

**State, Religion, and Muslim Politics: Locating the ‘Political’
in the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala**

*A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfillment of the
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In

POLITICAL SCIENCE

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Sihabudeen P** (11SPPH14), hereby declare that work embodied in this dissertation titled “**State, Religion, and Muslim Politics: Locating the ‘Political’ in the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala**” is carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Arun Kumar Patnaik**, Professor, Dept. of Political Science, University of Hyderabad for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Sciences. The dissertation is an original work of mine to the best of my knowledge and no part of this dissertation has been submitted in part or in full to this University or any other university or institution for the award of any other degree or diploma. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be uploaded in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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1.	SR 600: Research Methodology- I	4	PASS	A
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3.	SR 602: Topic Related Course	4	PASS	A

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Dedication

*There has been a woman whose life turned into oblivion when the untimely demise of the husband left her with six young children in her hands, the eldest of them ten years old and the youngest just crossing a year. Every theoretical paradigm that excited me during this research would remain insufficient to match the emotional turmoil accompanied her desperate struggles in fighting poverty and meeting two ends of life for her children. She worked so hard in the tea plantation of the locality regardless of summer or winter investing her sweat and blood towards her children who brought in three PhD degrees into her home. This thesis owes to the sweat, blood, dreams and the invaluable love of that woman, **Kadeesakutty, my mother.***

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Abbreviations

AFSPA:	Armed Forces Special Powers Act
AIADMK:	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AICC:	All India Congress Committee
AIMIM:	All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen
AIML:	All India Muslim League
AIMPLB:	All India Muslim Personal Law Board
BJP:	Bharatiya Janata Party
CAA:	Citizenship Amendment Act
CPI:	Communist Party of India
CPIM:	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DMK:	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
EPW:	Economic and Political Weekly
FPJ:	Free Press Journal
IAS:	Indian Administrative Service
IFS:	Indian Foreign Service
INC:	Indian National Congress
INL:	Indian National League
IPS:	Indian Police Service
ISS:	Islamic Sevak Sangh
IUML:	Indian Union Muslim League
JSS:	Janathipathya Samrakshana Samithi
KARB:	Kerala Agrarian Relation Bill
KEB:	Kerala Education Bill
KFD:	Karnataka Forum for Dignity
KJU:	Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama
KNM:	Kerala Nadvatul Mujahideen

KPCC:	Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee
LDF:	Left Democratic Front
MLA:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNP:	Manita Neethi Pasarai
MP:	Member of Parliament
MSF:	Muslims Students federation
MYL:	Muslim Youth League
NCR:	Narendran Commission Report
NCRB:	National Crime Records Bureau
NDA:	National Democratic Alliance
NDF:	National development Front
NDF:	National Development Front
NDP:	National Democratic Party
NIA:	National Investigation Agency
NSS:	Nair Service Society
OBC:	Other Backward Caste
PDP:	Peoples Democratic Party
PFI:	Popular Front of India
POTA:	Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act
POTO:	Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance
PSP:	Praja socialist Party
RSS:	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SC:	Supreme Court
SCR:	Sachar Committee Report
SDPI:	Social Democratic Party of India
SKJU	Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama
SKSSF:	Samastha Kerala Sunni Students Federation

SNDP:	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam
SRP:	Socialist Republican Party
SYM:	Solidarity Youth Movement
SYS:	Sunni Yuvajana Sangham
TADA:	Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act
UAPA:	Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
UDF:	United Democratic Front
UK:	United Kingdom
UPA:	United Progressive Alliance government
USA:	United States of America
WPI:	Welfare Party of India

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Chapter 01

Introduction

This thesis titled “State, Religion, and Muslim Politics: Locating the ‘Political’ in the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala” examines the ‘political’ in the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML, also referred to as the Muslim League), a political party majorly functioning in the Southern Indian state, Kerala. The Muslim League was formed on 10th March 1948, after dissociating with the Muhammed Ali Jinnah led All India Muslim League, to protect the political and religious interests of the Muslim community in India. The study intends to explore the everyday articulations of the Muslim League’s political engagement by moving beyond the binaries of ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ in the scholarship on Muslim politics in India. This dissertation is mostly informed by Alfred Stepan’s theory of ‘twin toleration’ in which religion and democracy are mutually constitutive. Thereby, the study shows faith-based political affinity is immanent to the democratic and secular ethos of the Indian constitution. The thesis outlines how the formation of discursive cartography and eventful communitarian network in the post-partition/post-independent India shaped the politics of the Muslim League in Kerala. Finally, this thesis argues that Muslim politics in Kerala is not inherently inimical to the idea of democracy and secularism in which the Muslim League plays a pivotal role in electoral and legislative politics for the benefit of Muslims as well as the larger public.

1.1 Background of the Study

The relation between democracy and religion is one of the significant points of reference in the Political Science discipline of our time. Earlier Western thinkers of the nineteenth century, such as Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Max Weber (1884-1920), who played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of democracy and liberalism. Theories of modernisation claimed that the modern world order is likely to be more dependent on democratic and secular political credentials with the emergence of industrial society (Norris & Inglehart 2004). Accordingly, the role of religion would diminish in public, as it exclusively engages with the private sphere (Berger 1967). The proponents of enlightenment reason further viewed religion as a spectral presence that can take the community back to backwardness,

superstitions, and reactionary sentiments. Hence, the death of religion was the conventional wisdom in social sciences, where secularisation was ranked with bureaucratisation, rationalisation, and urbanisation; a transformation from medieval agrarian societies to modern industrial nation (Norris & Inglehart 2004), which predicted the decay of religion in modern global order without any reluctance.

However, over time, modernisation theories have failed to account for the increased importance of religion and religious identities in the domain of public politics throughout the world. Sociologist Jose Casanova (1994) observes that four developments gave religion the kind of global promotion which then forced the reconsideration of its place in the modern world. Developments such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the rise of the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the role of Catholicism in the Sandinista revolution along with many other such conflicts in Latin America and the persistence of religious devotion in the United States shows that religion remains a significant force in modern politics, and its presence is marked even in relatively developed countries. Casanova further views that religion and religious fundamentalism among the Muslims, Jewish, and Christians, along with the constant civil and uncivil war in the Middle East region and the intra- religious conflicts from Northern Ireland to Yugoslavia, also made the discussion alive. Correspondingly, these developments, religious activists and churches were becoming deeply involved in the struggle for justice, liberation, and democracy further flared up the relation between religion and politics (ibid). On the other spectrum of the story, the substantial political presence of Muslims in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia), etc. contributed to the increased relevance of religion in the national politics of these countries. These developments resulted in the secularisation theories experiencing sustained challenges even in developed nations (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Fox 2018).

Theories such as the ‘de-privatisation of religion’ (Casanova 1994) and ‘post-secularism’ (Habermas 2008) emerged in the context of a deepening religious and political engagement. These ‘post- Weberian’ theories questioned the separation of religion and faith in modern society. Post-secular scholars view secularisation theory as either loosely labelled or fundamentally mistaken. They further observe that religious traditions and

communities of faith attained unforeseen political importance in shaping the politics of the state in post-secular global politics, in which liberal democracies are not exempted. Further, they view that de-privatisation of religion need not be interpreted essentially as an anti-modern, anti-secular, or an anti-democratic reaction and that religion is gaining much influence even within national public spheres (Casanova 1994; Esposito & Voll 1996; Berger 1999; Asad 2003; Habermas 2008).

According to Casanova, as a relatively new global trend across all religious traditions, the world is witnessing a process of 'deprivatisation of religion. Though Casanova never shares the view that secularisation was/is a myth, instead, he re-evaluates the theory of secularisation in the context of the global resurgence of religion or religious re-engagement in the public sphere. Casanova observes that the religion did not lose its influence and relevance in the political and cultural life of the people; instead, it still possesses an influential role in, mostly, secularised societies. He emphasises that privatisation and deprivatisation are simply different historical choices for religions in the modern global order (Casanova 1994).

Deprivatization of religion means that religious traditions at the global level are refusing to admit the marginal and privatised role, which had been inscribed by theories of modernity and theories of secularisation. Otherwise, it signifies the advent of new historical developments, which at least qualitatively, amount to a certain reversal of what appeared to be secular trends. Casanova firmly observes that,

Religions throughout the world are entering the public sphere and the arena of political contestation not only to defend their traditional turf, as they have clone in the past, but also to participate in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundaries between the private and public spheres, between system and life-world, between legality and morality, between individual and society, between family, civil society, and state, between nations, states, civilisations, and the world system (ibid: 6).

As a result of these increasing elements of religion in socio-political discourses, Casanova further views that, to address the real issues of democratic politics across the world, there is a necessity to go beyond the secularist discourses (Casanova 2010, 2012).

Jurgen Habermas argues that the age of secularism might have come to an end and that the world is moving to a multicultural society, witnessing the beginning of a new religious revival. Post-secular society, according to him, denotes not only to the fact that religion continues to assert itself in an increasingly secular atmosphere but also refers to the continuing existence of religious communities (Habermas 2005, 2008). He further points out that religion is attaining influence not only at a global level but also within national public spheres. Churches and religious establishments take over the role of ‘communities of interpretation,’ more so than ever, in the public domain of secular societies (Habermas 2008: 20). They can influence public opinion by making significant contributions to key issues, irrespective of the plausibility of the stances. For him, “pluralist societies constitute a responsive sounding board for such interventions because they are increasingly split on value conflicts requiring political regulation” (ibid).

However, interestingly, Habermas never rejects the idea of secularism. Neither does he endorse a return to the medieval supremacy of the church. To him, modernity no longer infers the rally toward secularism, and post-secularism is the continued existence of religious communities in an incessantly secularising milieu. In a democracy, the secular mentality must be open to the religious leanings of believing citizens (Habermas 2005, 2008).

Charles Taylor, in his *A Secular Age*, calls secular discourse as an ‘immanent frame.’ Instead of calling it post-secularism, he prefers to address contemporary epoch as ‘a secular age.’ Taylor focuses on the religious developments in Western Europe, more specifically in relation to Christianity and secularity, and the dominance of Christianity over the European nations. The relationship between religion and secular modernity is not of conflicting interests. Rather, Taylor argues that secularism is a way of dealing with diverse religious, non-religious, or anti-religious positions without benefitting one over another (Taylor 2007).

In his early works, Peter. L. Berger ascertained that secularisation is more than a social-structural process. The idea of secularism holds the view that modernisation necessarily leads to rationalism and that religion would decline both from society and the mind of individuals. He stressed that secularisation “affects the totality of cultural life and of ideation, and may be observed in the decline of religious contents in the arts, in philosophy, in literature and, most important of all, in the rise of science as autonomous, thoroughly secular perspective on the world” (Berger 1967: 107). However, in his later period, Berger maintained that the theory of secularism was a production of European imagination and that the relation between modernity and religion cannot be easily explained. According to Berger

We confused secularisation with pluralisation, secularity with a plurality. It turns out that modernity does not necessarily produce a decline of religion; it does necessarily produce a deepening process of pluralisation– a historically unprecedented situation in which more and more people live amid competing beliefs, values and lifestyles (Berger 2012: 313).

Post-secular theories generally make space for the engagement of religion in politics. However, for Berger, Islam and Muslim societies are out of this (post) secular framework. Berger’s focus is on the newly emergent religious movements, particularly Islamic movements and their increased fundamentalist tendencies. According to him, “Islamic resurgence throughout the world strongly tends toward a negative view of modernity; in places it is downright anti-modern or counter modernising, as in its view of the role of women” (Berger 1999: 13), thus negatively affecting the idea of secularism. Increasing religiosity and supposedly fundamentalist tendencies of religious movements leads him to the assertion that the world is not secularised anymore. Berger’s exclusive focus on Islam and the relative neglect of fundamentalist tendencies of other religions such as Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism makes his theorisation of post-secularity wanting in nuance.

Much before Berger’s observation on Islam and Muslim societies, Bernard Lewis and Samuel P. Huntington observed that Islam and democracy could not co-exist as Muslims believe in divine sovereignty. Islam is ‘uncivilised’ and a potent threat to both the ‘civilised’ West/Christianity due to its inherent fundamentalist nature. According to

Huntington, “the underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power” (Huntington 1996: 217). Similarly, another Eurocentric scholar, Bernard Lewis, views that the significant difference between Islam and Christianity is that the former does not have any different conception of ‘sacred law’ versus ‘secular law.’ At the same time, it is easy to choose between God and Caesar in Christianity. Nevertheless, Muslims regard their religion as a source of both public order and personal ethics, and the political thinking of Islam has been dominated by the idea that ‘tyranny is better than anarchy’ (Lewis 1996, 2004).

The impact of Eurocentric reading of the ‘West/Other’ is not limited to the Christian or Western world but has spread across the globe. To be more specific, these one-sided readings of Islam have permeated the discussions about liberal democracies and authoritarian Islamic regimes. Huntington’s thesis was not only conflict-ridden but imbued with Eurocentrism. His thesis had such purchase in the post-war US policies that it influenced the country’s international relations with the Muslim states. Both of these thinkers strengthened an essentialist reading of Muslim politics to prove that Islam/Muslim society is incompatible with the values of modern democracy. They often refer to the Islamic regimes and Middle Eastern states to substantiate their essentialist argument, though the Arabs constitute only one-third of the Muslim world’s population. The large number of Muslims who live in a democratic set up outside Middle-East does not figure in the works of these scholars.

As Zoya Hasan points out, the last decades of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century witnessed many open democratic electoral competitions in Muslim countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, and Pakistan. Among this, Bangladesh had three democratic transfers of power, and in which two of the Prime Ministers have been Muslim women.¹ Hasan further observes that the Arab world is an

¹ For more details, Zoya Hasan (2007). *Democracy in Muslim Societies: The Asian Experience*. Hasan focuses on the debate about democracy and democratization in Muslim societies such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey. More than eighty percentage of the total world Muslim population are living in these regions, where democracy is a form that operates their political system. She further points out that there were many women leaders who act as a premier of the state; Begam Khaleda Zia

integral part of the world of Islam- often referred to as ‘Islamic heartland;’ however, numerically, it is the home only to a minority of the *ummah*. Out of 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, only 260 million live in Arabia, and the majority inhabits the Asian countries of Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. According to Hasan, we often compare Islam with Arab culture and tradition and declare that there is no democracy in the Islamic regimes, leaving the misleading impression that no Muslims live under democratic regimes (Hasan 2007).

Studies on secularism in the context of non-Western societies, specifically in Islam/Muslim societies, have argued that the questions about where to draw the line between public and private and the precarious condition of religious minorities point to certain innate and frontier-transcending powers of the secular modern (Agrama 2012). Scholars, who extensively studied Muslim societies in different parts of the world, argue that democracy and secularism are not alien concepts to Islam and Muslims. Works of scholars like Talal Asad, Alfred Stepan, John L. Esposito and John Voll, Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, Nader Hashemi, etc. point toward the fact that the Muslim world is ideologically not homogenous and that there is a need to place Muslim politics according to the context. As Esposito and Voll point out, “the historical situation of the present cannot be understood in monolithic terms but must be seen as a complex, multifaceted reality in which both complementarities and contradictions (between Islamism and democracy) can be seen” (Esposito and Voll 1996: 202). Alfred Stepan, in his works, considers the possibilities of toleration between religion and democracy by comparing many Muslim populated states, including India. His idea of ‘twin toleration’ proposes a mutual relation between religion and politics for the successful working of democracy (Stepan 2005, 2014).

Talal Asad breaks away from the conventional notion of secularism and argues that secularism is not merely a theory of state neutrality toward religion but designates the state’s sovereign power to control and form religion (Asad 1993). Asad writes

(1945-), and Sheikh Hasina (1947-), present Prime Minister, in Bangladesh; Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan (1953-2007); Megawati Sukarnoputri (1947-) in Indonesia and so on.

The nation-state requires clearly demarcated spaces that it can classify and regulate: religion, education, health, leisure, work, income, justice, and war. The space that religion may properly occupy in society has to be continually redefined by the law because the reproduction of secular life within and beyond the nation-state continually affects the discursive clarity of that space (Asad 2003: 201).

Asad discusses the impossibility of religion in the modern world in the wake of Islam and post-secular theories by questioning the essentialist definitions that generalise religion in a rigid format. He also problematises the binary opposition of religion and the secular and also suggests to read religion and secular as obtained in relation to each other. He further says that “universal definitions of religion is that by insisting on an essential singularity, they divert us from asking questions about what the definition includes and what it excludes – how, by whom, for what purpose, and so on” (Asad 2001: 220). Asad points out that the universal definition of religion failed to address diverse and complex reformulation of religion throughout the world.

Esposito and Voll, in their work, *Islam and Democracy*, seek not only to prove that Islam and democracy are compatible but also explores the democratic possibility within Muslim traditions. In the name of cultural authenticity, they argue, different societies are entitled to have their own non-Western notions of democracy according to their respective state. They stress the Islamic acceptance of diversity in its treatment of non-Muslims in the pre-modern era, more specifically, the way Islam treated the non-Muslims in Medina (*Sahifat al- Medina*- the first political constitution of an Islamic state), specifically the Jews and *Quraish* (a prominent Arab clan). By its very nature, Islam tries to adopt democracy and secularism in the respective form. Esposito and Voll claim that if the West fails to see the democracy in the Islamic regime, the reason for it lies in the ethnocentricity of their perception. In other words, Western myopia towards Islamic democracies is a form of ‘secular democratic trap’ to control Islamic polity and economy. They seek to exhibit that several Islamic governments and opposition forces have adopted various political strategies to serve their respective goals. Indonesian Muslims applied a moderate, tolerant version of Islam to their day to day lives where ‘Muslim and non-Muslim are the same,’ a state in which religion and politics are separate (Esposito and Voll 1996).

Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori have produced a much-celebrated study, *Muslim Politics* that explores the dynamics and the diversities of Islam and Muslim politics from a global perspective. According to them, the inherent defects of modernisation theory lay in the sharp difference between two artificial constructs, ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ and the consequent misapprehension of the entrenched social functions of tradition. It is viewed that modernity stands for human freedom, while tradition is often referred to as violence and political instability. However, questioning the binary, the authors argued that Muslim politics is not a monolithic entity; Muslim politics, as elsewhere in the world, engage in competition and bargaining- both market-place metaphors- between Muslims and among state and non-state actors and groups for survival. Hence, Muslim politics need to be placed in multiple and shifting contexts to understand pluralities and multiplicities among them (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996).

Nader Hashemi observes that the mainstream scholarship in liberal democratic theory and modernisation theory has been not, mostly, helpful in understanding the theoretical questions related to liberal democracy in Muslim societies. The main point often made when discussing Muslim politics is to fall into the seductive trap of a ‘false universalism’ as we see in the works of scholars like Peter L. Berger in their interpretation of Islam and Muslims. According to Hashemi, it is wrong to interpret that the West has accomplished the broader democratic consensus on the normative affiliation between religion and state, and the rest of humanity must have to follow the same (Hashemi 2009).

Many of the Islamic or Muslim countries have developed democracy in a way that suits their respective states. Like other religious traditions, Islam is not merely a set of rituals but also a way of life. Hence, it is difficult for Muslims to separate religion from politics, as they are interconnected in myriad ways. In the same way, as shown by the studies cited above, the idea of democracy is inherent in Islamic tradition, and it is part and parcel of their everyday affairs, even though it may or may not be compatible with the Western liberal democracy. The development of democracy in the populated Muslim countries in South Asia must be read in their historical pasts as well as the present political scenarios such as colonialism, adherence to religiosity, civil society and modern spirit of democracy and secularism to understand their particularities (Esposito and Voll 1996; Hasan 2007).

In the context of South Asia, particularly in post-independence India, the idea of secularism has been practised differently from the Western models of secularism; more specifically, the French model, called *laicite*, which follows the principle of ‘separation of religion and politics.’ Unlike the general definition of secularism, which maintains the separation of state and religion, the ‘idea of secularism’ practised in India is different. In India, secularism is grounded within an assumption of the inseparability of religion as it forms one of the defining factors of Indian secularism. The adaptation of the inseparability of religion in politics is connected with many aspects such as imperialism, educated Western elites, nationalist movement and religious and caste influence of the society. The members of the Constituent Assembly, who were themselves elected by and in turn represent people from different religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, drafted a constitution that creates legal and political space for a progressive secular ideal. That secularism in India is a compromise between the diverse groups that make up India. Though the word secularism was adopted only in 1976, the idea of secularism has been part and parcel of the Indian constitution from the inception, as outlined in Article 25 through 30 thereof. Further, in many cases, the Supreme Court (SC) of India has held that secularism is a fundamental structure of the Indian Constitution (Yildirim 2004).

The protagonists of Indian secularism, Ashis Nandy, T.N. Madan and Partha Chatterjee, view the Western-inspired idea of secularism with suspicious outlook, and argue that the idea of secularism should be defined and practised contextually. They maintain a critical position towards the theory and practice of the secular state offered by the West, which in their view is an un-Indian concept that flows against the indigenous tradition of tolerance practised and maintained for centuries by a pluralist and multi-religious ethos of Indian

Ashis Nandy, who has posited himself an ‘anti-secularist,’ has argued that secularism, as a gift of Protestant Christianity, has exhausted its possibilities and is positively harmful in the Indian context. To him, the idea of ‘secularism’ is inherently rooted in our religious culture and tradition. In the Indian context, any idea of secularism by the Indian secular state has to learn from the moral life world of Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. Nandy further defines religion into two, ‘religion as faith’ and ‘religion as an ideology’ (Nandy 1988, 1998). Former denotes religion as a way of life, a tradition that is definitionally non-

monolithic and operationally plural and is linked by a common faith having some theological space for heterogeneity, an Indian model. The latter is politically constructed, monolithic and communalist ideologies of sectarianism and intolerance, a Western imported concept (Pantham 1997). Today secularism functions more as an ideology of the modern state serving as a source of new religious violence; hence, it is to be considered as the most contemporary problem in our society.

T.N. Madan observes that the idea of secularism cannot be simply translated to South Asian/Indian culture. As it bears the number of religions where religion as the principle of overarching ends is the most significant factor in the lives of the people in which major religious traditions do not assume any radical antinomy between the sacred and the secular. Hence, the transfer of secularism to non-Western societies is quite difficult without considering the character of their religious traditions. The secularisation of everyday Indian life is directly responsible for the rise of fundamentalist politics, which was absent in traditional society. Madan finally proposes that state practices of secularism have to be based on the recognition of religious practices and should be supported by discovering and strengthening the internal resources of religious pluralism and tolerance (Madan 1998). The only way for secularism to succeed in South Asia would be to take both religion and secularism seriously and not discard the former as superstition and diminish the latter to a mask for communalism or mere expediency (Madan 1987).

Partha Chatterjee perceives the idea of secularism within the context of majority and minority binary as secularism is not appropriate to meet the challenges posed by Hindu nationalism against religious and cultural minorities. The official model of Indian secularism or secular state has brought India to a 'potentially disastrous political impasse' (Chatterjee 1994). Similar to Nandy's thought, Chatterjee views that Western secularism does not necessarily ensure toleration among the religious groups in the country (Chatterjee 1998). Further, he substantiates that Hindutva groups threaten the very idea of religious intolerance as they want to build up a homogenised national culture by erasing the presence of religious or ethnic minorities from the domain of law. Political tolerance includes autonomy and respect for persons and accommodates different reasons coming from various cultural and traditional institutions (Chatterjee 1998). Chatterjee's academic efforts

call not to secularise the state in the Western framework of reason but to preserve minority cultural rights and to underscore the duty of the democratic state to ensure policies of religious tolerations (Pantham 1997).

Unlike the other three scholars, Rajeev Bhargava argues for a form of political secularism where the relation between religion and politics involves neither fusion nor disentanglement but “principled distance.” It means to exclude religion for some purpose and include it to achieve other objectives, but always out of non-sectarian considerations (Bhargava 1994, 2006). Further, principled distance differs from strict neutrality of religion, which insists that the state must help or hinder all religions to an equal degree. For example, secularism excludes religion for some purposes, for instance, separate religious electorate; and includes it for some other purposes, as is the case with personal laws for religious communities. Otherwise, “it accepts a disconnection between state and religion at the level of ends and institutions but does not make a fetish of it at the third level of policy and law” (Bhargava 2006). This means that religion may interfere in the businesses of the state if such intervention upholds freedom, equality, or any other value integral to secularism (Bhargava 1998, 2006).

The interconnected approach of both religion and secularism flourish in theories of post-secularism, which never denies the possibility of either in modern society. These theories emphasise a tolerant relationship between religious faith and secular ideologies; a phenomenon practiced in India in the post-partition context. Though the secularism theorists have questioned the validity of Western-imposed ideals, they argue that the very idea of secularism is traditionally and culturally rooted in the country. Seval Yildirim has defined the idea of Indian secularism as “a discourse to reconstruct the political space so that religion and the state can co-exist” (Yildirim 2004: 902). The constitution of the country itself proves the possibilities of the inseparability of religion and politics, where different religious and caste groups in India operate their politics by using constitutional guarantees. The political mobilisations in the country, including Muslim politics, is justified under such circumstances. In this context, I argue that moving away from the generally acknowledged definition, the idea of secularism should be placed contextually to engage with religiously oriented democratic societies like India.

In the case of India, it is worth seeing how Muslims – a minority community in a ‘secular’ democracy - engages with the country’s democratic processes. Muslim politics in India, on one end of the spectrum, operates through mutual respect for religion and state within the constitutional framework of the nation. Zoya Hasan views that “the success of India’s democracy with a large Muslim population who are among its most enthusiastic participants shows that it can work, provided there is an emphasis on pluralism and equality” (Hasan 2007: 11). The Muslims in India form one of the potential political communities proving the compatibilities of religion and politics in the public sphere. Hence, the study of Muslim politics would definitely force us to redefine the concept of secularism.

This thesis attempts to understand Muslim politics in the context of the Muslim League and how they engage with India’s secular politics. Muslim League operates its religion-based politics in everyday life of the community within the prism of democracy and secularism, which made them a significant political force in Kerala.

1.2 The Premises of the Study

The thesis explores the ‘political’ in the Indian Union Muslim League in the post-partition/independence context. The party was formed under the leadership of Muhammed Ismail (1896- 1972), popularly known as *Quaid-e-Millat* (Leader of the Nation),² on 10th March 1948, at Rajaji Hall of Madras to protect the constitutional rights of Muslims and other marginalised sections of the community. This study revolves around the religious and political aspects of the Muslim community in Kerala. Communitarian politics have been instrumental in the developmental process of the state since the official formation and before.³ The unique societal characteristics of Kerala are the vivid presence of caste and religious-based organisations and their related movements, which heralded the modern

² Muhammed Ismail was master brain behind the formation of Indian Union Muslim League, and the founder president of the party. He remained in the position until he died in 1972. Initially, he served as an opposition leader of Madras Legislative Assembly from 1946-52 and served as a member of Constituent Assembly from the Muslim League panel. After India got independence from Britain, Muhammed Ismail was initially elected as a member of Rajya Sabha in 1952 from Madras, and then elected to the Lok Sabha from Manjeri constituency of Kerala in 1962, 1967 and 1971.

³ For details, see the Chapter Five of the thesis “Community Politics in Kerala: Competition, Accommodation and Negotiation.”

socio-political process in Kerala (Dreze & Sen: 1998). These casteist/community dialects made a new road to a secular Kerala, which has got considerable attention from many scholars (Mathew: 1989). The community politics of the state operates in the 'communal line' by consolidating different religious and caste communities (Mathew 1989; Oommen 1995; Devika and Varghese 2010).

The dominant presence of caste and religious organisations is one of the fundamental characteristics of Kerala society, especially after the removal of the first Communist Government by these groups, along with the opposition parties in 1959. The mobilisation of different communities by various political parties with their political language and narrative delivered a stirring space for community politics in the state (Wright 1966). The IUML has significant influence among the Muslim community of Malabar and different factions of Kerala Congress represent the Christians of central Kerala. Thus, both of them have prominent space in the highly competent electoral politics of the state. On the other hand, Nairs and Ezhavas, two prominent caste groups representing 'forward' and 'backward' Hindus, contain themselves, largely, in the political parties like Indian National Congress (INC, and also referred as Congress), and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M) and Communist Party of India (CPI) (Varshney 2002; Salah 2013; Biju 2013). These community groups formed the basic building blocks that sustain the electoral base of the political parties in the state. The formation of the Muslim League and the institutionalised nature of political mobilisation of the Muslim community helps the party to achieve an important place in the communitarian political structures of the state. These ever-evolving community conflicts and competing interests for resources conferred the Muslim League with its unique political characteristics in Kerala.

Though these four groups dominate the politics of the state, they have aligned themselves into two political alliances in the state known as United Democratic Front (UDF) and Left Democratic Front (LDF). The INC heads the UDF along with Muslim League, Kerala Congress and many smaller groups. On the other hand, the Left Democratic Alliance (LDF) led by CPI (M) along with CPI, and other left-oriented parties. This twofold alliance has been dictating state politics for the last four decades (Nair 1994; Varshney 2002; Biju 2013). To appease a respective community is one of the important strategies of every

political party in Kerala. There was barely any community or caste association in the state without having an association for self-assertion and development, trying to create pressure groups by highlighting caste or religious identity to secure concessions from the government in the socio, economic and educational fields (Salah 2013). The politics of the state is summarised succinctly by Robert L. Hardgrave Jr as thus, “Kerala is a land of contradictions in a nation of contrasts” (Hardgrave Jr 1970: 993).

Demographically, the Hindus are the dominant group, which consists of 54.7% of the total population, and includes many caste groups such as Nairs, Ezhavas, Brahmins, Nadar and Vishwakarma. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes also often place under the category of Hindus. Among Hindus, Ezhavas are the demographically dominant group, which consists of 22% of the total population of the state. Nairs come second among Hindus, who comprise 12% of the total population. Unlike other parts of India, the Brahmins have little political power in the state after the formation of United Kerala in 1956. Christians are 18% of the entire population of the state, who are also divided into certain sects such as Latin Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Dalit Christians, and so on (Census 2011; Zachariah 2016).

Muslims in Kerala constitute 27% of the population according to the 2011 census. Globally, the Muslim community is split into two main groups, namely *Sunni* and *Shia*. However, the Muslims in Kerala are broadly classified as *Sunni* and then segregated into many sects according to their theological perspectives, such as *Sunni*, *Mujahid*, and *Jamaat-e-Islami*. In addition to these powerful groups, many other minor groups like *Tablighi Jamaat*, *Ahamadiyas* and *Shias*, etc. Interestingly, each group claims that they are the real patrons of Islam and accuse others of misinterpreting Islam (Miller 1992; Samad 1998).⁴

Traditionally, Nairs were the landowning and mercantile community during the colonial period. They were bestowed with social and economic capital, even in the post-colonial period as well. The Nairs have been a pivotal force in Kerala politics and have traditionally

⁴ To understand the theological divisions among Muslims of Kerala, see Sub-section II “Muslim Organisations and the Community Relation,” in the Chapter Three of the thesis “Muslim Politics in Kerala: Formation of the Indian Union Muslim League.”

held the balance, making or breaking a government. The Nairs are located mainly in the southern parts of Kerala, particularly in Trivandrum, Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts. They have traditionally supported the INC government and have become the potential political group after the liberation struggle of 1959 (Nair 1994; Osella & Osella 2000).⁵

Economically subservient to the Nairs are the Ezhava community. Ezhavas are also known as Thiyyas in the Malabar region and occupy a 'lower position' in the caste hierarchy. However, they are the single most potent community in Kerala due to the nature of caste communitarian politics of the state. Ezhavas are traditionally toddy tapping community with limited ownership of land and restricted access to opportunities for socio-economic mobility. However, the tireless efforts of the community leaders like Dr Palpu and Sree Narayana Guru, the founder of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), have helped the community to improve their status. The Ezhava community is spread all over the state and traditionally extends its political support to the Communist Parties (Nair 1994; Hardgrave 1965; Osella & Osella 2000). However, in the recent past, they have formed a community political party called Bharath Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS) in 2015.

In addition to the mutually antagonistic Nairs and Ezhavas, the Christian community ranks as a significant political power in Kerala. The advent of colonial modernity helped the Christians to achieve a better position in society and thus to attain better socio-economic capital than any other community in the state. The Christians are one of the most influential communities of the state who holds the locus of political power through the organisation of the Churches. The Christians in central and southern parts of Kerala have their community political party, Kerala Congress. The party holds much power among the community and acts as the decision-maker of many governments, as a coalition partner. Presently the party is divided into many smaller groups under different leaders who support different governments according to their priorities.

⁵ For details, Sub-section II "Liberation Struggle and Communitarian Politics," in the Chapter Five of the thesis.

The Muslims in Kerala is popularly known as ‘Mappilas,’ and this particular term represents no other Muslim community in the world.⁶ The thesis uses both Mappilas and Muslims interchangeably to address the Muslim community. Muslims in Kerala are centred mainly in the Northern parts of the state, popularly known as the Malabar region. Malabar consists of six districts (Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Calicut, Malappuram and few areas of Palakkad). Primarily owing to this Muslim League is politically more powerful in Malabar than any other region of the state. The larger spectrum of the community, *Sunni* and *Mujahid* groups, are politically associated with the Muslim League. The communitarian politics of the Muslim League, in a way, transformed the party as one of the best bargaining group in the post-partition phase of Kerala.

Though the Indian Union Muslim League was officially formed in 1948, its base had already been set among the community due to the active immersion of the All India Muslim League (AIML) in the pre-partition phase. The major challenge in front of IUML in the post-partition phase was to consolidate Muslims politically, where the community identity was in danger after the formation of Pakistan, an Islamic state. The name of the party itself invited a communal label from the mainstream parties, particularly the ‘nationalist’ Congress. The targeted communal propaganda against its leaders forced some of them either to quit the party or to join with Congress to save their secular identity (Hasan 1998; Aziz 1992). However, in South India, the Muslim League could manage the situation by forming a separate political party to ensure Muslim political participation. The political commitment of the party has manifested in both religious and secular interests of the community, which popularised the party among the Muslim community.

The constitution of the Muslim League also stresses the importance of protecting the religious and political interests of the community. It indicates the party’s commitment towards the Indian nation and its adherence to the constitutional principles of socialism,

⁶ *Mappila* is a contraction of *Maha* (great) and *pilla* (child), an honorary title, as among Nairs in Travancore), and it was a probably conferred on both Christian and Muhammadan immigrants originally, as the title of honour. Muhammedan were usually called ‘Chonaka Mappila’; Christians ‘Nasrani Mappila’; and Jews ‘Juda Mappila’. At present ‘Mappila’ is often loosely applied to all indigenous Muhammedans of Malabar; but is now seldom used with a distinctive prefix with reference to members of other races or creeds (Logan 1989). It is also defined that *Mappila* is a title of honor conferred on immigrants, or a title honour foreigner who married into indigenous families in Kerala (Kunju 1989; Miller 1992).

secularism, and democracy (Wright 1966; Thangal et al., 2013). The party, as a stakeholder, has been engaging with the public policies of the state without demeaning the aspects of Muslim religious ethos. It naturally tends the Muslim League to engage with the electoral politics for the betterment of the political, religious and cultural life of Muslims. In its political journey, the party has played a significant role in politicising the community by focusing ‘power’ –as a political strategy- which enabled Muslims of Kerala to achieve better positions when compared to their counterparts in other states (Aziz 1992; Miller 1992).

The main aims of the first-generation leaders of the Muslim League were ‘knowledge, representation and power’ for the development of the ideal society and the honourable existence of the community (Kabeer 1988). The political engagements of the party were aimed at achieving the above-said goal right from the beginning. The Muslim League put forward the task of ensuring equality and social justice of the community as it was denied for the community for long by the administrative policies of the colonial government in Malabar. Kerala Muslims have got more vigour and vitality with a considerable representation of them, after the entry of Muslim League into coalition politics of the state with different alliance partners and thereby into the political ascendancies. The leaders of the party followed the policy of conciliation and accommodation by realising the existence of the community and the pluralistic nature of Kerala society (Ismail & Kurupp 2008: 227). The party perceives representation and power as necessary for the development of the community in all respect.

The main motto of the party is national welfare, communal harmony and protection of minorities and other marginalised sections of the society.⁷ The institutionalised mobilisation under the IUML provided the community with a new sense of political confidence. One of the main strategies of the party has been sharing power by engaging with the larger structures of Kerala politics. Muslim League negotiates with mainstream electoral politics and its stakeholders to formulate policies for the benefit of the community and the broader public interest of the state. They have made an alliance both with the Left front and Congress-led coalition, on various occasions, irrespective of ideological

⁷ For details, see The Constitution of Indian Union Muslim League. (2008).

positions, and succeeded in gaining many political demands in favour of the community and larger public (Miller 1992; Salah 2013). One can define this strategy as an ideological bankruptcy; however, as a communitarian political party, it is necessary to represent the community in availing maximum resources of the state in highly competitive political structures of the state. In the last seventy years, the Muslim League has become an indispensable political actor in the state, which has helped in ensuring the quality life of the community.

Though the political presence of the Muslim League covers the entire state, the electoral presence of the party is restricted mainly to the Malabar region. The party had ensured its electoral presence in state politics right after the formation of united Kerala in 1956. The Muslim League began its electoral journey with eight seats in the first general election of the state in 1957, and presently, in the 2016 election, the party has 18 legislators in Kerala Assembly. Similarly, the party increased its strength in Lok Sabha from one in 1952 to three in 2019, in which one seat is from Ramanathapuram of Tamil Nadu. The party had representation in various state governments from 1967 to 2011, both in Congress and Communist-led alliances (Konar 2014).

