

## Not losing in defeat:

### **K. Palaniswami has proved to be an artful survivor despite the AIADMK's massive losses**

Seldom does someone on the losing side have so much to be satisfied about in defeat as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami. The massive drubbing suffered by the AIADMK-BJP alliance in the State may be a notable outcome of the Lok Sabha election, but the positive takeaway for him is that he remains in office, and with added sheen of stability. By garnering nine out of the 22 Assembly constituencies that had by-elections alongside the Lok Sabha polls, the ruling AIADMK has got enough seats to stave off the prospect of losing its majority in the 234-member House. Although it lost 13 seats to the Opposition DMK, its tally went up to 123, five above the requisite majority. Another upshot is that T.T.V. Dhinakaran, the principal challenger to the AIADMK for Jayalalithaa's legacy, ended up losing so badly that he may not be in a position to wean away any more legislators from the party jointly led by Mr. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam. With none of Mr. Dhinakaran's candidates coming close to victory in any of the Lok Sabha or Assembly constituencies, the possibility of so-called fence-sitters leaning towards him has disappeared. In two years, Mr. Palaniswami has survived challenges to his leadership, first from Mr. Panneerselvam, who later became his ally in a joint attempt to keep out Jayalalithaa's friend V.K. Sasikala, and later Mr. Dhinakaran. He survived the first crisis by striking a deal with Mr. Panneerselvam and his supporters. To combat the crisis caused by the Dhinakaran faction's revolt, the party got 18 MLAs loyal to him disqualified from the House. The ensuing litigation kept his regime going. The disqualification tactic did not turn out too well in the end. Ten of the DMK's 13-seat haul came from vacancies created by disqualification on defection charges. But the AIADMK managed just enough to survive in government.

The next question was whether Mr. Palaniswami would survive an electoral test, given that this was the first election held after the demise of Jayalalithaa and DMK supremo M. Karunanidhi. With his government seen as a proxy of the BJP regime at the Centre and the mood in the State being one of antipathy towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the AIADMK had to contend with double anti-incumbency. Losing around 20 of the 22 Assembly seats could have propelled arch-rival and DMK president M.K. Stalin to power. But while the DMK alliance had to share the honours in the Assembly by-elections, in the Lok Sabha constituencies it won a landslide. Mr. Palaniswami's electoral strategy was largely geared towards retaining as many Assembly seats as possible. He succeeded in the limited objective of protecting his regime. Mr. Stalin, the undoubted overall winner on the electoral field, will have to wait for another day to try to dislodge the artful survivor at the helm in Tamil Nadu. Despite a stellar show at the hustings, the DMK remains out of power at the Centre and in the State.

#### **Words**

Drubbing  
Outcome  
Sheen  
Garner

#### **Kind**

#### **Meaning**

beating, thrashing, walloping, battering, pummelling  
result, aftermath, upshot, consequences  
shine, glitter, lustre  
decorate, trim, do (out)

Stave off	prevent, avoid, counter, avert, preclude
Requisite	Necessary, pre-requisite, indispensable
Upshot	result, aftermath, consequences
Legacy	Bequest, inheritance, heritage, bestowal
Wean	to stop feeding mothers food to a baby and start giving solid foods
Fence sitters	Neutral, impartial
Ally	Associate, colleague, confederate
Combat	fight, tackle, impede, block
Faction	coterie, caucus, meeting, group, grouping
Ensue	result, follow, proceed, succeed
Regime	government, authorities, administration
Litigation	proceedings, action, legal dispute
Defection	desertion, absconding, treason, disloyalty
Haul	drag, pull, heave, draw
Demise	death, dying, quietus, decease
Incumbent	necessary, essential, required, imperative
Propel	move, power, push, drive
Dislodge	displace, knock over, upset

## It's there:

### **It's obvious why so many try to scale Everest but the safety protocol must be tightened:**

Mount Everest, the world's highest peak at 8,848 metres, draws adventurers from all over. But the mountain on the Nepal-China border is fast becoming a dangerous place to visit even for the hardened mountaineer. The inherent risks were this month highlighted with a photograph by Nirmal Purja, a Gorkha ex-soldier. The image, which went viral and altered the manner in which people worldwide imagine what it is to scale Mt. Everest, showed a long queue awaiting a final tilt at the summit, with all the dangers such a wait holds. This season, at least 10 climbers have died or gone missing, including four Indians. Experts have been calling for Nepal to restrict the number of permits. It awarded a record 381 for this spring, each fetching \$11,000 (climbing from the Tibet side is more expensive). On Wednesday, 200 climbers ascended the summit, a new record for a single day. Last year, 807 managed to reach the summit. In 2012, the United Nations estimated that there were more than 26,000 visitors to the Everest region, and this figure has grown manifold since then. Nepal officials argue that permits are not issued recklessly, and that jams such as this year's near the summit are on account of spells of bad weather, which result in mountaineers being compelled to summit within a narrow time-frame. Waiting in sub-zero temperatures at the rarefied altitude can be fatal — this season's deaths were mostly due to frostbite, exhaustion, dehydration and lack of oxygen.

