

# Elections in Madras State

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*Few factual and unbiased studies have been made of elections in India. Even fewer attempts have been made to compare the results of successive elections with a view to indicating the trend of public opinion*

*The number of votes polled by a party is, of course, a simple indicator of the following that the party has among the people. But the techniques of assessing the relative strength of different parties need to be properly studied.*

*The methods used for studying elections in the West are not fully applicable in India. In the western countries there is usually a well-established two-party system. In India, on the other hand, there are a large number of parties contesting the elections, besides many independents. Different methods must therefore be used in studying Indian elections.*

THE necessary data for a detailed study of elections in India are difficult to obtain. The Election Commission of the Government of India has issued voluminous reports on the two General Elections in 1952 and 1957, giving details of the distribution of votes, etc. It also issues periodical reports, on bye-elections. But so far as I know, it has not published the results of the two midterm elections in Kerala. Besides, the reports being compiled on an all-India basis, details of the locally strong parties do not find a mention in them. Only details about the recognised all-India parties are available. Voting figures for any particular State are hard to get, unless one goes through the local newspapers of the time of the General Elections. Hence, there is a need for the States themselves to compile election results and make them easily available to research workers. Madras State has published such reports on both the 1952 and 1957 elections and the other States may do well to follow this example.

The analysis presented here is based on the above-mentioned reports and other available material. In the elections of 1952 the then Madras State included portions of the present Andhra, Kerala and Mysore States. Hence, for purposes of this study, only the Tamil districts of the State would be considered and comparison will be made between the results of the 1952 and 1957 elections in these districts. The analysis is carried further by presenting details of bye-elections after 1957 up to February 1961 and also by analysing municipal elections all over the State and the election to the Madras City Corporation in 1959.

The 1952 Assembly had 190 members from the 12 districts and the 1957 Assembly 205 members from these districts and the newly-added district of Kanyakumari. Hence, comparisons can be taken to be fairly valid.

## Contestants and Votes

In 1952 there were 871 candidates contesting 189 seats (1 seat was uncontested), or 4.6 candidates per seat. In 1952 three seats were uncontested and there were 787 contenders for the 202 seats, or 3.9 per seat. There has been thus a slight reduction in the number of candidates. The reduction in the number of candidates belonging to minor parties and independents has been more significant — from 451 in 1952 to 339 in 1957.

For purposes of presentation, the parties are grouped as under: (i) the Communist Party; (ii) the Congress; (iii) the Dissidents from the Congress; (iv) the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or D M K; and (v) the Socialist Group. The third group consists of Congressmen who formed eve-of-election parties and opposed the candidates set up by the Congress. In 1952 there were two such groups, the Tamilnad Toilers' Party and the Commonwealth Party and in 1957 one — the Congress Reforms Committee. (This party later formed itself into an