The year 1979 is marked as an important year in the political history of the Muslim League, in which the party leader C.H. Muhammed Koya⁸ assumed the post of Chief Minister of the state, although for a short period of 54 days (Aziz 1992), the only Muslim Chief Minister of the state since then. Interestingly, the Muslim League has handled the education portfolio of the state for a longer period than any other political party. C.H. Muhammed Koya was the first education minister of the party in its first governmental appearance in 1967 with CPI (M). The party was also represented in the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government (UPA) I and II at the centre, in which the party leader, E. Ahmed, assumed the post of Minister of State for External Affairs, Minister of State for Railways,

⁸ Cheriyan Kandi Muhammad Koya (1927-1983), popularly known as C. H. Muhammad Koya, was an Indian politician, former Chief Minister of Kerala and a stalwart leader of Muslim League. He served as the General Secretary of Kerala State Muslim League, and then the Secretary of IUML. He was the Chief Editor of Chandrika Daily for a long time. C.H. was the member of first Kerala Assembly of 1957. Later he served as the speaker of second Kerala Assembly from 09-06-1961 to 10-11-1961. He then assumed the post of Chief Minister of the state from 12th October 1979 to 01st December 1979. He then assumed different ministerial portfolios in the state cabinet.

and also held with additional charges of Ministry of Human Resource Development (Konnar 2014).

This thesis argues that the development of Muslims in Kerala is made possible through the political consolidation of the community by utilising the existing community-centred electoral context. The political mobilisation of the Muslim League and its power politics by joining hands with different political fronts, UDF and LDF, have helped the community to act as a pressure group to attain resources and requirements. Compared to the national Muslim context of alienation and discrimination, the state of Kerala marks the difference due to communitarian political involvement. In this context, the thesis explores the communitarian engagement of the Muslim League in both religious and political spheres to understand the Muslim politics of the state.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The thesis demarcates the difference between Islamist politics and Muslim politics and how the Muslim League engages with the everyday politics of the Kerala state. This study categorically argues that the religious politics of the Muslim League cannot be equated with political Islam or radical Muslim politics. Muslim League employs its politics within the secular and democratic frame of the Indian constitution. Hence, the politics of the Muslim League fall into the category of Muslim politics. This thesis understands ‘political Islam’ and ‘Muslim politics’ (by which I mean community politics) are two different concepts. Political Islam is a political ideology that articulates the necessity of establishing an Islamic state based on *sharia* (Islamic Law) where the separation of *din* (religion) from *dawla* (state) is not possible (Hefner 2011; Ismail 2011). Muslim politics, on the other hand, operates within the domain of everyday politics articulated through a communitarian and secular vocabulary, in which Muslims as actors of community politics occupying different positions in the social settings they live. Its engagement with identity construction is informed by the power struggles that are embedded in the material local and situations, and global processes and makes use of a multiplicity of registers and frames of reference (Ismail 2011). In short, for the actors of political Islam, religion is a matter of identity, based on religious faith, whereas, for the actors of Muslim politics, it is a personal or contextual choice. One must understand these two premises according to the contextual

settings of politics and society (Eickelman & Piscatory 1996; Esposito & Voll 1996; Hasan 2007; Ismail 2011).

In this context, this study opens a new window on how Muslim minorities operate their politics in a Hindu majoritarian multicultural society within the constitutional ethos of the country. The politics of the Indian Union Muslim League is an amalgamation of religion and politics. In this context, the thesis uses the term ‘political’ with a broader connotation, that looks not only at the formal aspect of politics such as election, voting, protest demonstration, governing and policy formulation but also informal structures, or in a much broader sense, the ‘everydayness’ of Muslims in Kerala. It is more about understanding the behavioural pattern of Muslims as both in public and private life. Put differently; the study aims to explore how a religious community engages in a democratic space in a secular/post-secular order of the country. Here, the formal political science theorisations would not suffice to explain these acts. Hence, the study on Muslim League’s everyday engagements opens up the possibility of understanding and analysing the critical category of ‘political’ outside the state sovereignty.

1.4 Research Questions

The thesis asks three critical questions to understand the ‘political’ of the Muslim League.

1. How can we think about the political beyond the religious and secular binaries, especially when considering everyday Muslim lives?
2. How could the Muslim League build inroads into a political system that produced complex religious identities and elevated politics of representation?
3. How does the party negotiate with mainstream politics and its stakeholders to hold the political power to formulate policies for the Muslim community in a ‘secular democracy’?

1.5 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study is indebted theoretically to the idea of ‘twin toleration’ propounded by Alfred Stepan. The first in this series of works was “Religion, Democracy and the Twin-Toleration” in 2002, and the subsequent developments analysed religion and democracy of

different democratic countries in comparative perspectives. The twin toleration overcomes the European idea of secularism and demonstrates how social contexts of non-Europeans can reach, with an alternative model, mutual respect between religion and politics. It refers that religious and political spheres 'tolerate' each other as independent domains, while they can still have certain levels of collaboration.

Stepan states that in democratic politics, the separation of religion and state is neither the narrow nor the broader definition of democracy. He points that Robert Dahl's eight guarantees of democracy⁹ are insufficient because no matter how free and fair elections and no matter how large the government's majority, democracy must also have a constitution that itself is democratic, respects fundamental liberties and offers considerable protection for minority rights (Stepan 2005).

Stepan emphasises the importance of the twin tolerations between the state and religions for the development and consolidation of democracy. He has placed two specific patterns of toleration- religious citizens toward the state and the state towards religious citizen- for the successful working of religion and democracy.

- 1). The first toleration emphasises the condition that the freedom of democratically elected officials to legislate and govern without having to confront denials of religion and religious authority.
- 2). The second toleration requires that laws and officials must allow religious citizens to freely express their views and values within civil society and to freely take part in politics. This permission is granted as long as religious activists and organisations respect other citizens' constitutional rights and the law (Stepan 2000, 2012).

It delineates the necessary border that should be maintained between the elected government and the religious groups and the necessary boundary between religious groups

⁹ Robert Dahl, in his work *Polyarchy*, guarantees the following eight components of democracy. 1) freedom to form and to join Organisations; 2) freedom of expression; 3) the right to vote; 4) eligibility for public office; 5) the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes; 6) alternative sources of information; 7) free and fair elections; and 8) institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference, are a necessary but not a sufficient condition of democracy (Stepan 2000: 39).

and the state (Stepan 2014). This refers to the idea that the state needs minimal degree of toleration from religion and religion needs minimal toleration from the state for the polity to be a democratic one. This mutual respect between religion and the state is a pre-requisite for the development and consolidation of democracy. Stepan views that,

Democracy is a system of conflict regulation that allows open competition over the values and goals that citizens want to advance. In the strict democratic sense, this means that as long as groups do not use violence, do not violate the rights of other citizens, and stay within the rules of the democratic game, all groups are granted the right to advance their interests, both in civil society and in political society (Stepan 2000: 39).

According to this, a democratic institution must be free to devise policies within the bounds of the constitution and human rights. The religious establishment should not have any special constitutionally entrenched rights, nor should they be allowed to enforce public policies on democratically elected governments unilaterally. Nevertheless, individuals and religious communities must have complete freedom to worship privately. Furthermore, as individuals and groups, they must also be able to advance their values publicly in society and to sponsor political organisations and movements, as long as their activities do not impinge negatively on the liberties of other citizens or violate democracy and the law. This institutional approach to democracy necessarily implies that no group in the society- including religious groups- can *a priori* be prohibited from forming a political party until they violate principles of the constitutions (Stepan 2014).

Departing from John Rawls, who argues citizens “ought” to take matters of religion “off” the political agenda, Stepan views such advice would make it virtually impossible to socially construct the twin tolerations in those political systems where the citizens are deeply religious but profoundly divided over democracy (Stepan 2014; 271). Hence, he argued that, in a democracy, religion need not be “off the agenda from the society” (Stepan 2012: 90). Twin toleration, according to Stepan, is a more flexible concept than the separation of the state and religion. Many democratic countries such as India (the world’s largest democracy), and many Muslim majority states— Senegal, Indonesia, Tunisia— are following the idea of twin toleration, and they have proved successful in practice. The

political conditions of these states can be referred to as the model of ‘multiple secularisms’ (Stepan 2014).

By analysing Muslim populated Indonesia, Senegal and India, Stepan observes that these countries have some commonalities to drive the concept of twin toleration. They are more officially *co-celebratory* of a wider variety of religions in their respective states and close to the ‘positive accommodation’ model. They follow political leaders’ recognised religious heterogeneity of belief and intensity of practice than following the religious homogeneity model. They often view that the reformism within Islam is necessary and worked in alliances with secular state officials to help implement them. The Islamic activists and leaders are against anti-democratic and intolerant elements within Islam and acted on the principle that they could best contribute to making pluralism and democracy the consensual option in their Muslim majority states by putting *Islamic democratic arguing* on their agenda (ibid).

Hence, it is not necessary to strictly separate religion from politics for the successful working of democracy. Specifically, democracy is not a monolithic idea, and liberal democracy is only one variant of democracy as in the West. Twin toleration does not require less religious belief and practice for the development of either democracy or modernisation. He suggests a ‘positive accommodation’ of religion or ‘positive neutrality’ towards religion. This concept obligates the state to support religion and to deliver the space religion wants to flourish in the state (Stepan 2014).

Stepan curiously asked how the emergence and functioning of democracies in Muslim majority countries remain understudied or untheorised (ibid). Subsequently, he criticised the modernist and essentialist reading that perceives religion as ‘traditional and irrational’, which leads to authoritarianism and an obstacle to the quest for ‘modernity and rationality’ that alone could lead to democracy (Stepan 2012). Further, he criticised the theory of ‘clash of civilisations’ propounded by Samuel P. Huntington. Huntington argued that, as mentioned above, the separation of religion from politics exists only in Western Christianity, and where Western Christianity ends, Islam and Orthodoxy begin. For Huntington, Islam as a religion itself is a problem category, whereas the other great religious civilisations lack the unique bundle of cultural characteristics necessary to support

Western-style democracy. As against this Eurocentric reading, Stepan argued that Islam, Confucianism, and Eastern Orthodoxy were not innately more authoritarian than Western Christianity. According to him, all religions were multivocal; they all had pro-authoritarian and pro-democratic interpretations in religious and political manifestations (Stepan 2002, 2005, 2012).

Stepan questions the misinterpretation of the Western liberal notion of democracy as the separation of church from the state. By substantiating his argument, he further says that none of the European Union (EU) members, including France, has strict separation and all of them have arrived at a collaborative engagement with religion by offering to fund to religious school and education, and other supporting helps. All these Western countries are multivocal with anti-democratic voices and doctrines and pro-democratic perspectives. All these countries follow a 'religious friendly relation' than a strict separation of religion and politics. His extensive field study of different democratic countries proves the religious friendly model of democracy theoretically and empirically. Indonesia, Senegal and India have state -religion- society pattern or religious-friendly model consistent with democracy, which is different from the Western liberal model.

In India, as Stepan views, the religious, caste and community organisations are free to engage with the political structures of the system by forming their different identity groups and movements. By considering the diverse and composite cultures, he termed India as a 'state-nation' rather than 'nation-state (Stepan 2011). The law passed by the state and central legislatures are strictly concerned with the sentiments of the different religious and caste communities. For example, the government declared five paid holidays for Hindus, the majority community. While minority communities such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jain and Buddhist have ten such holidays, all religious communities run schools, organisations, and charities are available to state financial support. Muslims are allowed *hajj* (annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah in the Arabic month of *Dul Hajj*) subsidies, and these positive accommodations of religion are accepted by the majority community (Stepan 2005, 2014).

Following such a theoretical frame of religion and democracy, this thesis argues that the twin toleration works effectively in the political context of India. Hindu majority India has

approximately 200 million of the Muslim population, the third-largest Muslim populated state coming only after Indonesia and Pakistan. It maintains a positive accommodation of religion, religious heterogeneity of belief and intensive religious practices with political pluralism, which allows them to practice twin toleration in which democracy and religion have been mutually constitutive. On the one hand, the constitution of the country guarantees the religious freedom of different communities; on the other, the citizens are abided to follow the constitutional principles. Indian secularism itself is the positive accommodation of all religious beliefs by the principle of the constitution, and this makes Indian democracy more heterogeneous and powerful.

In such a context, this thesis attempts to explore the religious and political engagement of the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala. The politics of the Muslim League can be conceptualised within this frame of twin toleration as it operates religion-oriented politics within the established structures of the constitution of the country, which emphasises the idea of democracy and secularism. The politics of Muslim League operates through the processes of accommodation, competition, and negotiation between religious and secular actors than stringently following either religious or secular.

1.6 Methodology

As a case study, this thesis employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. It is mainly based on extensive fieldwork undertaken during 2015-16 and a few months in 2017.¹⁰ The study utilises both primary and secondary data to understand the ‘political’ in the Muslim League. The study uses archival records such as party documents newsletters, pamphlets, souvenirs and supplements to understand the everyday religion and politics of the Muslim community in Kerala.

The study is conducted mainly by using primary data sources such as participant observation and focused group interviews among the members of the Muslim League. Personal narratives and lived experiences of the first and second-generation of the Muslim

¹⁰ The writing of the thesis was completed by December 2020. Thus the study could not take into account the Local Self Government Election held in December 2020. It would be too early to say whether the election results indicate any significant shift in Kerala’s Muslim politics in general and that of Malappuram district in particular.

League members have been used as one of the major sources of the study to understand the different political descriptions in various periods. The study also includes interviews with local party members, religious and political leaders of the Muslim community in Kerala. Data has also been drawn from their public speeches. I have supplemented my data with the responses collected from around 200 respondents based on the purposive sampling method (both open-ended). Samples are taken from a wide range of party workers, men and women, to explore their day-to-day engagement with both Muslim League and their respective religious Organisations to examine how it influences the overall discourse of Muslim politics, individual beliefs on Islam and democracy. More than that of a quantitative analysing technic, the study mainly works with the qualitative method to understand and analyse the everyday experiences of people.

Various secondary data sources, such as print and broadcast media - books, articles, newspaper reports, and social media- are also used for this study. Vernacular newspapers such as Chandrika (mouthpiece of Muslim League), Madhyamam, Suprabatham, Mathrubhumi and so on are included to understand certain events when there is a dearth of academic works on a specific topic. The official records of the Kerala Legislative Assembly and Indian Parliament are also extensively used to understand Muslim League's engagements in law-making bodies and how it reflects in the community and society. The sixth chapter of the thesis, "The Role of Muslim League in Legislature: Representation and Rhetoric," is mainly based on such governmental records. Further, various government Committees and Commission reports are also used in the study for a more authentic account of many events and incidents. These accounts help us to understand the political actions of the party in a better scientific and systematic way. All translations from Malayalam in this thesis are done by me unless otherwise mentioned. The researcher himself has transcribed all the interviews in this thesis.

1.6 (1) The Profile of the Field

The field study was conducted mainly in the Malappuram district, where Indian Union Muslim League has its substantial political support. Demographically, Malappuram is one of the most Muslim populated districts in India and is the number one Muslim populated

district in Kerala. According to the 2011 census, the population of Malappuram was 4,112,920, of which male comprises 1,960,328 and female includes 2,152,592, correspondingly. Out of this, 70% of the population are Muslims; Hindus constitute 28%, and the Christians comprise 2% of the district's population. The total literacy of the Malappuram district is 93%, in which male literacy is 95.76%, and female literacy is 91.62%. Malappuram is now known for being the first E-literate district in India.

Politically, the Muslim League has been the dominant party in Malappuram since the formation of the district in 1967. The party has 11 out of 16 MLAs (2016 Legislative Assembly) and 2 out of 3 MPs (2019 Lok Sabha elections), Malappuram and Ponnani Constituencies, from the district. The party controls the power in District Panchayat through UDF alliance with a majority of 27 out of 32, of which 20 members are from the Muslim league. Apart from this, UDF grabbed 62/94 Village Panchayats, 13/15 Block Panchayats, and 08/14 Municipalities, in which the party dominates most of these institutions.

The fieldwork is conducted mainly in two Municipality areas (Malappuram and Manjeri) and three Village Panchayath areas (Koottilangadi, Anakkayam, Kodoor) of the district where the Muslim League has a substantial political and electoral majority. In the Local Body Election of 2015, Muslim League alone won 23/40 seats in Malappuram Municipality and 28/50 in Manjeri Municipality.¹¹ In Anakkayam Panchayath, Muslim League alone secured 17/23 seats, while 11/19 in Kodur and 07/19 in Koottilangadi Panchayat. Muslim League had lost the Kootilangadi Panchayat in 2015, for the first time after the formation of the Panchayath. In all these localities, Muslim League remains a strong political and electoral presence.

The research location is not strictly constrained in the above-mentioned localities. The researcher travelled extensively in the Malabar region and personally attended many of its state, district and local conferences, study classes, camps to understand the everyday political engagement of Muslims. The researcher also observed three election campaigns

¹¹ For details, see the election results of local self-government in 2015.
<https://lsgkerala.gov.in/en/lbelection/lbelection/2015>.

of Muslim League- Parliament in 2014, Local Body in 2015 and Kerala Assembly in 2016- to understand various political and electoral strategies of IUML in Kerala.

1.6 (2) Chapterisation

The thesis comprises eight chapters, inclusive of the introduction and conclusion.

The first chapter, “Introduction” seeks to analyse Islam and its engagement with democracy and secularism, and it questions the essentialist reading of Islam and Muslim societies. It also discusses the theoretical framework of the thesis by looking at the idea of twin toleration. The chapter argues that the study of Muslim communities should place them contextually rather than generalizing Islam as a single political phenomenon. It also provides an overall understanding of the thesis.

The second chapter, “Muslim Political Formation in Colonial and Post-Colonial India: An Overview,” focuses on the debates in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It discusses the formation of Muslim identity in India by analysing the character of ‘Indian Nationalism’ and how the Muslim identity was conceived and projected in politics. The chapter argues that the absence of a strong political party like the Muslim League is one of the main reasons for the overall backwardness of the community in the rest of India.

Third chapter, “Muslim Politics in Kerala: Formation of the Indian Union Muslim League,” aims to understand the historical and contemporary socio-political discourses of the Kerala Muslims. The Muslim community consciousness, intra- community conflicts among them, the formation of IUML and subsequent developments are major points of discussion.

The fourth chapter, “Religion and Politics: Everyday Muslim ‘Political’ Engagement,” addresses the ‘political’ beyond the binaries of religious and secular in the everyday context of the Muslim community in post-independence India. This chapter is developed primarily out of fieldwork analysis of the everyday negotiations of people, both in terms of political and religious engagements.

The fifth chapter, “Community Politics in Kerala: Competition, Accommodation and Negotiation,” discusses the nuances of the communitarian politics that is being operated by the Indian Union Muslim League in the state of Kerala. The chapter seeks to look at the

communitarian political strategies of Muslim League wherein Muslims are brought together as a 'political community' irrespective of their theological/sectarian differences.

The sixth chapter, "The Role of the Muslim League in Legislature: Representation and Rhetoric," seeks to understand the significance of IUML's engagement in Kerala Legislative Assembly and Indian Parliament in the formulations of policies for the Muslim community and the larger public. It further argues that the Muslim League has been able to create the Muslim community as a citizen subject in the existing political context of the country.

The seventh chapter, "Conclusion," complicates the existing scholarship on the interconnections between religion, community and politics, forcing us to rethink the modalities of Muslim every day.

Chapter 02

Muslim Political Formation in Colonial and Post-Colonial India: An Overview

The political identity of Muslims in colonial and postcolonial India is a contested topic. The decisive role played by religion in the creation of two independent nation-states—India and Pakistan—defined within the binary of ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ nationalism, respectively, has haunted the very existence of Muslims in India. Their religious and political identity and loyalty to the Indian nation have always been questioned by the dominant groups to protect the idea of a secular (Hindu) majoritarian state (Palliyalil 2018). Based on the religious-secular binary, a new and troublesome category of ‘Indians’ emerged in the public discourses, namely, ‘Indian Muslims.’ This chapter argues that the historiographical sketch of India, both colonial and national, furnished the idea of Hindu nationalism as a normative discourse of the state, whereas the ‘idea of Muslims’ was ontologically kept outside the very idea of ‘Indian nation.’ As Partha Chatterjee observes, the concept of ‘nationalism’ in Asia and Africa, were mostly derived from the European imagination. Chatterjee further views that Indian nationalism was designed by the Bengali Hindu Middle-class elites, which intensified majoritarian nationalism (Chatterjee 1986).

The present chapter, focusing on the debates in the colonial and postcolonial periods, discusses the formation of Muslim identity in India. It does so by analysing the character of ‘Indian nationalism’ and how the Muslim identity was conceived and projected in the realm of politics. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first part, “The Construction of Muslim Political Identity in Colonial India from 1857 to 1947,” analyses the formation of Muslim political consciousness in the colonial period. It mainly discusses the idea of ‘nationalism’ as defined by the Muslim political and religious leaders, particularly the All India Muslim League and *Darul Uloom Deoband*. How these actors, along with the INC, played a significant role in shaping the religious and political identities of Indian Muslims, and how it led to the formation of two independent states—India and Pakistan—is discussed in this part. The second part, “Communalising Muslim Identities in Postcolonial India,” focuses on the religious and political identities of Muslims in the post-independence era. The attempt is to discern the tensions and debates surrounding the Muslim community/identity in relation to partition and issues related to communal violence and the

growth of Hindu nationalism. It further explores how these issues challenge the socio-political life of the country in general and the Muslim community in particular.

Section I

2.1 Construction of Muslim Political Identity in Colonial India from 1857 to 1947

Religion played a vital role in shaping communities and identities in the colonial and postcolonial Indian societies. It has been argued that the sense of Muslim ‘political identity’ in colonial India was formed due to the administrative policies of the British against Muslims and the religious and cultural antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. The increased feeling of oppression in terms of language, culture, and tradition, both from the British and the majority community, made Muslims articulate themselves in varied registers. The sense of a stable Muslim identity consciousness developed further after the formation of the AIML in 1906 (Robinson 1974; Jalal 1994, 2001). This feeling of Muslimness was intensified during the Khilafat Movement of 1920, where the Muslim identity was constituted on dual terms – Pan-Islamic and Pan-National. The political leaders from the community and the *ulama* (religious scholars)¹² played an active role in shaping Muslims as a political community during this period (Minault 1982; Brass 1974). The emergence of Muslims as a political community and the assertion of their identity in the post-Khilafat period posed remarkable challenges in the political context. Thereafter, the political equations of the country transformed into the majority-minority concerns, more specifically to Hindu-Muslim religious antipathy.

Paul Brass (1974), in *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, discusses three movements such as Maithili movement in north Bihar, Muslim separatism in the United Provinces and the formation of a Sikh dominated Punjabi linguistic state in Punjab. He points out how the political elites —Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs— used group identities based on language and religion to ignite communal/national sentiments among people.

¹² The word *ulama* (*alim* singular), historically, has come to mean those versed in the legacy of religious knowledge. *Ulama* are religious scholars with intensive training in religious texts, *Quran* and *Hadith* (jurisprudence). They are accredited with the power of interpreting Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) by the Islamic society. They have long sustained widespread respect as the guardians of the Islamic religious tradition. For details, see (Esposito and Voll 1996; Zaman 2002; Hatina 2010).

According to him, the Muslim separatism in the United Provinces (UP) during the colonial era did not necessarily and inexorably follow out of the objective differences between Hindus and Muslims, but through manipulating the symbols of Muslim unity to preserve the community privileges through political means. The ideology of this movement was not anti-democratic and anti-secular but reflected its class position as most of its leaders were belong to aristocrats, landlords and professional educated middle-class. However, the Hindu- Muslim relations became embittered because the Muslim fears of displacement by the rising Hindu majority and Hindu resentment at the tenacity with which the Muslim elites struggled to maintain their privileges against Hindu interests. Brass further points out that the situation changed in postcolonial India, and there was no effective Muslim leadership available to protect and defend the rights of Muslims. Muslims lost their privileges in political representation and employment opportunities in the government sector. The dominance of the majoritarian community and the spread of Hindi as an official language further weakened Muslims socially and culturally in North India. The frequent communal riots in cities and towns threatened the Muslim lives and properties of both the urban and lower-middle classes of the community.

Francis Robinson (1974), in *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860-1923*, focuses mainly on the nature of separatist politics of United Provinces between the period of 1860 and 1923. The United Provinces was an important religious and political place for both Hindus and Muslims.¹³ Many factors conditioned the antagonistic relationship between Hindus and Muslims in the Province. The question of cow protection, on which the Hindu and Muslim communities differed fundamentally, was one of the major issues that constrained the dialogue between the two communities. The lost status of Muslims in government services due to British administrative policies also played a significant role in separating Muslims and Hindus. The government's rejection of the demand for a full-fledged Muslim University and the diminishing role of the Urdu language affected the Urdu-speaking elites and widened the

¹³ For Muslims, UP was the center of Muslim rule and civilization, the cities redolent with past glories of Muslim power. For Hindus, on the other hand, this is a sacred place, where Ayodhya- the birthplace of Rama - and many other religiously important places such as Kashi, Haridwar and Prayag (the confluence of Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswathi rivers) exist (Robinson 1974: 120-22).

rift between the communities. Robinson further points that the Muslim separatist politics was nurtured not by the Muslims alone, but the British, as well as Hindus, played a major role in this account.

Gyanendra Pandey (1996), in *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, argues that the idea of communalism is a form of colonial knowledge production applied to colonized people. According to Pandey, communalism in India is a particular and paradoxical product of the age of reason (and of capital), which also gave us colonialism and nationalism. Communalism is not an isolated political phenomenon related to one particular community, but the product of many possible sources, including Hindus, Muslims, nationalist spokespersons and colonial administrative officials. Pandey views that communalism refers to a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of a different religious community. He then clarifies that communalism is applied to organized political movements based on the proclaimed interest of a religious community, usually in response to a real or imagined threat from another religious community. Furthermore, the binary created between majority voices as secular and minority voices as communal also strengthened the community divide in the postcolonial Indian state.

Drawing on the above literature, the primary focus of this part is to understand the emergence of Muslim political identity/consciousness in the colonial period and how the idea of ‘nationalism’ was defined and practically attributed by Muslims in their religious and political discourses. It focuses on the political ideas of the AIML and *Darul Uloom Deoband* (also referred to as *Deoband*), the political and religious movement in colonial India respectively and how they represented the interests of Indian Muslims. These Organisations have theorized the idea of ‘nation’ on par with ‘community’ for political and religious reasons. The ‘community’ was conceptualised by AIML, a political party, as a religious category, whereas a religious Organisation like *Deoband* imagined the ‘community’ as a territorial category (Tabasuum 2006; Malik 2008). Hence, it is necessary to discuss the origin and development of AIML and *Deoband* to understand the Muslim political developments in colonial India.

2.1 (1) The All India Muslim League

The emergence of AIML gave new impetus to colonial Muslim politics, particularly in the United Provinces. The party was formally established on 30th December 1906 in Dacca (now in Bangladesh) under the leadership of Agha Khan (1877-1957) with the following objectives.

- 1) To promote among the Muslims of India feelings of loyalty to the British government and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of the government about any of its measures.
- 2) To protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the government.
- 3) To prevent the rise among the Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the other objects above of the League.¹⁴

The establishment of AIML provided a new platform for representing Muslim subjects in government through community leaders. AIML produced many national leaders, such as Muhammed Iqbal (1877-1938), Dr. M.A. Ansari (1880-1936), Muhammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), Maulana Muhammed Ali (1903-1979), etc. and developed community politics until 1947 (Jalal 1994).

In the post-mutiny era, as Francis Robinson points out, the main reason for establishing an exclusive Muslim political party was a resilient British belief that the Mutiny of 1857 was the result of a Muslim plot (Robinson 1974). The British treatment of the Muslims remained under suspicion after the Mutiny, often making them consider the religiosity of Muslims to be a reason behind their disagreement with the British Raj. On the other hand, the elite class of Muslims in the United Provinces felt that the colonial administration was culturally and religiously threatening the community. Subsequently, the introduction of Western education, the enforcement of the same as the prerequisite for government jobs,

¹⁴ To understand more about the All India Muslim League and its activities, see Hector Bolitho (1954), *Jinnah Creator of Pakistan*, and Syed Sharafuddin Pirzada (1982), *Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents (from 1906 to 1924)*. Volume I.

and also government determination to reduce the Muslim presence in government employment left Muslims in a disadvantaged position (Robinson 1974, 2010). The very emergence of a separate Muslim political entity was against the humiliation and threats posed by the colonial administration, as it mostly affected the elitist class of the community.

On 1st October 1906, Lord Minto (the Viceroy of the British government) received a deliberation, called Shimla Deputation, of thirty-five leading Indian Muslim leaders. The deliberation discussed, as described by Agha Khan, the plight of Indian Muslims, and the increased nature of communalism after the “Partition of Bengal of 1905” (Bolitho 1954: 44-45).¹⁵ The deliberation stressed the ‘fair share’ for Muslims not merely by considering the numerical strength of Muslims in India but also with reference to their political importance and the contribution they made in defence of the empire (Hardy 1972). The delegation demanded being guarded against “any political concessions” that might be “hastily made to the Hindus,” which would pave the way for the ascendancy of a Hindu majority” (Bolitho 1954: 44-45) and expected provisions of a fixed amount of Muslims in Municipal and District Boards, and also for the separate electorates. The demands also included that the proportion of Muslims on provincial councils should be established with due respect to the community’s political importance and that a similar arrangement should be adopted for the Imperial (Viceroy’s) Legislative Council, in which the appointment by-election being desired over appointment by nomination (Hardy 1972).

In the earlier period, AIML was concentrated mainly among the affluent section of the community, as Mushirul Hasan points out ‘Indian Muslim Bourgeoisie.’ In the later stage, it reached the common masses (Hasan 1997). Ayesha Jalal observes that the politics of

¹⁵ The partition of Bengal took place on 16th October 1905 declared by the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, which separated the mostly Muslim eastern areas from the largely western Hindu majority: Bengal, Orissa and Bihar on the one side and Eastern Bengal and Assam on the other, strictly along communal lines. Under the British, Bengal was a big state with 78.5 million of population, which included Bihar and Orissa, and Assam (up to 1874). The British argued that the division is mainly for administrative convenience. However, there was a plan in 1903 to unite for largely Muslim regions of the Bengali-speaking area and uniting them with Assam, giving a new province with a population of thirty-one million, of whom 59% would be Muslim. After the partition the population of West Bengal reduced to 47 million in which the Bengali speakers would be in the minority in relation to Biharis and Oriyas. The final result of this divide and rule policy led to protest both from the Hindus and Muslim elites which finally led to the formation of AIML in 1906 and Hindu Mahasabha in 1926 (Hardy 1975: 148-9).

AIML was bounded more by locality and province, and it was explicitly on the communal concerns of the tiny elites (Jalal 1994). Faisal Devji views that the difference between the ‘early Muslim League leadership’ and the ‘Aligarh School leadership’ was that both of them tried to pressurize the government differently for the community. The former stood for commercial and aristocratic causes such as establishing banks, the Organisation of princely politics and the preservation of noble inheritances, etc. On the other, the Aligarh School emphasised societal needs such as liberal education, professional jobs and reservation in the civil service and so on (Devji 2013).

The formation of the AIML helped to constitute the idea of minority politics in an institutionalised manner. From 1906 to 1947, the party had faced many challenges from the Indian National Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and also from the Muslim community, especially from *Deoband*. The INC severely criticized AIML’s demand for separate electorate for Muslims. The Indian Council Act of 1909, popularly known as ‘Minto-Morley Reforms,’ made way for the Muslim demand for the separate electorate against the Congress’s demand for the joint electorate.¹⁶

The entry of Muhammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), popularly known as Jinnah, as a leader of AIML, marked a new beginning in the politics of the party.¹⁷ Jinnah was popularly known by the title, *Qaid-e-Azam* (great leader), and he had claimed to be the ‘sole spokesperson’ of Muslim politics, and later played a triumphing role in the formation of Pakistan (Jalal 1994). When Jinnah became the president of AIML in 1916, INC and AIML signed the Lucknow Pact, where 400 Muslims attended the meeting despite the opposition from All India Muslim Association, a group of conservative Muslim landlords and extremist Congressmen. This pact agreed on the formula of future Muslim representation, where Congress implicitly recognised them as equal footing with Hindus. The pact also agreed on separate electorates for Muslims and maintained that the Muslim minority

¹⁶ Under the Minto Morley reform the electorate was split by the communities, where Muslims voted for Muslim and Sikhs for Sikh Candidate and so on through several small communities, with the general constituencies being largely equivalent to the Hindu community. Where the minorities enjoyed more representation than their strict numerical proportion warranted (Mandelbaum 1947).

¹⁷ Muhammed Ali Jinnah started his political journey as a Congress member. In 1906, before his arrival into Congress, Jinnah worked as the secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji. Jinnah began his political career as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, and then the member of both INC and AIML (Bolitho 1954).

provinces of UP, Bihar, Bombay, and Madras should have 30, 25, 33 and 15 percent of the elected members, respectively. In return, AIML was to support the national aims of Congress. As a nationalist, Jinnah was not in favour of communal electorate, and he did not think of the Muslims as a 'minority,' but an 'equal' part of the Indian body politic. However, as a president of AIML, he had to consider the community's feelings, which he represented (Bolitho 1954; Hardy 1975; Karim 2010).

In the first decade of the 20th Century, the United Provinces Muslim elites or Aligarh Movement was divided into two political groups, Old Party and Young Party. The Old Party consisted of established professionals and landlords. The Young Party, as its name denotes, was constituted mainly by the younger generation, the majority of whom were Aligarh graduates, lawyers, journalists, or government servants. The Young Party was supported by *Darul Uloom Deoband*, under the leadership of Maulana Muhammed Ali and Wazir Hasan (1874- 1947). In 1909, the elitist Old Party lost its grip over AIML, and the party leadership was taken over by the Young Party. When Wazir Hasan got elected as the secretary of AIML in 1916, he pledged to work with other political Organisations for a system of self-government suitable to India. Subsequently, a unity emerged between the INC and the AIML, which further supported the Muslim demand for the separate electorate by the Government of India Act of 1919. This joint venture helped AIML to set its political strategy in UP to develop their politics in British India (Robinson 2010: 212-40).

In a combined study, Gail Minaut and David Lelyweld, "The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898-1920," points out the importance of the Aligarh Movement in the shaping of Muslim politics in India. The establishment of a Muslim university changed the nature of the political and educational prospects of the community. The Muslim University Movement represented the urge to create an all-India Muslim constituency and also to garner support in influencing specific government policies. The supporters of the Aligarh Movement used the university as a tool for popular mobilisations against the British Raj. The movement took up different issues such as AIML, the Khilafat Movement, World War I and II, and the Montford reforms to mobilise the community to show its power in national politics (Minaut & Lelywel 1974).

The next phase in Muslim politics emerged with the Khilafat Movement, which recalibrated the relation between Muslims and Indian politics. The entry of M.K. Gandhi (1869- 1948) into Indian politics by igniting the religious sentiments of Muslims in the wake of Khilafat agitation against the British made a new turn in Indian politics (Ansari 2005). M.K Gandhi's political strategy to merge the Khilafat Movement and Non-cooperation Movements received applause from both the Hindus and the Muslims, especially from the *Deoband*.

2.1 (2) *Darul Uloom Deoband and the Idea of Nationalism*

The presence of '*ulama*' was inevitable in colonial Muslim politics, in which the *ulama* operated their politics, mainly, through an institutionalised manner. The most significant institutionalised form of religious authority was the *Darul Uloom Deoband*.¹⁸ *Deoband* is considered as the representative of Indian Muslims both in religion and politics. They were inclined towards a nationalistic agenda, and thus creating a sense of 'Indianness' among the community. The seminary was founded under the leadership of Maulana Qasim Nanawati and Rashid Ahmad Gangoi against the economic, political, and educational policies of the British Raj. The *Deobandi ulama* played an essential role in nationalist politics with their religious spirit and opposed the foundations of the demand for Pakistan. *Deoband* offers a striking and successful example of the bureaucratization of traditional religious institutions that have been effective in the modern world to nurture the community in a more effective way (Metcalf 1978; Robinson 2010).

¹⁸ *Darul Uloom Deoband* (House of Knowledge), an Islamic seminary founded in 31st May 1867, at *Deoband*, presently, in Uttar Pradesh. It was formed after a decade of 1857 mutiny. The name of *Deoband* represent a distinct style of Indian Islam that emphasized the diffusion of scripturalist practices and cultivation of a spiritual life of the community. *Deobandi* taught the *Dars -i- Nizami* curriculum with an emphasis on the transmitted subjects, *Quran* and *Hadith*; its students were to be beacons of reformed Islam.

Barelvis is another religious seminary founded soon after the *Deobandi*, follow the custom laden or *sufi* tradition of Islam, which seeks the mystical possibility of Islam. Most of the south Asian Muslims are followers of Sufi traditions.

Ahl-i Hadith is another group that deny the legitimacy not just of all practices lacking a basis in scriptural texts, but even of the classical schools of law, stringently insisting on the *Quran* and *Hadith* as the exclusive and directly accessible sources of guidance where there is no place for *Taqlid*. For details, see Francis Robinson (1974). *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, Barbara D. Metcalfe (1989). *Islamic Revivalism in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Robert Hefner (2007). *Schooling Islam*, Muhammed Qasim Zaman (2007). *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, Arshad Alam (2011). *Inside the Madrasa* Arshad Alam.

The leaders of the *Deoband* attempted a combination of faith and politics and sought Islamic reformism in a more active form. The main aim of the Organisation was to guide the community in the religious and political order in the post-Mutiny period of 1857. Due to the bitter lesson from the Mutiny, the *ulama* insisted the community to stop an open *jihad* or militant defiance against the British Raj. The formation of *Jamiat- ul Ulama-e-Hind* (JUH) by traditional Muslim theologians belonging to *Deobandi* School in 1920 helped to instil pan-Islamic and pan-national sentiments among the community and made a way to share political platforms with M.K. Gandhi and INC. The *ulama* advocated freedom for India while simultaneously subscribing to their pan-Islamic identity to protect the Islamic Khilafat in Turkey. *Deobandi ulama* insisted on the community that it is the religious duty of Muslims to fight against the British Raj along with Hindus (Metcalf 1978, 1989; Tabassum 2006).

