REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA: AKALI-DAL AND DMK-AIADMK

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When India became independent from Great Britain in 1947, its leaders were faced with the formidable task of forging a modern, united republic from a population that was divided by linguistic, ethnic, and religious differences, compounded by ancient caste and class systems. The Indian constitution, enacted in 1949, established a federal government, which served to ensure central authority, while guaranteeing the expression of individual interest group sentiments. Such local interests have come to be articulated and defended by regional political parties. In her examination of two of the most successful regional parties, Uzma Burki uncovers the complexities and contradictions of Indian politics. She concludes that despite the ability of regional parties to challenge central authority, both the structure and flexibility of India's federal government protect the integrity of the Indian union. Her analysis illustrates the flexibility of political systems which evolve continuously in response to culture and tradition.[1]

The political systems of the world may be classified into federal and unitary models, characterized by the relative concentration and division of powers between central and regional governments. The Indian constitution provides for a federal system with a formal bias in favor of the central authority, hereafter referred to as "the Center." The federal order, however, framed in a semi-agrarian, semi-industrial and monolithic administrative system inherited from colonial rulers, with English as the official language, could not work effectively in a multimodal political system.[2] It faced the serious challenges of modernization, democratization, and indigenization of the country. Each of these forces reinforced every other and made the regional peoples conscious of their identities and communal interests.

The net effect of the interplay among these forces has been a resetting of the Center-state power equation. The tension between the Center and states always has been evident, even when the same political party has controlled affairs at the Center and in the states. Center-state tensions have given rise to agitational politics in diverse parts of India, particularly over language issues, which created the urgency to set up a State Reorganization Commission to seek a balanced approach between regional sentiment and national interest. In its 1955 report, the commission rejected the theory of one language-one

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1. Indian terms in italics are defined in a glossary at the end of the article.
2. S. Chaklader, "Federalism and National Integration," *Secular Democracy* Vol. XI, No. 14 (1978): 14.

state, but "recognized linguistic homogeneity as an important factor conducive to administrative convenience and efficiency."[3]

The leadership in India tried to provide visions of broad-based unity, and attempted to find a solution to the reorganization of state boundaries on the basis of "unity in diversity." Thus, the unity of the country could be maintained through a democratic approach, as Nehru expressed in the *Lok Sabha*: " . . . the method of democracy [is one] of discussion, of argument, of persuasion and ultimate decision and acceptance of that decision even though it goes against our gain and our opinion."[4]

Even though the Center tried to meet administrative issues raised by the states, the political implications of the states' grievances remained outside the purview of the Center. This led to an upsurge in regionalism in different parts of India, couched in terms of linguistic and cultural diversity. Regionalism is an ethnic and an economic phenomenon. It is an expression of heightened political consciousness, expanding participation and increasing competition for scarce resources. Economic grievances, expressed in charges of unfairness, discrimination, or Center neglect, may be fused with cultural anxiety over language status and ethnic balance. It is this fusion that gives regionalism its potency. Language and culture, like religion, are at the core of an individual's identity, and when politicized, take a potentially virulent form.

Today, regionalism is manifest increasingly through opposition to Congress in regional parties like the Akali Dal, in the northwestern state of Punjab, and the DMK, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. These two parties have been the most successful in articulating regional demands. Key variables, such as party ideology, language and cultural issues, electoral politics, and the Center's role must be identified in order to examine the rise of these political parties from obscurity to political prominence.

AKALI DAL: ORIGINS AND IDEOLOGY

The Akali Dal traces its origins to the Sikh religious reform movement and the drive by the Sikhs to gain control of their *gurdawaras* in the early 1920s. During this period of agitation, the Akali Dal was established as an institutional political force under the leadership of Master Tara Singh. The Akali Dal moved quickly from its religious reform activities to political action because the *gurdawara* movement involved a direct political confrontation with the British and the British-supported Hindu *mahants*.[5] Meanwhile, in October 1920, the religious Sikhs of Punjab formed the Shiromani Gurdawara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), whose charge was to gain control and management over all Sikh shrines, and put the Sikh community on firm footing when India became independent.[6]

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3. *Report of the State Reorganization Commission* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1955), 46.
4. *Lok Sabha Debates* Vol. X, No. 25 (December 21 1955).
5. Lloyd I. and Susanne H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Transition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 47-48.
6. Richard Fox, *The Lions of Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 88.

Over the years, the Akali Dal's ideology came to be identified with the protection of the Sikh *Panth*, or more specifically, the protection of Sikh rights and ensuring the Sikhs' continued existence as an independent political entity.[7] The close relationship between religious and political solidarity has been defended by the Akali ideologues on the grounds that it has provided a protective shield to the Sikh community and helped it maintain its distinct identity.[8] This relationship between Sikh ideology and political interests has been reflected in such demands as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973) and the All-India Gurdawara Act, proposed in the Rajiv-Longowal Accords (1985). The All-India Gurdawara Act, for example, sought to extend the domain of the SGPC (which currently controls only the *gurdawaras* in Punjab and the neighboring states of Himachal Pradesh and Haryana) to all the *gurdawaras* in the country. Such legislation would strengthen a religious structure which, in turn, would be used politically to prevent government interference in Sikh religious matters.