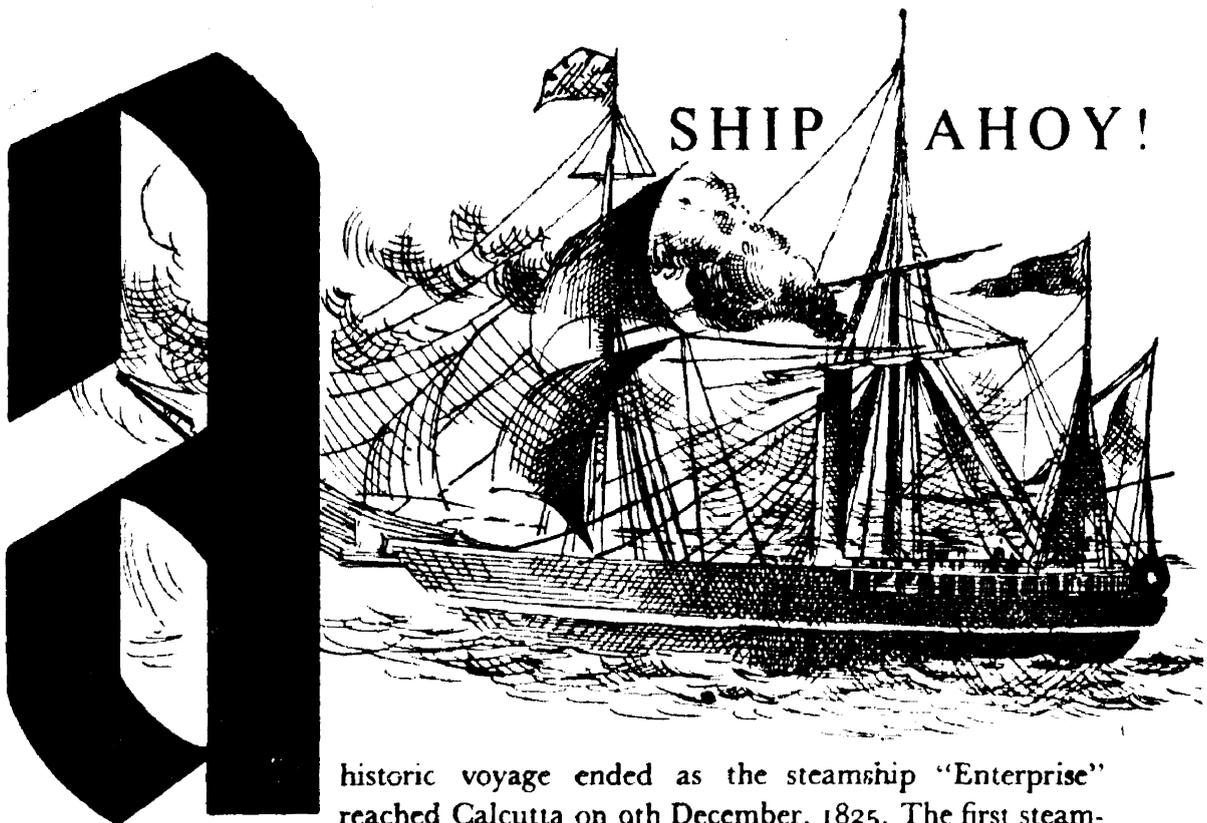
all-India party under the name of Indian National Democratic Congress, but, of late, many of its members have joined the newly-formed Swatantra Party). The DMK came *into* being as an organisation some nine years ago but it emerged as a political party only in the 1957 elections and so comparisons cannot be made in its case. Details regarding the DMK are presented only for the sake of completeness. (The DMK stands for the formation of an Independent Dravida Nad, comprising the present Mysore, Kerala, Andhra and Madras States, but it appears to have little backing or support outside Madras State). The Socialist Group included the Socialist Party and the K M P Party in the 1952 elections and the Socialist and Praja Socialist Parties in the 1957 elections. Table I gives details of votes secured by the parties in the two elections.

The Communist Party contested about the same number of seats in both the elections and its per capita vote also remained nearly the same, indicating the number of staunch supporters of the Party. The Congress has increased both its total and per capita votes. Thus there appears to be an appreciable shift in favour of the Congress which is also reflected in the distribution of

**Table 1 : Total and 'Per Capita' Votes Polled by the Parties**

	1952		1957	
	Total votes	Per capita votes	Total votes	Per capita votes
Communist	841,997 (52)	16,192	905,921 (55)	16,472
Congress	3,940,332 (185)	21,299	5,040,587 (201)	25,078
Dissidents	1,066,934 (47)	22,701	955,168 (50)	19,103
D M K	—	—	1,628,598 (112)	14,541
Socialists	967,103 (136)	7,111	418,911 (30)	13,964

*Note : The figure in brackets indicates the number of candidates contesting.*



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seats in the Assembly — it was 96 strong in a House of 190 in 1952 but was 148 strong in a House of 205 in 1957. The figures for the Dissident group also remain almost unchanged, but the average for 1952 is slightly higher — perhaps this group had then set up candidates wisely, only in constituencies where it had definite support. The total votes polled by the Socialist Parties have no doubt decreased to less than half those in 1952 but this alone should not be taken to indicate a shift away from the socialist ideology. For, the per capita figure has increased considerably in 1957. The inflated figure of 10 lakh votes in 1952 was because the number of candidates set up was very large. In 90 per cent cases the party candidates were overwhelmingly defeated. In an infant democracy like ours, where the majority of the voters is illiterate and politically not conscious and discriminating, such a state of affairs is bound to continue. There will always be a few hundred or thousand votes for any candidate whose name appears on the list! There has been only one instance, to my knowledge, of a candidate securing zero vote. That was in Pondicherry in 1959.) Lastly, the new party, the DMK, has also polled a large number of votes, 16 lakhs, but its average is very low. The party, just like the Socialist group in 1952, set up candidates indiscriminately in almost all places and has been defeated in a large number of constituencies.

The Congress increased its strength in the Legislature from 50.8 per cent to 73.3 per cent. For all other groups, the strength in 1957 is much less than in 1952. The medley group of "minor parties and independents" had 23.9 per cent of the seats in 1952 but only 8.4 per cent in 1957. The Congress thus emerged as the strongest party in the State.