The leading *Deobandi alim* Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879- 1957) explained the term *qaum*, commonly referred to as the Muslim community, as any group of men and women bond together in their pursuit of a common persistence, which may not necessarily be religion. He did so primarily by citing the examples of common nationalities of Prophet Muhammed and his unbelieving people of Madina (Tabassum 2006). However, the idea of *qaum* propounded by the *Deobandi ulama* was not acceptable to the leading Muslim figure of the time, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), who defined the *qaum* as a ‘nationality based on one religion.’ Iqbal famously propounded that territorial nationality is against the concept of Islam against the *Deobandi ulama*’s advocating of the formation of free and undivided India, which was inclusive of all communities (Malik 2008; Tabassum 2006).

The *Deobandi ulama* asserted the community’s authority in politics at various levels by closely working with the secular leadership of the time. The *ulama* officially announced their political arrival at AIML’s annual session in 1918 and with the Khilafat Movements from 1919 to 1923. The entry of *ulama* made the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation movement more popular among Muslim masses of the country, which prompted both Hindus and Muslims to stand together against the British Raj for the first time in freedom movements (Robinson 1998, 2010).

The theoretical understanding of *Darul Uloom Deoband* was strongly supported by the nationalist Muslims who opposed the separatist demand of the AIML, the prominent among them being Maulana Muhammed Ali and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Maulana Muhammed Ali¹⁹ clearly understood that no anti-colonial struggle could succeed in India without the unification of Hindus and Muslims. He promoted an anti-colonial spirit with national sentiments within the frame of staunch religious belief. In this regard, he extended his support to Gandhi in the Khilafat Movement. In December 1919, there was a joint meeting held in Amritsar, attended by the INC, AIML, the All-India Khilafat Committee and the JUH, which was a rare spectacle of Indian unity. In the meeting, an impassioned Muhammed Ali asserted that “Government did not belong to anybody but to God alone,” and Muslims were “the subjects of God and not of Great Britain” (Jalal 2001: 212). In the later period, Gandhi’s decision to end the Non- Cooperation Movement marked the end of the association between Gandhi and Muhammed Ali. He extended his criticism against Gandhi for his majoritarian attitude, contending that “Gandhi behaved as though he was fighting for the freedom of the only majority community, making the seventy million Muslims depend on the Hindu Mahasabha” (Tabassum 2006: 10). Nevertheless, Muhammed Ali never gave up his dream of Hindu-Muslim unity. He elaborated the idea of religion and loyalty to the nation without any second thought in the fourth plenary session of the Round Table Conference in 1930:

Where God commands... I am a Muslim first, a Muslim second and a Muslim last and nothing but a Muslim... But where India is concerned, where India’s freedom is concerned, where the welfare of India is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second, an Indian last and nothing but an Indian... I belong to two circles of equal

¹⁹ Maulana Muhammad Ali (henceforth Muhammed Ali), was the former president of AIML and then the president of INC, and one of the founding member of Khilafat Movement. Muhammed Ali was an Alumni of Anglo Oriental College and closely associated with the Aligarh Movement and Young Party of that time. After coming back from the Oxford, he served in government department. He was much concerned about the community issues and criticized severely the British policies through his journal called *Comrade* in between 1911-14. The idea of Khilafat Movement was launched by him with socio political implications. The main social interest was to unite Western educated youth with *ulama* to strengthen Islam and to promote Indian struggle for independence. Politically it aimed to attack British policies towards Muslim subjects within their colonies, particularly British policy of disbanding of Islamic Khilafat in Turkey, the highest power center of Islam at the time. For details see, (Bolitho 1954; Hardy 1972; Pirzada 1982; Jalal 1994).

size but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is the Muslim world... we belong to these circle... and we can leave neither (Hardy 1975: 218).

Another prominent figure among the nationalist Muslims was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888- 1959).²⁰ In 1912, he started the publication of an Urdu journal, *Al Hilal* (the Crescent), to create a revolutionary feeling among the masses. Within a few years, *Al Hilal* became the sole expression of the voiceless Muslims in India, who was discriminated from mainstream politics after the Mutiny of 1857. It also tried to bring the rich and poor Indians together, irrespective of religion, in their fight against the Crown (Azad 1959; Hardy 1974; Tabassum 2006). Azad was very critical of the educated elites of Aligarh College, for their conception of *Musalman* was one who was loyal to the British Crown and remained aloof from politics. He repudiated the policy of cooperation with the British and separation from the Hindus as proposed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) and the Aligarh group of Muslim elites and urged the Muslims of India to identify themselves with the national movement and oppose the forces of British Imperialism (Kabir 1959).

The British had an intention to curb the Hindu Muslim unity; for that reason, they encouraged the Hindu Mahasabha and AIML to polarise the community to reduce their national spirit. Azad was very critical of both of these Organisations and treated them as communal. In the year 1920, Azad, along with M.K. Gandhi and Lokmanya Tilak (1885-1920), started mobilising masses against the British on the question of Khilafat. Azad wrote in 1920 *Masla-i- Khilafat* (The question of the Caliphate), which is an exciting amalgam of the orthodox *Sunni* theory of the Khilafat, the pious *Sultan's* theory, and plain political expediency. According to Hardy, Azad argued that,

It is the individual duty (*farz al-ain*) of every Muslim to come to the aid of any Muslim government under attack from non-Muslims, but *a fortiori* it is their duty to do so when the *khalifa* himself is threatened. The *Jazirat al-Arab* (the Arabian Peninsula) must at all times be free of non-Muslim control and if it has escaped

²⁰ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was greatly influenced by the thoughts Muhammed Abdu and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan which shaped him as a political man in his fight to colonialism. Azad started his political career as an Islamist revivalist (*Mujaddid*) and later played a key role for the unification of Hindus and Muslims against the British. For details, see (Hardy 1974; Tabassum 2006).

from the control of the *khalifa* of Islam then it must be restored to him by force, force to which all Muslims all over the world must contribute (Hardy 1974: 192)

As a champion of Hindu Muslim unity, he expressed his commitment to the ideal of unity by saying, “if an angel were to descend from the high heavens and proclaim from the heights of the *Qutb Minar*, discard Hindu Muslim unity and within 24 hours Swaraj is yours, I will refuse the proffered Swaraj, but will not budge an inch from my stand” (Azad quoted by Humayun Kabir 1959: 49). He then clarifies that “the refusal Swaraj will effect only India while the end of our unity will be the loss of the entire human world” (ibid). As a learned scholar of religion and a national leader of the time, he defined nationalism as a territorial category than the religious one. Azad’s idea of nationalism was also favoured by JUH, which officially proclaimed the necessity of territorial nationalism (Tabassum 2006).

The collapse of the Khilafat Movement in 1922 and Turkey’s march towards the secular state one way or the other reflected in Indian politics as well. The failure of the Khilafat movement led to a reassessment of the pan-Islamic dimension of Muslim identity in India. The Khilafat movement created ripples within Indian Muslim politics. On one side, a section within AIML, like the Jinnah fraction, opposed Gandhian politics, particularly the brewing of religion with politics. Jinnah stuck to the method of moderate constitutionalism. On the other, leaders such as Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali, along with a Congress leader Abul Kalam Azad, with the active support of *Darul Uloom Deoband*, helped Gandhi in fusing Indian nationalism with Islamic universalism.

2. 1 (3) Muslim Separatist Politics in the post- Khilafat Period

During the Khilafat struggle and later in the 1930s, AIML virtually disappeared from the political scene. Jinnah left the politics between 1931-35 due to the failure of the Nehru Report of 1928, which refused to address the issue of widespread under-representation of Muslims in education and government professions. However, the leadership vacuum was occupied by Muhammad Iqbal and Liaquat Ali against the British Raj and INC. These leaders raised their demand for a separate Muslim nation, eventually leading to the creation of Pakistan (Minault 1982; Jalal 2001).

The idea of a separate homeland for Muslims was initially carried by the eminent jurist and scholar, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who triggered the idea of the Pakistan movement. Going beyond the simplified position of positing Islam just as an alien force in India, or just one of the major components of eclecticism, He raised substantive issues about ‘Muslimness,’ ‘Indianness,’ and even European- led modernity. Without moving into a rejectionist or assuming the role of an uncritical imitator, he attempted to understand these three trajectories rationally. Besides, he even laid out some potential alternatives for a collective Muslim renaissance (Malik 2008; Cohen 2004). However, in the later years, Ahmad Khan transformed his thoughts and advised Muslims to consider the British government as being the best protector of their interest and shepherded many of them away from the Congress and political agitation of any kind.

The idea of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent was first propounded in the 1930s by Choudhary Rahmat Ali (1897-1951), an Indian scholar from Cambridge University. Along with a group of Indian students, he sketched a plan for the formation of a federation of ten Muslim States, which they named as Pakistan, the land of pure. They managed to get letters in support of their plan from the provinces that had a Muslim majority or a significant Muslim population—Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Baluchistan. However, this proposal was rejected by Muslim leaders of that time such as Badr-ud-Din Tyabji (1844-1906), Zakir Husain (1897-1969), and Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), who were closely associated with the Indian National Congress (Cohen 2004).

Muhammad Iqbal was one of the most prominent figures among the many people who lent support to the demand for the creation of Pakistan. Initially, Iqbal did not advocate the formation of a separate country for Muslims; he proposed one or more distinct components in a federated India. In his 1930 presidential address to the AIML, he argued that Indian Muslims should seek a separate state via ‘concerted political action,’ as political power was essential to the higher ends of establishing God’s law (Ibid: 30). He was of the view that the application of Islamic Law required the establishment of an exclusive Muslim power. In the presidential address of the AIML conference held at Allahabad in 1930, Iqbal clearly stated the need for self-government for the Muslims whether within or without the British Empire.

I have no hesitation in declaring that, if the principle that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development, on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian homeland, is recognised as the basis of a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India... The Muslim demand for the creation of Muslim India within India is therefore perfectly justified...Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the foundations of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India... It is actuated by the genuine desire for free development, which is practically impossible under the type of unitary government contemplated by the nationalist Hindu politicians with a view to securing permanent communal dominance in the whole of India (Pirzada Vol. II 1982: 58-60)

On 28th May 1937, Iqbal proposed that a consolidated Muslim state was in the best interest of India and Islam to solve the problems among the people. To him, sovereignty to Indian Muslims was only possible through political representation, which eventually sustained the sense of community feeling among them. Iqbal pointed out that the creation of autonomous Muslim states will not introduce any religious rule because Islam is not Church but a state. He never supported the idea of a theocratic model of the state. His primary interest was the full and free development of the community on the lines of its own culture and tradition, which was not inimical to others. Muhammad Iqbal's communitarian political ideals, in a way, influenced Muhammed Ali Jinnah, in his second entry to Muslim politics in the post-1930s (Robinson 1998).

Inspired by Iqbal, the demand for a separate Muslim homeland was further carried by Jinnah in the 1940s. He published an article in an English journal *Times Tide*, on 9th March 1940, in which he argued for the necessity of a separate Muslim homeland and criticized the INC for their agenda of majoritarian democracy. For Jinnah, INC's agenda reflected the idea of 'Hindu Raj' which would annihilate not only a large number of Muslims but other small groups in the country, which included sixty million Untouchables, six million Christians, Jews, Parsees, and the domiciled British (Bolitho 1954; Ahmad 1942).

Observing the nature of Congress leadership, Jinnah sharply criticized the Congress for their majoritarian attitude by saying that,

The present leadership of the Congress... had been responsible for alienating the Musalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy that exclusively Hindu... deeds and programs have shown more and more that the Musalmans cannot any justice or fair play at their hands. Wherever they are in the majority... they refused to cooperate with Muslim League and demanded unconditional surrender and signing of their pledges... Hindi is to be the national language of all India... *Bande Mataram* is to be the national song... the Congress flag is to be obeyed and revered by all... the majority community has clearly shown their hand that Hindustan for the Hindus... The present Congress Party policy will be class bitterness, communal war and strengthening of the imperialistic hold (Ahmad 1942: 26).

Reiterating this position, he put forward the idea of ‘Muslim Zion’²¹ or Muslim homeland in his presidential address to the AIML session held in Lahore in March 1940. The concept of Pakistan or the ‘Two-Nation Theory’ was invoked in its full manifestation in this session. In his provocative speech, Jinnah criticized both the Congress and M.K. Gandhi for their Hindu majoritarian attitude and their failure to understand the problems of Muslims. In the speech, Jinnah stated that “we stand unequivocally for the freedom of India. However, it must be the freedom of all India, not the freedom of one section or, worse still, of the congressional caucus, and slavery for Musalmans and other minorities” (Pirzada Vol. I 1982: 329).

The primary demand of the Lahore meeting was the formation of the Muslim autonomous states. Jinnah stated that the Hindus and Muslims were two distinct communities in the country, and it is only a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve into a common nationality. According to Jinnah,

²¹ Zion means “a political form in which nationality is defined by the rejection of an old land for a new, thus attenuating the historical role that blood and soil play in the language of Old World nationalism. Moreover I wish to claim that the Zionist movement leading to the creation of Israel in 1948 was simply one example of this political form, with Muslim nationalism, resulting in the founding of Pakistan a year earlier, constituting both its precedent, and perhaps its closest political relation as well” (Devji 2013: 3).

Hinduism and Islamism are not a religion in a strict sense of the word, but in fact, they are different social orders. It is the dream that the Hindu and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality... Musalman are not a minority, as it is commonly known and understood. Musalman are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homeland, their territory and the state (Pirzada Vol. II 1982: 337-39).

Through his inflammatory speech, Jinnah asserted that Muslims in India are not a minority but a nation. Against the idea of religious nationalism propounded by Iqbal, “Jinnah took his cues from the contemporary internationalist discourse on territorial nationalism and the doctrine of self-determination” (Jalal 2014: 13). Further, he asserts like any other group claiming nationhood, “Muslims wanted their own separate national home in the shape of autonomous states in northwestern and northeastern India, where they were in the majority” (ibid). Unlike Nehruvian understanding of ‘nationality’ as a shared historical entity, nationality to Jinnah was a purely “constitutional category,” which is crucial in the making of a social contract (Devji 2013: 105). On the other, as a theorist of two-nation, Pakistan was never declared as an Islamic state in his period, which would happen only in 1956, eight years after independence. Jinnah’s definition of the Muslim community imagined it to be a political category than a religious- legal or linguistic. To him, the “Muslim community is not an abstract historical political entity but a contemporary political force” (Brass 1991: 94). Jinnah was a true communitarian rather than a religious-nationalist. To him, Pakistan was the need for the community, and the future of its constitution was to be within a democratic frame, not a theocratic line (Brass 1991).

In the 1946 elections, AIML performed better in the Muslim majority constituencies across the subcontinent (Bolitho 1954: Hardy 1972). In the Central Legislative Council, the party won thirty seats and both in provinces and Central Assembly, and it won 439 of the 494 seats reserved to Muslims under separate electorates in the Provincial Assemblies and emerged as a mass movement (Hardy 1972: 236). The AIML, all over India, fought the election campaign on the sole issue of ‘Pakistan’ (Bolitho 1974). After this election, AIML quickly laid a claim to being the ‘sole representative’ of the Muslims, and Jinnah became the ‘sole spokesman’ of the community (Jalal 1994).

The two-nation demand became active after the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, which aimed to discuss the transfer of power from British to Indian leadership by granting its independence (Hardy 1972). On the other spectrum, the communal holocaust also started in different parts of the country during this period resulting in the loss of thousands of lives made an inevitable situation of the partition (Pandey 2004). There was a long term deliberation with Cabinet Mission Plan regarding the transfer of power both by AIML leadership, under Jinnah, and INC leadership, under Nehru, and it finally materialised in August 1947. It is evident that the idea of Pakistan was not a political demand of Muslims alone, but also in part a response to the majoritarian political agenda of the INC leadership. However, in the post-independence period, Muslims have been accused of being the sole reason behind the creation of Pakistan. The large chunk of Muslims who remained in India was conceived within the political category known as ‘Indian Muslims.’

The term ‘Indian Muslims’, which is a crucial part of colonial and nationalist knowledge production, is considered as a ‘troublesome political category.’ In postcolonial Indian politics, the idea of Indian Muslims has been used with a very negative connotation, with the term being equated with communalism and anti-nationalism. On the other hand, there is no such idiom as ‘Indian Hindu’ or ‘Indian Sikh’ and or even ‘Indian Christian.’ Curiously the term captures the burden of Indian Muslims to show their loyalty to the nation and prove themselves as Indian. In post-independence India, Muslims identity has evolved outside the secular political imagination of the Indian nation.

Section II

2.2 Communalising Muslim Identities in Postcolonial India

Scholars have described the nature of Indian society or the community identities in terms of caste and communal categories. The religious antagonism of Hindus and Muslims has been one of the major driving forces of Indian politics, particularly after the 1980s. The idea of ‘majority communalism’ through its promise to establish a Hindu Rashtra (or nation), became an ideological and intimate part of the state apparatus and a legal means through which conflict between groups was placed (Nadheem & Rajan 2007:16). Often politicians use religion and religious symbols as a political tool to appease or mobilise the

different religious communities in their favour (Muralidharan 1990; Hasan 1990; Panikkar 1993; Engineer 1995; Khalidi 1995).

Communalism is a phenomenon in which communities recognise religion as a legitimate marker of political articulation. The communal antagonism between majority and minority, particularly Hindus and Muslims, in the post-partition phase can be seen to have conditioned the socio-political atmosphere of the nation. In such a condition, the minority is found to be left behind in the developmental and modernisation process of the country (Brass 2005; Shaban 2018). In such a context, this part explores Muslim identity and its challenges in the postcolonial era. Precisely, it reflects the socio, economic and political problems faced by the Muslim community due to its minoritarian religious identity.

One of the main reasons for the terrible state of affairs of Muslims in post-independence India is the absence of a strong political party at the national level to consolidate the community and work for its interests. After the Independence, the All India Muslim League disappeared from the political stage of the nation as most of its leaders migrated to Pakistan to protect their religious and cultural identities. The leading industrial families, trading groups, and professional men hassled to Pakistan to expand their fortunes, leaving behind around 35 million poor Muslims, a socially fragmented and economically weakened community (Hasan 1988). It was difficult for the Muslims to constitute a political party as the politics of the country was under the sway of majoritarian political consciousness. The absence of a powerful political leadership for the community exacerbated the situation. As a result of the apparent lacuna, the mainstream political parties have been using the Muslim community as a mere vote bank to increase their constituencies rather than treating them as ‘citizen subjects.’ Abdul Shaban points out that “Indian Muslims have emerged as a ‘mass’ around which the politics of ‘vote bank,’ ‘appeasement,’ ‘foreigners,’ ‘Pakistanis within the country,’ and so on are innovated and played upon” (Shaban 2018).

Indian nationalism is nurtured in favour of majority/Hindu nationalism, where the Hindus are equated mostly with the ‘national subject,’ and minority/Muslim is termed as the ‘communal subject.’ The formation of nationalism in terms of ethnicity or ethnonationalism is animated by fear and hatred of the ‘other.’ Xenophobia and ethnic

cleansing become integral parts of ethnonationalism. In recent years, this ethnonationalism has shown resurgence through increased communal violence on religious minorities, particularly Muslims and claimants of non-ethnonationalism (Shaban 2018: XXI). According to Abdul Shaban,

In India, the developmental divide between the majority religious group and Muslims is on the rate of communal violence and social tension between them have exacerbated. The dwindling confidence of the Muslim community on state machinery to provide physical (at the time of Hindu–Muslim riots) and social security, as also the emergence of ‘Muslim unwelcome’ areas (specifically in cities and towns) since the last two decades, have generated Muslim ‘exclusive spaces’ and ‘ghettos. The spatial exclusions are logical products of ‘social exclusions’ through which ‘metaphorical spaces’ of ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’ are created. The metaphorical spaces are invented and constructed to provide a sense of territoriality, community, and nationhood to the communities. These metaphorical and social spaces matter most to the communities and shape their day-to-day interaction and decision-making. To produce the segregation and exclusion of Muslims, history is manipulated and past discordance circulated to re-live the past as present, especially the partition of the country in 1947. (ibid: 1)

The post-independence Muslim politics, where Muslim socio-political Organisations emerged and disappeared, invites scholarly attention. It was a laborious task to constitute an exclusive political party in the context of partition where the existence of Muslims was in trouble. Some scholars are of the view that the partition limited the political choices of Indian Muslims to three options; i) to join the Indian National Congress or any other secular political Organisations to prove themselves as ‘national Muslims’ to protect their secular identity, ii) to work as a non-partisan pressure group to demand more developmental aides from the government, iii) To form their distinct political party and try to extract the benefit of power by joining the coalition government (Hassan 1990, 1998; Wright 1966).

Most Muslim Organisations in North India, including the *Jamiat-ul- Ulama- e- Hind*, a stronghold traditional Muslim Organisation, under the leadership of Hussain Ahammed Madani (1879-1957), had agreed to go with the first option. JUH advocated the theory of

a social contract between Hindus and Muslims to establish a secular state for the development of Indian Muslims. *Jamiat* chased their traditional nationalist spirit and wholeheartedly supported the Indian National Congress to protect their secular credentials. Furthermore, many of its leaders, such as Maulana Hifzur Rahman (1900- 1962), returned to the Lok Sabha as Congress candidates. *Jamiat* was also a staunch critic of the separate Muslim political formation after the independence as it would invite the communal tag and conflict from the majoritarian community (Engineer 1995; Khalidi 1995; Hasan 1988).

On the other hand, *Jamaat- e- Islami*, a religious Organisation, did not accept the secular parliamentary institutions and composite nationalism. *Jamaat* was acted as a non-partisan in a sense though not a pressure group. Neither did they participate in the political processes of the country for a long time. Though *Jamaat* initially opposed the aspirations of the AIML to establish a separate homeland in the initial days, the founding leader of *Jamaat*, Abul-ala- Maududi (1903-1979)²² and many of his followers migrated to Pakistan when the Muslim state became a reality. However, later they argued that the new state, Pakistan, had been fought and won in the name of the Muslims and Islamic aspirations. It was the duty of the leadership to create a state-based upon Islamic ideology (Hasan 1990).

The remaining leadership of *Jamaat* in India was in a dilemma to continue their politics in the country. Their theological understanding focused on the idea of ‘true’ Islam, which, they believed, cannot be fulfilled in a majoritarian Hindu state. *Jamaat*’s constitution underlines the Organisation’s primary objective as *Hukumat- e- Ilahi* (rule of God), which later changed to *Iqamathudin* (establishment of Islam as revealed by God) in the particular political context of India (Ahmad 2009; Samad 1998). They worked as a purely religious Organisation and never engaged in any political activities. *Jamaat* was not inclined with the ideas of the nation-state, secularism, and democracy, as they believed these concepts to be against Islamic tradition. However, in the 1970s, *Jamaat* agreed to work with

²² Abul- Ala Maududi was an Islamic reformer and writer from a Syed Family. He learned many languages including Arabic, English, and Persian and engaged in streams like religion, philosophy, social sciences and politics. He worked as editor of many Islamic publications like *Al-Madina*, *Al- Jam-e-Yat* and *Taj* and also wrote more than hundreds of books, and he died in 1979.

secularism and democracy of the country and declared that the secular democratic mode in India should endure (Hassan 1988, 1990; Ahmad 2009).

Interestingly, there were many political parties formed, and many of them disappeared shortly. The *All-India Majlis-i-Tamir-i-Mil* in 1954, a Hyderabad city-based political party with a broader political interest was formed to transform the community culturally and educationally in the wake of the Hyderabad Police Action of 1948 (wherein Hyderabad, a Muslim princely state was merged into the Indian Union). The party embarked upon an ambitious program of religious education, welfare, and economic rehabilitation of the community. Politically, *Tamir-i-Mil* supported Congress against the politics of AIMIM in the state and local elections (Khan 1971).

The emergence of another Muslim political party *Muslim Majlis-i Mushawarat* (also referred as *Mushawarat*), under Syed Mahmud and A.J. Faridi in August 1964 in Uttar Pradesh (UP) aimed to articulate the Muslim grievances and seek ways of alleviating them through the processes of the party and electoral politics. It was formed mainly as a response to the failures of Congress in protecting the interests of the Muslim community. There were particular grievances among the Muslims regarding the unequal educational opportunities, discrimination in government employment, and inadequate representation in central and state governments. The increased communal violence against the Muslims in different parts of North India created insecurity among the community, which forced them to think of a separate political formation (ibid).

The *Majlis-i-Mushawarat* was a loose confederation of diverse political interest groups, including former leaders of AIML, *Jamaat-e- Islami*, and some Muslim Congressmen backed by the JUH. *Mushawarat* drafted the people's manifesto in 1967, which effectively summarized the main grievances and demands of Muslims.²³ *Mushawarat* urged Muslim

²³ The draft includes revision of textbooks with a Hindu bias, introduction of proportional representation in elections, protection of the Muslim Personal Law, recognition of Urdu as a second official language in the north Indian states, and preservation of the 'minority character' of the Aligarh Muslim University (Hasan 1988: 2467).

voters to support the independent candidates from different parties who can understand Muslim sentiments. In one way, *Mushawarat* succeeded in stirring up the political and social consciousness among the Indian Muslims but failed to defend INC politically due to the fragmentations within the community. Furthermore, the victorious candidate of *Mushawarat* backed out during the time of policy articulation and implementation. The party also failed to make an inroad into the diverse political geographies of the state (Khan 1971; Hasan 1988; Khalidi 1995).

Contrary to fellow political Organisations of the time, the emergence of the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala and *All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen* (AIMIM) in Hyderabad made its political presence in the country. Both of them could overcome the political challenges created by the political opponents, to an extent, as they made an electoral appeal in their respective states, thus strengthening the community's political consciousness.

The AIMIM in Hyderabad emerged under the leadership of Abdul Wahid Owaisi in the post-independence period. It was the successor of *Majlis-e- Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen* (Association for the Unity) formed in 1927 as a cultural-religious organisation but became increasingly political as Hindu-Muslim tensions grew all over India. Its concerns were mostly territorially confined, and it was formed primarily to challenge Congress's attitude towards the Muslims in India (Khan 1971; Hasan 1990). During the period of Hyderabad Police Action in 1948, one of the chief leaders of Majlis, Kasim Rizvi was arrested, and later released in 1958 on the condition that he would go to Pakistan. Rizvi nominated Abdul Wahid Owaisi as his successor. After that, the party actively participated in the electoral process of the country. Abdul Wahid Owaisi reconstituted the *Majlis-e- Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen* as *All India Majlis-e- Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen* (AIMIM) in September 1961 with a broader political outlook (Wright 1969). After his demise, his son, Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi (1931-2008), popularly known as *Salar-e- Millat* (commander of the community), took charge of the party in 1975. Presently, the party has gained momentum in Indian politics, particularly in Hyderabad of Telangana state under Asaduddin Owaisi, the Member of Parliament, Hyderabad constituency. The main objective of the party is to promote the socio-economic, educational and cultural development of Muslims and the

other marginalised sections of society. Earlier the AIMIM was limited in Hyderabad alone; however, the party has recently expanded its political base to other states— Karnataka, Maharashtra and Bihar— as well.

Indian Union Muslim League, the prime site of analysis in this thesis, constituted in 1948 a distinct political party to attain power for the socio, educational and cultural development of the community. In the context of Kerala, the party survived as a regional force with religious identity and gained legitimacy through its electoral alliances with various political parties and factions by using the communitarian political atmosphere of the state (Hasan 1990; Aziz 1992). The party was formed to achieve the constitutional rights of Muslims and other minority and backward caste/class people of India. The party claims to have always stood for democracy and the integrity of the nation upholding the motto of ‘secularism and communal harmony.’²⁴

Why Muslim leaders of North India failed to consolidate the community politically in the post-partition context? Answering this, Mushirul Hasan and Yoginder Sikand observe that the community had to bear the brunt of the country’s partition. They were accused of being responsible for the partition, resulting in constant anti-Muslim pogroms and pervasive discrimination. As a result, North Indian Muslims were too scared to mobilise politically as a strong force as, they felt, it would invite charges of being ‘communal’ or ‘anti-national’ from the dominant communities of the country. The lack of a strong Muslim political party at the national level resulted in Muslims of north India being politically divided and weakened (Hassan 1998; Sikand 2007).

In contrast to this scenario, Yognder Sikand further views that Muslims in Kerala realized the possibilities of a political party to address their grievances which helped them to better their socio-political conditions. Yoginder Sikand notes that the political parties in Kerala mobilised Muslims as a strong and capable political force. Being taken seriously by different political parties of Kerala, they were able to get many of the community’s demands fulfilled. While in north India, Muslim politics have been signified by symbolic, although not unimportant, issues—Babri Masjid, Urdu, Muslim Personal Law, and so on—

²⁴ The official website of Indian Union Muslim League: <http://iuml.com/aboutiuml.html>.

in Kerala, the Muslim political discourse has been different, focusing more on social and economic issues (Sikand 2007).

To be read in tandem with these developments, the Hindutva groups such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Hindu Maha Sabha attempted to consolidating the majority community. In the initial days of partition, RSS failed to consolidate Hindus as a dominant force in electoral politics. However, RSS has been working as a social Organisation among the Hindus from the 1920s onwards. It represented majoritarian Hindu sentiments through its actions and reactionary politics from time to time. The failure of an exclusive Hindu political formation was mainly due to the large scale of political mobilisation of the Hindus by the Congress, where the party's soft Hindu politics made a hindrance in the way of Hindutva politics vouched for by the RSS. This had been the case since partition at least until the 1980s.

In the second phase of Indian politics, the growth of Hindu nationalism by RSS and other Hindutva forces was accelerated after India- Pakistan war in 1965 and then in 1971. They ignited the Hindutva sentiments by arguing that Muslims are the main threat to Indian nationalism and national integration. They further claimed that the Indian secularism propounded by Nehru/Congress was only to appease the religious minorities than to protect the nation, or Hindus as the spirit of India is always rooted in Hinduism (Puniyani 2018). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the formation of the Janata Party, mainly on the issue of dual loyalty of some members to Hindu revivalist political movements, also led to a struggle for supremacy within the Hindutva camp (Shaban 2018).

The politics of the late 1980s brought out important questions concerning communities and identities. The emergence of an active community and identity-based politics from Dalits and Muslims, particularly in the context of Mandal and Masjid issues questioned the majoritarian political and cultural structures of India. These newly formed identity groups who engaged in asserting their identity further intensified the political situation of the country. These political developments led to the escalation of communal violence against Muslims and other marginal sections of the community by the Hindutva forces.

The main agenda of these Hindutva forces were the ‘Indianisation’ of Muslims, as they believe Indian Muslims as being pro-Pakistanis and as a corollary disloyal to the Indian nation. Scholars view that Hindu nationalists used the burning political issues such as Urdu language, Mandir Masjid issue, reservation policies and affirmative action, cow protection etc. to operate and sustain their politics, particularly in the late 1970s (Engineer 1995, 2000; Hasan 1988; Puniyani 2018; Van der veer 1994).

As a result, the Indian nationalism later developed into a form of Hindu nationalism. As many scholars have observed, among the Hindu nationalist discourse that seeks dominance today, ‘Mandir’ is synonymous with patriotism while ‘Masjid’ symbolizes Muslim aggression (Panikkar 1993; Brass 2005; Muralidharan 1990). As Van der veer observed, “the temple-mosque controversy is only the latest in a series of struggles over the appropriation of religious symbols in which “party politics” is merely involved in a secondary way” (Van der veer 1994: 24). However, these controversies touch the heart of the construction of religious identities, which form the premise of politics in South Asia (ibid). Hindu nationalism claims the legal primacy of Hindus, in which Muslims must accept the centrality of Hinduism to Indian civilisation (Pingle & Varshney 2006). The idea of Indian nationalism was created with the binary of majority and minority discourses in which the majority understood as nationalist and the minority as anti-nationals (Pandey 1999; Van der veer 1994; Brass 2005).

Gyanendra Pandey points out that “many elaborations of the “us” and “them” of Indian nationalism during the late 1940s served to reinforce the conceptual split between the Hindu/Indian on the one hand, and the Muslim/foreigner on the other” (Pandey 1999: 621). He further says that the communal consciousness is discursively forged and constructed in a specific manner by underplaying the heterogeneity of a community and positing the broadest possible solidarity against the group defined as the ‘other’ (ibid). The binary is more and more visible in the everydayness of India. In the context of the inter-religious divide that characterizes Hindu-Muslim relations in India, one might be tempted to accept a simple view that portrays the Islamic perspective as exclusivist and the Hindu one as inclusivist (Mujeeb 2008). As a result, there has been a constant attempt by the Hindutva Organisations and media to project the Indian Muslims as a ‘dangerous’ category.

Considering the Muslims as the ‘other’ produced endless violence over the community, which side-lined Indian Muslims in the post-partition phase (Pandey 1999; Khalidi 1999). It is important to note that the projection of the ‘other’ has been a political strategy of Hindutva to develop and sustain their activities.

Mass media has played an essential role in instigating Hindu Muslim violence in the country. It often established the contingency between specific local issues and master symbols of national imperative. The print media in Hindi and other regional languages has been generally hostile to the Muslims. Varshney points out how the local newspaper propagate false news to ignite Hindu- Muslim violence in the context of Aligarh, North India (Varshney 2001). Moreover, mass media routinely publishes the stereotypes of Muslims as violent and fanatic and question their loyalty to the nation, branding them as pro- Pakistan in spirit.

In tandem with the mass media operations, the communalisation of bureaucracy needs to be connected to understand this network. The police have become increasingly partisan, and instead of stopping the riots, they have been found in a majority of cases to be complicit. When Hindu-Muslim communal conflicts take place, “the police has been more apt to side with Hindus who instigate violence than with Muslim victims. The police force is biased against Muslims, because of its predominantly Hindu composition and because it is protected by higher functionaries from being punished for crimes of commission and omission” (Basu 2018: 35). Like Police, the para-military troops meant to control such riots had murdered hundreds of unarmed Muslims in many cases, such as Moradabad 1980, Meerut 1987 and so on (Khalidi 1998: 28- 29).

The politics of religious demography of the country also played a crucial role in spreading the Muslim hate, further strengthening the Islamophobia in the country. The Hindu majoritarian nature of the state is one of the main reasons for the communal riots in North India, where the Muslims live in severe conditions due to the increased nature of violence meted out towards the community. Violence not only dismantles the material wealth of the community but also weakens its capacity to rebuild its financial strength, pushing its members to assume traditional attitudes and seek refuge amongst themselves, in ghettos, and in religion (Hasan 1998; Engineer 2004; Khalidi 1995).

The majority of studies on communal violence in India highlight the pitiable condition of Muslims in India. The cause of violence is not only restricted to religious and ideological differences alone but various other issues like socio, economic, and political atmosphere. The reach of such violence is spread across local, urban, and semi-urban spaces according to the intensity of the issues. However, most of these communal attacks were concentrated in the industrial/town areas such as Meerut, Ahmadabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jamshedpur, Moradabad, and so on, where Muslims lived in a better socio-economic condition with their trade, business and other establishments (Khalidi 1995; Hasan 1998; Varshey 2002; Wilkinson 2005). Omar Khalidi points out that the riots are often planned by business rivals, politicians, and criminals depending on who is likely to profit from the riots. In many cases, the upper caste Hindu politicians instigate riots as a diversionary move to divert attention from intra-caste conflicts over issues like the reservation in government employment and educational institutions (Khalidi 1995).

Ashutosh Varshney points out that the urban areas have remained the centres of Hindu–Muslim riots, and about 96% of the total deaths from 1950 to 1995 have taken place in towns. According to him, communal riots are an extremely localised phenomenon that occurs in some cities, mainly due to the decline in civic institutions. During the freedom struggle, political parties, trade unions, business associations, etc., had a reasonable representation of Muslims. These institutions promoted significant interaction in formal and informal ways, contained rumours, and built bridges, notwithstanding the existing tensions between Hindus and Muslims over the decades. Varshney further observes that small cities permit greater routine interaction between Hindus and Muslims, whereas there is relatively higher anonymity in bigger cities, making it a challenge to control violence when it breaks out (Varshney 2002).

Contrary to Varshney's observation, Asgar Ali Engineer and Mushirul Hassan contend that there is greater competition between Hindus and Muslims in small- and medium-sized cities when it comes to business and trade. According to them, many of these cities have witnessed the regular occurrence of riots in the past. In medium-sized cities like Aligarh, Firozabad, Moradabad, Meerut, Bhiwandi, Godhra, Malegaon, etc. riots have happened due to economic competition and limited economic opportunities in business and trade

(Engineer 2004; Hasan 1982). Asgar Ali Engineer sees economic competition and business rivalry, electoral politics, socio-economic backwardness, and the rising frustrations among Muslims as the reasons for the concentration of riots (Engineer 2004).

Steven Wilkinson points out that during 1901–2013, a total of 1995 riots have taken place in the towns and large villages of India. He argues that communalism is a political strategy of politicians/political elites for gaining electoral dividends. The violent conflagrations are carried by political elites who play on existing communal tensions to advance their political outline. In this sense, communalism perverts religion and converts it into a political constituency. He further points out that some states encourage ethnic violence, while others try to prevent it depending upon electoral incentives (Wilkinson 2004). It can be said that communalism in India works instead as political exploitation of religion and religious communities where communal Organisations exploit the sentiments of the religious communities for political benefits.

According to Paul. R. Brass, a communal riot is an institutionalised production carefully crafted by vested interest groups. Hindu–Muslim riot is also a matter of public interpretation and labelling that takes place on the streets, in the media, in the legislatures, in cabinet meetings and the civilian and police administration (Brass 2003: 66). When communal violence breaks out, much is almost always said about how the state neglected its duties, or might even have instigated riots, for political benefits. It is the electoral calculations of the politicians in power and the benefits they perceive from the violence that stop the state from containing riots (Varshney & Gubler 2012). This was evident in the case of the Gujarat riots of 2002, where it is also known as a ‘state-sponsored pogrom’ (Brass 2003). Most often, police intelligence either fails to forecast a possibility of riot occurrence or willfully suppress the indication of riot possibility from the authorities concerned. The police mechanism often fails to find the culprits or to prosecute them properly as the police itself is often a stakeholder in the crime (Khalidi 1995).