As the Akali ideology is based on Sikh tradition and ideals, it has exercised strong influence on the tradition-oriented Sikh masses, who have shown their support for the party at elections.[9] The early Sikh leaders recognized the need for a communal consciousness, which was emphasized to a large extent by a "we-they" distinction between Sikhs and Hindus on the one hand and between the Punjab and the Center on the other. It was this communal consciousness which expressed the Sikhs' skepticism of their future in a Hindu-dominated Punjab. As a result of this alleged fear of Hindu domination over the Sikhs, the Akali Dal demanded a separate Punjabi-speaking state in which the Sikhs would be dominant — a Punjabi *Suba*.

Punjab: The Politics of Communalism

What the Sikhs feared was not solely economic discrimination or centralization of authority emanating from New Delhi, but the threat of Hindu domination of the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious identity of the Sikhs. The States Reorganization Commission of 1955 did not satisfy Sikh concerns, when Bombay and the Punjab, two of the most politically sensitive areas, were not reorganized on a linguistic basis.[10] The States Reorganization Commission contended that the formation of a separate Punjabi-speaking state would not resolve language or communal issues, but "far from removing internal tension, which exists between communal and linguistic and regional groups, it might further exacerbate the existing feelings."[11] The Center's reluctance to concede to Sikh demands was, in large measure, an attempt to

7. Reuven Kahane, *Legitimation and Integration in Developing Societies: The Case of India* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 65.

8. A.S. Narang, "Punjab Elections: Retrospect and Prospect," *Punjab Journal Of Politics* Vol. 9, No. 2 (July-December 1985).

9. Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in Punjab* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 169.

10. Robert L. Hardgrave, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1986), 125.

11. *Report of the State Reorganization Commission* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1955), 146.

avoid dividing the Punjab province as long as the Punjabi-speaking Hindus in Haryana were opposed to it. In this way, the Center could avoid favoring one side over another in a regional conflict. However, in the face of continued opposition from the Sikhs, the central government revoked its decision and conceded to the Sikh demands in 1966 by announcing the creation of a Punjabi *Suba*, defined as a Punjabi-speaking state.

The Akali Dal's successful campaign for a Punjabi state and their slight electoral majority in Punjab after 1966 made the party a serious contender for state power in the 1967 elections. Until 1967, the Akali Dal had not enjoyed a strong showing in the state elections, but in the aftermath of the achievement of the Punjabi *Suba*, the Akali Dal was able to solidify its constituency and launch its new role as an alternative governing party.[12] It was from this position that the party increased its demands for Sikh autonomy.

Akali Demands and the Center's Response

To evaluate the success or failure of the Akali Dal as a regional party, it is necessary to examine its demands and the Center's response, operating within the framework of a democratic polity. The Akali Dal's demands were articulated best in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, which gathered together all the strands of the interrelated political-religious nexus, but was motivated principally by the fear of Hindu domination.

Although the resolution had a substantial religious component, only two religious demands had particular bearing on the Sikhs' relationship with the government of India. First, the Akalis wanted legislation that would "re-integrate" the traditional preaching sects of Sikhism without anyone encroaching on the properties of their respective individual *maths*. Second, the Akalis wanted free access to "all those holy Sikh shrines including Nankana [the holiest shrine] from which the Sikh *Panth* has been separated, for pilgrimage and proper upkeep."[13] Although designed to help strengthen the religious structure of the Sikh movement, these demands were relatively easy for the Center to concede, since they did not touch on sensitive political issues from the Indian government's point of view.

However, the political demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution were a source of consternation to the Delhi government. The first issue the Akalis wanted resolved was to extend the Sikh province of Punjab, to include the adjoining Punjabi-speaking areas, and to incorporate the city of Chandigarh as the state capital. The second was the demand for an amendment to the Indian constitution to ensure "real federal principles, with equal representation at the Centre for all the states."[14] (The Akalis argued that Punjab was not represented adequately at the Center.) Furthermore, the Akali Dal demanded recognition of Amritsar as a holy city. Additional points included the estab-

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12. K. R. Bombwall, *National Power and State Autonomy* (New Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1977), 154-155.

13. M. J. Akbar, *India: The Siege Within* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 179.

14. Ibid.

lishment of a new tribunal to sort out territorial issues between Punjab and Haryana and to have rights to the river waters running between the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan adjudicated.

Until this time, the Center had succeeded in managing the regional demands of the Akali Dal by agreeing to state reorganization. But with the adoption of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which reflected the consolidation of the Akali Dal as a legitimate and powerful regional party, the Center was forced to rethink its strategy, since it wanted to retain its hold on Punjab. The need became urgent in the aftermath of the 1977 elections, when Akali Dal routed the Congress Party. Congress attempted to undermine the Akali Dal's power by propping up the Sikh extremist, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, in the hope of exploiting political divisions among the Sikhs.