**Margin of Victory**

Whether a party (or a candidate) has overwhelming backing in a particular constituency can be ascertained by finding out whether the winning candidate there polled more votes than the combined votes of all his opponents. In such a case, the win would be characterised as a win by majority. That candidate would have won, even if all his opponents had formed an alliance

and contested, when the winning candidate does not get such a majority, his victory is by split of votes, such winners would rise if there is an alliance or agreement among opposing candidates. Table 2 gives details of wins by majority and by split of votes for the different parties in 1952 and 1957.

The Congress, which in the first election had won 70 per cent of its seats by split of votes, has in the second won more than 50 per cent by majority. Thus its strength appears to have increased. The only other group which has impressive figures is the Dissidents group. Even in 1952 this group had the highest percentage of outright wins. The Socialists, though they have a high figure for majority wins, have only four members in the Legislature; the same is the case with the Communist Party. The DMK has a low figure of majority wins. Thus the real opposition to the Congress appears to come from the Dissidents group and not from any of the other parties.

The last two columns of Table 2 give details of candidates who lost their deposits. Such candidates can definitely be said to be of not much political consequence in their constituencies. The Congress had no deposit-losers in either year and the Dissidents group few<sup>7</sup>. The figures for all other parties are fairly high — all of them losing deposits in nearly 1/3 of their fights. The percentage of deposit-losers has increased in the case of the Communist Party, perhaps indicating the waning of its influence.

Another method of assessing the support for a party may now be presented. The total number of votes secured by a party will not

necessarily indicate its popularity. It may only mean that it had in the field a large number of candidates: Thus the Socialist group had in all 136 contestants in 1952 (next only to the Congress) and so was able to poll 9 lakh votes; in 1957 this was repealed by the DMK with 112 candidates and 16 lakh votes. In a system of elections as ours, it is not the number of votes, that is the criterion but the number of seats that a party is able to win. (If elections were held under the proportional representation system then the number of votes would become more important). So we must have a different method of indicating; the relative strength of the parties. In any constituency the candidate who polls the largest number of votes wins. But if a candidate has a good following he must be able to poll a fairly large number of votes irrespective of whether he wins or loses. In more advanced countries elections are decided more by a small 'swing' in favour of a party than by the number of its staunch supporters) By and large, if we find the average number of votes polled by the successful candidates and the unsuccessful ones, these two averages should not be very far apart, if the party is a well organised one with public support. Otherwise, the successful candidates will have a high average and the unsuccessful ones a low average. The success of such candidates would not be because of the party but because of their personal influence. Table 3 gives the details for the different parties. The number in brackets indicates the number of successful or unsuccessful candidates on the basis of which the averages have been calculated.

**Table 2 : Wins by 'Majority' and 'Split'**  
(As per cent of total)

	1952		1957		Deposit losers	
	Majority	Split	Majority	Split	1952	1957
Communist	35.7	64.3	25.4	74.6	23.1	32.7
Congress	30.2	69.8	51.4	48.6	0.0	0.0
Dissidents	68.0	32.0	57.1	42.9	10.6	30.0
D M K	—	—	40.0	60.0	—	35.7
Socialist	22.2	77.8	75.0	25.0	75.0	36.7

**Table 3 : Average of Votes Polled by Successful and Defeated Candidates**

	1952		1957	
	Successful candidates	Defeated candidates	Successful candidates	Defeated candidates
Communist	29,028 (14)	11,464 (31)	29,095 (11)	15,489 (51)
Congress	22,632 (96)	10,003 (93)	27,227 (148)	19,074 (53)
Dissidents	31,082 (25)	13,176 (22)	24,137 (14)	17,146 (36)
D M K	—	—	26,470 (15)	12,704 (97)
Socialist	20,993 (9)	6,127 (127)	27,691 (4)	11,852 (26)

For the Communist Party, the 'success' average has remained practically the same while the 'failure' average has increased. This must be because the Party set up nearly the same number of candidates and also polled nearly the same number of votes (Table 1). For the Congress, the averages are fairly close, the losers polling 19,000 votes; in 1957 the 'success' average is higher. For the Dissidents group too, the two averages are closer in 1957 than in 1952. It may be recalled that in 1952 there were two parties in this group, but only one in 1957. Thus the figures for 1957 indicate that this group is better-knit than it was previously. The D M K's figures for 1957 and the Socialist group's figures for 1952 and 1957 are almost similar, there being a large divergence between the two averages. This would indicate that the parties depend heavily on a few individuals perhaps the main leaders.