The continuous communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in the post-partition era and the government’s inability to prevent such planned violence pushed the Muslim community into extreme misery and poverty. Along with these, Muslims are excluded from the benefits of various government schemes from time to time. Over the sixty years of their

rule in India, the Congress government has refrained from adopting positive measures to tackle the socio-economic disadvantages of the Muslims. Their socio-economic situations in India, mostly in North India, has been found worse than that of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. The deplorable conditions of Muslims in India have been brought to light by many Commissions and Committees appointed by the government, in which the Sachar Committee produced a detailed report that indicates a picture of exclusion and marginalization of the Muslims in India.

The Sachar Committee Report (SCR) of 2006²⁵ exposed the pitiful condition of Muslims in India. According to the Committee, the Muslim community exhibits ‘deficits and deprivation’ in all dimensions of the developmental process (SCR 2006: 237). The Committee found that in some regions of India, the Muslim representation in higher education, public employment is lower than that of the Scheduled Castes. They found that the literacy rate among Muslims was 59.1%, lower than the national average of 64.8%. Another shocking finding in the report was that the children between the ages of 6-14 either never went to school or else dropped out at some stage. The report further states that only four percent of Muslims have completed graduation, and only two percent of them complete post-graduation (ibid: 64).

According to the findings of the Committee, the share of government employment among Muslims never exceeded more than five percent. The employment rate of Muslims in the public sector is less than 24%, whereas it is 39% among SCs and STs, 37% of Hindus upper caste, and among OBC, the rate was 30%. The percentage of Muslims in central government jobs is only six percent while that of Hindu upper caste is 42% and SCs, STs and OBC communities consist of 23%. The presence of Muslims in high profile government jobs has been decidedly less, only 3% in the IAS, 1.8% in the IFS, and 4% in the IPS. In any of the government sector, their employment representations are much lower than those of their population (ibid).

²⁵ The first UPA government appointed an exclusive high-power committee in March 2005, under the chairmanship of Justice Rajinder Sachar with six other members. The Committee was formed to prepare a draft on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community. They submitted a comprehensive report to the Prime Minister of India November 2006 (SCR 2006).

The Sachar Committee also found a significant absence of Muslims in law-making bodies, both in the state and central legislatures. The Sachar Committee also observed that the minority communities of India lack competent agency and political importance in the democratic politics of the state, owing to which they do not have any significant influence or opportunity to either change or even influence events which enable their meaningful and active participation in the development process. Out of the 543 Lok Sabha seats, Muslims are elected only in 33, and the Committee warns that the low participation will hurt Indian society and polity in the long run (SCR 2006: 241). Even in the present day, the situation has not changed rather worsened. In 2019, the Muslim representation in Lok Sabha was just 27/542, though it has slightly increased, 22 seats, compared to 2014. The highest number of Muslim members in Lok Sabha was in 1980, in which 49 members were elected from the community.²⁶ The Sachar Committee also states that the situation is also the same in the legislative assemblies, except for few states. It suggests that the state legislative assembly constituencies with considerable Muslim concentration be declared as ‘reserved’ like SC and ST constituencies. Several positive steps have been recommended by the Sachar Committee, such as ensuring adequate opportunities in legislation, establishing a varied index in all jobs, spending more money on improving the madrasas, etc., but all such measures are generally more talked about than acted upon (ibid).

Prior to the Sachar Committee, the government of India appointed the Gopal Sing Committee in 1980 to study the minority communities as well as the SCs and STs. The Committee found that Muslims were educationally, economically and politically excluded compared to other communities. The worst part is that most Muslims live in ghettos across the country with a sense of fear and insecurity. The community also suffers from a perception of discrimination and a sense of alienation. The Commission found a significant rate of under-representation of Muslims in the employment sector (Gopal Sing Committee 1980).²⁷

²⁶ Although population of Muslim in India is 14.2%, according to the census of 2011, “their representation in the Lower House comes to less than five percent of its total composition. And as per the population of Muslims the number of parliamentarians to represent them should be at least seventy.” For details, Muslim Mirror. (24th May 2019). “List of 27 Muslim MPs elected for Lok Sabha 2019.”

²⁷ The committee found that in the central government offices, the Muslim employment rate was just 4.41%, and in-class- I, it was an abysmal 1.61%, in Class- II it was 3.0%, in Class- III the employment rate was

Another committee, the Ranganath Misra Commission, was appointed by the government of India to study religious and linguistic minorities. The Commission was formed in 2005 and submitted its report in 2007. According to the Commission, Muslims in the country is far behind all other religious communities in the areas of literacy and education, industrial promotion, and economic pursuits. In many of the states, Muslims lack the facilities for entrepreneurial ventures and markets. They have not been able even to avail the facilities of *waqf*²⁸ resources in the absence of proper management. They recommended 15% of reservations for the linguistic and religious minorities, of which 10% should be reserved for Muslims in central and state government jobs in all cadre and grades, as their remains high (73%) among the minorities. It also suggested that the remaining five percent should be allocated for all other minority groups (Ranganath Misra Commission 2007).

All the above-mentioned commissions identify Muslims in India as a marginalised, excluded and isolated community. Indian Muslims are often considered as a mere tool for the political parties, and they count them only as vote banks to increase their constituencies but not as a citizen subject. Sachar Committee points out that Muslims, “they carry a double burden of being labelled as “anti-national” and as being “appeased” at the same time. While Muslims need to prove on a daily basis that they are not “anti-national” and “terrorists”, it is not recognised that the alleged “appeasement” has not resulted in the desired level of socio-economic development of the Community” (SCR 2006: 11). In general, Muslims raise the issue of always being looked upon with a high degree of suspicion not only by the individuals in the society but also by public institutions and government as well.

The sad state of the Muslim community’s social ‘security’ is reflected in the increased ghettoization, mainly in North Indian states. The communal violence after the partition, which intensified further after the 1980s, resulted in the perception of Muslims as dangerous subjects, which affected the developmental realms of both at the emotional and physical levels. For instance, Ram Puniyani observes that the forced ghettoization of the

4.41%, and in Class IV it goes 5.12%. On the other, in the state government services, Muslims constituted 6.01% of total employees, class-I, the rate was 3.03%, Class- II 4.62%, and in Class IV, the number was 6.35%. The number of Muslim judges in different courts of the country was only 4.52%, and interestingly there were no single Muslim judges in the High Court of any state (Gopal Sing Committee 1980).

²⁸ The term *Waqf* denotes “an Islamic endowment of property to be held in trust and used for a charitable or religious purpose.” See Hans Wehr. (1976). *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*.

community cut them off from social interaction and social facilities like education, trade and banking and other related developmental realms. Today, Muslims are at a crossroads where, on the one hand, they are already being treated as ‘second class citizens’ in certain states. On the other hand, there is an overall communalized atmosphere in the country, due to which many feel intimidated and marginalised (Puniyani 2018).

Conclusion

Religion played a significant role in constituting the Hindu Muslim religious and political identities. The partition not only made a geographical bifurcation of India and Pakistan but a communal division of two major religious communities of the region, which then redefine the concept of nationalism in the post-independence context. The increased level of communal division among Hindus and Muslims is reflected in all sorts of religious and national imagination. As a result, the nationalism in India has been formulated through the interest of majoritarian understanding in the postcolonial era.

Although the constitution of the country asserts the ideals of secular democracy, however, in practice, Indian secularism is firmly majoritarian, and even the process of Democratisation in India has been driven by violent anti-Muslim populism. This is mainly to appease the majority community and to construct a feeling among them that the country belongs to their aspirations. The populist rhetoric of Hindu nationalists rejects Muslims from the imaginary domain of the Indian nation. Presently, the Muslims in India are going through extreme difficulties due to the political dominance of the Hindutva group. The community is more and more forced to prove their loyalty towards the country. On many occasions, the law-making bodies also target them to appease the majority for political successes.

Chapter 03

Muslim Politics in Kerala: Formation of the Indian Union Muslim League

The chapter traces the trajectories of Muslim identity formation in Kerala right from the arrival of Portuguese to the present by mainly focusing on the Indian Union Muslim League. Active Muslim political participation in Kerala can be found from the fourteenth century after the Portuguese invasion of the Malabar Coast. The series of resistance against colonial powers like Portuguese, Dutch, French and British shaped the Mappilas as a political and religious community in the colonial state. In the post-colonial era, the Muslims continued their political legacy by forming Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and further strengthened the political possibilities of the Muslims in South India, mainly in the state of Kerala. Presently, the Muslims, along with Christians, are powerful minority communities with its strong political network.

Roland. E. Miller observes that the Muslims of Kerala are “the unknown Muslims” among historians (Miller 1992: xv). The scholars prove that the Muslim community in Kerala that emerged through maritime trade is the earliest Islamic community in the Indian sub-continent. It is said that soon after the formation of Islam, the Arabs and Muslims carried a cordial religious-cultural relation with the Hindus of the region (Miller 1992; Makdhoom 2007; Bahauddin 2004). However, by nullifying the Islamic/Muslim community of Kerala, the popular history has always depicted the rise of Islam in the Indian subcontinent through the armed struggles of Muslim invaders, which demonized the Muslims as a threat to Indian society and culture.²⁹ Even at present, the cultural and political impact of such writings is apparent in India.

This chapter aims at navigating the historical and contemporary socio-political discourses about the Kerala Muslim community. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first

²⁹ James Mill (1817). *The History of British India* (Vol. 3). He categorized the three variants of Indian history: Hindu, Muslim and British period. He was of the opinion that the Islamic rule in India was a clear despotism of the Muslim rulers over Hindu society. The hegemony of Muslim rulers completely undermined the age-old Hindu culture in India. He further adds that the rule of British in India is a real civilized period in the epoch of Indian history. Similarly, the Hindu nationalist narrations was also replicated the same, which further created a divide between Hindu and Muslims. For details, see M.S. Golwalker (1966). *Bunch of Thoughts* and V.D. Savarkar (1984). *Hindu Rashtra Darshan (Collected Speeches)*.

section, “The Emergence of Muslim Political Consciousness in Kerala,” deals with the formation of Muslim community in Kerala and their struggles for survival from the invasion of the colonial powers from the 16th century to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. The second section, “Muslim Organisations and the Community Relation,” focuses on different Muslim community Organisations and their conflicting and complementary theological and political interests. This section also discusses the emergence of the All India Muslim League in the Malabar region. The third section, “Formation of the Indian Union Muslim League,” discusses the formation of IUML in the post-independence context and how the party has been engaging with the Mappilas/Muslims who were separated from the mainstream as a result of the Malabar Rebellion. This section also discusses the electoral performance to understand the political development of IUML.

Section I

3.1 The Emergence of Muslim Political Consciousness in Kerala

The Arabian Sea played a significant role in the political history of Muslims in Malabar. The region’s contact with the Arabs through maritime trade was the primary reason for the advent of Islam in Kerala. As Miller quotes, “the sea has been the permanent and decisive factor in the history of Kerala because foreign religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam came to Kerala through the Sea” (cited in Miller 1992: 2). The available literature helps to assume that Islam was manifested in Kerala during the time of the Prophet Muhammad himself.³⁰ This was facilitated by Kerala’s ample trade relation with Arabia, Persia and Babylonia, and many other countries from the 1st century AD onwards. Along with the trade relation, the Arabs also peacefully preached Islam in Kerala (Miller 1992; Bahaudheen 2004).

The Malabar, with plenty of spices, timber and other resources, was a prominent mercantile hub in Kerala. This mercantile activity was mainly centred on the coastal belt,

³⁰ Scholars argued that Islam as a religion started at the time of Prophet Muhammad, i.e. in the seventh century itself. There are, indeed, some differences of opinion among the scholars, who argued that Islam came to Kerala only in ninth century or twelfth century. For details, see Zainuddin Makdhoom (2007). *Tuhfat-al- Mujahidin*, Roland E. Miller (1992). *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* and K.M. Bahaudheen (2004). *Kerala Muslimgal: Cheruthu Nilpinte Charitram*.

predominantly controlled by Arabs with the consent of the local ruler, Zamorins,³¹ of the region. They were fascinated and impressed by the honesty and truthfulness of the Arabs in their commercial and social activities (Innes 1908; Miller 1992). The coastal trade and affluence of Malabar under the Zamorins came to the notice of the Portuguese, which in turn, triggered their attraction to the region.

The Portuguese were the first Western colonial enterprise whose engagement with Malabar coastal trade and political affairs began in 1498. After a few years of trade relations, the Portuguese gradually brought their dominance over maritime trade in Malabar Coast and then built an imperial power in the region (Dale 1980; Panikkar 1989; Miller 1992; Bahaudheen 2004). Richard Eaton rightly remarks that the Portuguese came as merchants, but in the end, they behaved like rulers of the region (Eaton 2000:93). The strategy of the Portuguese was to divide the Hindus and the Muslims into separate religious domains for their political and economic supremacy, which later in a way, destroyed the communal harmony of the Kerala society (Miller 1992; Bahaudheen 2004).

For the expansion of its empire, the Portuguese deployed its naval force against Muslims, who were the leading the marine force of Zamorins. Sheikh Zainuddin Makdhoom II traces the Portuguese invasion and its political impact on the Muslim community in his '*Tuhfat-al-Mujahidin*' - possibly the first historiographic record on Kerala.³² As a *qazi* (religious leader) of Ponnani Masjid, Makdhoom was the first to use his religious position to raise a dissenting voice against the Portuguese. He invoked the value of *jihad* (Holy War) against

³¹ The Zamorins, *Samudiris* in vernacular, constituted a great dynasty in the northern parts of Kerala, predominantly located at Calicut. It was a princely state which was formed only after the Chera Empire and sustained up to the 20th century (Logan 1989: 276).

³² Zainuddhin Makdhoom II was a great Islamic scholar, who was educated from Ponnani *Dars* (one of the oldest Muslim religious seminaries in Malabar), and also from Makkah. *Tuhfatul- al- Mujahidin* is considered as an important historical document, commonly believed to be written in early decades of the 16th century, i.e. around the time of the Portuguese intervention in Malabar, particularly on Muslims. The work has four parts and its preface educates Muslims on the necessity of struggle against the Portuguese. In the first part, it recommends and justifies the right of *jihad* against the Portuguese. The second part describes the history of the origin and spread of Islam in Malabar, while the third part explains the various socio-religious and cultural customs and traditions of the Hindus of Kerala. In the last part, the author narrates the arrival of the Portuguese to Kerala and their various activities against the Muslims of the region and points out the resistant made by Muslims along with the *Samoothiri* of Calicut. This work has been translated into many foreign and local languages such as Latin, French, English, Czech, Tamil, and Kannada etc. To understand more about *Tuhfat- al- Mujahidin*, see the translated versions of his work done by many scholars (Rowlandson (1833), Husayn Nainar (2007) and Hamza (1996).

colonizers to defend one's religious and political rights by citing the *Quran* and *Hadith* to support his call (Hamza 1996). Scholars argue that there was no history of any violent action, defensive or aggressive, involving the Muslims before the invasion of the Portuguese. It was only in the colonial period that they were subjected to oppression by the Portuguese, who inflicted atrocities on the Mappilas, which in turn, resulted in Mappilas revolting against them (Miller 1992; Bahauddin2004).

The Portuguese atrocities against the Mappilas made them a more united community, forcing them to adopt a militant way of resistance to secure their faith, economy, and tradition. The religious leadership of Makhdhoom also played a crucial role in the formation of the Muslim identity consciousness. The political power of religious leadership and their community affinity fostered a new form of identity formation among Mappilas in which religion played an important role. In the later period, the struggle against the Portuguese was supported by Kunjali Marakkar,³³ a great warrior who moved from Cochin to Calicut in support of Muslims and Zamorins (Kurupp 1997). The politics of resistance by the Muslim community made a great hurdle for the Portuguese to materialise their political and commercial dreams and finally made them leave the region.

After the Portuguese, the arrival of other colonial powers— the Dutch in 1663 and the British in 1659— brought remarkable changes in Kerala in general and to the Muslim community in particular. The British established its political supremacy in Malabar by defeating Tipu Sultan (Muslim ruler of Mysore) in the third Anglo Mysore war of 1792 (Kunji 1989). The British realised that the revenue from various sources, mainly from agriculture, was more profitable and durable than maritime trade. The restoration of excess agricultural tax removed by Tipu Sultan in his regime forced the Mappilas to continue their struggle against both the British and the local landlords. All these conflicts were rooted in the complex interrelationships between economic discontent and religious ideology. It is said that from 1792 to 1921, there were 83 major and minor revolts against the British in

³³ Marakkar, from a predominant Muslim family in Cochin, was a great patriot, with strong political and financial background. When the Cochin Raja established friendly relationship with the Portuguese, Kunjali Marakkar moved to the Mappila centre of Ponnani to support the Muslims and Zamorins from the Portuguese. For details, see Kurupp K.K.N. (1997). *India's Naval Tradition (The Role of Kunchali Marakkars)*.

which the ‘Malabar Rebellion’³⁴ was marked as one of the foremost political events in Mappila history (Logan 1989; Ansari 2005; Miller 1992).

It is important to note that many of these protests were led by *ulama* and *thangal*³⁵ leadership of the Muslim community. Umar Qazi (1757-1852) of Veliyancode of Malappuram was the first person to initiate a non-taxation campaign against the British government, almost a century before M.K. Gandhi’s Non- Cooperation Movement of the 1920s. Mamburam Syed Alavi Thangal and his son, Syed Fazal Pookoya Thangal, stimulated anti-British sentiments among the Mappilas through their influential writings and oratory skills.³⁶ As a reaction to this, the British officials branded Syed Fazal as a ‘dangerous man’ and exiled him from the region in 1852 (Miller 1992; Dale 1989).

The bloodiest event in Mappila history was the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, to which the British responded ruthlessly. The event resulted in hundreds of death, casualties, and thousands of people being exiled from Malabar. Varian Kunnath Kunnahamad Haji (died in 1922) and Ali *Musliar* (1861- 1922) were two influential Muslim religious-political leaders who led a series of armed movements against the British during this period. Ali Musliar worked as the *qazi* of Tirurangadi Masjid- the centre of the anti-British revolts. Through his oratory power, he inspired hundreds of people to fight against the British and the landlords. It is said that Kunnahamad Haji set up a parallel government, known as ‘Malayalanadu,’ covering Eranad and Valluvand taluk areas of Malabar and issued passports to those who wished to travel beyond his ruling area. The British government executed both Ali Musliar and Varian Kunnath in 1922 (Dale 1989; Bahauddin 2004).

³⁴ Malabar Rebellion of 1921 was an unorganized anti-British and anti-feudal Mappila uprising, or class struggle, against the inhuman policies. It was a series of revolts which spanned between 1836 and 1921. It is obvious that the colonial writings are very enthusiastic to draw the picture of religious fanaticism of Muslims as the main reason for the revolt. Marxist writers such as K.N. Panikkar (1989) states that it was a peasant revolt, even though they did not undermine the role of religion. M.T. Ansari (2008) is very sceptic about why scholars symbolize or reduce Malabar Rebellion only in the form of religious fanaticism and peasant revolts.

³⁵ *Thangal* is a vernacular term to address Syed (the people with Prophetic genealogy) in Kerala. Literally, this word means ‘lord, master’. Syed is used all over the Muslim world to address the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through his cousin and son in-law, Ali, the husband of Fatima (daughter of Prophet Muhammad), and their children, Hasan and Hussain (Khalidi 2004).

³⁶ *Saiful Bathar* was a compilation of religious fatwas (religious edict) in the form poems, which call the Muslims to fight against the British. He insisted that it is a religious duty, as Makdhoom did, of Muslims to fight against them. Later, British confiscated and banned it. *Udathul Umara* is a warning to the people about the danger of British and the necessity to defend them (Miller 1992; Kareem 1997).

Over the course of time, there were many other prominent Muslim leaders such as Panakkad P.M.S.A. Pookoya *Thangal* (died 1975), Muhammed Abdu Rahman (1898-1945), E. Moidu Moulavi (1886-1995) etc. who were capable of taking over the community leadership.³⁷ It can be argued that the Malabar Rebellion was a turning point in the political history of the region, in which religious leaders played an essential role in moulding the political consciousness among the community. The religious leaders or ‘traditional intellectuals’ were comprised not only by *ulama* but also by less important equally influential religious functionaries like *musaliars* and *qazis*. They shaped the religious and political outlook of rural Mappilas, which made them aware of their rights. Their influence was not limited to priestly matters alone but extended to the temporal life of the people as well (Panikkar 1989).

The Mappilas’ vigilant political activity, as a community, tapered after the Malabar Rebellion. Two significant elements caused the diminishing role of Muslim politics in public discourse. The first one was the active repressive measures taken by the colonial government to cease the political agitations of Mappilas. For instance, in the post-rebellious phase, the British did not allow them to carry out any relief measures in the Muslim-populated areas of Malappuram, which pushed them into severe poverty and misery. The second reason was that the Mappilas had been politically betrayed by the Indian National Congress and M.K. Gandhi. Both M.K. Gandhi and INC, along with Maulana Shaukat Ali (1873- 1938), a prominent Muslim nationalist Congress leader of North India, inspired Mappilas to fight against the unjust British to defend both the homeland and the Ottoman Khilafat of Turkey. Gandhi also urged Hindu brothers to join hands with Muslims to strengthen their struggle (Panikkar 1989; Bahaudheen 2004).

The *ulama* were the backbone of the Khilafat Movement in Kerala/India, who effectively channelized the religious sensibilities and the spirit of nationalist political ideology. There

³⁷ For detailed historical record about the Mappila/Muslim engagement in Kerala politics, William Logan (1879). *Malabar Manual I&II* by), K.N. Panikkar (1989). *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar, 1836- 1921*, Ibrahim Kunj (1989). *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture*, Roland E. Miller (1992). *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study of Islamic Trends*, K.M. Bahaudheen (2004). *Kerala Muslimgal: Cheruthu Nilpinte Charitram (Muslims of Kerala: History of Resistance*, M.T. Ansari (2005). “Refiguring the Fanatics: Malabar 1836- 1922” in *Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History* (Subaltern Studies XII).

were two reasons for ulama's engagement in the Khilafat struggle: to protect the homeland and save Ottoman Khilafat from the British Empire. Mappilas also perceived the Khilafat struggle as an extension of their ongoing struggle against the British. However, once the Malabar Rebellion went beyond the expectation of Gandhi and Congress, they accused Mappilas of being 'undisciplined and mad' fellows (Panikkar 1989), and went on to state that Mappila Revolt is nothing but a regular act of 'Mappila fanaticism' (Ansari 2005).³⁸ According to Gandhi,

Our Moplah brethren,' 'undisciplined... all these years, have now gone mad.' 'The Moplas are Muslims. They have Arab blood in their veins. It is said that their forefathers came from Arabia many years ago and settled in Malabar. They are of a fiery temperament and are said to be easily excitable. They get easily enraged and resort to violence in a matter of seconds. They have been responsible for many murders... They always set out for fighting with a pledge not to return defeated... It is not clear as yet what led to their present outburst (cited in Ansari 2005: 73).

The anti-Mappila attitudes of Congress forced Mappilas to move away from the party and nationalistic politics. According to K.N. Panikkar, "the Mappilas nursed a sense of betrayal, for the Congress leaders had turned away from them at the time of their distress, they were left to fend for themselves when the police unleashed a reign of terror... No legal and material assistance was proffered" (Panikkar 1989: 188). In December 1921, the INC conference held at Allahabad passed a resolution that the INC and Non- Violence movements were not responsible for the Malabar Rebellion. However, this anti-Muslim attitude of Congress made it feasible for the All India Muslim League to establish their base among the Kerala Muslims in general and Mappilas in particular (Kurupp 1998). Subsequently, it also resulted in the formation of the Indian Union Muslim League in the post-independence scenario.

The socio-political situation of Mappilas after the rebellion was worse than ever. Most of the Mappila leaders of the revolt were either executed or exiled to Andaman and Nicobar

³⁸ In the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, according to official sources, 2,337 rebels killed, 1, 652 wounded and 45,404 imprisoned, unofficial records put the figures of death 10,000 dead, 50,000 imprisonment, and 20,000 exiled and 10,000 missing cases (Ansari 2005).

Islands. Along with the marginalization of the community, the British and nationalist discourses treated Mappilas as ‘outside the history’ and ‘not full-fledged citizen subject’ (Ansari 2005). Neither the Colonial nor the Marxist framework and the Hindu cultural framework is adequate on its own to understand the rebellion and political articulations of Muslim identity. While the colonial historians portrayed Mappilas as aggressive, fanatical and militant. On the other hand, the Marxist scholars reduced religious consciousness to mere ‘false consciousnesses by ignoring the role of Mappilas in the freedom movement. The Mappila fight against the feudal lords and British strengthened the community identity of Muslims in the Malabar (Ansari 2005, 2008; Salah 2013). As Mushirul Hasan observes in the context of British colonialism in India, “colonial knowledge created and perpetuated myths and conjured up stereotypical images of peoples and countries as part of an imperial design of fortifying the ideological edifice of the Empire” (Hasan 1997:31).

It can be argued that there are two aspects through which Mappilas dealt with colonialism: religious and political. Rather than being two separate domains, we see these often enmesh and intertwine, unsettling the religious-political binary, which is often employed to understand the community. In the post-1921 phase, the Mappila history is complicated by the fragmented communitarian identities based on their theological positions such as *Sunnis*, *Mujahid* and *Jamaat-e-Islami* etc. This fragmentation helped them, in a way, to form a Muslim religious and political consciousness in a more institutionalised manner.

Section II

3.2 Muslim Organisations and the Community Relation

Malabar has witnessed several socio-political reform movements among Muslims, although reformism had its roots in the southern parts of Kerala. Community reform was the primary concern of these movements; however, the abysmal theological differences among them led to the emergence of many reformist and revivalist movements or sectarian divisions within them, which, one way or the other, helped to strengthen the community post- Malabar Rebellion context. In this backdrop, the terms ‘reform’ and ‘revival’ would signal attempts from the community to embrace a progressive, civilised and even ‘secular’ face (Mujeeb 2014).

As Barbara D. Metcalf observes, the nature and importance of Muslim reform Organisations in the context of North India are applicable in Kerala as well. Metcalf points out that there is no single appropriate rubric under which these movements to be placed. By looking at the centrality of the movements, they are often identified with qualifiers such as resistance, rebellion, social reform, peasant or working-class, nationalist, movement of religious syncretism, accommodation and modernisation and so on (Metcalf 1989). Metcalf adds that “the movements have been alike in being led by religious leaders, men of learning and piety who symbolize the aspirations of the community and who come to the fore in what are seen as times of crisis” (Metcalf 1989: 6).

To symbolize the community’s aspirations, as Metcalf points, the characteristics of such movements in Kerala can be categorized in their historical trajectories as socio-religious, resistant, nationalist, religious syncretism, and modernisation, in which their religious authorities influenced them the most. The competition among the Muslim community in Kerala to prove themselves as bearers of authentic Islam has ignited many theological/ideological debates. The theological debates between these sects focus on the question of ‘tradition’ vs ‘modernity’ between *Sunnis* on the one hand; *Mujahid* and *Jamaat-e-Islami* on the other.³⁹ The theological debates and discussions of the community in a way helped them to understand the institutionalisation and peculiar characteristics of the community. The intention here is not to explore the deep theological divisions among the community; rather understand their political engagement, which contributed to the formation of Muslim politics.⁴⁰

³⁹ The tradition and modernity among *Sunnis* and *Mujahid* can be drawn in two ways. The former denotes the debate on true Islam in which each group claim they are the patrons of pure Islam. The latter is mainly based on the secular education, including the learning of English, which *Sunnis* considered as an imposed cultural dominance of Western over the community. *Sunnis* were also not in favour of women education as well in some point of time. However, the *Sunnis* changed its attitude over the course of time when the modern education considered as the core of the society.

⁴⁰ To understand the theological divisions among Muslims, see, Abdul Samad (1998). *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20th Century*, Roland E. Miller (1992). *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*. Osella and Osella (2008). “Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India,” Mujeeb Rahman Vazhakunna (2014). *Reform and Revival as ‘Revitalization’: An Appraisal in the Kerala Muslim Context*.

3. 2 (1) *Origin and Growth of Community Organisation*

*Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham*⁴¹ (hereafter Aikya Sangham) was one of the early institutionalised community Organisations among the Muslims of Kerala. The Organisation was set up primarily to promote a united uplifting of the community and to bring about reforms, particularly the advancement of modern education along with striving to overcome what they deemed as superstitious and un-Islamic practices and beliefs of the Muslim masses (Miller1992; Osella & Osella 2008). Aikya Sangham has been viewed as a ‘progressive’ Organisation in Islamic thought that sought to wed the ideals of ‘modernity’ with tradition, producing a ‘superstition free’ Islam based on the ‘rationalist thought’ (Samad 1998). Aikya Sangham is often considered as the Kerala counterpart of the *Ahl-i-Hadith* of North India.

The discussion of Aikya Sangham helps us to understand the sectarian divisions among the Muslims, principally on the idea of ‘reformism.’ Modern secular education of the community, including that of women, was one of the core values of their reformist ideals (Samad 1998; Kurupp and Ismail 2008; Mujeeb 2014; Osella and Osella 2008). The major differences among the ‘traditional’ *Sunnis* and ‘modernist’ *Mujahids* lie in theological understanding itself, namely *istighasa*, *tawassul* and *taqlid*.⁴² According to *Mujahid*, *istigasa* and *tawassul* are *shirk* (idolatry or polytheism), and they strongly object the practices of *nercha*, *mawlid*, *ratheeb* etc. which are performed in the name of Prophet and saints. However, this practice been the custom and practices of *Sunni* Muslims in Kerala over many years. In addition to observing the basic requirements of religious practice -

⁴¹ Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam was formed at Kodungallore in 1922, in the southern part of Kerala, with the effort made many educated leaders among the community such as Manappattu Kunju Muhammed Haji (1890-1959), K.M. Seethi Sahib (1899-1961), K.M. Moulavi (1873- 1932) and E. Moidu Moulavi (1886-1995) etc. Before it there was another small Organisation Called *Nikshpaksha Sangham* formed by some of the above leaders to settle the dispute between families of the community and it was, later, converted in to Aikya Sangham (Samad 1998).

⁴² *Istigasa*, means to pray or seek help. It means, technically, to invoke help or protection of super natural forces, dead or alive including prophets and saints. *Tawassul*, means to secure proximity or support in Kings Darbar. According to *Mujahid*, it used to get the intercession of the prophet and saintly person in seeking the blessings of *Taqlid* is a matter related to the matter of the acceptance of any of the four Islamic School of thought (Known as *madhab*, namely *Shafi*, *Hanafi*, *Hambali* and *Maliki*) and which has been a matter of dispute among the scholars all over the Islamic world since the very inception of the faith in the world.

five-time prayers, fasting, *zakat* (compulsory alms) and pilgrimage – Muslims have traditionally observed many other forms of religious devotion (Mujeeb 2014).

The reformists who proposed a ‘puritanical Islam’ that was modernized was popularly known as *Wahhabist*⁴³ (Samad 1998; Osella & Osella 2008). To engage actively in reformism and the everyday religious life of the community, Aikya Sangham formed their *ulama* wing called *Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama* (KJU), in their second annual conference held at Alwaye in 1924.⁴⁴ Since its inception, it has been actively engaged in the political aspects of the state. Many of its founding leaders, such as K.M. Seethi Sahib, E. Moidu Moulavi, Muhammad Abdu Rahman, etc. actively engaged with the INC during the Malabar Rebellion. Many of its resolutions have paid particular attention to the political atmosphere of the Malabar district of British India.⁴⁵

The Aikya Sangham was dissolved in 1934 to merge into the Kerala Muslim Majlis, the first Muslim political Organisation in the Malabar. The main aim of the Organisation was to redress the grievances and to work for the political, educational, social and economic advancement of the community (Mujeeb 2014; Samad 1998). Majlis was active in engaging day to day political affairs of the community and presented the grievances to the government. During the same time, a significant shift happened in national politics where Mohammed Ali Jinnah revived the moribund AIML and ceased to cooperate with Congress. A similar division developed in the Malabar Muslim leadership (Wright 1966), wherein an internal division occurred among Majlis’s leadership. A group of leaders such as Muhammed Abdu Rahman and E. Moidu Moulavi insisted on continuing its political

⁴³ The term to address the followers of Muhammed bin Abdul Wahab (1702-1793), who introduced the ‘puritanian’ concept of Islam in the mid-18th Century. He started the movement called *Muwahiddun* (Unitarians) with the idea of pure or textual Islam, but the movement later termed as *Wahabi* movement by its opponent. *Wahabi* Movements spread all over the world in short span of time (Samad 1998: 33-5).

⁴⁴ The main aim of *KJU* was to lead the Muslim community back to the path of true/puritanical or textual Islam which they have swerved and weaned them away from the practices of *Shirk* and *Bida*, superstitions and ignorance and other religious and social evils which Muslims have plunged themselves. *KJU* was formed under the presidentship of Abdul Jabbar Hasrath, a learned *Sunni* Islamic scholar, and also the prominent leaders with a progressive outlook such as K.M. Moulavi, T.K. Muhammed Moulavi, M.C.C. Abdu Rahman Moulavi and E.K. Moulavi etc (Samastha 2012; Miller 1992; Samad 1998; Kutty 1987; Moulavi 1997).

⁴⁵ The Organisation, at their fourth conference held in 1925, requested the government to establish educational institutions in the Malabar region. They expressed their grief and anguish on the decision to deport Mappilas to Andaman Island and asked the government to put an end to such inhumane practices. In addition, they demanded for the communal representation for the Muslims in the Taluk board and municipalities, as in the case of provincial and central legislatures (Samad 1998).

support to INC. On the other, leaders like K.M. Seethe Sahib, K.M. Moulavi and B. Pokker Sahib argued to support the AIML, a party whose goal was to augment Muslim causes (Moulavi 1960: 447). When AIML started its full-fledged activities in Malabar, Muslim Majlis integrated with the party officially.

Meanwhile, the reformists formed *Kerala Nadvatul Mujahideen* (KNM) in 1950 to continue its religious activities. The Organisation is popularly known as *Mujahid/Salafi* Movement (Moulavi 1960; Miller 1992; Samad 1998). KNM, a full-fledged religious Organisation, extends its political support to IUML. As in the case of AIML, the majority of the early leaders of IUML in Kerala were mainly from the reformist background, and the affiliation remained continuous even after many splits that occurred in KNM. At present, *Mujahids* are divided into three. The first split happened in 2002 on the ground of ideological and personal reasons. The official group stands under T.P. Abdulla Koya Madani, and the splinter group was formed under Hussain Madavoor known as *Markazu-Dawa* (Osella & Osella 2008). Though these groups merged again in 2016, many ideological issues among them remain constant. Besides this, another split occurred in 2013, in which the splinter group officially formed Wisdom Global Islamic Mission in 2014.⁴⁶ However, IUML negotiates politically with each group to ensure their political support.

The *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* (SKJU), the supreme religious authority of the *Sunni* Muslims⁴⁷ of Kerala, was established under the leadership of Varakkal Mullakkoya Tangal and Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musaliyar on 26th June 1926 (Samastha 1985; Samastha 2012).⁴⁸ The Organisation is popularly known as Samastha, representing seventy percent of the total Kerala Muslim population. Samastha claims to have control over more than 8,000 madrasas (approximately 500 madrasas of *Mujahid*) with one million students and 72,000 registered teachers, as well as a string of Arabic colleges and, more recently,

⁴⁶ The Hindu (5th December 2016). "Revival Mujahid Factions bury Hatchet after 14 Years."

⁴⁷ The word *Sunni* is derived from the term *Ahlusunnah-wal- Jamma'ah*, which means those who adhere to the traditions of the Prophet and his righteous followers.

⁴⁸ The above mentioned references 'Samastha 1985' and 'Samastha 2012' are 'Souvenirs' published by *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* in their 60th and 85th annual conferences held on 1985 and 2012. The thesis also cited another souvenir 'Samastha 1933' as a part of its sixth year annual conferences.

even engineering colleges etc. (Osella & Osella 2008).⁴⁹ The SKJU works as a form of counter-revivalism with the aim of propagating ‘true Islam.’ It was formed initially as a reactionary force against the reformist ideologies of puritanical Islam proposed by Aikya Sangham and *Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama*.

Initially, there was a cordial relationship between SKJU and KJU, but later, *Sunnis* argued that the *Mujahid* is using its platform to spread *Wahhabist* ideology among the community (Tanur 2016). The main aim of Samastha was to guide the people through the path of *Ahlu Sunnah-wal Jamma’ah*, which gives equal importance to both text and traditions (*Quran* and *Hadith*). The high-power religious body of Samastha is known as *Mushavara*.⁵⁰ Institutionalised activities of SKJU are focused mainly on the *Mahal* system,⁵¹ which helps them control the community’s everyday religious activities (Samad 1998; Kurupp & Ismail 2008; Mujeeb 2014).

From the outset, Samastha has been politically committed to the existing structure of society with mutual cooperation and respect. They demarcate religion from politics but always make possible dialogue between religion and state whenever it is necessary. Samastha kept a distance from the Congress Party from the beginning itself. It was mainly because Congress betrayed Muslims during the crucial period of the Khilafat Movement (Panikkar 1989). This helped Samastha to make a cordial political relationship with AIML initially, and later IUML. It is interesting to note that the strict theological separation among *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* never prevented them from uniting under the Muslim League.

⁴⁹ At present, Samastha is running more than 10000 Madrasas in Kerala and in different parts of the country. This number is claimed by the Samastha spokesperson Pinangod Aboobacker in a Personal Interview, on 10th May 2016, at his residence. The number is also authenticated by the official website of SKJU: <https://samastha.info/index.php>.

⁵⁰ *Mushavara* is a supreme body of *Samastha*’s, including the working committee. It consisted of 40 eminent scholars of the time who are drawn purely on the basis of Islamic scholarship, religious piety, faithfulness and devoutness. The word *mushavara* (consultation) is drawn from the *Quranic* order to seek scholarly advice in matters. *Mushavara* discuss various issues concerning the religion and the community related to socio, political, economic and cultural matters and it is applicable to Malayali Muslims who reside inside and outside the state. Within the *mushavara*, *Samastha*, later in 1963, formed a *Fatwa* committee with five members, to specially look into the increasing queries of religion. Here the majority of decisions are considered as *Fatwa* in particular matters.

