

Tamil Nadu politics and its galaxy of cine stars

A small temple in Tamil Nadu's Rajapalayam town saw an unusual crowd last week - a gathering of diehard Rajnikanth fans who prayed fervently that their icon decides to enter politics.

The members of the Rajnikanth Fans Association also sacrificed 10 goats at the Pechiamman temple in Rajapalayam, about 100 km from Madurai, to appease the deity, hoping that their wish is fulfilled.

After the huge success of 'Sivaji: The Boss', Rajnikanth is now busy with his next film 'Kuselan', whose rights have reportedly been sold to Pyramid Samaira for Rs.640 million. With Rajni still so engrossed in films, only divine intervention could draw him into politics, his fans felt.

'We pray that our superstar should enter active politics,' said Yogasekaran, the leader of the fans association.

He pointed out that other film heroes like Vijayakanth and Sarath Kumar had their own parties. Even actor Karthik had left the All India Forward Bloc and set up his own political party.

Rajni fans have reason to fear others will hog the political space for actors going abegging in the ruling DMK, especially after the exit of Sarath Kumar from the party.

Chennai is rife with rumours that Karunanidhi is mulling dropping the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) from the DMK-led alliance, and is ready to welcome Vijayakanth's Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kahzagam (DMDK) into the fold.

Vijayakanth's film 'Arasangam' released recently and he apparently has a lot of time for politicking. Last week, Vijayakanth, popularly known as Captain, told the media in his constituency Vriddhachalam that the DMDK will 'only align with parties that give a written undertaking to strive for the people's welfare' for the coming Lok Sabha elections.

On Sunday, he said: 'I have no plans to team up with any party, I am confident of my alliance with the people. No one can stop me from becoming chief minister.'

'Reject both these parties (the DMK and the AIADMK) and give new thinking a chance... take their money (DMK's and AIADMK's) because it is really yours and vote for the DMDK,' the Captain said.

He stressed that common people were reeling under the burden of 'price rise and Special Economic Zones' and demanded 'a ban on online trading of food grains' - similar to what one-time actress and AIADMK leader J. Jayalalitha has been saying for the past several weeks.

She has, however, been focused on criticising not arch rival DMK but Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and the United Progressive Alliance's policies to ensure that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) keeps her AIADMK in its radar for the 2009 polls as a staunch detractor of the UPA.

Jayalalitha has, in several recent attacks on Vijayakanth, said she and her party 'were the true inheritors of MGR (AIADMK founder M.G. Ramachandran)', dismissing all talk of any friendship with Vijayakanth, known as 'Karuppu MGR' or black MGR.

This has lent credibility to talk of the DMDK allying with the DMK rather than with the AIADMK, which is more likely to extend its hands to the tried and tested PMK.

But where is superstar Kamal Haasan in all this star talk?

Kamal perhaps wants his much-hyped Friday released 'Dasavatharam' to speak for his politics. The opening and ending shots of the film had DMK patriarch Karunanidhi and the film began with the debate on whether there is god - the Dravidian rationalist's constant argument.

It also ended with the argument that if there is god, should he let this happen - shots of a great tsunami devastating Tamil Nadu's coast, drowning a statue of poet-saint Thiruvalluvar, and one of Kamal's avatars Vincent Poovaragan, a Dalit leader.

The film was also replete with shots of Jayalalitha reviewing relief work in a helicopter and gave credence to crank theories about the 2004 tsunami, thrown in with a liberal dose of anti-Americanism - perhaps aimed at pleasing the Indian Left. The film, therefore, gave his audience ideas that Kamal Haasan too was preparing for a political debut with a very unscientific potboiler.

All-India Samathuva Makkal Katchi president Sarath Kumar has, meanwhile, made his anti-DMK stand stronger by calling for the 'resignation' of Chief Minister Karunanidhi, who must 'own responsibility for his failure to check prices of essential commodities'.

The actor-politician even went on to say, 'Will reinstalling the Kannagi statue and securing classical, divine-language status to Tamil help control the rates of essential commodities?'

Papri Sri Raman (© IANS / India eNews)