This year's drama has caught the public imagination, as happened in 1996 when eight persons died in a single day amid an unexpected storm — events of and around that day were the subject of Jon Krakauer's bestselling book, *Into Thin Air*. The adventure industry that is built around the human desire

to scale the peak has meant many amateurs take up the challenge, confident that support teams and specialised equipment will make up for their lack of adequate mountaineering experience. The fallout is that in case of a disaster not only are some of them unable to manage, but they hold up others, putting them in harm's way. The commercial operations have led to the Everest being called the world's highest garbage dump as many climbers discard non-critical gear and fail to clean up the mess. It is unlikely, however, that this season's tragedies will deter future summiteers, as the hypnotic lure remains intact. As George Mallory, the English mountaineer who perished in the attempt to scale Everest, reportedly said of its pull, "Because it's there." But the authorities must learn from this year's tragedies and work out an optimum number of climbers and strengthen safety measures.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Harden		ossify
Inherent		inborn, intrinsic, innate, connate
Alter		change, modify, mutate, revamp, refurbish, metamorphose
Tilt		slope, lean, slant, incline
Ascent		climb, climb up-wards, rise, mount
Reckless		careless, thoughtless, heedless, precipitous
Compel		force, pressurize, browbeat, dragoon
Fatal		deadly, lethal, mortal, ruinous, disastrous
Exhaustion		extreme, tiredness, fatigue, tireness
Dehydration		dry, desiccation, efflorescence
Amateurs		non-professional, non-specialist, layman
Fall out		quarrel, argue, squabble, be at odds
liarbage		rubbish, refuse, waste, detritus
Discard		dispose of, throw away, get rid of
Hypnotic		mesmerising, mesmeric, entrancing
Lure		attract, woo, entice, induce
Deter		discourage, put off, dishearten
Pull	Noun	Prestige

### After the debacle:

The infectious sycophancy witnessed in the Congress from the days of Indira Gandhi is still alive and kicking. No one was in doubt that Congress president Rahul Gandhi's offer of resignation as the party president over the party's disastrous performance in the Lok Sabha election would be wholeheartedly rejected by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) packed with Gandhi-family loyalists. The CWC has authorised him to undertake a complete overhaul and restructuring of the party. A good suggestion. But should this not begin from the top? There are reports of Mr. Gandhi pointing fingers at the State leaderships for their failure to highlight alleged corruption in the Rafale deal, little realising that his poorly crafted slogan, "chowkidar chor hai", had not only failed to gain any traction but also backfired on him with Narendra Modi accusing former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of corruption. If Mr. Gandhi is adamant about stepping down, why force an unwilling soldier to lead the charge in politically challenging times?

S.K. Choudhury,

Bengaluru

The result in Karnataka (considered a Congress bastion) and the surge of the BJP in West Bengal should have forced the grand old party to initiate drastic measures. Continuing with Mr. Gandhi will progressively push young blood to defect to some other party since a Congress revival is not on the cards — at least in the near future.

V. Lakshmanan,

Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

Victories and defeats are not uncommon in electoral politics. Mr. Gandhi is a charismatic leader and he must display an attitude of courage. Just as there are millions who support the party that has won, equally there are those who look to him with hope and expectation. One election debacle is not the end of the world. Mr. Gandhi must guide and inspire the party rank and file, revamping and rejuvenating the party at the grass-root level. He must advise the cadres to work among the people. Act like a statesman and look forward to the next election. Work sincerely for the people and power will follow.

Dr. George Vareekal,

Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh

<b><u>Words</u></b>	<b><u>Kind</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>
Debacle		Fiasco, failure, catastrophe, disaster
Sycophant		Flatterer, kowtowner, truckler
Disastrous		Ruinous, catastrophic, pernicious, calamitous
Performance		Rendition, rendering, interpretation
Reject		repudiate, jetision, turn down, black ball.
Over haul		repair, rebuild, renovate, do up
Point at		blame, condemn, accuse, inculcate
Traction		grip, friction, adhesion
Backfire		come back, rebound, boomerang
Adamant		unshakable, immovable, inflexible, unwavering
Surge		increase, rise, grow, upswing, escalate
Drastic		extreme, serious, desperate, momentous
On the cards		likely, possible, probable, expected
Charismatic		towering, charming, attractive
Rank and File		ordinary employees, insider
Revamp		renovate, redecorate, refurbish, re-condition, rehabilitate, over haul, make over
Rejuvenate		revive, revitalize, regenerate, revivify