⁵¹ A *Mahal* is the plot necessary for the *Jumua* Masjid (the place where Friday Prayer is conducted). Every *Mahal* is consisting of many small Masjid and Madrasas. A *Mahal* looks after the religious and community issues such as Masjid and Madrasa maintenance and functioning, death related activities, marriages, divorce and other related issues. It also fulfills extra-judicial functions, such as mediation and guardianship over orphans of the community.

The party strategy was to unite these sectarian groups as a single ‘political community,’ and the consensus in this regard among the *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* helped sustain the Muslim politics in the state, particularly in electoral politics. However, Samastha as a consolidation of *Sunni* Muslims accommodates all sorts of *Sunnis* irrespective of their political affiliation.

Samastha also witnessed factionalism over time. A split occurred in 1989 in which Samastha was divided into two, in which the official group was led by E.K. Aboobacker Musaliyar and the other by Kanthappuram A.P. Aboobacker Musaliyar.⁵² Moreover, these groups are popularly known as ‘EK Samastha’ and ‘AP Samastha.’ Their respective followers are commonly referred to as ‘EK *Sunnis*’ and ‘AP *Sunnis*.’ The causes for this split were largely within rank and file rather than ideological. The AP Samastha claimed to oppose any form of political involvement as against the standpoint of the traditional view, which supported the politics of the Muslim League. However, in the later stage, AP Samastha politically inclined with the left parties. The political relationship between EK Samastha and Muslim League will be discussed in detail in the fifth chapter.

The third major religious Organisation among the Muslim community of Kerala is *Jamaat-e- Islami*. It was founded by Abul-Ala-Maududi in 1941 and started functioning in Kerala in 1948, with entirely different religious and political outlooks from that of *Sunnis* and *Mujahid*. The movement focused on the idea of ‘true’ Islam and more closely followed the *Mujahid* line in interpreting Islamic theology. Nevertheless, both *Mujahids* and *Sunnis* were opposed to the ideals of ‘rule of God’ advocated by *Jamaat*, which was not suitable to the Indian context. Both *Sunnis* and *Mujahid* believe that religion and state are separate entities and religious state is not necessary for eternal success (Kurupp & Ismail 2008).

The political strategy of *Jamaat* in Kerala was oriented towards the ‘value-based’ politics and context-specificity of it. Interestingly enough, the value-based model led them to associate mostly with the left parties. This strategy continued until *Jamaat* formed its political wing called the Welfare Party of India in 2011 to engage in electoral politics. At

⁵² There was a minor split into *Samsthana* group in 1967 which did not have much political ramifications.

the same time, *Jamaat* joined with the larger political spectrum of the community, including the Muslim League, in issues that concerned the community.

In short, the sectarian differences among the Muslims on the theological ground helped to strengthen institutionalised activities of the communities, which subsequently resulted in the development of the community. The religious vibrancy and close competition between the groups, in one way or the other, created a new horizon for Muslim politics in the state. AIML succeeded in bringing both *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* together despite their ideological differences, which was later taken forward by IUML. This political unity provided a strong basis for Muslim politics in Kerala, especially in the post-independence context.

3. 2 (2) *All India Muslim League in Malabar*

Though the AIML was founded in 1906, the party's activities were never successful in the Malabar of Madras Presidency until 1936. Although, the Madras Presidency Muslim League was founded after two years of the formation of AIML in 1906. As in the case of AIML, the Muslim politics in the Madras Presidency, initially, was also virtually under the control of the aristocratic merchant-elite who could not make much impact on the ordinary people (Mohamed Koya 2002). There were two reasons for the negligible presence of AIML in Kerala. One is the elitist attitude of the AIML (see the discussion in the second chapter), in which the party failed to address the issues of the common man in its earlier phases. The second reason was the vigilant politics of Mappilas, from the 1830s to 1921, against the British government without maintaining any particular structure, which distanced them from joining any political parties. However, the formation of Kerala Muslim Majlis in 1930 reduced the gap between Mappilas and AIML as most of the Majlis leaders were politically inclined with the AIML (Aziz 1992).

The advent of AIML in Madras Presidency was by forming a provincial unit under the leadership of Yakub Hasan (1875- 1940) and Jamal Muhammed (1882- 1949), the prominent community leaders of that time. Later the party began its activities in the Malabar district especially owing to the efforts of B. Pokker Sahib, K Uppi Sahib and K.M. Seethi Sahib (Azeez 1992). The main reason for the formation of AIML was the Mappilas' aversion to the INC in the aftermath of the Malabar Rebellion. Besides, Mappilas also lost

faith in Congress leadership as some of the Congress leaders associated directly with Hindutva Organisations. The Muslim enmity with Congress resulted in the visible absence of Mappilas in the Civil Disobedience Movement of the 1930s (Aziz: 1992; Miller 1992). The post- revolt situation of Mappilas necessitated a Muslim political party, which resulted in the formation of AIML.

The first unit of AIML in Malabar was formed at Tellichery in 1935 under the leadership of K.M. Seethi Sahib and B. Poker Sahib, among others. During the same period, AIML became powerful in Eranad, Valluvanad, and Ponnani taluks, the anti-colonial struggle's epicenter (Kunj 1989). Over time, AIML committees were also constituted in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. In the princely state of Cochin, the AIML was formed in the very next year, and they began the publication of a newspaper called *Cochin Mail*. However, AIML was formed in the princely state of Travancore only in 1945 though it had more Muslim population than Cochin. After the integration of princely states, on 1st July 1949, AIML also decided to merge and form the Travancore-Cochin Muslim League (Kutty 1992; Mohamed 2001).

The first meeting of the Malabar District Muslim League was held at Tellichery on 20th December 1937. In the meeting, Arakkal Abdurahman Ali Raja (1881-1946) was elected as the president and Abdul Sathar Sait (1896- 1989) as the general secretary (Aziz 1992; Seethi 1959). A major break in the trajectory of AIML occurred with the entry of *Sunni* and the renowned *thangal* leader, Abdurahman Bafaqi Thangal.⁵³ Up to that time, the AIML support base was restricted to the reformist folder, which was demographically less when compared to *Sunnis*. Muslim League's inefficiency to unite *Sunnis* politically was very much visible in the initial days of AIML in Malabar, particularly during the elections. Neither the Congress nor AIML received a mandate in the Muslim pockets in elections.

⁵³ Initially, Bafaqi *Thangal* was elected as the working committee member of Calicut town Muslim League committee, and very soon *Thangal* assumed the role of treasurer and then the post of president of the same committee. When the president of Malabar Muslim League, Sathar Sait, opted Pakistan after the independence, then Bafaqi Thangal was assigned with the president post of Muslim League in Malabar. When Kerala State was formed in 1956, Thangal became the President of the State Muslim League. After the death of Muhammed Ismail Sahib in 1972, Bafaqi Thangal was elected as the president of Indian Union Muslim League until his death in 1973. He also served as the Managing Director of Chandrika until his death (Vadakara 2011: 50- 60).

For example, during the Central Assembly election of 1934, the Congress candidate and reformist leader Muhammed Abdurahman was defeated by AIML candidate, Sathar Sait, backed by the *Sunnis*. Abdurahman was a religious as well as political leader of the time (Tanur 2016). The election campaign of the Muslim League was under the leadership of Samastha leader Pangil Ahmadkutty Musliar, a staunch critic of ‘reformism’ advanced by the *Mujahid*. The electoral support of *Sunnis* to Sathar Sait was the main reason for the defeat of the ‘reformist’ candidate. On another occasion, AIML and Congress supported B. Pokker Sahab, defeated by Khan Bahadur Attakoya Thangal in the Madras Legislative Assembly election of 1937. Samastha campaigned under Bafaqi Thangal in favour of Attakoya, a strong *Sunni* leader and a member of the *thangal* family. The election campaign of Pokker Sahib, who was a reformist leader and an advocate by profession, was carried by national Congress leaders, Maulana Shaukat Ali, and the Kerala reformist leader, E. Moidu Moulavi, etc. (Vadakara 2011; Tanur 2016). The election results proved the importance of Samastha and *thangal* leadership and the adherence of *Sunnis* to their religious leaders.

The entry of this venerated *thangal* leadership helped the party to ensure mass support to AIML from *Sunnis*. The political support of *Sunnis* to AIML and its subsequent development in Malabar invited a confrontation among AIML and Congress on many occasions. Meanwhile, the demand put forth by AIML at the national level for the formation of a separate Muslim nation was met with great enthusiasm in Malabar as well. A large meeting of the Malabar Muslim League took place in Calicut on 29th April 1940, which approved the Lahore resolution of the AIML on the partition of the country. To counter the two-nation theory of AIML, the Congress formed an All India Muslim Majlis, a nationalist Muslim Forum; however, it failed to make an inroad to Mappilas. Later, on 16th August 1946, AIML observed the ‘Direct Action Day’ in support of Pakistan, and its impact had resonances in Malabar as well (Seethi 1059).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ This thesis extensively uses one article titled “Keralathil Muslim Leeginte Purogathi (Development of Muslim League in Kerala, pp 7-28),” written by K.M. Seethi Sahib, in a Souvenir published as a part *Kannur District Muslim League Conference* in 1959. This article can be considered one of the primary sources, as it was written by the state general secretary of Muslim League, which helps to understand the authentic picture of the trajectories of the Muslim League.

In the election held for Madras Legislative Assembly in 1946, AIML got prominent opposition after a victory of 29 seats out of 36 in Muslim reserved constituencies and seven seats in Upper House (Wright 1966). During the debates of Madras Legislative Assembly, the Malabar branch of the AIML raised the demand for *Moplstan*, a separate Muslim region within South India. They argued that other than language, Mappilas are different in terms of food, costumes, rituals, customs, and philosophy of life, and thus the new state, *Moplstan*, should be based on religious identity (Miller 1992). The claim of *Moplstan* received wider criticism from political opponents. It termed AIML as a communal and pro-Pakistan movement, and the criticism even continued in the post-partition context of Muslim politics. Congress questioned the political existence of IUML, and there was a massive cry for the party's dismissal.

Nevertheless, the Muslim political leaders of South India, like Muhammad Ismail, and K.M. Seethi Sahib (1899-1961),⁵⁵ firmly argued for the necessity of Muslim politics in post-independence India. On 15th December 1947, an All India Muslim League meeting was held in Karachi, Pakistan, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah with the presence of many delegates from the Indian Union. After prolonged debates and discussions, the AIML bifurcated into the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and the Pakistan Union Muslim League (Kareem, 1997; Noorani 2003).

⁵⁵ K.M. Seethi Sahib was a reformist and a prominent leader of Indian Union Muslim League. He was one of the founding members of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham before becoming an influential leader of Kerala Muslim Majlis. Seethi Sahib was in the forefront to enhance the Muslim community in the turbulent post-Malabar rebellion period. Educating the Mappila youth was one of his primary concerns as he encouraged education for women as well. A lawyer by profession, Seethi Sahib, started his political journey in the early 1920s with the Indian National Congress. He initially served as a member of Cochin Assembly from 1928-34, and strongly raised his voice for the community. Seethi Sahib later moved to Tellichery, Malabar, and then became the fulltime worker of All India Muslim League. He was one of the important figures behind the establishment of Farook College in 1948, a leading educational institution in Malabar. He was elected as the first general secretary of Kerala State Muslim League Committee. Seethi Sahib was elected as a member of Madras Legislative Assembly in 1952 when Malabar was a part of Madras Presidency. He served as the Speaker of Kerala Assembly in 1960 until he died in 1961.

Section III

3.3 Formation of the Indian Union Muslim League

Indian Union Muslim League was formed in the turbulent post-partition political context of the country. It was an unfavourable situation to constitute a Muslim political party as the entire blame for partition was dumped on Muslims. The right-wing and nationalist Congress targeted Muslim leaders and branded them with communal tag (Wright 1966; Hasan 1988; Puniyani 2018; Van der veer 1994). However, the Muslim leaders of South India succeeded in creating IUML crossing all the hurdles. At the outset, Muslim League was the result of the self-expressed identity of Mappilas; however, in the later years, it played a significant role in politicizing the Muslims and other marginalised communities of Kerala at large. The party has had a history of negotiation, accommodation, and conflict in its seventy years of political existence in the state. Currently, the party is emerging as the ‘sole representative’ of the Muslim community (Osella & Osella 2007) and leading as a coalition partner of the United Democratic Front.

IUML was officially formed in a meeting held at Rajaji Hall in Madras (Chennai) on 10th March 1948. In the context of communal violence that was taking place throughout the country, the delegates from the North-Bombay, UP, and Calcutta- argued for the party's dismissal (Seethi 1959; Wright 1966). However, the leaders from the South, Muhammed Ismail and K.M Seethi, argued for the necessity of Muslim political formation despite various criticisms. The meeting finally decided to form the Indian Union Muslim League in which Mohamed Ismail and Mahboob Ali Baig were elected as the president and general secretary, respectively (Seethi 1959; Aziz 1992; Konnar 2014). IUML marked its history by becoming the first Muslim minority political party in the Hindu majority Indian state.

On the other, A.K. Hafiska- the leader of AIML in Bombay- dispersed the party and formed the Fourth Party with a secular name. By understanding the difficulty of carrying, even, a secular named party by a former AIML Leader in the post-partition context, Hafiska dismissed the party and joined the INC. The situation in UP was also similar, where AIML was renamed Janatha Party but could not resist the communal tag. In Madras Provinces, AIML legislators such as I.M. Anwar and S.M. Abdul Majid left the party for Congress.

Many leaders who argued for the necessity of Muslim politics in the pre-partition phase also left IUML for different reasons (Wright 1966; Thangal et al. 2013).

The leaders who remained with IUML were subjected to communal assaults and were labelled pro-Pakistanis. Panakkad P.M.S.A. Pookoya Thangal, the influential leader of the party, and many others were detained and arrested by the authority in connection with the Hyderabad Police Action of 1948. Pookoya Thangal stated, “I would rather go to jail than disperse Muslim League, as the party is indispensable for the community.”⁵⁶ None of such arrests and detention paralyzed the political commitments of the Muslim leaders in carrying out their activities in South/Malabar (Seethi 1959).

During this period, the relevance of the Indian National Congress in the Malabar had declined due to the politics of AIML and IUML as well as the mobilisation of the lower classes by the Communist Party. Since the Congress felt that the dominance of the Muslim League would prevent the growth of the party in Malabar, INC’s political agenda was to label IUML as communal and pro-Pakistani. The demand of IUML to continue the communal electorate further worsened the relationship between these two parties. Muhammad Ismail and B. Poker Sahib, the legislators from Madras, argued that the partition had diminished the number and influence of Muslims and therefore, the community needed separate electorates more than before. The argument that the abolition of the separate electorate would result in the ‘political emasculation’ of the Muslims as a community resulted in an open confrontation with the Congress party (Khalidi 1993).

Subsequently, the dominant Congress leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), Sardar Vallabhai Patel (1875-1950), and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (1901-1953) sharpened their criticism against the ‘communal’ demand of IUML. In the Constituent Assembly debates, the Congress accused the Muslim League of always reflecting a communal spirit than national spirit (Khalidi 1995). On the Muslim demand for a separate electorate, Nehru remarked that “with the separate electorate ended, most of the ‘poisons’

⁵⁶ Muslim League Supplement. (1997 Vol. 1). *Bafaqi Thangalude Kalaghattam*. pp. 52-3.

had gone” (Khaldi 1995: 181). Further, by addressing a massive rally in Palakkad in 1955, Nehru stated that,

I am surprised that a small part of Muslim League is working in Malabar. Indians are moving forward, and their development processes are being respected and admired by many other countries. Some communal Organisations are trying to demonize the country and create a divide between the people of India. Each Organisation in the country must function in the country as constitutions prescribe. Nevertheless, the actions of Muslim League are an embarrassment to the country, and we must be aware of their political campaign. Luckily, they have confined themselves to the Malabar region, and they are just like dead horses at the moment.⁵⁷

Nehru’s remarks on Muslim League indicate the attitude of INC against Muslim political assertion. At the same time, it also elucidates the existential crisis of Muslim politics in the country. Since the Muslim League was framed as a ‘problem category’ in the post-partition context, its political demands were easily labelled as communal. Interestingly, scholars view that Congress never problematized the Hindutva Organisations and their communal politics owing to the fear of reduced voting bank. The dominant concerns were always viewed as genuine, while the constitutional rights of Muslims were regarded as separatism and communal (Pandey 1999; Brass 2005).

The emergence of IUML in post-independent India speaks to the above context. The primary objectives of the party were to protect the religious, cultural, educational, and economic interests of the community by using the constitutional provision (IUML Constitution 2008).⁵⁸ Muhammed Ismail stated that a Muslim political party is not necessary for Muslim’s existence in a country like India. However, the political presence of the Muslim League is essential for the ‘honourable existence’ of every Muslim in the

⁵⁷ This Speech is delivered in a Congress conference on 25th December 1955 in Palakkad. For details see, Muslim League Supplement. (1997 Vol. 1). pp, 45.

⁵⁸ The constitution of IUML was originally adapted in the council meeting of IUML held on 01st September 1951 under the presidentship of national president, Muhammed Ismail, and then it got amended many times. The first and third amendment took place on 04th October 1987 and 06th August 1989 respectively under the presidentship of Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait. The fourth amendment took place on 14th September 2008, and the last amendment took place in 2011, both are under the national presidentship of E. Ahmad.

country. The objectives of the party always stood for the integrity, freedom, honour, strength, and happiness of the country and the unity of all the sections of the people (Thangal et al. 2013).⁵⁹

Muslim League aimed to fulfil the above objectives by enforcing certain duties and responsibilities to its members through its constitution. The commitment of the party towards the Indian constitution indicates the fact that the politics of the Muslim League is oriented within the secular and democratic ethos of the country. The first resolution of the party, on 10th March 1948, adopted the word 'Indian Union' instead of All India or British India, and the party was officially entitled as Indian Union Muslim League (Thangal et al. 2013). It can be said that there is a position of a social contract between the party and the Indian constitution. Both are, in a way, complementary to each other in many instances. The constitution of the party further clarifies the relation.

- 1). To uphold, defend, and maintain the independence, freedom, unity, integrity, and honour of the State of the Indian Union and work for and to contribute to strengthen the prosperity and happiness of the people of India.
- 2). To bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to brace the principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy and to uphold the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.
- 3). To secure, protect and maintain the religious, cultural, educational, linguistic, economic, political, administrative and other legitimate rights and interests of the Muslims and other minorities including scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward and weaker sections of the society in India.
- 4). To promote mutual understanding, goodwill, amity, harmony, and unity between Muslims and other communities of the Indian Union (IUML Constitution 2008: 2-3).

⁵⁹ For detailed account of Muhammed Ismail's life and politics, see Muslim League Supplement. (1997 Vol. 2). *Quaedemillat Muhammed Ismail Sahibinte Kalaghattam*.

The party's constitution emphasises the importance of the faith and cultural traditions of the community. The political commitment of the party is manifested in the religious as well as the constitutional interests of the country. It shows commitment to the Indian nation and adherence to the constitutional principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy. According to Muhammed Ismail, "Muslim League is a minority political party with national interest; hence, it works not only for the rights of the minorities but for national interests as well" (Thangal et al. 2013: 86).

The major challenges in front of the Muslim League to continue politics in the state were threefold. As mentioned above, the first two have a national background, the Congress and right-wing forces who always questioned the existence of any form of Muslim assertion, and the third one was from the Communist Parties of the state. The anti-Muslim rhetoric from the dominant forces, both the INC and right-wing forces, were the main reasons for not reconstituting Muslim politics in North India in the post-partition period. However, in the South, Muslim League always questioned the inability of Congress to challenge the Hindutva groups, which, in turn, polarise the community religiously (Khalidi 1993). Over time, the Muslim League became an inevitable political force of the state where INC left with no option than making a coalition with IUML to defeat the Communist alliance for its political fortune.

Muslim politics in Kerala faced intense criticism from the Communist party, where the Communist Party maintained its support basis among peasants and working classes. However, while the confrontation with the INC and rightwing forces was often grounded in religious antagonism, the divergence from the Communists was based on class. The class factor is one of the crucial elements in the Malabar, where the Mappilas and Hindu 'lower caste,' Tiyyas, constitute both caste and class politics. Tiyyas are more politically aligned with the Communist Parties, while the Mappilas mostly tend to support Muslim League. The Communist mobilisation was mainly through the Kisan Movement and Trade Unions, which spoke to the ground reality of the region. One of the main demands of these movements was to end the feudal-*Janmi* system (Fic 1970; Namboothiripad 1981).

Traditionally, religion and its leadership have had a greater impact on Mappila Muslims that, in a way, moulded their life in the colonial period. For Mappilas, religion was surely

not separable from public life as it was intrinsically tied up with their thoughts and actions (Salah 2013). As religion is an interminable factor of Muslims, the politics of Muslim League had attracted the community largely owing to its religious/communitarian identity. To a great extent, the *ulama* and *thangal* leadership of the party had overcome the large-scale Communist mobilisation of the community in Malabar.⁶⁰ The legacy of such leadership is still present in community politics. This intrinsic relationship between religion and politics of Muslim League makes it difficult for other political parties to influence the community beyond an extent. It does not mean that Mappilas are completely exempted from the Communist political fold. The party has a significant influence on the Muslim community outside the Malappuram district of the Malabar region.

It is important to see how these religious and political leaders engage with the community. The early Muslim League leaders of the party, such as Muhammed Ismail, K.M. Seethi, Bafaqi Thangal, and Pookoya Thangal insisted that the community should follow religion for a better/ethical-political life. The leaders assigned its members to set up a party committee in every *Mahal*, and also advised to avoid the unnecessary ideological debates which reinforce sectarian divisions among them. They insisted on increasing the communitarian relationship in all possible ways. The leaders also directed the community to follow prayer, *zakat*, and other rituals that enhance the spiritual life. Further, they urged the community to set up religious education for the moral and ethical development of the younger generation (Vadakara 2011; Thangal et al. 2013: 57-50). These morally enabled principles of the party received a broader appeal from the community, irrespective of their ideological clash, which enhanced the politics of the Muslim League in Malabar.

In its initial phase, the party's membership was restricted to Muslims alone. According to the party, any Indian who is above eighteen years old with Muslim identity is eligible for the membership (Thangal et al. 2013:153).⁶¹ Later the constitution amended and

⁶⁰ For details, see Sub-section III "Religious Authority and Muslim Politics" in the Chapter Four of the thesis "Religion and Politics: Everyday Muslim 'Political' Engagement."

⁶¹ According to the official sources of the party, in 2016, the total number of members of Muslim League in Kerala is 21.50 lakhs. Malappuram district has the highest number of members, and the least number is from Idukki. The membership of its sister Organisations, such as Muslim Youth League is 09.10 lakhs; Muslim Students Federation is 03.0 lakhs, Indian Union Dalit League is approximately fifty thousand, and the *Swathanthra Thozhilali Union* (STU), labour wing, is 1.83 lakhs. See IUML. (2016). Official Documents of Kerala State Muslim League Committee.

maintained that “any person who is Muslim, as also any other person, who is citizen of Indian Union and who is not less than eighteen years of age and who is subscribes to the aims and objects of the Indian Union Muslim League and agreed to abide by its Constitution” (IUML Constitution 2008: 3).⁶² However, the word “Muslim” was subsequently removed from the Constitution. It was added that “any resident of India” shall be eligible to become a member of the Party.⁶³

There are many non-Muslim members in the State Committee of Muslim League. In addition, the Party has fielded non-Muslim candidates in the Legislative Assembly elections, particularly from its strongholds, and have got them elected.⁶⁴ The party has formed Indian Union Dalit League in the 1990s for the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste community. As per the claims of the party, the party has around 8000 non-Muslim members at present. The party has formed Dalit League in the 1990s for the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste community. The present Malappuram district panchayat president (2015-2020), A.P. Unnikrishnan, who is a representative of the Muslim League, belongs to the Dalit community. In addition, the Party has its youth wing (Muslim Youth League), trade union (*Swathanthra Thozhilali Union*) and students’ wing (Muslim Students Federation), including girls’ wing called *Haritha*.

The party structure consists mainly of four levels; National, State, District, and Primary Unit. The Primary Unit is formed in each village, city, panchayat, or division, having at least 100 or more members with the approval of the district committee (IUML Constitution 2008). Unlike other political parties, the state committee of IUML is more powerful than

⁶² Members shall pay the subscription of the rupees five as the membership for four years. Any member may withdraw from the Muslim League at any time with the sanction of the executive /working committee of the State League but shall be eligible for readmission to membership anytime hereafter his withdrawal subject to the approval of State Executive/ Working Committee (IUML Constitution 2008).

⁶³ IUML (2011). Official Documents of Kerala State Muslim League Committee.

⁶⁴ M. Chadayan was the first non-Muslim member elected to Kerala Assembly from Manjeri constituency in 1957. Before that, he was also elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1952. After that, there were many non- Muslim members elected from the Muslim League panel. K.P. Raman from Manjeri in 1970, and then elected from Kunnamangalam in 1977 and 1987 from Thrithala. He also contested in All India League panel from Kunnamangalam from 1977, 1980 and 1982. Another member, U.C. Raman, elected from Kunnamangalam reserved constituencies for Scheduled Castes in 2001 and 2006. In 2011, Raman also contested in Kunnamangalam general seat but defeated by the LDF independent candidate.

the national committee as it is based mainly in Kerala. Besides, the fact that the state committee is headed by a member of the *thangal* family since the formation of the Kerala state facilitated such an authority. This held impossible for the national committee to take an independent decision without the consent state committee.

The success of the Muslim League in Kerala is that the party consolidated the community with a political consciousness. This consciousness was created through the constant engagement of the party with the community in its political developments. The party understands that political power is essential for community development; hence the party has been engaging in the electoral politics of the state right from the beginning of the formation of the state. It is a fact the politics of Muslim League produced a sense of confidence to the community, particularly after the turbulent situation of post-partition/independence context of the country.

3.3 (1) Muslim League and Electoral Politics

Since the first Lok Sabha of 1952, the Muslim League has represented the community in the parliament. B. Pokker Sahib was the first member of the party from the Manjeri Lok Sabha constituency of Madras Presidency. At the same time, Muhammed Ismail, the national president, was elected from Madras Presidency to Rajya Sabha. In 1971, Muslim League had won four Lok Sabha seats out of 27 they contested in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.⁶⁵ This was marked as the highest number of representatives in the last seventy years of parliamentary history of the party. Muslim League has elected members of the Lok Sabha from Tamil Nadu— Ramanathapuram in 1967 and 2019, Periyakulam in 1971, and Vellore in 1980, 1989, 2004 and 2009 (Konar: 2014). The party has contributed two prominent figures in parliament, G.M. Banatwalla⁶⁶

⁶⁵ In the state of Kerala, C.H. Muhammed Koya and Muhammed Ismail Sahib elected from Kozhikode and Manjeri constituencies respectively. S.M. Shareef also elected from Periyarkulam of Tamil Nadu and Abuthalib Choudari from Murshidabad of West Bengal (Election Commission of India 1971).

⁶⁶ Gulam Mahmood Banathwalla (1933 – 2008) was an Indian politician and the leader of Indian Union Muslim League. Banatwalla became the General Secretary of Bombay Muslim League in 1960. In 1967, he was elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for the first time, as the first Muslim League member in the house, and remained in his office till 1977. He entered the national level politics as a Member of Parliament from Ponnani constituency of Malappuram, Kerala in 1977, and then re-elected in 1980, 1984, 1989, 1996, 1998 and 1999 representing IUML. Banathwala was a powerful orator who raised his voice in and out of the Parliament for the constitutional rights of the Muslim community and other marginalized

and Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait,⁶⁷ who raised political voices for the Muslims and marginalised communities.

Except in 1952 and 2004, each term Muslim League has had two elected members in the Parliament from Kerala. In 1952, the party fielded only one candidate whereas in 2004, the party candidate, K.P.A. Majeed, lost to the CPI (M) candidate, T.K. Hamza, from Manjeri constituency with a margin of 47,743. Muslim League, the two-member party in Parliament, had received a ministerial berth in the last two United Progressive Alliance (UPA) wherein E. Ahmed was appointed as the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister of Human Resource Development, and Deputy Minister of Railways, showing the political importance of Muslim League both in the centre and the state government. The party, currently, has three members (P.K. Kunjalikutty, E.T. Muhammed Basheer and Navas Ghani) in Lok Sabha and one member (PV. Abdul Wahab) in Rajya Sabha.

The significant presence of Muslim League in Kerala Legislature made remarkable achievements for the developments of the Muslim community. The nature of the coalition politics of the state and the party's stakes in it helped them to present minority concerns in law-making bodies. The formation of Kerala on 1st November 1956, following the recommendation of the State ReOrganisation Commission, by uniting Malabar and two princely states, Travancore and Cochin, brought new momentum in the politics of Kerala.⁶⁸ The following table will show the electoral performance of IUML in the state.

sections of the society. He presented a total of 25 Private Bills in the house, as he marked his powerful presence in the house. His interventions in the house, particularly in the debates on Muslim Personal Law, Babri Masjid, reservation and affirmative action etc. were pivotal. He also served as the National President of IUML from 1993 to 2008, until his demise.

⁶⁷ Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait (1922- 2005), popularly known as Sait Sahib, a noted parliamentarian of Muslim League. He represented the party for 35 years (1960- 1994) from the different constituencies of Kerala such as Calicut, Manjeri and Ponnani. He dedicated his life to saving the country from fascist forces by trying to unite all secular forces and develop a united front of Muslims and backward classes. He started his Muslim League career as a general secretary of Ernakulam town unit. He was elected as a President of IUML from the period of 1973- 1994, and he was also the Convener of Babri Masjid Committee formed by All India Muslim Personal Law Board. He was the founding President of Indian National League from April 1994 to till his demise of 2005. Indian National League was formed due to the internal split among the party in the wake of Babri Masjid demolition of 1992, from April 1994 to till his demise of 2005.

⁶⁸ The State Re-organisation Commission (SRC) was appointed on 22nd December, 1952. The Commission appointed to understand objectively and dispassionately about the question of Organisation of the States of the Indian Union. It is intended for the welfare of the people of each constituent unit as well as the nation as

Electoral Performance of IUML in Kerala Assembly from 1957-2016				
Year	IUML Won	Percentage of Votes	Total Seats	In Govt.
1957	08/14	4.7	114	No
1960	11/12	4.9	114	No
1965	06/16	3.8	133	No
1967	14/15	6.8	133	Yes
1970	12/21	7.7	133	Yes
1977	13/16	6.6	140	Yes
1980	14/20	7.1	140	No
1982	14/18	6.1	140	Yes
1987	15/23	7.3	140	NO
1991	19/22	7.3	140	Yes
1996	13/22	7.1	140	NO
2001	17/23	7.3	140	Yes
2006	08/22	7.3	140	NO
2011	20/23	7.9	140	Yes
2016	18/24	7.4	140	No

Source: Election Commission of India

In the first general election of the state, the Communist Party came to power, on 5th April 1957 and being the first democratically elected communist government in the world under the leadership of E.M.S. Namboothipad, it made history. In this election, INC contested alone despite some national leaders' attempt to ally with Muslim League and Praja Socialist Party (PSP) to defeat what they identified as the common enemy, Communist Party. However, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) rejected the proposal in a meeting held in Indore as it would invite the label of communalism. The decision was mainly due

a whole is promoted. As of this the first state of Indian Union, Andhra Pradesh (Telugu speaking state), was formed on 1st October, 1953 (SRC Report 1955).

to the opposition of the Muslim nationalist leaders of the state such as A.A. Rahim, T.O. Bava and Moidu Moulvi who wanted not to ally with the ‘communal’ party, as it would adversely affect the party in the future (Wright 1966). By understanding the political situation, the Muslim League was open to any form of an alliance that would ensure its political representation. Hence, the party joined with the Socialist block headed by PSP in its first electoral attempt which enabled them to mark a space in Kerala politics. INC not only used the opportunity to criticize Muslim League as ‘communal party’ but accused PSP of allying with the ‘communal’ Muslim League (Fic 1970; Nossiter 1982; Aziz 1992).

The total number of seats in the Assembly was 126, in which eleven seats were reserved for Scheduled Caste and one for Scheduled Tribes. The Communists emerged as the single largest party with a margin of 60 seats, and they formed the government with the help of five independent candidates. INC lost its political dominance over the state for the first time since independence, and they were only able to elect 43 representatives. The Indian Union Muslim League won eight out of the 14 seats contested. The party received 4.7% of the total votes, and all the candidates were from the Malabar despite the malignant campaign of both the Congress and the Communist Party. The party positioned as an independent opposition under C.H. Muhammed Koya. PSP secured nine seats out of 62 contested (Nossiter 1982; Fic 1970; Ahmad 1966). However, the Communist government could not finish its five-year term owing to the Liberation Struggle.⁶⁹

After the collapse of the Communist government, a new coalition was formed against the Communist Party which comprised three parties, INC, PSP, and Muslim League, with the help of community groups such as Nairs, Muslims, and Christians (Nossite 1982; Lieten 1979). In the second general election of 1960, the three-fold alliance defeated the Communist Party. The coalition won 94 as against the 29 seats of the Communist Party. Muslim League won 11/12 candidates with 4.96% of total votes.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The Liberation Struggle was a joint struggle against the first Communist government by the opposition parties headed by the INC and community Organisation such as Nairs, Christians and Muslims. This will be discussed in detail in the sixth chapter (Fic 1970; Nossitter 1982; Namboodiripad 1988).

⁷⁰ Statistical Report on General Election. (1960). The Legislative Assembly of Kerala.

The Congress elected an ‘upper caste’ Nair leader, Pattam Thanu Pillai, as Chief Minister, against the ‘lower caste’ Ezhava leader R. Shanker (president of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, KPCC), who was appointed as the Deputy Chief Minister. Though Muslim League was part of the electoral coalition, Congress never allowed them to join the government accusing them of being ‘communal’ (Wilkinson 2005). Muslim League, however, supported the government, considering the larger community interest and assumed the post of the speaker (Ahmad 1966; Konnar 2014). After a year of conflicting interests among the coalition, Muslim League withdrew the support for the government in opposition to Congress’s Durgapur Resolution of 1961, which labelled IUML as a communal Organisation (Wright 1966).

After a decade of being in opposition, the Muslim League came into power for the first time along with the Communist Party of India, Marxist - CPI (M), in 1967. An alliance with the Muslim League, the old enemy of Liberation Struggle, was due to a split that occurred in the Communist Party. Party was divided into two, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist).⁷¹ Communist Party (Marxist) Kerala had trouble building an electoral coalition without the assistance of other political parties to defeat Congress; hence, a seven-party alliance was formed under CPI (M), known as *Sapthakakshi Munnani*, also known as United Front.⁷²

The alliance grabbed 117 out of 133 seats, and E.M.S. became the Chief Minister of the state for the second time. Muslim League was able to win 14/15 seats; for the first time, it was able to win two seats out of Malabar, at Mattanchery (Cochin) and Kazhakkottam (Trivandrum). Muslim League was assigned two ministries: C.H. Muhammed Koya (Education Minister) and K. Avukader Kutty Naha (Panchayath and Social Welfare

⁷¹ The split was mainly owing to the differences between the parties at the time of the Sino-Indian war in which 32 members of the National Council walked out from the meeting, and later formed CPI (M). There were mainly two groups in the party— leftist and rightist. The major cause for the split was the question regarding which political line, Chinese or Soviet Union, the party should follow. The leftists took a pro-Chinese stand while the rightist was in favour of the Soviet Union. Some of the leftist leaders were A.K. Gopalan, P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunnaiah, Jyoti Basu, B.T. Ranadive, on the other, S.A. Dange, C. Achuta Menon, M.N. Govindan Nair, Raj Sekhar Reddy were on the rightist block. The CPI (M) was constituted at the seventh congress of the Communist Party of India held in Kolkata, on 31st October to 7th November 1964.

⁷² The alliance was led by E.M.S. Nabothiripad of CPI(M), along with the Muslim League and other five political parties such as CPI, RSP, Samyuktha Socialist Party, Karshaka Thozhilali Party and Kerala Socialist Party. (Vadakara 2011).

Minister). This government was known for many welfare policies such as the establishment of Calicut University in 1968 and the formation of the Malappuram district in 1969 and so on (Aziz 1992; Basheer 2015)⁷³. The government, however, lasted only two years due to internal issues within the alliance, and eventually, IUML withdrew its support.

Between 1967 to 1980, seven governments were formed in three general elections. During this period, IUML was part of all these governments in which the party was granted different ministerial posts. Interestingly, C.H. Muhammed Koya represented all these governments with different responsibilities. During this time, the party also witnessed two significant events; the first one was a split in the party, and the second one, a landmark in the political trajectories of the party, in which IUML became the ruling party of the state.

The split in the party occurred, on 10th May 1974, due to the internal political issues among the leaders. It occurred as a generational conflict and as a dispute over tactics- i.e., whether to jeopardize the Congress alliance in Kerala by expanding aggressively in the North or not (Wright 1977). The party split into two, the official group under Pookoya Thangal and the splinter group, All India League, formed under M.K. Haji. The splinter group got the support of six MLAs⁷⁴ who were expelled from the party as they ‘refused the whip’ (Wright 1977). The splinter group termed as *Vimatha League* (Rebel League) by the official group.

Even though the impact of the split affected the party adversely, most of the leaders and workers stayed with IUML. After the split, All India League made an electoral alliance with the CPI (M) during 1977, 1980, and 1982 in which the party was bestowed with cabinet. However, an internal conflict arose in the alliance on the Shah Bano case and the subsequent issue on *sharia law*. The anti-*sharia* attitude of the E.M.S⁷⁵ is the major factor that resulted in the merger of Muslim League in August 1985 (Konar 2014).

⁷³ For details, see Sub-section I “The Role of Muslim League in Kerala Legislative Assembly” in the Chapter Five of the thesis “The Role of Muslim League in Legislature: Representation and Rhetoric.”

⁷⁴ Umar Bafaqi Thangal, B.M. Abdurahman, P.V.S. Musthafa Pookoya Thangal, Moideen kutty Haji, P.M. Aboobacker, A.V. Abdurahman Haji were the six MLAs (Konar 2014).