The goals of the Congress and Bhindranwale, however, were quite incompatible. Bhindranwale was operating within the hallowed Sikh ideal of Panthic unity and resistance against all elements that could divide the Sikhs over religious practices or political goals. He began to act as a catalyst for Sikh nationalism and a rallying point for Sikhs seeking their identity. Bhindranwale and other extremists soon gained control of the political agenda of the Akali Dal, and his popularity among several antagonistic groups threatened to upset the political balance in Punjab.

When Bhindranwale's political activities became increasingly violent, the Center sent troops to Punjab during the summer of 1984. Bhindranwale sought refuge in the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and used that as a base for conducting violence with impunity. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had little choice but to launch Operation Bluestar to rout the Sikh extremists from the Temple, resulting in Bhindranwale's death, and ultimately, in Mrs. Gandhi's own assassination by her Sikh bodyguards on October 30, 1984. Her death was followed by highly charged riots in Delhi between Hindus and Sikhs.

In the aftermath of these events, Akali demands took on an emotional hue and thereby compounded the Punjab quagmire. Some of the Akalis' most vociferous requirements included: 1) that Sikh army deserters be given back their jobs (i.e., exonerated, as opposed to being "rehabilitated"); 2) that all cases be dropped unequivocally against Sikh terrorists and hijackers; 3) that these men, along with Jodhpur detainees (those who had been arrested in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar and were detained in Jodhpur and denied free trial) be released immediately; 4) that an inquiry be conducted into the riots in Delhi following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination.[15]

It appeared that a watershed had been reached in the Punjab crisis following the signing of the Rajiv-Longowal Accords in 1985. These accords aimed at beginning the negotation process between the Center and the Akali Dal. The accords conceded the basis of some of the demands which the Akali Dal considered essential prerequisites to discussion, and set the parameters within which other demands would be addressed (in particular, the Anandpur Sahib

15. *India Today*, 15 August 1985, 13.

demands, which still had not been acted upon). The agreement stipulated that the central government would pay compensation to the families that had incurred either personal or material loss in the Delhi riots.[16]

In an effort to respond to the demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the Center appointed various commissions to investigate the issues of territorial and water distribution. These commissions, however, failed to come up with comprehensive settlements that were acceptable to the Akali Dal.

The Mathew Commission was appointed in 1985 to investigate demands for territorial redistribution. After its inquiry, the commission disappointingly announced that eighty-three Hindi-speaking villages and two Hindi-speaking towns in the Abohar and Fazilka *tehsils* of Punjab could not be transferred to Haryana because they were not contiguous with Haryana's border: the Punjabi-majority village of Kandukhera stood in the way. The commission also suggested that the Center send fresh assessors to Abohar and Fazilka. This suggestion was met with staunch opposition by the Akali Dal.

In the case of demands for water redistribution, the central government established the Eradi tribunal in April 1986, to look into the clause of the Longowal Accords that dealt with the sharing of water from the Ravi and Beas rivers. The Eradi Commission clearly stated that no state would get less water than it had been using in July 1985. However, Punjab contested the stand taken by Haryana and Rajasthan and claimed that the accords neither indicated any time period nor stipulated the precise methods for measuring the number of water units each state consumed during that period.[17] Faced with such conflicting views, the tribunal directed that the water utilization for the preceding five years be verified by the Center's assessors before the tribunal could reach a final judgment. The Center's intransigence to implement the commission report reflected its political unwillingness to resolve the impasse.

This intransigence again was manifest in the Raganath Mishra Commission, which was appointed to inquire into the massacre in Delhi following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. The most authoritative findings of the commission were that the rioting and mob violence had been spontaneous and not organized; that politicians were not responsible for the violence; that the police were guilty of negligence by inaction; that the number of dead could not be ascertained (and another inquiry should be set up for this limited purpose); and that the victims of the disturbances should be compensated and rehabilitated. This commission report was considered by the Akali Dal as rife with self-contradictions, errors, and a general tendency to seek out a scapegoat instead of determining the real instigators of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. It is not suprising that the Akali Dal rejected the commission report, especially when national civil rights organizations such as the Peoples Union of Civil Liberties and the Peoples Union of Democratic Rights revealed that some of

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16. *The Sunday Observer*, 8 February 1987.
17. Ibid.

the leaders of the Congress (I) Party (the mainstream Congress party faction originally of Indira Gandhi) were involved in the atrocities of the Delhi riots.[18]

The failure of the Mathew and Eradi Commissions can be ascribed, in part, to the intransigence on the part of Haryana state, which was not a party to the agreements, and had, therefore, no obligation to abide by the terms of the Rajiv-Longowal Accords. Even though Haryana was ruled by the Congress Party, internal pressures in Haryana prevented that state from agreeing to the terms of the accords. If Bhajan Lal, the Chief Minister of Haryana, had accepted the accords, his detractors would have proclaimed that he had sold out to the Center.

