Municipal Town of Palayamkottai. Nevertheless it is hoped that findings of this study would contribute to the understanding of an important aspect of the political sociology of India.

A description of the Party Machinery

To facilitate the understanding of the party's structure, the Party Machinery is described below.

The units formed in villages are known as Village Branches, and branches formed in Major Panchayats, Municipalities, Townships and Municipal Corporations are known as Ward Branches and Circle Branches.

A Village Branch means a single village--component of village panchayat--which stands with an independent name and boundaries according to the electoral rolls or according to the records of the government. In the Village Branches formed on the basis of the records of the government and the electoral roll (except circle and ward branches), if separate branches are desired in the colonies of the scheduled castes, such branches may be formed. Branches formed in the wards and divisions of Major panchayats, Townships, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations are known as Circle Branches. Only those units with at least Twenty five members are accepted as Branches.
The members of each village branch or circle branch elect from among themselves a Council Chairman, a Secretary, a Deputy Secretary and a Treasurer, which have a registered membership of hundred and less on the date of the elections. They will elect a representative to the higher level committee and also ten executive members. Branches having more than a hundred members elect two representatives to the higher committee and fifteen executive committee members.

The general council of the branches are convened once in six months and the meeting of the executive committee is held once in two months. The Branch Secretary sends copies of the proceedings of such meetings to the higher organisation and to the headquarters of the party. If the meeting has not been convened according to rules, the higher organisation has the right to convene such meetings. Branch kashagams, through the Secretary of the Union kashagams and circle kashagams, through the Secretaries of the major panchayat and municipality-Township kashagams in which they function, have regular contacts with the higher set up of the party.

Each branch, each auxiliary association and each pro-kazhagam association has to organise propaganda meetings or cultural functions at least twice a year. Any Branch or auxiliary association or pro-kazhagam association which falls to organise such meetings has to explain the reasons for the lapse.
The elected Secretary and representative of the Town-township branches collectively form the members of the Town kashagam. The members of the Town-kashagam elect the Council Chairman of the Town kashagam, its Secretary, its Deputy Secretary and its Treasurer. They also elect representatives to the District kashagam at the rate of one representative for a population below fifty thousand; two representatives for a population between fifty thousand and one lakh, three representatives for a population between one lakh and 1½ lakhs; four representatives for a population between 1½ and two lakhs and five representatives for a population about five lakhs.

The executive members, by virtue of their position, become representatives of the District kashagam. After the election of the District kashagam representatives, an executive committee of the Town kashagam comprising of 21 members including the executive officials of the Town kashagam and District representatives is elected. Any eligible member belonging to the respective town may be elected as Town kashagam and District representative. Those who are elected as officials and District representatives are representatives of the Town kashagam also.

The Executive Committee Meeting of township-town kashagam should be convened once in two months, the township-town kashagam
meeting once in four months. The Secretary of the Town kashagam should send copies of the minutes of these meetings to the higher kashagam and also to the Headquarters. If these meetings are not convened according to rules, the higher kashagam have the right to call for such meetings. It will be the responsibility of the Township-Town kashagam to make the Taluk branches function properly. For the functioning of the Township-Town kashagam the office must be in the respective Township-Town kashagam.