⁷⁵ Islamic Law based mainly on *Quran*, *Sunnah*, *Ijma* (majority opinion among the religious leaders) and *Quias* (analogical reasoning). In the wake of Shah Bano case, a major debate in Indian Judiciary on *Sharia* - a common law for all community - was erupted. But almost all Muslim Organisations came together in the protest against the judgement by the Court to restore Muslim Personal Law guaranteed by the constitution. But E.M.S. Namboothirpad supported the common law for all. For details, see Sub-section II “The Role of

A watershed moment in the political history of Muslim League was when the party assumed the post of Chief Minister in Kerala. It happened due to several internal conflicts in Congress as well as in the alliance partners.⁷⁶ To overcome the crisis, the alliance partners suggested the Muslim League, the third-largest party of the UDF, to the post. Thus, C. H. Muhammed Koya was elected as the Chief Minister of the state on 12th October 1979, though for a short period of 54 days. He had to resign his office on 1st December 1979 owing to the withdrawal of the Kerala Congress due to the internal split in the alliance (Aziz 1992; Konnar 2014). C.H. was the only Muslim Chief Minister in the history of the state. Later, C.H. became the Deputy Chief Minister of the state twice under K. Karunakaran government, in 1981 and 1982. During these years, IUML had increased its electoral constituencies and became the indispensable alliance partner of INC. This also strengthened its bargaining capacities in the alliance. Congress could not form a government without the support of Muslim League since then (Pillai 1987; Nair 1994).

In 1991 IUML won 19 out of 22 seats, and in 2001, 17 out of 23 seats under the INC-led UDF government. It was for the first time in 1991, IUML was granted with four ministerial berths. Both in 1991 and 2001, the party was granted with Industry (PK. Kunjalikutty), Education (ET. Muhammed Basheer), and Local Self-government and Public Work took over by various leaders of the time. In the last UDF government of 2011, IUML secured 20 out of 23 seats, with a margin of 7.92% of the total votes polled. INC contested in 81 seats but succeeded in only 38 seats (EPW 2011). The government was formed under the INC leader, Oommen Chandi, in which IUML had five ministers.⁷⁷ In the last Assembly election of 2016, IUML secured 18 out of 24 seats, but the alliance could not secure overall victory. CPI (M) led LDF formed the government under Pinarayi Vijayan.

Muslim League in the Indian Parliament in which 6.2 (1). *The Muslim League and the Muslim Personal Law* in the Chapter Six of the thesis.

⁷⁶ Initially, Congress-led government under K. Karunakaran was sworn on 25th March 1977 with the support of CPI, Muslim League, RSP, and Kerala Congress. The government resigned after a month due to the alleged custodial death of an engineering student, Rajan. Kerala High Court mentioned K. Karunakaran's name as he was handling the charge of Home Ministry as well. Another Congress-led government came to power under A.K. Antony on 27th April 1977. However, he resigned the office on 22nd October 1978 due to the internal conflict in the party. A new government was formed under CPI, an alliance partner, under P.K. Vasudevan Nair on 29th October 1978; but he also had to resign after a year.

⁷⁷ The ministers are P.K. Kunjalikutty (Industry and IT), MK Muneer (Social Welfare and Panchayat), PK Abdurabb (Education), VK Ibrahim Kunju (Public Works) and Manjalamkuzhi Ali (Parliamentary Affairs).

Muslim League received electoral setbacks in 1996 and 2006 Assembly elections. The election of 1996 occurred four years after the demolition of Babri Masjid in which the party could secure only 13 out of 22 seats.⁷⁸ The formation of the Indian National League under the National President of IUML, Sulaiman Sait Sahib, due to differences in the leadership of the party in the wake of Babri demolition, caused huge electoral damage to the party.⁷⁹ A dominant opinion within the community, at least for a while, was that Muslim League was not capable of protecting the Muslim sentiments and was more focused on power. However, the party was of the opinion that withdrawal would adversely affect the community in the future (Chiriyankandath 1996; Ismail & Kurupp 2008).

Another major electoral set back of IUML was in the 2006 election, in which the party could gain only eight out of 22 seats contested.⁸⁰ There were many reasons for the dismal performance of the party. One of the major reasons cited was the developmental debacle of the previous government, such as faulty policies on education and agriculture, law and order problems, including the Marad Riots.⁸¹ The other major reason for the failure of IUML is that the LDF employed some unprecedented strategies of allying with the Muslim political groups such as People Democratic Party, Indian National League and *Jamaat-e-Islami* - all traditional opponents of IUML, and including AP *Sunnis*, operating from within the perspective of 'Muslim identity' - which helped the coalition break through the ramparts of IUML in its stronghold in the Malabar area (Gopa Kumar 2004, 2006). However, the party regained the district in the subsequent elections.

At present, IUML has become one of the major political actors in the state, and major coalition partner of INC in the last four decades. However, few major and minor internal rifts have shaken this coalition as Muslim League broke the alliance with the INC in

⁷⁸ Statistical Report on General Election. (1996). The Legislative Assembly of Kerala.

⁷⁹ For a detailed record of the emergence of new Muslim community Organisations and its operations in Kerala in the wake of Babri Masjid demolition, see Sub-section IV "The Changing Nature of Community Politics in the post-1990s" in the Chapter Five of the thesis.

⁸⁰ In the Assembly election, all major leaders of the party faced the setback as P.K. Kunjalikutty (Kuttippuram), E.T. Muhammed Basheer (Tirur) and M.K. Muneer (Mankada) were lost to left alliance candidates. (Konar 2014). In Parliament, the senior party leader, E. Ahmad, won at Manjeri in the previous Lok Sabha election in 1999 with a margin of 1, 23,411 votes, But K.P.A. Majeed, another senior leader was defeated. For details, see Election Commission of India.

⁸¹ It was a Hindu Muslim communal riot, known as Marad Massacre. It took place in Marad Beach of Calicut in 2002 and 2003 in which both Hindus and Muslims lost their lives.

February 1991 before reconstituting it in the wake of Assembly election of the same year. The political strategy of the party is to achieve political power for the development of the community. Hence, the party allied electorally with both the Left and the Congress to enhance its stake in the government to formulate policies for the community and society. This electoral strategy, in a way, helped the community to achieve a position in the state on par with the other communities such as Nair, Ezhava and Christian.

Conclusion

The chapter points out that the political consciousness of the community was formed through the continuous struggle against the colonial powers. The *ulama* and *thangals* have played a vital role in shaping the community both religiously and politically. In the post-independence era, IUML shaped Mappilas as a major political block by using the possibilities of communitarian political structures of the state. The party pursued the task of protecting minority identity in a multicultural society while simultaneously serving national interests. The national and community identity helped Muslim League to achieve a better political position in the post-independence context of the country.

In its seventy years of political experience, IUML has witnessed many ups and downs. The party was successful in promoting a political consciousness among the Muslims of Kerala while compared to the rest of Muslims in the country, who were not much organized politically in the post-partition phase. The political progression of Muslim League helps us to put forward two political statements. Firstly, IUML has removed the political untouchability maintained by INC after the Malabar Rebellion. Secondly, the party played a significant role in mobilising the community by changing political situation and altering them from an interest group to a pressure group. Despite endorsing the Islamic tenets, Muslim League was successful in garnering support from a larger section of Kerala society owing to their image as a secular political front.

Chapter 04

Religion and Politics: Everyday Muslim ‘Political’ Engagement

Sitting on the verandah of his single-story concrete house, Hamza, a seventy-year-old active member of Muslim League, shared his religious views and political inclination.

*My Muslim Identity forms my primary motive to join the IUML. As a believer, the separation of religion from politics is not possible as it is closely associated with each other in Islam. The cautiousness of party leaders such as thangal and ulama and their commitment towards the community without seeking any material benefit, but the eternal life, attracts me to the party. As a Muslim, I must dedicate every endeavour of mine to God. I am one of those who believe that the Muslim League is the only political party in Kerala, where I can engage or participate following my religion and upholding my Indianness. One of the primary objectives of the party is to build citizens who vouch for the betterment of the country.*⁸²

Hamza was one among the many commoners who asserted the politics of the Indian Union Muslim League. The hospitality that Hamza provided me during my fieldwork, at his residence in Melmuri of Malappuram district for a few weeks, opened up various conversations with him that prompted me to explore the relationship between religion and politics further. Hamza cannot separate his politics from religion and faith as he finds its mutual complementarity in all respects of his everyday life. For him, the religious premise of the party, its leadership, which claims a lineage from Prophet Muhammed, the support of *ulama*, and the party’s welfare activities form primary motives to join Muslim League. However, he categorically points out that his idea of religion and politics cannot be equated with political Islamism as his idea of politics operates in the realm of Muslim/community politics, more clearly in the democratic and secular frameworks of the Indian nation.

⁸² This chapter is, mainly, based on fieldwork undertaken during 2015-16, and a few months in 2017. The above said description is from Hamza, one of the respondents, in a personal conversation at his residence, Melmuri, Malappuram district on 10th February 2105. Throughout this chapter and the subsequent chapters, the responses of the participants have been given in italics when they are directly quoted.

Corresponding to the statement above, this chapter seeks to understand the politics of Muslim League with particular reference to nuanced ways in which a Muslim subject performs his/her politics within the realm of democracy and secularism. Further, the chapter is an attempt to think about the ‘political’ beyond the binary of religious and the secular, by exploring ‘everyday’ negotiations of the Muslim community in Kerala. The chapter argues that faith-based politics or communitarian identities need to be engaged with a close reference to the everyday politics of Muslims in the state. Hence, the chapter focuses, mainly, on the subjective or the primordial–religious– identities of the community and their political affiliation with the Muslim League. By way of opening up possibilities to think further on how religion and politics mutually constitute the formation of citizenship and Islamic etiquettes in the context of Muslim politics in Kerala.

Nuances of the relationship between religion and political participation of Muslim subjects bear potential significance, particularly in the democratisation process of the post-colonial nation-state. This chapter, developed thorough analysing everyday negotiations of people both in terms of the political and religious, is divided into three sections. The first section, “Religion and Politics: Locating the Muslim League,” focuses on the ‘political’ in Muslim League beyond the binaries of sacred and secular. The second section, “Everyday ‘Political’ Engagement of the Muslims in Kerala,” deals with everyday Islam and Muslim politics in relation to Muslim League. This part brings out the theoretical frames of everydayness concerning the politics of the Muslim community. The third part, “Religious Authority and Muslim Politics,” maps the role of religious leadership in a democratic political system and how they retain their authority in a secular society. This chapter argues that Muslim politics in India is not inherently inimical to the idea of democracy but similar to any other political parties in which the Muslim League actively engages in the political processes of the state.

Section I

4.1 Religion and Politics: Locating the Muslim League

It is evident that, as discussed in the introductory chapter, the secularization theories failed to understand the increased importance of religion and religious identities in the domain of

politics as well as the possible structural conflicts that the separation of religion from politics would trigger. The increased academic and theoretical engagements on the ideas of de-privatization, post-secularism, and the resurgence of religion in the public sphere have remarked on the importance or marked presence of religion and faith in everyday life of modern subjects. Ardent champions of secularism such as Jurgen Habermas and Peter. L. Berger have later conceded the increasing importance of religion in the modern world order. However, they tend to read Islam mostly with a eurocentric lense which negates the mutual relation between Islam and democratic politics (Berger 1999; Habermas 2008).

According to Jose Casanova, the return of religion to the public sphere will never destroy the values of modernity but will protect it (Casanova 1994). Similarly, Charles Taylor argues secularism is a method of managing the diversity of religious, non-religious, or anti-religious without favouring one over another (Taylor 1998). The post secularists understand the importance of religion in the realm of politics and argue that religious traditions and communities of faith achieved a new hitherto of unexpected political importance in shaping the politics of the state, in which liberal democracies are not exempted (Casanova 1994; Berger 1999; Habermas 2008; Taylor 1998).

Similar to post-secular scholarship, Alfred Stepan's theory of twin tolerations states that in a democratic state, the separation of religion and state is the neither narrow nor the broader definition of democracy. Many democratic countries, including India, where Muslims fall under the category of minority community but are significant in number, are following the idea of twin toleration and they have proved successful in practice. According to him, democracy is not a monolithic idea, and liberal democracy is only one variant of democracy as in West (Stepan 2002, 2014). So, it is not necessary to strictly separate religion from politics for the successful working of democracy.

On a more radical note, anthropologist Talal Asad questions the dichotomy of religion and the secular, interrogating the category of secularism itself. Contesting the essentialist definition, which generalizes religion in a rigid format, Asad points out that 'religion' is an integral part of the modern practice of politics in the post- enlightened period (Asad 1992). To Asad, secularism is not merely an intellectual answer to a query about enduring social

peace and toleration. It is “an enactment by which a political medium (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion” (Asad 2003: 5). Asad’s concern is to explore how secularism became statecraft in the modern world. Whereas, in a constitutionally defined secular state like India where secularism is envisioned in terms of ‘mutual distance’ or ‘mutual respect’ to religion, secularism as an ideological category is historically contested in relation to its identity both as a colonial and post-colonial entity.

This thesis, however, argues that religion was ever-present in the public sphere before and after the advent of modernity. The concept of secularism in India is entirely different from the Western idea of secularism. Political theorists argue that religious community and non-religious people can live with or without their religious beliefs and thoughts, as we termed in Indian context as ‘composite culture.’ Indian Secularism is deeply concerned in projects of interreligious peace, national unity/identity and territorial integrity, citizenship and minority rights, although it has been rejected as an unsuitable or inadequate paradigm to engage with the multireligious and multicultural identities of India (Bhargava 2006: Nandi 1998, Kaviraj 1998: Madan 1998).

Recent scholarship has attended to the indisputable role that religion plays in both democratic and non-democratic regimes through gaining a remarkable influence in the new world order. It proves that religion did not lose its significance or relevance in the political and cultural life of the people but powerfully validates its role and presence even within highly secular societies. In the case of India, the politics of Muslim community operates mainly through the mutual engagement of both religion and state within the constitutional framework. Muslim League, my primary site of analysis, also operates its politics corresponding to the everyday life of the community through the prism of democracy, secularism, and the constitution. I argue that the political identity of IUML is co-terminus with the ‘religious identity’ and this is consolidated through prolonged political and religious confrontations with colonial powers and the feudal system in Malabar, grounded in caste power relations.

Unravelling this complexity would enable us to understand the language, life, tone, texture, limits, and prospects of imagining the possibility of ‘asecular’ Muslim politics in post-

partition India. My idea of ‘asecular’ is indebted to the arguments of anthropologist Hussein Ali Agrama,⁸³ who chose asecular instead of post-secular and non-secular. According to him:

The term *nonsecular* is too easily confused with the notion of the religious. And unlike *post-secularity*, *asecularity* is not a temporal marker. It allows the possibility that *asecularity* has in different forms, always been with us, even from within the traditions on which state secularity is based. Explorations of *postsecularity* typically try to identify the emergence of new norms. Such attempts fail to recognise that the process of identifying and distinguishing secular from nonsecular norms is part of what secularism is, and integral to its power (Agrama 2012: 187).

To him, secularism is a ‘problem space’ which explains “a historical arrangement of power in which the question of how and where to draw a line between religion and politics becomes seemingly indispensable to the practical intelligibility of our ways of life” (Agrama 2012: 40-1). Secularism and its spaces of exceptionalism produced by the state tend to foster struggle between religion and politics. As a problem-space, secularism is innately indeterminate and ambiguous, raising paradoxical, irresolvable questions that reproduce and amplify the worries and antinomies of secularism (Schielke 403: 2014). Language of asecularity in Muslim politics means that Muslim politics is neither the manifesto of the ‘anti-secular’ (Nandy 1995) nor apologetic towards the condition of the secular languages, but it is indifferent to the religiopolitical divide (Agrama 2011) which pops out from the ‘ethos of democratic sensibility’ (Asad 2003). Agrama resorts to the concept of asecularity to make possible thinking beyond the ideas of post-secular and non-secular.

The term asecularity specifies a situation not where norms are no longer secular, but where the questions against which such norms are adduced and contested as

⁸³ In his work, Hussein Ali Agrama (2012). *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt* explores the relationship between the Egyptian state, secularism, and religion. Agrama analyzes the relationship of religion and modernity, Islamic ways of life, and the rule of law. It further seeks the everyday practices of law by Islamist lawyers, the practice of *Hisba* (which allows a Muslim to bring a suit against another Muslim if he believes the defendant is acting in a way that is contrary to the tenets of Islam) and the role of the *Fatwa* Council of the *Al-Ahzar* Mosque. The core argument of him that the current practice of secularism in Egypt promotes the politicization of religion and therefore weakens the rule of law.

answers are no longer seen as necessary. It is a situation where we can be genuinely indifferent to those questions, the ways that particular stakes are attached to them, and their seeming indispensability to our ways of life. As a result, such moments open up spaces for us to think beyond our current predicaments. Here, it is worth noting that the condition of aseclarity manifested by these protests was also associated with a genuine ethos of democratic sensibility (Agrama 2011:5).

The above-cited article of Agrama discusses the popular Egyptian uprising against President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Narrating how the ‘conditions of aseclarity imbued within the revolution arms us to think about newer ‘ethos of democratic sensibility,’ he points out how the aseclarity conditions ask us to think about the democratic ethics and the broader political questions. Thinking alongside Agrama, one could argue that being indifferent to the religio-political divide would also enable us to think about ‘democratic sensibilities.’ The term aseclarity is referred to indicate an indifference to the questions and anxieties of the problem space of secularism, and avoidance of the conceptual-affective structures through which secular power works. Thus, *aseclarity* can be expressed in many different practices, spaces, and movements; some of them readily identified as religious (Agrama 2012).

Muslim League in Kerala demoted the use of thanatopolitics (death politics) for its political success as radical Islamists do. However, it is interesting to note how the party is often branded as ‘apologetic’ within the community by the electoral hardliners. In contrast, the leading left-liberals, Hindu nationalists, and conservative left parties often call IUMML as a ‘party for minority appeasement’ or a communal party. Both these definitions do not merely form triumphalist accounts but also subdue the complex negotiations and practices involved in the possibility of making sensible democratic ethos. Nevertheless, IUMML has been able to create a ‘political consciousness’ among the Muslim community compared to their counterpart, mainly North Indian Muslims, who were not much politically organized in the post-partition phase due to the absence of strong Muslim political movement. As Roland E. Miller points out, political mobilisation under Muslim League produced a new sense of power, security, and confidence to the community from the turbulent political situations faced by them in the post-independence India (Miller 2015).

An experience of Ayishakutty, a sixty-year-old housewife from Koottilangadi, Malappuram, demonstrate varied modes of political mobilisation of Muslim League:

*The prosperity of Muslims in Kerala is enabled only because of the dedication and commitment of the Muslim League, with the blessings of Panakkad Thangal, Samastha leaders, and the prayers of innocent orphans.*⁸⁴

I told her that ‘role of *thangals* and *ulama* in the politics of Muslim League can be well-taken,’ but how does a simple prayer from an orphan deliver success. She seemed happy to answer the question. She went inside her home smiling and came back after a moment. She asked me whether I am in *Wudu* (‘Ablution’)⁸⁵. While I replied, “I am not sure,” she pointed towards the tap at the side of verandah asking me to perform the ablution. It seemed that seeing my hesitation, she must have judged my attitude towards religious rituals.

Ayishakutty told me her views reciting a verse from the *Quran* that reads “And they give food despite the love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive” (Quran 76:8). She continued, “In Islam, orphans are treated with utmost care and affection, and protection of the orphans are regarded to be one of the greatest virtues in Islam.” One of the *Hadiths*, she quoted from Al-Bukhari, says that “whoever protects the orphans will be very close to me in paradise.” I was asked whether I know the *Hadith*. Later, I learned that the protection of orphans had been the priority of the party right from the beginning, and many of the party leaders were patrons of orphanages in and around South India. The followers of the party, like Ayishakutty, who hardly comes to streets to claim the space, believe that the protection of orphans and needy from poverty and destitution would result in the success of the party. In Malappuram district - where Muslim League holds the Lok Sabha constituency for the last 70 years has more orphanages than any other districts in Kerala (Usman 2005). How can a discipline like political science take into account the narrative of Ayishakutty since the dilemma poses a methodological question apart from its

⁸⁴ Ayishakutty, sixty-five-year old woman from Koottilangadi of Malappuram, on 22nd February 2015.

⁸⁵ Ablution is a special cleaning, specifically in relation to Prayer and for recitation of *Quran*, performed by Muslims by washing the face, arms, and feet, and by wiping the head. According to Islam, Wudu has several material and spiritual benefits. A Muslim who makes wudu at least five times a day for the prayers forms a habit of cleaning, which protects him from causes of illnesses and purifies him of microbes. Wudu has several spiritual benefits according to Islamic belief.

ethnographic ambiguity? Unpacking this complexity, I propose that tropes of Muslim League politics have an ‘asecular language,’ which needs to be located beyond the wisdom of conventional disciplinary boundaries.

Muslim League operates its politics through the prism of democracy, secularism, and constitutional frames. As a result, the politics of the Muslim League cannot be equated with Islamism /political Islam. While replying to one of my queries, a respondent said, *“being in one’s faith is not a condition to adjudicate another’s, rather being in faith is to secure the promise of life afterlife”* and continued *“and it decides the betterment of the nation.”*⁸⁶ Thus, the politics of the Muslim League in Kerala enables one to think about the complex relationship between politics and religion in India, where religion mediates the political relationship between the party and its supporters. In the case of Islamic/Muslim societies, religion constitutes one of the primordial identities, and the relationship between religion and politics in Islam is mutually constitutive.

The following narration illustrates how people’s religious commitments determine their everyday politics. Moideen Haji, who returned from Makkah after the pilgrimage opened up about his conviction in League’s politics. He says, *“practicing and maintaining one’s religion is an essential duty for a Muslim. The izzath/dignity of Muslims today is mainly indebted to the great political movement, Muslim League.”*⁸⁷ This can be read in conjunction with Hamza’s statement, which I quoted at the beginning of the chapter.

Hamza points out that the Muslim League is the only political party that has adequate potential to protect his religious and national identity together. For him, his national identity is equally important to his religious identity. One of the essential political missions of Muslim League is to build worthy citizens for the development of the country without compromising ones religious and cultural identity.

It is important to note that the political consciousness of the Mappilas is formulated, as mentioned in the previous chapter, through prolonged religious and political struggles against the colonial powers from the sixteenth to the 20th century. This struggle was mainly

⁸⁶ Abdu Salam, forty-five-year old man, from Kodur of Malappuram, on 15th March 2016.

⁸⁷ Moideen Haji, sixty-two-year old man from Mudikkode of Malappuram, on 10th February 2016.

to protect their religious and national identities. The idea of national unity was one of the primary concerns of the party, and the leaders insisted on the same. The politics of Muslim League has preserved the religious and nationalist credentials by actively participating in the political system of the country across time. Hence the ‘political’ of Muslim League is an interconnection of religion and politics.

The constitution of the Muslim League emphasises the importance of religion and cultural traditions of the community. The constitution of the party indicates the party’s commitment to the Indian nation. The party has been engaging public policies of the state and carrying forward a sense of spiritual awakening in politics. The first objective of the party’s constitution reads, “to uphold, defend, and maintain the freedom, unity, integrity, and honour of the State of the Indian Union, and its commitments towards the constitutional principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy” (IUML Constitution 2008: 2). The commitment of the party towards the Indian constitution indicates the fact that the politics of the Muslim League is oriented within a secular and democratic ethos.

The commitment to the everyday of the Muslim community cannot be evaded from Muslim League’s political programmes. The sense of everyday is defined by the religious, social, and political life of the supporters or followers of the party. As Kenneth D Wald views, religious belief is deeply connected not only to the voter’s choice; rather it encompasses political ideology, outlook, and attitudes towards a wide range of political objects (Wald 1987). To understand the relationship between politics and religion in Kerala, observing the religious faith of the community becomes vital.

Section II

4.2 Everyday ‘Political’ Engagement of the Muslims in Kerala

The global Islamic revival and the growing visibility of Islam in the West have created a great deal of debate in academia and beyond, with significant analytical, epistemological, and methodological inferences for the discipline of anthropology, and especially for the study of religion and ethics (Fadil and Fernando 2015). Everyday ethics has become a new

site of anthropological enquiry by various scholars.⁸⁸ Despite the availability of a considerable number of academic scholarships on ‘everyday Islam,’ the ‘everyday Muslim politics’ of South Asia, one of the largest Muslim dominated regions in the world, remains the least explored field in the scholarship of an anthropological discipline. This section develops out of these fissures, and seek to understand the ‘everyday Muslim politics’ in the context of South India, particularly Kerala.

In the case of Islamic/Muslim societies wherein religion is considered to be the primordial identity of its subjects, religion cannot be separated from the political life of the Muslims. The everyday life of Muslims is primarily defined by and dependent on the narratives of eternal and temporal experience. Since submission to God is the basic premise of the Muslim lifeworld, eternal or afterlife is one-step-ahead to the worldly life for a believer. Hence, religion and faith mediate the temporal (socio-political) experience of the Islamic/Muslim community. By taking the idea of mediation into account, this section focuses on how members of Muslim League affiliate themselves using the meta-narratives of religious, moral and political motives informing their everyday life and practices.

Individuals inherit the practices and discourses of a tradition (Asad 2003, 2009). Unlike Christianity, the religion (church) and state in Islam is visibly interconnected than separated, in which religion plays a vital role in shaping the politics of the people (Esposito and Voll 1996; Piscatori and Eickelman 1996; Asad 2003; Voll 2006). One could argue that religious structures, perceptions, experiences, actions, and everyday engagement of the people and the community are interconnected. To put it differently, since religion designs and frames the life structures of a subject, the separation of religion and politics is impossible within the Islamic traditions. As Carl Brown points out the reason for such differences between Islam and Christianity is that church as an institution is neither present nor significant in Islam in the sense of a corporate body whose leadership is defined, hierarchical, and distinct from the state. The somewhat amorphous yet concrete

⁸⁸ Saba Mahmood (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* in the context of ‘women piety movement’ in Egypt; Charles Hirschkind (2006). *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counter Publics* seeks how ‘Islamic media form, the cassette sermon has profoundly transformed the political geography’ of the Middle East; Talal Asad (2009) “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam” proposed the idea of Islam as a ‘discursive tradition’ against the Eurocentric reading of Muslims.

Organisational arrangement of Muslim religious specialists or *ulama* makes an institutional conflict between the Muslim church and Muslim state virtually not possible (Brown 2000).

To understand the everyday life of the Muslims, for instance, Muslim politics, one must consider Islamic texts and traditions beyond an essentialist mode of understanding. Instead of a reified way of perceiving religion as static and unchanging entity, it is required to understand Islam as a discursive tradition with own forms of authority, practices, reasoning etc. According to Asad, Islam is an analytical category or defining Islam as what Muslims everywhere say it is. Anthropology (of Islam) must be sensible of social structure, religious belief, and political behaviour which interact with each other (Asad 2009). To understand the diversities and differences among the Muslim communities, one must study the inner realities of that particular community than seeing the essentialist/orientalist distinction between an orthodox and non-orthodox model of Islam. Asad criticizes the essentialist mode of interpreting Islam, which represents Islam in a culturalist vocabulary through negating the agential aspect, particularly Gellner's and other West-centric scholars, wherein "Islamic actors do not speak; they do not think they *behave*" (ibid: 11).

Asad's anthropological inquiry is about religious practices rather than focusing on 'a single religion' (Scott 2006). Briefly, the anthropology of Islam is responsible for understanding the historical conditions and the efforts of practitioners to achieve coherence (Asad 1992).

If one wants to write an anthropology of Islam, one should begin, as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the *Quran* and the *Hadith*. Islam neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of belief, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition (Asad 2009: 20).

Islam as a discursive tradition for Asad is "a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present" (ibid: 22). In the Orientalists and anthropologists' perspective, the representation of "Islamic tradition" has often marginalised the place of argument and reasoning surrounding traditional practices. Asad points out that "reason and argument are necessarily involved in traditional practice whenever people have to be taught about the

point and proper performance of that practice, and whenever the teaching meets with doubt, indifference, or lack of understanding” (Asad 2009:22).

Asad further points out that Islamic traditions are not homogeneous. Instead, they aspire to achieve coherence as all discursive traditions do. Finally, Asad argues that “an anthropology of Islam will therefore seek to understand the historical conditions that enable the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation – and the efforts of practitioners to achieve coherence” (ibid: 23). Without understanding the inner realities of the Muslim community and their tradition, it is not worth analysing the community. Asad does not find any difference between religious and secular meanings in contemporary society and treat both as complementary to each other. Instead of treating the return or resurgence of religion into the public domain as against the spirit of secularism, Asad puts forward the possibility to understand religion and secularism more clearly in the current world order (ibid).

Anthropological works of Saba Mahmood (2005) and Charles Hirschkind (2006)⁸⁹ elucidate Talal Asad’s idea of an anthropology of Islam as a discursive tradition. Although they do not use ‘everyday’ in an analytical frame, their work engages with the broader anthropological study of ethics and religion. They found that Islamic religious practices enable the individuals to perform an ethical life through a knitting together of the soul and the body. Mahmood and Hirschkind observe the ‘ethical self-cultivation’ as the product of bodily performance of self-discipline, intended at restructuring a set of moral, sensorial, and affective dispositions by authoritative Islamic norms. These literatures argue that an individual connected religiously that enforce them to practice ‘ethical’ in his all political manifestations; and Muslim League considers ethics in political actions with a great value.

In the Indian context, Veena Das (1984) has talked about the folk and formal theology in Islam. Emphasizing how Islam at the local level has diverse textual or scriptural strands, Das’s framework allows us to include the populist politics, beliefs, and practices in studying the Muslim community. The methods of Muslim League members cannot be

⁸⁹ Saba Mahmood (2005) deals with the practice of veiling and Hirschkind (2006) focuses on Islamic sermons particularly in the localities of Cairo in Egypt in creating a pious life among people.

badged merely under the ambit of textual Islam or lived Islam; instead, one needs to carefully look at the entanglement or fluidity between the practices, actors, and beliefs. Focusing more on the ‘amalgamation of practices,’ this thesis argues that everyday living and religious faith of the subjects mediate the politics of Muslim League in Kerala. This faith-based political affinity of the community constitutes one of the primary reasons for the political existence of the Muslim League in the Malabar region.

In the fieldwork conducted in Malappuram to understand the nature of everyday Muslim practices and politics, it was found that most of the respondents practice religion in their daily life, called *Arkan- al- Islam*,⁹⁰ the basic principles of Islam considered obligatory by believers. The respondents believe that their religious faith is very much related and strengthened by their socio-political activities. In other words, spiritual experiences complement their social action. The practice of religion in their everyday life constitutes their social and political life. Few of the respondents maintained that religion is not a significant presence in everyday life, even though they are not anti-religious. They do not have any conflict with religious rituals or practices and sometimes do participate in religious ceremonies according to their conveniences. Interestingly, they follow religious identities in their lives and follow religious sermons during marriage and other auspicious occasions. A small group of respondents exhibited an unwillingness to respond to the questions, stating religion as their personal choice and their reluctance to disclose it in public as they consider faith as an enterprise between God and them.

One of the interesting insights from the field is regarding people who consider working in Muslim League as a ‘sacred’ activity, which demands us to think about the politics of the Muslim League beyond disciplinary boundaries. How can political action be considered a sacred act? The concept of sacred is always connected with religion, rituals, and spirituality. As far as Muslims are concerned, their conviction mostly defines their life to the submission to God, which operates both at the material and moral level. Islam is primarily considered as a social religion that emphasises collective existence and the fundamental importance of community (Rahman 1966). In theory, all Islamic laws are

⁹⁰ The basic principles of Islam lie in *Arkan-al-Islam* which includes everyday prayers, fasting in the holy month of Ramzan, offering *Zakat* and performing yearly religious rituals like *Hajj* and so on.

separated into two categories: *ibadat*, which deals with the matters of rituals that regulate the relationship between God and humans, and *mu'amalat*,⁹¹ which govern the relationship of humans with one another (Esposito and Shahin 2013). The former is related to the eternal life of the people who prescribe specific duties towards God, such as the declaration of faith, the performance of Prayer, Fasting, *zakat*, and confession of Islamic faith, etc.

In the case of Muslims in Kerala, these two, *ibadat* and *mu'amalat* can be divided in relation to their religious and political life. In Islam, *ibadat* has a broader connotation, which does not mean the devotional side of spiritual life exclusively but the total of the output of man under the moral law (Rahman 1966). By submission to God, the temporal experience of a believer should follow specific moral code in his social and political life. As a promotor of Muslim community politics, Muslim League considers ethics in politics to be one of the fundamental principles of the party. As an extension, the first-generation leaders of the party always insisted the members uphold moralistic principles in their political actions. The early leaders of Muslim League such as Muhammed Ismail, Pookoya Thangal and Bafaqi Thangal emphasised that the primary responsibility of the party supporter is to be a trustworthy Muslim in all sense. Where he/she must follow the Islamic principles of *tawhid* (Oneness of God) and then work for the national development. The leaders also urged the community to follow the Islamic principles based on the *Quran* and *Hadith* to keep morality and ethics in life for the betterment of the community and society (Seethi 1959; Thangal et al. 2013).

Thus, invoking Islamic etiquette and the objective of 'creating citizens' for the national development was at the core of the Muslim League's politics in Kerala. Most of the party meetings often begin with Islamic rituals such as recitation of the *Quran*. Similarly, the leaders usually start their speeches with the religious chants— wishing for the wellbeing of others— *Assalamu Alaikum* (Peace be upon you), which invokes a sense or feeling of togetherness among the people. Likewise, the party conferences and meetings will summon

⁹¹ Though the term *mu'amalat* is more inclined to the day today activities of economic transaction in Islamic jurisprudence though it connects other aspect of life. But I use the term here to connect with the temporal life of the people in a society such as socio, political, military and legal. More specifically to address the political life as the political and social life of a person- ruler and ruled- is bounded with morality and ethics in the Islamic tradition.

with *dua* (prayer) led by the revered Islamic scholars such as *thangals* and *ulama*. Sometimes, the party conferences and rallies begin after the visit and the performance of worship in the tombs of the *shuhada* (people martyred during the colonial struggle, particularly in the 1921 Malabar Rebellion). *Shuhada* has a high value in Islam, and Muslims believe that God has taken them to heaven.⁹²

Muslim League operates their politics mostly among these faith-based community who believe that religious belief brings spiritual awakening among them. The early leaders insisted on the community to be a ‘good’ Muslim first and then to be a member of the party. A circular issued by the party in its early phase asks the party workers to follow the Islamic principles such as *zakat*, *sadaqha* (voluntary alms), and advice people to avoid un-Islamic practices for the betterment of the society (Thangal et al. 2013: 57- 60). Muhammad Ismail, the founder president IUML, considered politics as a holy mission to serve the community which shouldn’t be followed by any intention of material benefit. According to him,

As a Muslim, we must obey what Islam has insisted, and we must abandon everything which Islam has banned. We must offer prayer in everyday life, observe obligatory fast during the month of *Ramzan*, give *zakat* according to your economic condition, and these will help you from all the difficulties. A good Muslim can become a good human and good Indian as well (Thangal et al. 2013: 15-24).⁹³

Karim, an active worker of the Muslim League for the last few decades, opines that working in Muslim League is a sacred activity because of the party’s religious affinity and various communitarian activities.

I have been working for the party for the last fifty years. I joined the party only after the call of Bafaqi Thangal, who came to my locality, and I do believe working in Muslim League as a virtue and sacred act. As a believer, God has given some duties

⁹² *Sunni* Muslims are more inclined to visit the *shuhada* and believe in their divine presence everywhere, which would provide immense energy to the believer in their social and political actions. Visiting the *subahda* is seen not only as a religious ritual but also as a means to commemorate their endless struggles.

⁹³ This was a proclamation, titled “Muslim League for What,” a speech of Muhammed Ismail, first published by Kerala State Muslim League in 1949 (Thangal et al 2013).

*and responsibilities for us to do in the world and we must do that. The party maintains sincerity and truthfulness in its socio-political engagements.*⁹⁴

Karim affirms that his reason to join the Muslim League itself is the call of Bafaqi Thangal and his religious leadership. Karim, still remembers his first meeting with Bafaqi Thangal and his *dua* during a party meeting that he attended during his adulthood. He believes that the blessings of Bafaqi Thangal remain with him always and strengthen his journey ahead, and his excitement could not be reflected in words. *Thangal* and *ulama* inspire the party members for an active intervention in the party activities. The Mappila community reveres the leaders due to their Prophetic genealogy, religious and communitarian leadership. To Karim, working in Muslim League is not a mere political activity as we might be inclined to perceive; instead, he finds it as a religiously sanctioned duty. The Islamic virtue also informs this sacred sensibility around the party's activities of helping the needy. The sacred leadership of the party has influenced Karim extensively, which was the case with many other respondents.

It can be said that the history of Mappila Muslim political life was inspired by the religious leaders of the party, and this legacy continues in the community through the unnegotiable sacred leadership. The party had voluntarily taken the charges of community enhancement schemes along with various other community Organisations in its early stages. The primary task of the party, in initial days, was to rehabilitate the orphans and destitute who survived the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Priority was also given to opening several educational institutions in the underdeveloped areas of Malabar.⁹⁵ The party advised the members that it is invested in the community to protect the poor and the orphans and later community took the responsibility and contributed enormously in this regard. This religious and moral responsibility of members helped in fostering a community sensibility among the Mappilas, which gradually strengthened the political authority of the Muslim League in the state of Kerala.

⁹⁴ Karim, sixty-year-old man from Mudikkod of Malappuram district, on 20th March 2016.

⁹⁵ The first Muslim higher educational institution, Farook College, was established in 1948 in Calicut. After two-decade, another prominent institution, Pokker Sahib Memorial Orphanage College, was also set up by the party leadership at Tirurangadi, Malappuram. Presently, both of these are the prominent higher educational institutions in the state of Kerala along with many such others (Muhammed 2007).