The major responsibility for failing to implement these accords, however, rests with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who alone could have made the decisions on the conflicting claims, restrained congressmen in Haryana, and accepted the political consequences as long as the Congress majority in the country was secure. The Center was playing a double-edged game. On the one hand, its failure to resolve the demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution and Rajiv-Longowal Accords prevented the Punjab from gaining many political concessions; on the other hand, the Center strengthened the Akali forces by giving credence to their popularly held belief that the future of the Sikh community was in grave danger.

Electoral Politics

The Punjab party system has a dualistic structure as a result of the competition between the Congress Party and the Akali Dal. The Akali Dal's membership is confined to Sikhs; only on the rarest occasions has the party's symbol been given to non-Sikh candidates in an election.[19] Hindus naturally are disinclined to vote for such a party. The main base of Akali Dal support in Punjab is among the *Jat Sikh* peasantry, the rural overlords of the lower castes.[20] For this reason, the *Scheduled Castes*, both Hindu and Sikh, do not find the Akali Dal appealing.[21]

To remain competitive with the Congress Party, the Akali Dal has required both pre- and post-electoral alliances with other parties. For instance, following the Congress Party's historic nationwide defeat by the Janata Party in 1977, the Akali Dal formed a government in Punjab through an alliance with the Janata Party. In the struggle between the Congress and Akali Dal, the large population of *Scheduled Castes* has been a critical floating element in the struggle for power between the Congress and Akali Dal. A *Scheduled Caste* population dedicated to Sikhism simultaneously presents a great danger to the Congress' political base in the Punjab and a potential asset to the Akali

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18. *Indian Post*, 4 November 1987.
19. Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 384.
20. Baldev Raj Nayar, "Religions and Caste in the Punjab: Sidhwan Bet Constituency," in *Indian Voting Behaviour: Studies of the 1962 General Elections*, eds. Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), 134-137.
21. Ibid.

Dal in expanding its voting base. In this respect, Bhindranwale and his followers posed a threat to the long-term political balance in Punjab. If he had drawn some *Jat Sikh* support away from the Akali Dal and gathered support as well among rural *Scheduled Castes*, an alliance with him would have benefitted the Congress enormously, while significantly weakening the Akali Dal. On the other hand, if he had developed his influence among rural *Scheduled Castes* to draw them away from the Congress politically, the political majority of the Congress in the Punjab would have been endangered. The link between Sikh revivalism and the political struggle became clear in the 1983 *panchayat* elections, when the Akali Dal and the Bhindranwale forces both sought to draw *Scheduled Caste* support away from the Congress, while the Congress struggled to maintain its base among the *Scheduled Castes* in preparation for the next round of parliamentary and legislative assembly elections.[22]

In the 1984 elections, there was a greater consolidation of Sikh votes in favor of the Akali Dal than ever before. That these victories in the Assembly were mostly from rural areas, which represent a population majority, indicates that the electorate voted, by and large, along communal lines.

Akali Dal: Conclusion

Since the signing of the Rajiv-Longowal Accords, the Akali Dal has become highly factionalized due to disagreement among the Sikhs over the implications of the accords. The three major factions of the divided Akali Dal have made several abortive attempts toward unification, but political and personality differences have undermined these overtures.

Those who wish Punjab well hope that the Akali Dal unity movement succeeds. The Center's recent initiatives in Punjab (release of most of the Jodhpur detainees; withdrawal of special provisions of the National Security Act applicable to the state, and of the Disturbed Areas Act, except in the most sensitive areas; and allowing foreigners to travel to nearly every part of the state) require reciprocal political moves from the Akali Dal toward restoring peace to Punjab. The Akali Dal, which has been paralyzed so far by dissension, can play an important role in this respect if it is united. The Center must do everything it can to encourage Akali Dal unification and to refrain from its earlier divisive policies, which have brought Punjab to its present state of disunity.

TAMIL NADU: CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The impact of the British colonial regime on Tamil Nadu, in the south of India, at a time when the local feudal organization was under severe strain, was that high-caste non-Brahmins lost the political, administrative and economic power they had wielded previously. The Brahmins, whose economic

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22. Pritam Singh, "Punjab: Lessons of Panchayat Elections," *Economic and Political Weekly* (October 22, 1983): 1822-1823.

and political importance had been limited,[23] were able to take advantage of the new order by virtue of their readiness to benefit from education and other facilities introduced by the British with a view toward training the necessary personnel, initially for the different echelons of the bureaucracy and subsequently for the professions. The Brahmins benefitted from the new opportunities because their tradition valued formal learning. Although the content of learning in the traditional culture was very different from that in the imposed culture, it was not difficult for the Brahmin to adapt himself to the new circumstances. Within a few generations the Brahmin community (comprising only 3-5 percent of the total population of Tamil Nadu) had risen to monopolize the clerical, administrative, professional, and other positions open to the native Indian.[24]