**In the Districts**

In 1952 the Communists, got 1/3 of the seats from the Tanjavur district, the Dissidents got 2/3 of the seats in South Arcot, nearly 1/2 in North Arcot and a good number from Tiruchi. The Socialist group secured 25 per cent of seats from the City and about half of the seats from the Chingleput district. The Congress had a clear majority in Ramnad, Tirunelveli, Madurai and Coimbatore districts. In the remaining district of Salem, the Congress gained 9 out of 21 seats, the Independents too claiming an equal number. But in 1957 the Congress secured a clear majority in all districts (including the newly-added Kanyakumari district), except South Arcot and Ramnad. In Ramnad the Congress has secured 7 out of 11 seats, the Dissidents 1 and others 3. In South Arcot 4 seats each have been won by the D M K and the Dissidents, and the Congress has bagged 9 out of 19 seats. Thus the Congress is strong in all districts, though it appears to have lost its hold to some extent in Ramnad district. The Communists have lost their hold in Tanjavur district while the Socialists have lost in Chingleput. In South Arcot there appears to be a strong following of the Dissidents group.

We next attempt, a comparison of the legislators in the two Assemblies. The aspects considered are:

sex, age, educational attainment and social and occupational status.

**The Legislators**

In 1952 there was only one woman legislator while in 1957 there were 12 elected—One DMK., the rest Congress. Out of the 12, as many as ten won only by split of votes. The age distribution of legislators is given in Table 4. There appears to be a slight increase in age, the average age being 31.6 years in 1952 and 32.8 years in 1957. The difference not being significant; further analysis is not attempted. If it is remembered that many of the legislators of 1952 were re-elected in 1957 the increase in the average age would be explained.

The educational attainments of the legislators are classified as: 'only literates', 'school or high school education', 'graduates' and 'post-graduates'. The only literates' group increased from 26.3 to 39.0 per cent; the 'school' group decreased from 46.4 to 36.1 per cent; the 'graduates' group remained almost stationary at 20 per cent, and the last group decreased from 6.8 to 1.9 per cent. Thus the 'only literates' group alone has increased its representation.

The social groups treated are these: non-Backward groups, Backward groups and Scheduled groups. The constitution provides for a twenty per cent reservation of seats for the third group. This group has almost the same percentage in both elections. While in 1952, 12 per cent of the legislators belonged to the Backward Classes group, in 1957 this percentage has gone up to 39.

The livelihood or occupational classification shows that in both

years about 60 per cent of the legislators belonged to the agricultural classes and 40 per cent to non-agricultural classes. Of the former, as many as 43 per cent were owners of land in 1952 and 47 per cent in 1957. In the non-agricultural sector the largest percentage was from the "other services and miscellaneous" group, the percentages being 25 and 32 in the two years. Details are given in Table 5 for all the classes. The percentage of population belonging to the various categories is also given. Land-owners and rent-receivers among the agricultural classes and the "other services" among the non-agricultural classes predominate. The sectors which are under-represented are: cultivating labourers, rum-owning cultivators and those engaged in production other than cultivation.

**After 1957**

Between the General Elections in 1957 and the present time, there have been a number of bye-elections in the State; elections to the 53 municipalities also took place in March 1959 followed by elections to the Madras City Corporation in April 1959. The results of the\* are perhaps a pointer to the trend of public opinion in recent times.

There have been 8 bye-elections so far (up to February 1961). The Congress retained its seats in 5 of these: in Mudukulathur, the local FB-Marxist party retained its seat; in Tiruvadnai, the Congress wrested the seat from the Dissidents group; only in Aruppukottai (in 1959) has a Congress candidate been defeated by a member of the Dissidents group. In quite a few of these bye-elections the opposition parties had some electoral understanding to reduce splitting of votes.