The charity politics of Muslim League, according to members, was never considered as a mere political activity. More specifically, it was never considered to be a means for any political gains; but it was understood as a part of self-cultivation and a means for reward in eternal life. As a result, people firmly believe that they can uphold their piety by working with Muslim League. Many of the respondents opined that “*Muslim League is not just a political party but the guardian/patron of the community.*” Therefore, the ‘institutional model’ welfare policies of the party need to be located within the discursive domain of religious ethics and practices, beyond the formal political structures.

The respondents signify the nuanced and complex ways through which Islamic scriptures and tradition inspire charity activities among the party members. It is worth noting that all the respondents who participated in the field survey have been actively engaged either as a contributor or as an agent at the Organisational level. Among the respondents, most of them perceive that the contribution to charity for the welfare of the community and society is one of the religiously sanctioned duties of a Muslim. Many respondents opined that the charity and philanthropic activity is *ibadath* quoting the *Hadith*, “a man is not a believer who fills his stomach while his neighbor is hungry” (Al- Albani 6:112) to authenticate their argument. They opined that the charitable activities of the party are not meant to increase their electoral constituencies but are investments for the eternal life of a believer, as ethical self-cultivation. However, very few of the respondents find it as a typical political activity which one way or the other benefits the politics of Muslim League.

The charity activities of the party can be taken in two ways, both in terms of its religious aspect and as a social responsibility of the community to help their fellow human beings. The welfare projects are undertaken to uphold the objectives of ensuring ‘social equity and security’ irrespective of social and religious identities. Alternatively, it is an attempt to increase the standard of living of the people through everyday charity where the state missionary is inadequate to place their problems. Though the idea of charity is for a better tomorrow, or it is a transaction between contributor and *Allah*, as Amira Mittermaier points, it makes space within social justice for the here and now. Mittermaier also points out that everyday practices of *Khidma* giving can point to an alternative— obscured and emergent—meanings of justice in society (Mittermaier 2014). It is interesting to note that

the idea of social justice emerged in the late eighteenth century as a product of industrial revolution. However, the idea of social justice placed Islam since its inception. It is defined in many times both in *Quran* and *Hadith*, and it is a religiously sanctioned duties of a believer.

There are three main charity/philanthropic projects carried out by the Muslim League, namely, C.H. Centre, *Baithurahma*, and Shihab Thangal Drinking Water Programme.⁹⁶ The party collects finance for these philanthropic schemes primarily through two ways: firstly, through channelization of remittances from the Malayali Muslim Gulf migrants, which strengthens the possibilities for transnational ‘charity’ in Kerala; secondly, through contributions from the community in the form of either *zakat* or *sadaqha*. It is worthwhile to note that the party collects money for C.H. Center from Masjid in the second Friday of every *Ramzan* as Muslims believe that it is more rewarding from Allah during the holy month which further encourages them to be part of the philanthropic venture. The party also distributes cover to collect money from every household of its members during the *Ramzan* for other charity and allied activities.

Moideen Koya, a veteran Muslim League member of Malappuram Municipality, recollects his experience in engaging with the charity activities of the party. I met him in the month of *Ramzan*, and he was rushing to the party office to handover his contribution.

I have been working for the Muslim League for the last many decades. Yes, I do believe charity activities of the party is a religiously sanctioned duty. It has been the tradition of the party since its inception. As far as Muslims are concerned, the worldly life is for a short period and remains till we reach eternal life. God has assigned us with certain duties in this world. Hence, we must do our best to help the needy people, particularly orphans, destitute, and widows, along with other

⁹⁶ CH Centre is an institutionalized attempt of Muslim League intended mainly to make available help in medical and related fields. It provides many humanitarian services- food, medical, diagnosis, ambulance and so on- to the poor and the needy people on a day to day basis irrespective of their religious and communitarian identities. The *Baithurahma* (House of Mercy) is a charity and social welfare program aimed to provide housing for the poor and downtrodden sections of the society, both in Kerala and other states of the country⁹⁶ (Baithurahma Documents). The Shihab Thangal Drinking water Programme, through which the party runs more than 1000 drinking water projects in different parts of the country. For details, see IUML (2016). Official Documents of Kerala State Muslim League Committee.

*party activities. The various charity programmes of the party such as Baithurahma, C.H. Centre, etc. are channelized in a way to reach to the maximum number of people regardless of their religious, caste or political affiliations.*⁹⁷

Here, the respondent has a firm conviction that the charity programmes of the party are not mere political activities, but religiously sanctioned duties to help the needy. Moreover, the respondent is quite convinced that the charity activities of the party will reach the real beneficiaries as the intention of the activities is solely informed by the motive of rewards from *Allah*. Hence, the political activities of Muslim League are directly linked to their religious faith and traditions.

Corresponding to these transactions and negotiations between faith and politics, the present study seeks to shed light on how people look at and perceive party activities. Many of the respondents, mostly the first generation workers of the party, find working in Muslim League as an act of *khidmat* – rendering services to the community and society – and hence conceive it as a sacred act. Apart from the regular political activities, Muslim League carries out many other activities for the social and economic development of the community by which the supporters and workers of the party are much impressed. It is widely acknowledged among the supporters and even others that the political morality of the Muslim League is derived primarily from their religious faith, which cannot be separated from their everyday life.

This study proposes the concept of ‘spirituality in politics’ as a political framework to understand Muslim League’s everyday negotiations with the Mappila Muslims of Kerala by upholding many religiously inspired activities in its politics along with the philanthropic activities. Here the spirituality in politics designates a religiously attuned ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ standard in all the political manifestation of the community. This religious and moral responsibility of members helped to create a community feeling among the Mappilas, which gradually strengthened the political authority of the Muslim League in the state of Kerala. The party does not feel any difference between the political and social community, as both are complementary to each other. Legislative power is more important

⁹⁷ Moideen Koya, sixty-year-old man, from Koottilangadi of Malappuram, on 4th May 2016.

than any other form, to empower the community socially and culturally. For these reasons, the Muslim League employs the presence of religious authority, *ulama* and *thangal*, in its everyday activities to ensure the presence of a ‘traditional’ Mappila community.

Section III

4.3 Religious Authority and Muslim Politics

The indisputable role of religious authority in Muslim politics has been a notable site of academic contestation for a long time. In Islamic tradition, *ulama* – the group of specialists authorised to interpret the holy text or a professionally trained priesthood – possesses the highest status. They are perceived as the representatives of divine and the custodians of faith who are assigned to systemise religious belief (Zaman 2002; Esposito & Voll 1996; Hatina 2010). However, the Iranian revolution of the 1980s opened up a new academic impetus towards the increased role of religion or *ulama* in public politics. It has led to a renewed scholarly interest in the complex interplay of religion, politics, law, and society (Esposito & Voll 1996). Nevertheless, scholars view that much of the discussions on *ulama* are usually focused on their engagement in the Islamic jurisprudence, primarily on the relevance of (religious) authority to *sharia* (Islamic law) as well as *fiqh* (jurisprudence) (Hefner 2000; Kramer & Schmidtke 2006; Hatina 2010). However, the reassessment has related the vitality of the ‘*ulama*’ in politics after the Islamic resurgence in Iran onwards, which forced the political elites to rely increasingly on the religious establishment, thereby allowing the ‘*ulama*’ greater freedom of activity (Hatina 2010).

Scholars such as Barbara D. Metcalf (1989), Francis Robinson (2001), and Muhammed Qasim Zaman (2002) have produced a significant corpus of works on *ulama* which challenge conventional paradigms.⁹⁸ These scholars point out the significant role that *ulama* played in politics during the colonial and post-colonial times. While Zaman’s work can hardly be seen as an account of the scholarly tradition of ‘*ulama*,’ it focuses on how

⁹⁸ For more details on *ulama* and its authority both religion and politics, see Barbara D. Metcalfe. (1989). *Islamic Revivalism in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Francis Robinson. (2001). *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, and Muhammed Qasim Zaman. (2002). *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. The first two works are discussed in detail in the Chapter Two of the thesis “Muslim Political Formation in Colonial and Post-Colonial India: An Overview.”

they reconstitute their religious authority, institutions and socio-political role in contemporary societies like India and Pakistan. His study re-examines the historical perception that mostly depicted the ‘*ulama*’ as a marginal player, neither as activists nor as intellectual innovators, in relation to the Islamic regimes.

This part of the chapter primarily uses Zaman’s work *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodian of Change* as a point of reference to explain the role of religious authority who manages to control the Muslim politics in Kerala. In Kerala, the *ulama* has always been part and parcel of Muslim politics at least from the sixteenth century onwards by engaging with the all potential interpretation of *ulama*.⁹⁹ Traditionally, *ulama* are bestowed with the authority of interpreting and imparting the religious texts and thus to control the community and lead them in Islamic ways. However, Zaman views that the *ulama* in the modern era dealt with the challenge of modernity and managed to widen their support in different ways of engaging in public discourses in local, national, and international contexts (Zaman 2002, 2009).

Religious authority is more interested in the day to day politics, even in the secular and democratic setup, because, as Zaman observes, in the present global context the religious epistemology which was earlier the monopoly of *ulama*, has now become accessible to the common man as a result of the innovative telecommunication systems and transnational engagements. With these changes, Islamic foundational texts and other sources of religious knowledge are made readily available in print as never before. Besides, the availability of vernacular translations of these texts helps common men with ready access to Islamic forms of knowledge. All these have resulted in undermining the *ulama*’s claims to privileged access to text and knowledge. To overcome this crisis, the *ulama* are trying to make interventions in political as well as public spaces to ensure their participation in politics and government (Zaman 2002, 2009). Similarly, Asef Bayat observes that *ulama* continued

⁹⁹Osella and Osella extensively studied the different aspects of Kerala Muslims, but majority of their studies centered on the idea of reform and revival, the theological debates among the community in case *Sunnis* and *Mujahid* (Osella and Osella 2008). Roland Miller’s work is on socio, political and religious aspects of the community, but has not explored much on the political possibilities of *ulama* (Miller 1992).

to reinvent new strategies of communicating and exerting their lost hegemony in the changing world (Bayat 2010).

Other scholars who studied extensively about Islam and Muslim societies also put forward similar ideas on *ulama*'s changing nature in modern time (Esposito and Voll 1996; Bayat 2010; Hatina 2010). To understand this phenomenon, one must grasp the different political environments to which Muslim communities respond as religion and politics remain closely associated in Islam. To an extent, *ulama* hold substantial power in the present context, which can influence the politics related to decision making of the Muslim community in significant ways. Because Muslim politics has been, largely, influenced and defined by the religious context of the community. However, it does not mean that a Muslim cannot have any other political stand beyond the political approaches and interpretation of the *ulama* or religious authority.

The religious authority, by which I refer to as *ulama*, is accredited with the highest status in the Muslim socio-political discourses of Kerala. This part aims to engage with the following question critically – why is the religious authority bestowed with a charismatic or higher status in the Muslim political tradition in Kerala? The conformity of a wider audience, who are theologically of *Sunni* tradition and politically Muslim League followers, to listen and follow the doctrinal words of these religious leaders and ascertain their authority. The religious authority controls the community morally and ethically, which replicate a 'spiritual awakening' in the political realm as well. I consider both the *ulama* and Samastha, an institutional *ulama* wing of EK *Sunnis*,¹⁰⁰ as primary sites for enquiry in this section.

In Islamic/Muslim societies, religious authority/*ulama* responded to several ideological and political developments differently as every regional culture was the creation of unique historical experience (Green 1976). In Kerala, the trajectories of political development of Mappilas began in a conflicting relation with the colonial powers in which religion and its leadership, 'traditional intellectuals' as KN Panikkar termed them (Panikkar 1989), played

¹⁰⁰ For details, see Sub-section II "Muslim Organisations and the Community Relation" in Chapter Three "Muslim Politics in Kerala: Formation of the Indian Union Muslim League."

a significant role in shaping Mappila political identity. In the post-colonial secular state, *thangals* and *ulama* have come to play a new and highly significant role in religio-political sphere operating through Muslim League, where religious authority uses their legitimate role to control or guide Muslim politics. Although *thangals* and *ulama* use their authority over the community at a different level, the operation is mutually constitutive as both of them are working among the *Sunnis*. *Thangals* need not have accredited extensive religious knowledge compared to *ulama*. However, the Prophetic genealogy and politics with which they associate sustain their pious status in the Muslim community.

Thangals are accorded great admiration among *Sunni* Muslims including *ulama*, as they revere their Prophetic tradition.¹⁰¹ Hence, *thangals* are perceived as the spiritual and temporal leaders of the community. This spiritual leadership also granted them the Muslim League's political authority (Khalidi 2004; Osella & Osella 2008). Interestingly, the power is bestowed not just because of their Prophetic genealogy alone but for their effort in politicising the community, through mobilising continuous struggles against the colonisers and landlords of the Malabar region (Miller 1992; Bahauddin 2004; Rahmathullah 2006). For example, during colonial times, the Mamburam Thangal family had received wider appeal and respect from all over the community for unifying Mappilas against the British¹⁰².

After the formation of Kerala state, Bafaqi Thangal, popularly known among the Mappilas as '*Qaidul Qaum*' (leader/guardian of the community) was appointed as the first president of the Kerala State Muslim League, from 1956 to 1973. Since then the president post of the party has never been given to any non-*thangal* person. Before this, Bafaqi Thangal had also served as the president of Malabar district Muslim League committee in erstwhile Madras Presidency. This appointment was not merely religious, but an attempt to capitalise on the political situation in favour of the party. It was an essential political strategy to attract the large number of *Sunni* Muslims to the then *Mujahid* leaders dominated Muslim

¹⁰¹ A recent study on *thangal* families identified around 300 *thangal Quabeelas* (clan) in Kerala, and prominent among are Bafaqi, Jiffry, Bukhari and Jumaillulaili, etc. *Thangals* such as Mamburam Alavi, Mamburam Fazal and Panakkad Muhammed Ali Shihab etc, are prominent individual figures among them (Rahmathullah 2006).

¹⁰² For details, see Sub-section I "The Emergence of Muslim Political Consciousness in Kerala" in Chapter Three of the thesis "Muslim Politics in Kerala: Formation of Indian Union Muslim League."

League party and unify them as a single ‘political community’ (Aziz 1992; Miller 1992; Samastha 1985). The *thangal* leadership enabled the party to maintain a cordial relationship with *Sunnis*, which attracted a large number of *Sunnis* who were, earlier, averse to mainstream politics due to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Bafaqi Thangal also brought *Sunnis* both religiously and politically together, and his close association with Samastha made him play the role of facilitator between *Sunnis* and Muslim League.

Bafaqi’s leadership popularised the Muslim League in the community-oriented political sphere of the state in which party marked its space. After the demise of Bafaqi Thangal, the party leadership was assigned to the Panakkad Thangal family.¹⁰³ After that, there was no election held for the post of state president as it is unanimously considered a ‘hereditary’ position for the Panakkad family. Interestingly, Shihab Thangal served more than thirty years (1975-2009) as the party’s state president (Konnar 2014). Presently, the Panakkad Thangal family has become a star symbol of *Sunni* Muslims and the community, owing to their religious and political leadership. It is also important to note that all the presidents of Muslim League, except Syed Muhammed Ali Shihab, have served as a member of Samastha *mushavara* as well.

Interestingly though, all the *thangals* are not accredited with equal veneration and sacredness among the community. This status is accredited by many factors such as religion, politics, and also by their sense of commitment towards the community. For example, in the Assembly election of 2016, a BJP candidate namely Badusha Thangal contested from Malappuram constituency, but could not attain legitimacy within the community and failed miserably. The major reason behind his failure was seen as an extension to the doubts on his claims of the Prophetic genealogy and the politics he had chosen. He did not receive any veneration but was ridiculed widely within the community. One respondent, Ahmad, from Koottilangadi, Malappuram, expressed his anger “*how can we accept him as a thangal when he contests for BJP*. He further added that *he is a mere*

¹⁰³Initially Panakkad P.M.S.A. Pukooya Thangal (1973-75) assumed the Muslim League leadership. Two years later, after his demise, the leadership got transferred to his son, Syed Muhammedali Shihab Thangal. After his demise in 2009, the leadership transferred to his brother, Hyderali Shihab Thangal (2009-), the current president of Kerala State Muslim League.

puppet of Hindutva groups and we are well aware of their politics.” At the same time, the respondent vocally expressed his views on the Panakkad *thangal* family:

*Panakkad thangal family has the Prophetic tradition and is considered as an embodiment of secularism, peace, and communal harmony in Kerala. They are not fascinated either by parliamentary politics or motives for any positions than serving the community and society. This family is the shelter for all, and they can solve any unsolved problems of the community. They are not only the leaders of the Muslim League but the spiritual leaders of the community as a whole.*¹⁰⁴

One of the spokespersons of Samastha, who wants to remain anonymous, told me in a personal interview regarding the importance of Panakkad *thangal* family: “*both Samastha and Muslim League are capitalising the sacredness of the Panakkad family to mobilise the community. People respect them as ulama, sufi, judge and saint on many matters.*”¹⁰⁵

One of the top Muslim League leader, who also did not want to be named, in a personal talk, revealed that:

*It is the common tendency among the Muslim League candidates to seek the blessings and prayers from the Panakkad thangals before filing nomination for elections in order to help him get more confidence to contest.*¹⁰⁶

Another respondent, Muhammedali, a seventy-year-old man from Melmuri, Malappuram, fondly recollects his memory of hugging and kissing the hand of Panakkad Pookoya Thangal fifty years back. Kissing the right hand of a *thangal* or an *ulama* is a sacred practice among the *Sunnis*, which they believe, would bring spiritual blessings.

The spiritual and temporal leadership is much accepted by the *Sunni* sects, which sustained their religio-political authority. As a result, they adorn different posts of both Samastha and Muslim League simultaneously. Hyderali Shihab Thangal (1947-), the current president of the Kerala state Muslim League, and the chairman of the National Political Advisory

¹⁰⁴ Ahmad, fifty-year-old man, from Kodoor of Malappuram, on 03rd March 2016.

¹⁰⁵ A personal Interview with a Samastha Spokesperson, on 10th January 2016, at Islamic Centre: Calicut.

¹⁰⁶ A personal Interview with a top officials of the party, on 10th December 2015, at CH Centre: Calicut.

Committee of IUML, holds the office of vice-president of Samastha and also serve as the member of *mushavara*. Apart from this, he works as the president of the *Sunni* Mahal Federation (which look after all Masjids, Madrasa and similar establishments of Samastha), and is the patron of many charitable and educational institutions both inside and outside the state. Umerali Shihab Thangal (1940-2008), also served as Samastha's vice president and *mushawara* member, along with adorning the president of Malappuram district Muslim League committee.¹⁰⁷

In short, *thangal* leadership is one of the major determining factors for *Sunnis*' joining in the Muslim League and the subsequent growth of Muslim politics in Kerala. Their engagement with Samastha and Muslim League remains crucial in building an inclusive relationship among these two organisations. The *thangal* leadership also takes the responsibility, on certain occasions, of mediation in settling the religious and political issues among Samastha and Muslim League. This mutually constitutive religious and political understanding of EK *Sunnis* and the Muslim League, with several other factors, helped the party ensure its electoral constituencies in Kerala, particularly in Malabar.

Along with the *thangal*, *ulama* also remains a visible presence and a powerful marker of Muslim politics in Kerala which can be traced back to the 16th century. Unlike Islamic governing systems, where the *ulama* plays a very dynamic role, their role in secular countries is either minimal or absent. Historically, IUML has been in a cordial understanding with the *ulama*, and this relationship proves to what extent *ulama* can engage in a secular and democratic polity. In contemporary society where the idea of modernity is existent in all the public discourses, *ulama* plays a relatively different role compared to the earlier ones. In such a condition, Zaman views that, *ulama* are making important contributions to the public, and even setting the terms for such discourses. More importantly, they also play substantial religiopolitical activist roles in contemporary

¹⁰⁷Umarali Shihab Thangal also served as Chairman of Kerala *Waqaf* Board. Similarly, the other members of Panakkad family serve different positions in Samastha and Muslim League. The present president of Muslim Youth League, Panakkad Munavarali Shihab Thangal, is the younger son of late Muhammed Ali Shihab Thangal. Panakkad Hameedali Shihab Thangal, son of Umarali Shihab Thangal, is the current president of Samastha Kerala *Sunni* Students Federation (SKSSF), the student wing of Samastha.

society. Despite the debates around the status of Muslims being numerical majority or minority, the *ulama* in recent decades has grown increasingly prominent in society and politics (Zaman 2002). This observation is validated in the religio-political context of IUML and Samastha as well.

As the religious authority of the community, the *fatwas* (legal opinions by religious scholars) made by Samastha *ulama* on religious affairs are regarded to be final and binding among the *Sunnis* of Kerala. Muslim League consults the religious leaders of the community to avoid confrontations of any sort among them on religion-based political issues such as Muslim Personal Law, Common Civil Code, Triple *Talaq* etc. Concomitantly, the party presents the community's concern in the lawmaking body to ensure that the minority rights are protected. When I asked about this, one of the top officials of the IUML, who wished his name not to be referred, said that "*as a religious organisation they have every authority to express their opinion in religio-political matters.*"¹⁰⁸

Alikutty, a member of both *Samastha* and Muslim League opined about the complementary relationship between these two organisation,

*Samastha, as an ulama wing, has the power to look after the religious matters of Sunnis, and they are obliged to follow its decrees on religion. Similarly, the Muslim League is, largely, supported by Sunnis; hence, it is accountable to Samastha on religion-based political issues. This intrinsic traditional relationship is the core of Muslim politics in Kerala.*¹⁰⁹

His opinion reflects the nature of Muslim politics, which rarely demarcate any boundary between religion and politics. And it also proves that religious identity is fundamental to Muslims than any other identity. This twin toleration of religion and politics is the core element that sustains the Muslim politics in the state over seven decades. According to M.T. Abdullah Musliyar,

¹⁰⁸ A Respondent from Kodoor of Malappuram, on 03rd March 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Alikutty, fifty-five-year-old man, from Melmuri of Malappuram, on 30th May 2016.

There has always been a consensus between Samastha and Muslim League in many issues. Most importantly, Samastha accepts the Muslim League as the political authority of the community and Muslim League takes Samastha as its religious authority. Hence, there is an informal agreement among Samastha and Muslim League regarding the terms of their cooperation and complementarity for the betterment of the community. He further adds that there must be a coordination between *ulama* and *umara* – the religious leaders, which include mainly the *thangal* leadership.¹¹⁰

However, on certain occasions, Samastha uses its authority to control the party and work as a corrective mechanism whenever the party falls into theological and ideological bankruptcy. As Zaman points out how *ulama* imposes its authority in modern politics also works in the context of Samastha. Samastha imposes its religious authority on Muslim League where the party is left with no options but to accept the decree of Samastha, as *Sunnis* are the major stakeholders within the community. For example, women's entry into mainstream politics has been one of the major bones of contention between these two organisations. Samastha *ulama* are of the opinion that women's entry to politics should not be encouraged unless there is an unavoidable circumstance such as to contest in reserved posts to local body elections.¹¹¹ It is important to note that the Muslim League has never elected a single woman candidate either as MP or MLA in its seventy years of political history. The only Muslim women candidate, Qamarunnisa Anwar, who contested in 1996 in the Kerala Assembly election from Calicut II, sitting seat of CPI (M), was defeated by a senior CPI (M) leader, Elamaram Kareem.¹¹² Samastha then came up with a resolution against the women candidature that Islamic tradition never entertains the public appearance of women with men, except in an unavoidable situation (Samastha 2012: 418-53).

¹¹⁰This statement is a part of speech delivered by M.T. Musliar in the Jamia Nooriya Islamia Pattikkad, Malappuram, on 18th January 2018, in its annual conference held as a part of its convocation. He is working as the vice-President of Samastha and the Secretary of Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board.

¹¹¹ However, the increased number of women reservations in local bodies in 1992 and its subsequent amendments in 2010 which further increases it from 33% to 50% in which Samastha left with no option, but accept it. *Ulama* supported the need for women in such unavoidable situations according to the norms of Islam (Tanoor 2016: 851-912).

¹¹² Calicut II has been a strong hold of CPI (M) since the formation of the assembly constituency and the constituency has always been represented by the members of CPI (M).

Another major controversy that erupted between Samastha and Muslim League is on lighting the sacred lamp (*Nilavilakku*) for inaugurating public functions and meetings, which received extensive public attention. Lighting the lamp is observed as a customary practice before the commencement of any official events in the secular Hindu society of Kerala (Osella & Osella 2007:330)¹¹³ A few years back, several heated debates and discussions erupted in public discourse when a Muslim League minister P.K. Abdu Rabb (Minister of Education) refused to light the lamp during a public programme.¹¹⁴ While the liberal left of Kerala argued in favour of the act as a secular tradition, the Muslim religious groups opposed it by stating religious principles. However, two of the party MLAs (M.K. Muneer and K.M. Shaji) stated that lighting the lamp is an individual choice, and it has nothing to do with religious faith. Whereas, Samastha stated that the lighting lamp is the tradition of another religion (Hindu) and blamed the party leadership as attempting to “trivialise” the customs.¹¹⁵ In the end, IUML officially made a statement that no party leaders should debate or discuss the issue in public. The party found that any statement which harms the religious sentiments of the community would negatively affect the political legitimacy of the party.

According to the situation’s demands, Samastha either controls the Muslim League directly as reflected in the above examples or work independently to display its power. Samastha also intervened in politics, with Muslim League and like-minded groups, during the Shah Bano case in the 1980s to restore the *sharia* and Muslim Personal Law. Samastha, along with Muslim League and different community groups, organised many protests in this regard (ibid). When the Babri Masjid was demolished by the Hindutva forces in 1992, Samastha had passed a resolution to rebuild the Masjid not only for the protection of the minority sentiments but also for the protection of the secular fabric of the country (ibid). Samastha also held a protest ‘Protect *Sharia*,’ against the Union Cabinet’s ordinance to criminalise the *triple talaq*. Samastha collected one million signatures against this move

¹¹³ This practice, as an apparent Hindu religious ritual, led to the reformist groups branding it as an un-Islamic act and to demand that Muslim politicians should refrain from the practice (Osella & Osella 2007:330).

¹¹⁴ The senior leader of the party, E.T. Muhammed Basheer, endorsed minister’s stand by stating “IUML would continue with its convention of not lighting the lamp in public functions.” For details, see Times of India. (27th July 2015). “IUML Leaders Divided over Lighting the Lamp.

¹¹⁵ ibid

and submitted to the president of India, and filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court of India.¹¹⁶

These above-cited examples show the instances in which Samastha exerted religious authority over the Muslim League. The case of Samastha illustrates the extent to which a religious organisation can get involved in the politics of the state. In a way, the Muslim League is subject to the ‘religious and political auditing’ of Samastha, which testifies the vital role of the *ulama* in a modern Muslim society. The *ulama* interfering in democracy and politics shows their changing strategy to retain authority in public discourses by using the possibility of secular politics. In many instances, the Muslim League is left with no option other than accepting the religious decree of Samastha to carry forward its politics.

This intrinsic relationship between Samastha and Muslim League further rouses the possibility of the interconnection of religion and politics. The religious and political auditing of Samastha always enforced the party to carry morality and ethics in political actions. This morally bounded politics in all its manifestation ensured an indispensable place for Muslim League among the community, which resulted in the party’s sustenance, especially, in Malabar. The complementary sacred and secular relationship of both Samastha and Muslim League proves the possibilities of Muslim minority political assertion in a majoritarian Hindu state

Conclusion

The political support of the Muslim League among the community has been mostly dependent on religious faith and affinity. This study on Muslim League is not undertaken as an analysis of a formal political aspect; instead, it tries to understand the everyday engagements of Muslim politics in Kerala. Moving away from the standard narration of political mobilisations. This chapter illustrated the complex transactions of the Muslim community between religion and politics in upholding the secular credentials. Politics of Muslim League also invites us to think about the possibility to create a collective democratic ethos on being indifferent to ‘religiopolitical’ division (Agrama 2011). This

¹¹⁶ Suprabatham. (9th October 2018). “Samastha Shariat Sammelanam: Pathu Laksha Oppukalitta Bheema Haraji Rashtrapathikku Samarppikkum.”

creation of ethos is made possible through mobilising and capitalising on the discursive orientations of religious subjects.

Drawing from the data derived from fieldwork, the chapter proposes the framework of ‘spirituality in politics’ to understand the Muslim League’s everyday negotiations with the community and the state. The party promises to keep the religious and cultural ethos of the Muslim community in all its political manifestations. The sense of religious and moral responsibility among the members help to create a sensibility of *ummah*, which gradually strengthens the political authority of the Muslim League. This faith-based political affinity of the community is one of the main reasons that remains crucial in maintaining the political legitimacy of Muslim League in Kerala. The attempt of the chapter is not to weave the story with nationalist credentials but to points out alternative conceptual frameworks in understanding the everyday political negotiations of the Muslim League. This will interrogate the essentialist narratives on Muslim politics, and open up a new horizon in the academic thinking of religion and politics.

Chapter 05

Community Politics in Kerala: Competition, Accommodation and Negotiation

Caste and community based political mobilisation is a significant feature of Indian polity. The persistent social inequalities by the dominant castes and the consciousness of the 'lower caste' communities to overcome such discriminations have resulted in the formation of political mobilisations among the backward sections of Indian society, particularly after the 1980s. However, in two South Indian states, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, political mobilisation of the lower caste/class began much before broader Indian context (Wilkinson 2005). Kerala has received significant scholarly attention due to the communitarian nature of its politics, since the formation of the state in 1956. Where, two major Hindu caste groups, Nairs and Ezhavas, along with the Muslim and Christian communities, have maintained a dominant presence and continue to act as a pressure group to attain political and material benefits from different political parties and governments (Mathew 1989; Varshney 2002; Wilkinson 2005; Biju 2013).

The strong presence of these caste and religious movements in Kerala have a historical trajectory which I attempt to map here. Kerala is religiously heterogeneous, and non-Hindu minorities are a larger proportion, mainly Muslims and Christians, of the population than in any major state except Kashmir (Wilkinson 2005). Historically, like many other states, there is a dominance of Brahmins manifested in their attitude towards the middle-caste Nairs and lower-caste Ezhavas and Pulayas. They practice 'highest caste purity' and consider/ed others were 'untouchables' and availed all the benefits of education and government employment (Wilkinson 2005; Pillai 1989). The Malayali Memorial (Travancore Memorial) in 1891, was one of the early social movement initiatives in Travancore by non-Brahmin communities to challenge the Brahminical dominance in educational and public services (Nair 1979; Pillai 1989).

The Ezhava, a 'lower caste' community, is engaged in many occupations such as agriculture, toddy tapping, weaving, and small business enterprises and so on. The dominance of Brahmins and Nair community in government and administrative services forced the Ezhavas to constitute the Ezhava Memorial in 1896 to ensure their rights are

protected. Subsequently, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), a social reform movement, was formed by Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928) in 1903 for the upliftment of the lower caste community to promote the “religious and secular education and industrious habits among them” (Nossiter 1982). The Organisation was active in fighting for the Ezhavas and untouchables to get access to Hindu temples and they held important non-violent protests at Vaikom in 1924 and the Guruvayoor temple in 1931–32 for the same (Jeffrey 1976).

A decade after the formation of SNDP, Nairs formed their institutional wing called Nair Service Society (NSS), on 31st October 1914, by Mannath Padmanabhan (1878-1970), popularly known as Mannam. The NSS had a wider network throughout the Travancore and Cochin, and by the independence of the country, it had set up a network of local branches, hospitals, and educational institutions throughout this region. Another significant community consolidation, Nivarthana Prakshobham (Abstention Agitation), was carried by the Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians together from 1931-38, against the discriminations of C.P. Ramaswami Iyer (Diwan of Travancore), for proportional representations in administration and employment. Nivarthana Prakshobham, in a way, helped these three communities’ later stages to carry out their political activities in a more dynamic and institutionalised manner (Pillai 1989; Chandramohan 2016).

The transformation of Socialist Party into the Communist Party in Kerala in 1939 and its political engagement with the SNDP made a new impetus in the ‘lower caste’ movements. Establishing the party by mobilising lower caste groups aided the Communist Party in upholding a confident political front in the state, which further boosted the lobbying capacity of Ezhavas. Meanwhile, the Nair community consolidated politically by aligning with the INC for their communitarian aspirations. The NSS became one of the power centres of the state by working as a pressure group in congress in the following years. Also, the Christian community stood in favour of congress initially by consolidating the situation, and later associated under Kerala Congress, mostly a Christian minority party. However, the Muslims in Malabar united under the IUML, which further led to more organized political activities by the community than ever before. Muslim League mainly focuses on the mobilisation of two major Muslim groups in the state irrespective of their sectarian

differences. The political consolidation of these communities, in a way, strengthened the democratic fabric of the state with a unique community-oriented politics.

Interestingly, both Nair and Ezhava communities formed their political parties called the National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1974 and the Socialist Republican Party (SRP) in 1976, respectively (Nossiter 1985; Biju 2013). However, they failed to consolidate the community in an institutionalised manner due to internal clashes among them along with their affiliations with INC and Communist parties. However, the case of IUML is different from that of the Hindu and Christian groups and can be seen as a form of/example of institutionalised community politics.

In this context, the chapter attempts to engage with the nuances of the communitarian politics operated by the Indian Union Muslim League in the state of Kerala. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section, “Understanding the nature of Community Politics,” deals with the theoretical understanding of community politics in the state, and discusses distinct ways of understanding or looking at the idea of communalism. The second section, “Liberation Struggle and Communitarian Politics” discusses the origin and development of community politics after the formation of Kerala state in 1956. The third, “The Muslim League and Community Politics” focuses on the political strategies operated by the Muslim League for their mobilisation, and how the party engages with the larger frames of communitarian politics in the state. The last section, “The Changing Nature of Community Politics in the post-1990s,” looks into new political discourses in the Muslim community and the politics they upheld in the wake of the demolition of Babri Masjid and the subsequent incidents that took place throughout the country.

Section 1

5.1 Understanding the Nature of Community Politics.

The term community is defined in the simplest way as a “group of people who have something in common” (Lee 1992: 13). According to the Cambridge dictionary, ‘community’ means people living in a specific area or people who are considered as a unit because of their collective interests, social group, or nationality.¹¹⁷ Carol Upadhyaya views

¹¹⁷ Cambridge Online Dictionary definition on community

that the concept of community, in social science perspective, that is dynamic and diverse in every aspect: class, religion, region, age, ethnicity, gender, language, and caste (Upadhyaya 2006). According to her, community means, “any collectivity of people that seems to have some kind of enduring social identity, solidarity and boundedness comes to be regarded as a community” (ibid: 33).

Communities are viewed as closed collectives or traditional groupings in which the question of individual choice is not utmost significance. They are characterised by higher levels of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment to social cohesion and continuity in time (Jodhka 2001:18). Classical sociology defines community as identical to traditional societies, that is, pre-industrial Europe or the non-Western civilisation of the East. It was in the seventies that the question of identity became political in western academia, which Anthony D Smith referred to as the ‘ethnic revival’ (Smith 1981). However, the identity question became crucial in the Indian political context during the 1980s, although the communitarian nature of politics in Kerala began in the early phase of the twentieth century.

Scholar views that the communities are the production of colonialism in India that created a civil society in line with the demands of governing and controlling large populations of the country (Kaviraj 1994; Chatterjee 1998; Jodhka 2006). Sudipta Kaviraj argues that the colonial discourses affected a change in the conceptualisation of communities in India. Earlier the community had a fuzzy or underspecified boundary; however, in the colonial Indian state, they became an enumerated category. The processes of enumeration held through the mapping and census, irreversibly altered the social ontology by giving groups a new kind of agentive political identity in the forms of caste and religion (Kaviraj 1994).

In India, Muslims emerging as a political category was the production of such colonial mapping. Where the British categorised different communities based on their identities in the form census and communal electorate strengthened their political nature. Such communal and caste identities then reiterated in the post-colonial nation-state. The situation of Malabar was also not different from it, where the communal identity of Hindus and Muslims facilitate the communities to operate their politics more flexibly throughout the colonial regimes. According to Partha Chatterjee, communities in post-colonial Indian

state are recognised as “some of the most active agents of political Practice” (Chatterjee 1998: 282). He emphasises the profound difference of social values between the communities of West and India. In the West the communities have a tenuous place in the liberal theory of civil society and state, however, in new political societies like East including India, communities work as most vibrant political agent with different identity forms (ibid).

However, in the post-colonial context, the discussion of community, mostly, revolved either in caste and religious line. Ethnic identities are a subset of identity categories in which eligibility to the community is determined by descent-based attributes (Chandra 2006). Jodhka also points the emergence of the new social movements in seventies such as Dalit, women and other ethnic movement and their engagement in politics made attention both in civil and political societies (Jodhka 2006). The relationship between religion and politics, on the one hand, and communal interaction between different religious identities on the other – particularly between Hindus and Muslims –have been one of the central themes for scholarly literature in India. The partition of the country and the subsequent communal violence, along with the sensational issues such as *Sharia* and Common Civil Code and demolition of the Babri Masjid has been the point of references (Brass 1991; Jaffrelot 1996; Pandey 1999; Wilkinson 2004). As Yoginder Sikand views, these issues, in a way, reduced the political possibilities of Muslims in the North (Sikand 2007).

However, the political context of South India was entirely different from the North. In the North, communitarian interaction has been based mostly on the religious line, but in the South, it is based on caste and communitarian lines. Although both regions work along the communal line, the definition of communalism in North India does not adequately address the political scenarios in Kerala. In case of the former, religious communities are antagonistic to each other on the lines of majority and minority concerns, but in the latter case, the competition is mainly to achieve resources of the state for communitarian development (Mathew 1989; Varshney 2002); although there are many groups such as Dalits and Tribals who are excluded from this fold. As Jodhka rightly points out, presently, identity politics and mobilisation of communities cannot be explained away through concepts such as communalism and casteism. There is a need to evolve a new language of

politics which can engage with these processes and understand the impulse of such cultural mobilisation (Jodhka 2001).