The non-Brahmins of Tamil Nadu found the Brahmin professional monopoly an impediment to their own progress, which was hindered by the lack of education. The non-Brahmins did not hesitate to use political means to attack a social issue. Their political instrument was the Justice Party, which aimed at reducing Brahmin domination and securing a more favorable representation for the high caste non-Brahmins within the British administration. Although the Justice Party claimed to speak for the submerged and underprivileged sections of the non-Brahmin community, as well as for the large segment of the population outside the pale of ranked caste (the *Untouchables* or the *Adi-Dravidas*), in practice it proved to be a pressure group devoted to the prospects of high-caste non-Brahmins.[25] By the late 1930s, the Justice Party had dismantled its ideology of advocating non-Brahmin issues and had shown itself willing to support any Brahmin who would, in turn, support the party. This change in ideology might be ascribed to the party's need to present itself as a broad-based, rather than as a class or communal organization.[26]

DMK: Origins and Ideology

In the 1940s, the Justice Party was organized into Dravida Kazhagam (DK), under the leadership of Periyar E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. The DK was based on an ideology which rejected Hinduism as inherently inegalitarian.[27] It attacked the Brahmins and helped awaken the consciousness of the oppressed non-Brahmins. Naicker emphasized social reform through radical resistance activities and opposed political participation.[28] Within the DK, serious friction soon developed between two groups. One of them, led by

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23. V. Subramaniam, "Emergence and Eclipse of Tamil Brahmins: Some Guidelines to Research," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 4 (July 1969): 1133-1136.

24. Ibid.

25. T. V. Sathyamurthy, "The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the Politics of Tamil Nadu, 1949-1971," in *Leadership in South Asia*, ed. B.N. Pandey (New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1977), 432.

26. C.J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940* (New Delhi: Macmillan Co. of India, 1975), 16.

27. S. K. S. Nathan, "The DMK and the Politics of Tamil Nadu," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 2, No. 47 (December 1967): 2133-2140.

28. Rajagopal Indhu, *The Tyranny of Caste* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1985), 164.

C.N. Annadurai, favored entry into electoral politics and advocated the mass mobilization of *backward class* Hindu communities. This faction led to the formation of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in 1949, marking a shift of the political agenda away from the concerns of the high-caste non-Brahmins. Instead, the DMK concentrated its efforts on mobilizing the *backward classes*, which had come to view as their major concern the advancement of their interests and the maintenance of their superiority over the *Adi-Dravidas*.[29]

The DMK's ideology evolved away from a radical philosophy based on territorial separation and social reform to one of cultural nationalism.[30] The DMK began to eulogize the Tamil language and culture. In various forms the party identified the symbols of North Indian domination, the glorious Tamil heritage, and the idea that the DMK was the saviour of Tamil culture.[31] The DMK awakened feelings for Tamil autonomy, an end to North Indian domination and protection against Hindi as the official language. By 1963, during the immediate aftermath of the central government's legislation banning separatism as a permissible aim of political parties (a direct consequence of the India-China border dispute), the DMK implicitly had renounced *Dravida Nadu* (the idea of a separate Dravidian state) as a viable political goal. The DMK's objective had turned to the achievement of real and meaningful autonomy within the Indian federation. This change of objective occurred so that the party could contest elections legitimately and form a government in Tamil Nadu.

Politics of Language

As a result of the Tamil population's high standard of education and knowledge of English, it has been able to enjoy a large share of government jobs. Accordingly, "it required only the suggestion [by the Center] that English was to be replaced by Hindi to provoke a violently adverse reaction, particularly among students but also among the illiterate masses."[32] Many were apt to regard the proposed switch as part of a bigger plot by the North to dominate the South culturally, economically and politically. These fears intensified the opposition of many non-Hindi speakers to the adoption of Hindi as the official language. It was feared that the Hindi-speaking area viewed itself as the Prussia of India, with the intention of subjugating other areas.[33]

In 1965, the DMK seized upon these Tamil fears as a political tool against the Congress-led state government in Madras, which insisted that there was

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29. Sathyamurthy, 342.

30. Marguerite Ross Barnett, "Cultural Nationalist Electoral Politics in Tamil Nadu," in *Electoral Politics in Indian States*, Vol. IV, ed. Myron Weiner and John Osgood (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975), 77.

31. M. Chidambaram, "Cultural Entrepreneurs and Language Strategists: DMK in Tamil Nadu," *The Indian Journal of Political Sciences* Vol. 48 (1987): 418-427.

32. Duncan B. Forrester, "The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965," *Pacific Affairs* (Spring 1986): 23.