Year	Age				
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65
1952	25.8	40.5	26.3	6.9	0.5
1957	22.5	41.0	25.4	10.2	0.9

**Table 5 : Occupational Distribution of Legislators**  
(As per cent of total)

	1952	1957	Proportion of total population
Owner cultivators and land-owners	42.6	46.8	35.0
Non-owning cultivators	2.1	4.9	9.6
Cultivating labourers	0.0	1.0	18.2
Non-cultivating owners and rent-receivers	16.3	9.3	2.2
Production other than cultivation	3.2	1.0	12.4
Commerce	6.8	2.4	6.5
Transport	4.2	2.9	1.7
Other services and miscellaneous	24.8	31.7	14.4

four main parties contested 1,187 seats in the municipalities: the Communist, the Congress, the Dissidents and the DMK. The percentage of seats won were: 6.3, 54.6; 5.1; 7.8, respectively. In the General Elections these percentages were: 1.9; 73.3; 6.9; 7.4. While the last two groups do not show much difference, the percentage of the Communists has considerably increased (though even after the increase, it is not very large) and the Congress figure has been reduced. It must be mentioned that the Congress did not put up candidates in many places; also, in some municipalities all the candidates contested as Independents with a view to eschew party politics from municipal affairs.

The Congress secured all the seats in Gobichettipalayam (Coimbatore district) and the lowest percentage of 9.5 was in Ambur (North Arcot). For the DMK, the largest percentage was 30.6 in Salem and Tanjavur. For the Dissidents group, it was 39.3 in Ooty. In Dindigul 34.4 per cent of the seats went to the Communists. Independents figure as the largest party in Ambur (71.5), Nagapattinam (87.5), Vaniyambadi (95.8), Chingleput (85). The Congress did not contest as a party in the above places, except in Ambur. The Congress contested elections to 15 municipalities and secured an absolute majority in 19. Nowhere has any of the other parties secured even a workable majority. The trend thus appears to be slightly against the Congress but this does not seem to be of much significance.

Madras City was divided into 100 wards for the election to the Corporation, which was held in April 1959. The two main contending parties were the Congress and the DMK. As far as I am aware, this is the only example in Indian elections, which approaches the two-party system which prevails in U K and U S A. The Congress won 37 of the 100 seats they contested and the DMK registered wins in 45 of their 90 fights. Congress polled 33.9 per cent of the votes and the DMK 35.3 per cent. The DMK, with the support of a few other members has a 'working majority' in the City Corporation and the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are from this party. Even in the General Elections, out of the 10 seats from Madras City, 6 were secured

by the Congress and 3 went to the DMK. Thus the DMK is fairly strong in Madras City.

### Conclusions

1 There is a tendency towards reduction in the number of candidates contesting. This is very noticeable in the case of unattached Independent candidates. Minor parties are also reducing the number of candidates.

2 The shift of public opinion has definitely been in favour of the Congress between 1952 and 1957; after 1957, the Congress appears to have lost some ground in Madras City, but in the mofussil it appears to be quite strong.

3 The influence of the Communist Party has definitely waned but the hard core of its supporters appears to be steady at about 9 lakhs. In the coming elections, by a proper choice of contests, it might increase its representation in the Legislature. The new party, viz the DMK, has a following mainly in the City and in a few districts, but the support does not seem to be enough to enable it to provide an opposition to the ruling party. The Dissidents group is perhaps capable of providing the opposition in a few districts at least—notably South Arcot and Ramnad. Thus, any party which

hopes to replace the Congress or to provide a stiff fight to it in the next elections should "seek to enlist the support of this group. It is also significant that in one of the latest bye-elections, the Congress candidate has been defeated by a Dissident rival.

As regards the representation of various sections of the population in the Legislature, the following groups are under-represented: women; backward classes; cultivators and labourers, producers other than cultivators and those engaged in transport. The proportion of Scheduled Caste legislators appears almost stationary at 20 per cent. provided in the Constitution.

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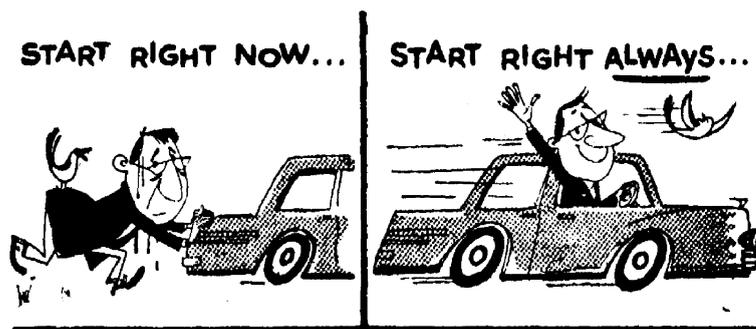
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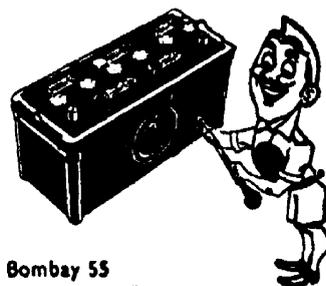
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