33. Myron Weiner, ed., *State Politics in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 243.

no cause for alarm.[34] A Madras State Anti-Hindi Conference held at Tiru-chirapalli by the DMK declared Republic Day (January 25) as a "Day of Mourning" in protest against the expiration of constitutional protection for English.[35] The position of the state government was that nothing substantive would be changed on January 25, 1965, and any observation of mourning on Republic Day would be considered subversive.[36] Thus, the stage was set for political conflict between the Congress ruling party and a popular movement led by the main opposition party. The DMK was seeking access to the political system by means of political agitations, through which the party could aug-ment its organizational strength and win mass support. In its struggle for survival, the DMK (while waving the symbolic banner of Dravidasthan) was articulating specific Tamil demands and making agitations a part of lobby-ing.[37]

Political Mobilization of the DMK

The spread of the DMK party organization through the 1950s was accom-panied by the growing presence of party members in journalism, film and theater. The DMK's ideals of social reform and myths regarding Tamil cultural history were propagated actively through these media. By the end of the 1950s, DMK themes set the dominant tone in Tamil films.[38]

The DMK also strengthened its political base by acting as the champion of the industrial workers. By the late 1950s, the party began to venture into the trade union front, and gained great strength in this area after its accession to power in 1967. Throughout the 1960s it supported many demands of industrial laborers and peasants in the legislative assembly, notably land reform and the alleviation of agricultural indebtedness.

The general pattern of DMK mobilization has also included its capacity to diminish the Congress vote, to mobilize new voters, and to form electoral alliances such as the DMK-headed *multi-party coalitions* in both 1967 and 1971. In 1967 the DMK's united front consisted of Swataranta, the CPM, the Praja Socialist Party, the Samyukta Socialist Party, and seven independents. In 1971 the DMK, Congress (R) (a breakaway faction of Congress (I)), the Praja Socialist Party, the Muslim League, Forward Bloc and the Communist Party of India formed an alliance.[39]

In trying to mobilize a mass following, the DMK forged an image of the party as the champion of the common man. It was this common man that the early DMK leader, Annadurai, claimed to represent in all his ruggedness.[40]

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34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Robert L. Hardgrave, *The Dravidian Movement* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), 52.
38. Narendra Subramaniam, "Towards an Understanding of the Dravidian Movement," (M.Sc. thesis, Massa-chusetts Institute of Technology, 1988), 67.
39. Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 147.
40. Ibid.

This appeal was directed at the rising urban lower-middle class; the educated, unemployed youth; the middle farmer; and particularly the *backward classes*. As Annadurai and the DMK modified the radical social reform aspects of the Dravidian ideology, they placed greater emphasis on the national language issue, the desirability of a Tamil literary and linguistic renaissance, and other apsects of Tamil cultural nationalism.

Emergence of AIADMK

The DMK had gained its popular support through expression of its ideology and through personality cults organized around its leaders. The party continued to draw people from the film industry into its cadres. However, when the influence of the film world began to dominate the public image of the party, factions appeared in the DMK. In the conflicts that ensued between the organizational and extra-organizational personalities, leaders such as Nendunchezian, Anbazaghan, and Karunanidhi always submitted to M.G. Ramachandaran, who had gained his reputation as southern India's leading film actor. This factionalism intensified during the struggles to succeed Annadurai, after his death in 1969. Competition among factions eventually led to the formation of the All-India Anna DMK (AIADMK) by Ramachandaran in 1972.

Ramachandaran's personal charisma proved to be appealing to the electorate and strengthened the AIADMK's support base. Ramachandaran had become the protector of the common man by the roles he had played in films. His fans began to organize *Rasigar Manirams* (fan clubs) throughout Tamil Nadu. These *Manirams* gave publicity to Ramachandaran's films and also undertook the political activities of the DMK. Thus, the actor, the fan clubs, the masses, the cinema, and the DMK became one ideological and organizational whole.[41] Ramachandaran's position in the DMK was unchallangeable.

As leader of the AIADMK, Ramachandaran pursued the solutions to the problems of Tamil society that had been proposed by Annadurai. This approach contained a synthesis of the principles of Tamil nationalism, self-respect, social reforms, mass participation, rationalism, democracy, joint sector socialism, and communication from the party leaders to the masses.[42] To these principles, Ramachandaran added his ideas of a casteless society; eradication of class influence and the existing social order; special treatment of women; and a clean administration to bring Annaism (Annadurai's principles) up-to-date to make it a purposeful philosophy in the spheres of society, party, and government.[43]

When a society is divided into several assertive groups, parties are bound to multiply, and unless effective means are evolved to reconcile group differences, political stability cannot be achieved. Operating under this principle, the AIADMK pledged first to uphold the basic framework of the Indian

41. Anata Narayanan, *The Story of Tamil Cinema* (Madras: New Century Book House, 1981), 464.
42. R. Thandavan, "AIADMK in Tamil Nadu," *Journal of Indian Political Studies* (1988): 61.
43. Ibid.

constitutution and styled itself as a centrist party. Next, the AIADMK went about contesting the elections through adept electioneering and skillful electoral alliances with the Congress (I) Party.[44] These measures proved successful, when in 1975, the DMK government in Tamil Nadu was dissolved upon losing a parliamentary vote of confidence. Karunanidhi and other members of the DMK were subjected to interrogation by a Center-appointed commission. The group implicated Karunanidhi in corruption charges thereby barring him from contesting the 1975 emergency elections in which Ramachandaran's AIADMK was swept into power on the basis of his personal popularity, coupled with exposure of the DMK's mismanagement of the state.

In 1980, the AIADMK again won the state elections. This time its success at the polls was made possible, to a large extent, by Ramachandaran's charismatic personality, his economic policies, and his demands for greater powers allocated to the state. Broadly speaking, Ramachandaran's economic policies included populist measures, such as a subsidized midday meal scheme, welfare and development programs and management of water shortages.

As a result of these policies, the AIADMK gained popularity, and later, in alliance with the Congress (I) Party, successfully won a majority in the state assembly election of 1984. The AIADMK lost its direction and focus, however, in December 1987, with Ramachandaran's death, which caused the party to split into two factions, one led by Ramachandaran's protégé, Jayalalitha, and the other by his widow, Janaki Ramachandaran. Karunanidhi and the DMK exploited this split in the party to their advantage in the 1989 Tamil Nadu assembly elections, which catapulted the DMK back into power.

Among various factors which contributed to Karunanidhi's success was his ability to exploit regional media, the support of the *Scheduled Castes* and *backward classes*, and dissidence within the Congress (I) Party. He took personal command of the elections, from the selection of each candidate to the style of the campaign, and highlighted issues which transcended the Dravidian concerns (the old demands for a Dravidian state). As a result, for the first time, the Brahmins and the traditionally pro-Congress *Vanniyars* came out openly in support of the DMK. In the southern part of the state, where, since 1977, the DMK had never won more than a dozen seats in the state assembly, it won sixty-five.

Tamil Nadu: Regional Parties and the Center

The DMK first came to power in Tamil Nadu in 1967 on the strength of its anti-Center posture and continued to retain the demand for states' autonomy as one of the principal planks in its platform. In 1969, it appointed a committee of constitutional experts "to suggest ammendments to the constitution so as to secure to the states the utmost autonomy."[45] The committee recommended the appointment of a high-power commission to redistribute

44. Ibid.
45. Government of Tamil Nadu, *Report of the Centre-State Relations Inquiry Committee* (Government Printing Office, 1969).

authority between the Center and the states. It also recommended the replacement of the planning commission by a new organization free from the world of the central executive; a greater devolution of revenue to the states; and greater state control over industry and industrial development.[46]

The Center tended to view these demands as a threat to national unity. The DMK, because of its experience with the government's continued intransigence and its perception of the prevailing political system, softened its autonomy demands. In 1971, the DMK chose to express its autonomy demands in general terms and also accepted the value of a strong India as an element of its platform. It suggested that economic planning originate from the states only, and, therefore, that each state have a separate planning commission. The DMK ceased to be alienated from the political system and began to play a national role as an ally of the dominant Congress.

The AIADMK, on the other hand, used its connections with Congress to come to power in 1975. Once in power, under the initiative of Ramachandaran, in 1980 the AIADMK formed a council of Chief Ministers from four southern Indian states, focussing on financial problems of the states, Center-state relations, and the need for greater state administrative autonomy. In 1984, however, the issue of Center-state relations did not form part of the AIADMK's political agenda because the party had won the elections with the help of Congress, and did not consider it politically expedient to raise the Center-state issue.

Conclusion: DMK and AIADMK

The founding of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam political party in 1949 was a turning point in the political history of Tamil Nadu, because it heralded a new era of Tamil cultural nationalism. Nationalism had existed before 1949, but had been encompassed and overshadowed by other political themes. In the hands of the DMK, Tamil nationalism became an ideology of mass mobilization, and has shaped the articulation of political demands for a generation.

After entry into the political system in 1967, the DMK gradually began to modify its earlier anti-Brahmin stance, as well as its atheistic ideology. As the party gradually became more pragmatic, less ideological, and less radical, it began to focus on specific issues, such as language, economic development, inflation, and corruption.

Disintegration of the DMK party during the Karunanidhi era of the 1970s was not inevitable, but it was certainly a strong possibility, given the inherent ideological and organizational contradictions that Karunanidhi inherited. Financial problems and personality conflicts contributed to DMK problems. As a result of factional politics, the DMK lost three-fourths of its supporters to the AIADMK, which became the new ruling party. The success of the AIADMK in displacing the DMK was due to Ramachandaran's cooperation

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46. Hardgrave, *India: Government and Politics*, 121.

with the Congress in supporting it at the Center. Through this relationship, the AIADMK could take credit for the release of central funds for projects, which had been held up during the previous DMK regime as a result of the DMK's confrontational attitude toward the Center. Upon Ramachandaran's death, however, it was clear that his charismatic leadership had directed the AIAMDK. Without Ramachandaran at the head of the party, it has broken into small, competing groups, allowing the DMK to return to power.

Is Regionalism a Threat?

The emergence and sustenance of regional parties in Punjab and Tamil Nadu stems from political choices made by political leaders to shape "group consciousness," and to form and channel group identities. For example, in Punjab, the Sikh religion was the key organizing element and the Akali Dal's support was derived from the arena of Sikh community life. Its appeal was limited to that community, and its central challenge was to secure the creation of a new and smaller Punjab state, in which that community would predominate. With the issues of that campaign attained in 1966, the Akali Dal solidified its social bases and emerged as a representative party of the Sikh community.

The DMK, on the other hand, born of anti-Brahmin frustrations, became spokesman for sentiments which were increasingly anti-northern as well as anti-establishment. The Hindi issue, in particular, generated regional passions which led temporarily to secessionist sentiment. The anti-establishment aspect has persisted, and the party at times has made radical pronouncements associated with the far left. However, since first coming to state power in 1967, and since the move by its constituents toward established governmental and commercial power centers in the state, the DMK's radical steam has abated. The DMK and AIADMK represent regional power groups that have been at odds with the Center, the DMK more so than the AIADMK, since the latter's alliances with Congress have put Center-state issues on the back burner.

The Akali Dal, DMK, and AIADMK have used their ideologies to strengthen their support bases. In regional politics, the political elites have developed a "we-they" distinction to transform the latent emotions of the masses into regional ideologies. The Akali Dal used religious institutions to mobilize political support, while the DMK and AIADMK relied on popular institutions such as *Manirams*. The development of regional ideologies has enabled the Akali Dal, DMK, and AIADMK to maintain and enhance their mass support bases successfully. However, the parochial ideological parameters of these parties prevent their appeal from extending beyond their territorial boundaries.

The regional parties of Punjab and Tamil Nadu struggled to establish an electoral constituency from 1950 to 1967. By 1967, both the Akali Dal and the DMK had won control of their state governments. The issues of culture, religion, and particularly language, were key elements used by the parties to effect their successful rise in the state legislatures. Initially, both parties

clamored for full independence, but in order to gain legitimate power in their states, they rescinded their demands for secession and took a middle-of-the-road position.

It is not clear in the case of the Akali Dal with whom the power of political leadership rests, since in the absence of strong personal leaders, the party is prone to factionalism. This tendency has led to the emergence of self-proclaimed leaders with one avowed goal in common, that is, to undermine the power and influence of each other in a quest for undisputed leadership of Akali Dal. Factionalism only makes a peaceful solution to the situation in Punjab even more difficult.

In the case of the DMK and AIADMK, the presence of strong leaders has enabled the parties to contain and even resolve conflicts within the framework of the federal system. In the context of Center-state relations, this has meant that the leaders of the regional parties in Tamil Nadu, unlike those in the Punjab, have been able to implement the promises they made to their constituents.

The Center's response to regional parties in Punjab and Tamil Nadu has been determined, to a great extent, by the geographical location of the two states. Punjab's contiguity with Pakistan makes it a strategically sensitive area. The Center, therefore, tends to be reluctant to concede too much power to the Akali Dal, even if that entails ignoring some of the party's legitimate demands. This attitude, in turn, makes the Akali Dal less willing to compromise, and results in increased mass political participation in Punjab. Alternatively, since a relatively small security threat emanates from Tamil Nadu, the possibility of internal problems taking on a critical dimension and endangering the entire Indian union is very remote. Therefore, the Center has been less resistant to accepting regional party interests.

Regional parties operating in a democracy such as India's must operate within the constitutional framework of the federation. This difficult task rests with the central political institutions: if they do not respond to regional needs, they run the risk of fomenting divisive tendencies in the states. The question arises whether India can respond to the divisive regional issues with some degree of success. Thus far, the record of India's federal system is quite impressive, because of its ability to co-opt diverse political movements and regional issues. As long as the federation continues to function in this spirit, the divisive regional issues will not be able to foster disintegration of the Indian union.

GLOSSARY

Adi-Dravidas	original settlers in the area of Tamil Nadu
backward classes	disadvantaged groups that are slightly better off than the Scheduled Castes but are not awarded special priveleges by the Indian Constitution
Dravida Nadu	land of the Dravidians
gurdawara	Sikh temple
Jat Sikh	a member of the northern Indian landowning caste
Lok Sabha	the Lower House of the Indian Parliament; literally, "House of People"
mahant	high priest in a Hindu temple
math	religious belief
panchayat	village-level government
Panth	religion
Scheduled Castes	Untouchables or those castes designated by the Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution as economically and socially disadvantaged and therefore entitled to special privileges
Suba	province
tehsil	sub-district
Untouchables	see Scheduled Castes
Vanniyar	a member of the merchant caste