Several scholars who worked in these areas have identified the role of religion in dividing the community, socially and politically. Communal ideology, they observe that the Indian society is divided deeply into different religious communities whose interests not only differ but may often be opposed to each other (Varshney 2002; Wilkinson 2005). The difference between the religious communities is apparent not only in their religious and cultural way of life but also in their everyday practices/life organised to cater to the secular economic and political purposes. This distinction is more stressed, specified, and articulated in the case of the Hindu and Muslim communities in India (Chandra 1984, 2004). Hence, communalism is deeply rooted in the contemporary religious, political and economic structure of the Indian society. Politicians tactfully use the potential of the communities by articulating religion in relation to political situations to cater their goals; hence reinforcing communal violence (Khalidi 1998; Varshney 2002; Wilkinson 2005). In the second chapter, we have already discussed the different nature of communalism in India in which Hindus and Muslims engage each other. Hence, taking a cue from it, this part attempts to analyse how far the broader definition of communalism can apply in the political/ communitarian context of Kerala.

Ashutosh Varshney, in his study, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life in Contemporary India*, explores the nature of communal violence in different paired Indian cities in which Kerala also studied. In clubbing Kerala's Calicut and Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh as one of the pairs, Varshney elaborates on how *associational*, as well as *everyday* forms of civic engagement, account differently for communal peace as well as violence in different parts of urban India. Varshney considers Calicut, one of the leading Muslim concentrated cities with an 'institutional peace system' while comparing the 'institutional riot system' in Aligarh. He observes that a deep inter-communal civic engagement among Hindus and Muslims marks Calicut, which makes it hard for politicians to play the politics of religious polarisation (Varshney 2002: 121-2). In Aligarh, communal polarisation has been the principal strategy of the BJP and many Muslim leaders, and violence is open part of the political calculation. This 'institutionalised riot system' was born, as politicians, thugs,

civic organisations, and the local press formed parallel Hindu and Muslim communal networks that thrived on communal propaganda, rumours, and violence (Varshney 2002: 150). This civic engagement is not restricted to Calicut alone but can be applied to entire Kerala.

Concerning the specific question of how these variations of civic engagement came into being in these two cities, Varshney clarifies that the pattern and texture of civic life are often politically constructed. Taking the example of the reaction of both cities to the mass politics which emerged during the 1920s in the context of Indian nationalism, Varshney notes that in Aligarh, public discourse tended to concentrate on religious antagonism. In contrast, caste injustice was the master narrative in Calicut, which fostered Kerala politics (ibid: 130-148). According to Varshney, if the Hindu-Muslim cleavage has been a ‘master narrative’ of North India for much of the twentieth century, caste divisions have had the same status in the politics of South. The electoral politics of South India was organised partly around caste, and not around a Hindu-Muslim axis. This caste-based politics, mostly dominated by lower caste, made them achieve political power throughout the South Indian state (ibid). It was evident in the case of first democratically elected Communist Government in Kerala where the ‘lower caste people’ dominated in politics. Hence it becomes necessary to understand the theoretical framework of communal and community in the context of Kerala politics, and how it is different from the broader idea of ‘communal politics’ in the country.

Although there are different arguments and theories on communalism in the Indian context, ‘communalism’ is the larger narrative within which these issues have been framed. As George Mathew argues, “two subtle distinctions of communalism can be drawn up: (a) communalism as a political doctrine; and (b) communalism as a behaviour based on community sentiments” (Mathew 1989: 11). The first implies the tendency to use religion-cultural differences to mobilise people for narrow political ends, and the second aspect of communalism entails a specific identity being transferred into a sense of community feeling (Mathew 1989: 11). The first definition can be applied in the political context of North India, where the political elite is using the possibility of Hindu Muslim antagonism for narrow political interests (Varshney 2002; Wilkinson 2005), or as Ashis Nandy

observes, ‘religion as ideology’ (Nandy 1998). However, the nuances of community relations receive substantial attention from scholars and academicians, and most of them acknowledge that this communalism is very close to the second category. The communalism of Kerala works as a tactic for resource mobilisation for respective community development in highly competitive electoral politics. Where each caste and community groups work as a pressure group for the maximum benefit of the resources, hence, the communalism in Kerala may be defined as a feeling of group solidarity among different communities and to assert its presence in the day-to-day functioning of society in every possible manner. The communities have a potential in the making and unmaking of governments in the state of Kerala (Mathew 1989; Oommen 1995; Varshney 2002). The community politics in the state have often driven by perceptions of coincidence and distance by the constant engagement of both communist and nationalist parties (Nossiter 1982).

Although J. Devika and Varghese observe that the scholars are divided mainly on the significance of the powerful presence of organised communities in the political scenario of Kerala, for some, it defines that the politics of Kerala is rather ‘sub-modern’ and ‘fundamentally inimical’ to transparent democratic developments (Devika & Varghese 2010: 6). While others have been noticeably optimistic, suggesting that those organised communities have competed with each other largely around resources and, most often, within the terms of democratic politics. This competition has helped to create a fairer distribution of social and economic resources among communities, and to a large extent, mitigate communal hatred such that of outright violence between communities has been comparatively less in Kerala when compared to other Indian states. Devika and Varghese argued that, for these reasons, ‘community politics’ in Kerala should not be lumped with religious nationalism’ or ‘communalism’ (ibid).

There are two variants of ‘communalism’ in Kerala referred to as ‘*samudayikatha*’ and ‘*vargeeyatha*’ in the vernacular language, Malayalam (Biju 2013). The former denotes a softer and acceptable form of consolidation of communal identities of caste and religious groups for the political contest. The latter refers to extremely violent behaviour based on religious identity for political motives. Specifically, ‘*samudayikatha*’ implies a modern,

civilised and democratic expressions of identity groups, while '*vargeeyatha*' is a premodern, violent and undemocratic expression of community groups for narrow political interests. Although, both of these vernacular versions of communalism are the same in substance from the modern vantage point of secularism, however, its operations are different in the Kerala context (Biju 2013).

Victor Fic points out that "politics in Kerala is merely a projection of the shifting strength and balance of the communal Organisations into the political arena" (Fic 1970: 529). Similarly, Devika and Varghese argued that "there is agreement that in the early and mid 20th century Malayalee society, 'communalism' referred not to fierce hatred and violence between communities, but to intense competition around rights and resources within the field of modern politics and centred upon the state" (Devika & Varghese 2010: 7). Correspondingly, George Mathew analyses how the basic identities and primordial loyalties, in which the religious factor is common, play a sustaining role in social movements and how it eventually leads Kerala into secular and developmental processes (Mathew 1989).

Adding to Mathew's observation, Ashutosh Varshney points out that the Hindu nationalists have yet not been able to launch any serious campaign against the Muslim League's minority appeasement, communalism, and power in Kerala. It is mainly because of the strong economic and social links between the Hindus and Muslims, which do not provide any space for a large-scale communal mobilisation of Hindus (Varshney 2002). Varshney notes that the political formula of the Muslim League in Kerala is: "be small, be moderate, let caste dominate and stay in government" (Varshney 2002: 165). Muslim League stands for the development of the Muslim community as others with mutual respect. The communitarian societal characteristic of Kerala just has been successful in maintaining a sustainable environment for different social groups in maintaining their dynamic presence in the contemporary socio-political scenario of the state (Varghese 1987; Ommen 1995; Varshney 2002). Similarly, I. K. Khan notes that Muslim League survived in Kerala because of a communal balance peculiar to the state, which helped it pioneer a strategy between two closely matched coalition fronts, Congress and Communists (Khan 2006).

According to Varshney, there is indeed a distinction between good and bad communalism, which is often drawn in the case of Kerala. Good communalism stands for advocating the interests of one's community while bad communalism entails spreading bigotry. Varshney places Muslim League within the frame of good communalism (Varshney 2002). He views that when tensions do mount concerning religious issues, the League tends to cool them. It neither incites Muslims to retaliate nor does it lead the charge of religious fervour (ibid). In good communalism, all communities, religion or caste-based, organise to lobby the state for sectional benefits. The communitarian atmosphere of the state sustains the harmonious 'communal' relation in politics where each community works for their own by aligning with different political parties to gain maximum benefit (Varshney 2002; Mathew 1989). This communitarian societal characteristic of Kerala helped to produce a sustainable achievement of the other socio-religious groups in maintaining their dynamic presence in the contemporary socio-political scenario. These community or caste organisations have been instrumental in Kerala's developmental process in different ways; in other words, the political structures of the state are operated within the prism of communitarian politics.

It is interesting to study how the Muslim community is conditioned by the Muslim League in such a communitarian political atmosphere of the state. The creation of a 'Muslim political community' has benefited the Muslim League to enlarge their politics and electoral constituencies in the state. This community consolidation of the party has formed through the constant engagement of both with the communitarian concern and with the engagement of the power structures of the state over time. The following section illustrates the community political formations of the state in general and Muslim community in particular, mostly in relation to the liberation struggle.

Section II

5.2 Liberation Struggle and the Development of Communitarian Politics

The formation of the state of Kerala, on 1st November 1956, strengthened the caste and community politics than before. In the first general election after the state formation, on 5th April 1957, in which the Communist Party of India assumed power. The Communist Party proved the possibility of a non-Congress government in the country for the first time after

a decade of India's independence. The party bagged 60 out of 126 seats and also received the support of five independent members which facilitated them to form a government. E.M.S. Namboothiripad became the first Chief Minister of the state along with ten Cabinet Ministers (Fic 1970; Nossiter 1982; Lieten 1977).¹¹⁸ The government made many practical measures to transform the bureaucracy and state administration to empower people for active engagement in the processes of deliberation, decision making, and implementation of developmental policies (Williams 2008). One of the significant administrative reforms of the government was the democratisation of the state apparatus through the process of decentralisation.

Numerous socio-political factors helped the Communist Party to form the government. The first one being the increased demography of the Ezhava community from 22% to 26% due to the merging of the Malabar region to Kerala state. It helped the Communists to grab several seats with the support of the Ezhava community (known as Tiyyas in northern Kerala), one of the leading vote banks of the party since then (Vadakara 2017: 98). A significant portion of Nairs, who used to support Congress, also extended their political solidarity to Communists due to the increased dominance of Christians in the party. Moreover, the class politics of the Communist Party also attracted certain sections of lower-class Mappilas of Malabar, thus helping the Communists achieve a better electoral result in 1957 (Ahmed 1966; Kothari 1972; Fic 1970; Nossiter 1982).

Apart from the reasons cited above, there were many other factors which helped the Communist party to form the government. The inability of the Congress Party to make a stable government in Cochin and Travancore regions is one of them. Also, the failure of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) to form an alternative government to counter the opponent was another factor. In addition to that, the election manifesto of the Communist Party gained widespread support from farmers and other downtrodden people as it was against

¹¹⁸ The election held for 126 constituencies, in which 114 for single seat and 12 for double seat, of the state in two phases on 28th February and 11th March 1957. In the election, Communist Party came as a largest single party with 60/100 seats as against the Congress 43/124, PSP 09/62, Muslim League, 08/14, Independent Communist 05 and Independent 01. The Cabinet members were C. Achutha Menon (finance), K. P. Gopalan (industries), Joseph Mundassery (education), T. V. Thomas (transport and labor), K. C. George (food and forest), A. R. Menon (health), V. R. Krishna Iyer (law), T. A. Majeed (public works), P. K. Chathan (local self-government) and K. R. Gouri (land revenue) (Fic 1970).

the pro-upper caste model manifesto of the Congress party (Nossiter 1982; Nair 1965; Williams 2008). According to Nossiter, the success of Communist party in Kerala was mainly due to the pattern of land tenure, communal combination, but also the anti-peasant policies of pre-independence governments in the three regions-Travancore, Cochin and Malabar- of the state than the highest rate of literacy and a large number of agricultural labours (Nossiter 1982).

The continuous efforts of the Muslim League to make an electoral alliance with the Congress against the Communists after the state formation did not materialise as the AICC feared such an alliance would invite the label of communalism. Hence, the Muslim League made an electoral alliance with PSP after a series of deliberations and discussions. The party leaders, Bafaqi Thangal and C.H. Muhammed Koya signed an electoral agreement with the PSP national leader, K.B. Menon, and state leader, Arangil Sreedharan, on 15th January 1957. There were several political reasons behind the alliance on the part of both the parties. The PSP intended to increase its political landscape to the Muslim dominated areas of the state, particularly Malabar. At the same time, the Muslim League perceived the alliance to open gates to national politics against the communal indictment of the Congress and Communists. Apart from electoral politics, PSP accepted the importance of religious minorities and their assertive politics in the democratic processes for national integration and communal harmony. Interestingly, both of them were vigilant against the increasing dominance of the Communist Party in the state. Both parties felt that the growing influence of Communist ideologies among ordinary people might adversely affect the politics of the Muslim League (Rajagopalan 1960; Nair 1994; Ahmed 1966).

From the beginning, the Muslim League engaged critically with the Communist government in various matters. However, at the same time, the party supported the welfare policies of the government for the development of the state. The main agenda of the party was to represent the demands of Muslims and attain maximum benefits for the community. And hence, in the first session of the Assembly, on 6th May 1957, C.H. Muhammed Koya, along with other members of the party, represented many issues pertaining to Muslims, particularly in the sectors of education and employment. They demanded the government to be responsible for the development of the community in full respect on par with other

communities, such as the establishment of adequate number of Schools in Malabar, the introduction of Muslim girls' scholarship, protection of *Waqf* properties, etc. The party also reminded the government about the absence of Muslims in Judicial Services and Public Service Commission and proper implementation of reservation for Muslims according to their population (Wright 1966; Aziz 1992). Furthermore, the Muslim League demanded the EMS government for 20% reservation for Muslims in the Public Service Commission against the 35% reservation for all backward communities, though the demand was not accepted (Vadakara 1985).

The Communist government was determined to ensure the enactment of socialistic principles for the development of society in which the significant reforms took place in educational and agricultural sectors. The introduction of Kerala Education Bill (KEB)¹¹⁹ and Kerala Agrarian Relation Bill (KARB),¹²⁰ culminated in the collapse of the 1st Communist government. Initially, both KEB and KARB received widespread appreciation from the opposition parties and various communities, except Christians. Mannath Padmanabhan, the founding leader of the NSS, was impressed initially by the progressive character of the Education Bill. The NSS passed a resolution to support the bill and accused the Christians of vested interests in opposing it (Lieten 1977:11). The Ezhava Community enthusiastically supported the Education Bill as they conceived it be a developmental mechanism of the state. They also supported the legislation to control the appointments in aided Schools through the Public Service Commission. In Malabar, the Education Bill did

¹¹⁹ The Communist government passed KEB, on 28th November 1958, to introduce the proper mechanism to control private School management. The KEB ensures free and compulsory primary education for all children up to the age of fourteen, which includes free textbooks and mid-day meals. According to bill, the teachers should be appointed on merit than communal equation by the management, and direct salaries to teachers in private aided schools signed by the Headmaster instead of School managers. The KEB also enacts that Managers do not have the right to close down the School unless one year's notice has been given to the Government. The Management, mostly Syrian Christians, claim absolute autonomy in teacher's appointment. The government constituted a high-level Advisory Board to guide Government in the matter of framing educational policies with the help of elected representatives at the local and district level (KEB 1957).

¹²⁰ The Kerala Agrarian Relation Bill ensures the protection of farmers and peasants. Fixity of tenure in all categories of hutment dwellers and tenants and also fixed the fair rent to stop the exploitation of peasants. The law also imposed the land ceiling of the household, in between 15 and 25 acres, according to the size of the family, and surplus land confiscated the government to distribute the landless agricultural labours. The government also fixed the minimum wages for the agricultural labourers and stayed all the court proceedings initiated by landlords against tenants. The restoration of tenets to purchase the land they cultivated with the fair amount of instalment schemes (KAR 1957). For details, see (Radhakrishnan 1981; Lieten 1979).

not invite much criticism, and the Congress members openly supported it. Praja Socialist Party was also in favour of the bill, despite the minor opposition from within them, as they felt the necessity for an Education Bill to protect teachers from exploitation (Lieten 1977).

The IUML supported the Education Bill initially by citing the positive/qualitative measures in it. The new education policy was beneficial to the economically backward Muslims as it offered free and compulsory education (Vadakara 1985). However, C.H. Muhammed Koya pointed out certain issues inherent in the education Bill, which adversely affect the community institution. Clause 11 of the Bill authorised the government in appointing teachers. Hence, the Muslim League argued that the government must restore the rights of management in appointing teachers in Schools according to earlier norms prescribed by the government than permitting the Public Service Commission to do so. Clause 15 of the bill ensured the government to acquire any category of Schools. Muslim League argued that this might lead to the gradual liquidation of schools reasonably run by the management, which would adversely affect the educational system of the state (Lieten 1977). The party also noted that clauses 17 and 18, which authorised the constitution of a local education authority for auditing School management might become a menace to the proper administration of schools. Muslim League affirmed that these above-said clauses gradually lead to a governmental monopoly of the education institution run by the management, which later loses the management control over their institution.¹²¹ However, the party suggested that a proper mechanism should be maintained to control the unlawful activities of management.

From the beginning, the Christians community was at the forefront of the protest against the government as they held many educational institutions in the state (Lieten 1977:14). The Christian unity added a religious tone to the protests resulting in an equation akin to religious against the ‘anti-religious’ forces of the state as the Communist party was viewed as an anti-religious or non-religious body- secular body with its ‘anti-religious standpoints’ (Shefeeque 2019). This helped the Church not just to consolidate the Christians, but also to bring other socio-religious groups into its fold, which further strengthened the agitation.

¹²¹ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1970). Vol.1 No.19: 1658-1661. Trivandrum, Government Press.

The Nairs who supported the Education Bill initially, and then changed their position concerning the new reforms in agriculture (KARB) would cease the interest of landlords of the community. They thought that the empowerment of tenants and farmers, legally, may adversely affect them as they held hundreds of acres of agricultural land. Also, the Nairs vehemently opposed the reservation policies of the Communist government, which excluded Nairs who held substantial shares of government resources, as it challenges their class position in the society. As a reaction, NSS joined with Christians with the pledge of removing the Communists from the power. Later, Congress also joined with these groups by considering its vote bank (John 1962: 149-52).

The change in the syllabus of School textbooks, which allegedly promoted communism, was another major concern of the protesters. The textbooks included the success stories of Communist regimes all over the world along with the economic and political issues of non-Communist countries; which the protesters perceived as a Communist agenda of promoting atheism or anti-religious sentiments among the children (Lieten 1977). The Congress and community organisations felt that the communist ideology was against the nationalist ideology and might gradually diminish their political existence in the state. Congress succeeded in their attempt to propagate this anxiety publicly. As a result, all the opposition parties and community groups came together against the Communist Party. The protesters argued that the government intended to bring a hidden ‘qualitative change through an open quantitative change’ through the Education Bill. They further claimed that the bill is totalitarian and that the Communist dictatorship, which treated the managers as criminals with rigorous penalties as a reward for their pioneering enterprise. The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) argued that the government agenda was to brain-wash the future generation by tactically adopting certain universally accepted values with the hidden agenda of imposing Communist dictatorship (ibid: 10).

Muslim League also presented their grave concern about the KAB. The national president of the Muslim League, Muhammed Ismail Sahib, stated in the second state conference held on 14th February 1959, that the party supports the socialist tradition of development; however, “the authoritarian model of the Communist power structure cannot be tolerated” (Vadakara 1985: 263). The party demanded the government to adequately address the

public and engage with their concern before making final legislation of the Agricultural Bill. Also, C.H. Muhammed Koya pointed out that the government considered all people who own some portion of land or even farmers with some particular portion of land as *Janmis* (feudal landlords) while the reality was that the people were struggling to meet their daily needs. However, he further stated that the Muslim League is not against the seizure of excessive land hold by *Janmis* in any manner.¹²²

During the anti-Communist protest, Kerala faced a by-election in Devikulam Assembly constituency in May 1958. The alleged anti-religious attitude of the Communists united the different political parties and community organisations together against Communists in this election. Muslim League supported the Congress candidate, B.K. Nair, against Rosamma Punnoose of the Communist party. However, the congress failed in the election with a margin of 7000 votes despite the severe campaign of senior leaders of the party, including Chief Ministers of different states. However, the election made possible a new political platform in the state where the political opponents, Congress and Muslim League, along with the PSP, came together to fight against the Communists (Hardgrave 1970; Vadakara 2011).

After the election, the leaders of opposition parties —INC, PSP and Muslim League— came up with an agenda of forming a joint attack against the government, and also constituted an election front against the Communist Party in the upcoming election (Hardgrave 1970). The combined attack of the political parties and community organisations— Nairs, Christians, and Muslims— put much pressure on the Communist government. As a result, the *Vimochana Samara Samiti* (Liberation Struggle Committee) was formed under the Nair leader, Mannath Padmanabhan, in a conference held on 1st May 1959 at Changanacherry (Rajagopalan 1960:177). After the meeting, Mannam became a leading figure of the protest against the government. The *Vimochana Samara Samithi* intended to expel the Communist government via means of protest rather than the ballot box. The protests finally resulted in the relinquishment of the first Communist government

¹²² *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1958). Vol. 4 No.29.

by the President of India on 31st July 1959, after twenty months of its operation, using the constitutional power vested in him by Article 356 (Rajagopalan 1960; Hardgrave 1970).

The collapse of the Communist government helped led to form a communitarian network in the state in which Nairs largely supported the Congress, Christians supported the Congress initially and later the Kerala Congress (M), Ezhava supported the Communist Party, and Muslims supported the Muslim League. Compared to other communities, this consolidation helped the Muslim League to build a strong political network among the Muslims of Kerala. Roland E. Miller points out that though the communism attracted the Mappilas in large numbers initially, an understanding developed among Mappilas that political power is essential on their terms for the development of the community. Hence, political mobilisation under the Muslim League delivered a new sense of power, pride and confidence, which could overcome the feeling of insecurity post- Malabar Rebellion of 1921 (Miller 1992).

The success of Liberation Struggle and the formation of a subsequent government under the congress in the 1960s with the help of Muslim League and PSP made a new communitarian political atmosphere in the state. The alliance grabbed 94 seats by mobilising different communities, mainly, Nairs, Muslims and Christians; the Congress with 63 seats, PSP with 20 seats and Muslim League with 11 seats respectively. The Communist Party could win only 29 seats in 1960 election as against 60 seats in 1957, in which the party was able to retain Alleppy and Palakkad districts due to the support of lower class/Ezhava community (Nair 1994).¹²³ Interestingly, the Muslim League was not included while forming the government by Congress, despite the pressure of PSP, by citing them as a communal party. However, the Muslim League extended outside political support to the government by accepting the post of the speaker (Ahmed 1966; Wrigh 1966). The main agenda of the party was to avail maximum benefits from the government for the development of the community.

¹²³ Alleppy, where the Communist movements was popular among the peasants. The same place, where the bloodiest Punnappa and Vayalar uprising took place on 24-27 October, 1946 against C. P. RamaswamiIyer which claimed 800 poor peasants' lives (Kurupp 1988; Jeffry 1984). Even at present Alleppy is one of the stronghold places of Communism in Kerala.

The alliance with the anti-Communist front helped Muslim League become one of the most significant minority political groups in the state. The new political developments strengthened the negotiating capacities of different communities since the first EMS government to then. This community consolidation helped them attain varied material benefits in the form of schools, colleges (aided and un-aided), hospitals-including Medical Colleges, and other establishments. It is important to note that 70% of such institutions in the state are run by these four communities of Kerala with full autonomy (Mohamed 2011).

These communities set their political agenda and acted as pressure groups based on material interests where each of them tried to achieve maximum benefit from the ruling party. The intense competition of the communities for state resources put much political pressure on the various governments. If the government fails or delays the resources or policy formulation as demanded by these communities, it adversely affected the functioning of the government. Hence, to satisfy these communities became a necessary task for various governments to survive. The political parties have been aware of their political networks without which the formation of government is impossible. The communitarian groups achieved a political capacity in the state by transforming themselves as a pressure group.

Section III

5.3 The Muslim League and Community Politics

Muslim League has played a vital role in the Muslim community's engagements with the public sphere (Wright 1966). The party has a predominant role in the Muslim politics of the state as it mobilises different sects of the community and strives to uphold the community's interests in various socio-economic, cultural and political issues. These sects/groups mainly include *AP Sunni*, *EK Sunni*, the different factions of *Mujahid* and *Jamaat-e-Islami*. Muslim politics revolves around the nuances of these organisations to a great extent; in which the Muslim League plays a significant role.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ For details, see Sub-section II “Muslim Organisations and the Community Relation,” in the Chapter Three of the thesis.

The Muslim League has been mainly focusing on the EK *Sunnis* and different groups of *Mujahid*, and they keep cordial relation with the party for the community's interest in general and their vested sectarian interests in particular. The highly institutionalised caste and community groups in the state of Kerala often require political support to meet their demands. In the case of Muslim organisations, the Muslim League is considered to be the influential political option which represents the interest of the community. The AP *Sunni* and *Jamaat-e-Islami*, and along with the newly formed political outfits in the post-Babri context keep aloof from this political fold of Muslim League. Despite their strong disagreements with the Muslim League's leadership, there are instances where AP *Sunnis* and the *Jamaat* have engaged/associated with League on specific community/religious-based political issues. The complementary political relationship rather than contradictory theological issues among EK *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* continues to aid the party in maintaining its political stature. Taking this into account, this section deals with how the Muslim League engages with the broader spectrum of communitarian politics of the state.

The politics of Muslim League has been formulated by mobilising 'traditional/conservative' *Sunnis* and 'modern/reformist' *Mujahid* in a common political platform despite the intra-religious ideological/theological differences among them (Aziz 1992; Osella & Osella 2007; Kurupp & Ismail 2008; Salah 2013). According to Osella and Osella, "the Muslim League's orientation has since been one of cautious reformism, where policies are dictated by pragmatism—the need to maintain unity and to participate in state government— rather than by possibly divisive ideological or religious considerations" (Osella & Osella 2007: 335-6). By forming a political community, both *Sunni* and *Mujahids* groups act as pressure groups on the Muslim League, like other communities on different political parties, to access the benefits of state power for their developments.

Since its inception, the Muslim League in Kerala found it hard to bring all the sects of the community (*Muhjahids*, *Sunnis* and *Jamaat-e-Islami*) into a common platform. Majority of the first-generation leaders of the party were ideologically inclined to the *Mujahid* sect of the community. The supremacy of *Mujahid* leadership in the party and the class differences in the support bases of *Sunnis* and *Mujahid* distanced *Sunnis* from the party during the early phase. Most of the leaders of the party were economically well-equipped,

educationally advanced, and were in professions working as entrepreneurs, advocates, teachers, etc.¹²⁵ In contrast, *Sunnis* were mostly farmers and peasants, which were ‘lower class’ professions, due to the socio-political situation of Malabar (Panikkar 1989). Moreover, the ‘reformist’ tendencies of the *Mujahid* leadership, also increased the gap between the *Sunnis* and *Mujahid*; which has had subsequent cultural and political impacts. Although League's leadership was involved in community development, the party failed to establish a common platform that would include all sections of the community. In addition to this, the detachment of the Muslim community from the mainstream society in the shadow of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 and several narratives around it, left the community with limited options. Thus, the political representation of the community was oriented through the then ‘elite’ or ‘educated middle class’ from the *Mujahid* sects (Ali 1990; Osella and Osella 2008; Salah 2013).

It may be noted that the Organisational wing of *Sunni* Muslims, *Samastha Kerala Jamiyat-ul-Ulama* was established as a resistant and reactionary movement against the ‘reformist’ ideologies of *Mujahid* sect (Tanoor 2016). Similarly, majority of *Sunnis* had detached themselves from the Congress party over the period as they felt that the congress had betrayed them, neglected Muslim issues and considered them as mere subjects after the socio-political developments post 1921 (Ansari 2005; Miller 1992). The resolution of Samastha in its sixth conference held at Feroke in 1933 stated that the Mappilas are being used politically by the congress in the khilafat movement and it had a profound influence on the pitiful conditions of the Muslim community in the later period. The resolution further asserted that the membership of *Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama* was restricted to non- Congress members and those who follow the path of *Ahlu Sunnah-wal Jamma'ah*.¹²⁶ These anti- Congress sentiments of Mappilas created a political vacuum in the post-Malabar Rebellion context in Malabar. In addition to this, a significant number of Mappilas were critical and not convinced by Communist politics and believed that

¹²⁵ The first president of Malabar District All India Muslim League was Arakkal Abdurahman Ali Raja (from Arakkal Royal Family) and general secretary post for Abdul Sathar Sait, both of them were financially well settled. Then the early leaders of IUML such as B. Pokker Sahib (advocate), K.M. seethe Sahib (advocate), K Uppi Sahib (graduated from Madras) etc, were with high profile Middle-class background.

¹²⁶ This Samastha resolution is taken from the Souvenir published by Samastha as a part of their sixth Annual Conference in 1933. For details, Samastha. (1933). *Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama*.

communism stood against their religious beliefs, and they accused it of spreading atheism, distanced *Sunnis* from it (Muhammed 2010). This anti-communist sentiment, which was institutionally propagated by many Muslim leaders, received substantial attention from the community.¹²⁷

The absence of *Sunnis* in mainstream politics was later fulfilled by the advent of *Thangal* leadership such as Bafaqi Thangal and Panakkad P.M.S.A. Pookoya Thnagal into Muslim League, thus marking a momentous departure in the history of Muslim politics.¹²⁸ Bafaqi Thangal was assigned several important roles and positions in the party despite the presence of the senior *Mujahid* leader, K.M. Moulavi. This was also because Moulavi himself believed that Bafaqi Thangal's leadership would ensure a significant presence of *Sunnis* in the party (Thangal 2010). This mutual respect among the leaders helped the party formulate a cordial political relationship among both communities despite their religious antipathy (Vadakara 2001). Osella & Osella rightly observe that "the chasm between urban 'modernism/reformism' and rural 'traditionalism/conservatism' was bridged in the postindependence period by bringing into the leadership of the Muslim League members of *Hadrami Sayyid* families... who were highly respected and revered by rural and non-middle-class Muslims and by the dominant Sunni non-reformist ulema" (Osella and Osella 2008: 335). Since then, the *thangals* have become the supremo of the party due to their charismatic authority among the community, which could pull out *Sunni* Muslims to the party fold.

The politics of the Muslim League does not only revolve around different sects but also with the engagements with other communities and caste groups. Mutual respect for each community and the mutual distance from its ideological division helps the party to unite different sects of Muslims and also fetch political support from other castes and community

¹²⁷ But in the later stages Communist Party could mobilise the lower-class Muslims of Malabar in considerable manner through the class politics. The Communist Party could develop a significant support base among Mappilas particularly from fisherman folks, beedi workers and other weaker sections of Malabar, the heart of Muslim League (Lieten 1979; Nossiter 1982; Muhammed 2011). Even in the last Kerala general election of 2016, the Communist Party won their traditional belt Ponnani, and the left alliance won the constituencies such as Tanur and Tavanur of the Malappuram district.

¹²⁸ See Sub-section II: 2.1 (1) "All India Muslim League in Malabar" in the Chapter Three of the of thesis.

groups. The state general secretary of Muslim League, K.P.A. Majeed, reveals this communitarian management strategy; thus,

*The Muslim League never interferes in religious matters/divisions of the community. The main agenda of the party is to protect constitutional rights-religious, political and cultural- through legal battles. As a communitarian political party, the Muslim League is bound to work for the betterment of the Muslims and other weaker sections of the society. Hence, the policies and programs carried out by the party are not according to the particular section but in accordance with the community and the broader public of the Kerala state.*¹²⁹

E.T. Muhammed Basheer, the national secretary and the member of parliament of Muslim League, Ponnani constituency of Malappuram district, also expressed a similar view on this regard.

*Muslim League is a political manifestation of the community regardless of their theological divergences. The organisational differences is a normative discourse of all groups; however, the Muslim League engages them politically. As a political party working for the community, it is the sole responsibility of the Muslim League to include all groups to ensure their political rights.*¹³⁰

Instead of engaging with the deep theological rift among Muslims, the party intended to protect the religious and cultural rights of the community. One of the major impacts of Muslim League's engagement in Muslim politics is that the mainstream political parties of the state like the Congress and Communist party were also forced to perceive the Muslim community as 'citizen subjects' rather than a mere vote bank as in the case of North India.¹³¹ As a result of League's influence over the state government's power, the party has

¹²⁹ Personal Interview with K.P.A. Majeed, Kerala State Secretary of IUML, on 19th June 2016, at Kuruva Village of Malappuram District.

¹³⁰ Personal Interview with E.T. Muhammed Basheer, National Secretary of IUML, on 06th July 2017, at Kuruva Village of Malappuram District.

¹³¹ However, the Muslim League was often criticized by political parties like CPI (M) that the party only use Muslims as mere vote bank and the real issues of the community were never addressed by the party. To make a political base in Muslim dominated Malappuram Left also engages with the developmental projects.

been able to provide remarkable material and symbolic benefits to the Muslim community over the past decades (Varshney 2002).

When questioned about this political unity, both *Sunni* and *Mujahid* leaders responded that political unity is essential for community development in competitive communitarian political structures of the state. They are aware that the development of a community is possible through material aids, which is possible only through political unity. By uniting these two groups together, the party is attaining possibilities to enlarge its electoral constituencies which enabled them more bargaining capacity in the coalition politics of the state. The communitarian politics of the state are indented to achieve maximum resources to their communities from the government, which they support time to time.

One of the active members of the party who belongs to the *Sunni* group expressed his views on the political unity of *Sunnis* and *Mujahid* thus,

*I am the general secretary of the Mahal committee in my locality. As a Sunni, I never go to the Mujahid Masjid or any of its religious programs as it is against my tradition. However, I never find any difficulties in attending the party programs along with Mujahid. Because the Muslim League works not for Sunnis alone but the development of the Muslim community. Whatever the Muslim community in Kerala has achieved as of now, it is because of the politics of the party in the last seventy years. This political unity, indeed, made the party a bargaining force in the communitarian structures of the state.*¹³²

The respondent never surrenders his *Sunni* identity; however, he never undermines the possibility of political collaboration with his ideological rival, the *Mujahid*. The nature of the communitarian politics in Kerala promotes communal based resource mobilisation among different groups which strengthens the political solidarities of *Sunnis* and *Mujahid*. This sense of political belongingness capitalised on by Muslim League is what makes them one of the major actors in the communitarian political context of the state. James Chiriyankandath views that the Muslim League showcased pragmatic politics by using its

¹³² Sulaiman, fifty-five year old man from Koottilangadi of Malappuram, on 04th April 2016.

electoral clout to win office and wield influence over significant areas of policymaking and decisions; in which the party has had considerable achievements (Chiriyankandath 2007).¹³³

Despite considerable sections of *Sunnis* associating with the party mainly through *ulama* and *thangals*, Samastha as an organisation never supported Muslim League officially. According to Abdussamad Pookkottur, “*Samastha, as a religious body of Sunnis Muslims, includes different political viewpoints, and many of its cadres, including the leaders, are working with different political parties such as the Congress and the Communist parties. And he further adds that “more people are working with the Muslim League due to the Muslim political geography of Malabar.”*¹³⁴ This account validates that many of Samastha’s members are working with different political parties according to their interest. Many of its members, particularly in the southern part of Kerala, are either with the Congress or Communist Parties. Also, many of them working in other Muslim political parties as well. A resolution passed by Samastha in 1979 stated that as a religious organisation Samastha does not have any political affiliation to any party. Samastha further noted that individuals are free to choose their politics according to their rationale (Samastha 2012: 418-53). However, this encouraged *Sunnis*, mostly, to align with the Muslim League rather than any other political parties in the state. *Sunnis* consider Muslim League not only as a political party but as the guardian of the community as many of the Samastha leaders stress in their speeches. One of the Samastha leaders, Abdissamad Pookkottur, stated in a public gathering thus,

We should not treat the Muslim League as a mere political party like others; it always stands for the moral good of the people with the leadership of *thangals* and the support of *ulama*. As a citizen, it is our responsibility to choose the best option

¹³³ The policy achievements of the party has been detailed in the Chapter Five of the thesis. For example, the formation of Malappuram district, establishment of Calicut University and other major universities in the state, the pressurisation of the party to continue Arabic language studies in Schools, and the establishment are some of the major interventions of the party in policy level. The party ensures following measures when they were in power in 1967 such as the free education up to the level of Higher Secondary, financial aid for poor and female Muslim students, the Arabic and Sanskrit colleges were affiliated to universities and permanent language posting were given for teachers in schools and colleges (Abdul Aziz 1992; Varshney 2002; Chiriyankandath 2007).

¹³⁴ Person Interview with Abdussamad Pookkottur, on 6th July 2017 (03: pm), at Pinangod of Wayanad.

for the development of our country. As a minority group, we must ensure our political participation, or nobody will care for us, as you know the situations of North India. Muslim League may not be necessary for the existence of Muslims; however, a political party like the Muslim League is essential for the honourable existence of Muslims in India. Hence, as a true Muslim, we must pass this political vision to the future generation and bring them up as good citizens of the country.¹³⁵

The speech is indicative of the political orientation of the community, which simultaneously aspired to become a faithful Muslim and a good citizen of the country. Samastha, as a religious authority, was bound to control the community morally and ethically. At the same time, he enforced the importance of political unity within the community for an ‘honourable existence.’ The speech stressed on the point by reminding the community about the conditions of Muslims in North India, which they believed was due to the absence of political unity. This religious and political ideal has been transmitted by several generations of its leaders, since Bafaqi Thangal. This faith-based political support helped the Muslim League to maintain a sustainable position in the larger scheme of communitarian politics in the state.

However, this sought-after unity of Samastha and *Mujahid* had several rough phases to it, which was apparent on many occasions. In the year 1979, when the ideological disagreements among the groups were at its peak, Samastha demanded Muslim League to exclusively place a *Sunni* candidate for an upcoming legislative election (Samastha 2012: 418-53). This resolution targeted the *Mujahid* group, which dominated the leadership of the party for a long time. The demand was meant to establish the political authority of *Sunnis* in the Muslim League. There were many such instances which often reflected in their conflicting relationship in religious and ideological matters. Recently, Samastha demanded an explanation from two young *thangals* from the Panakkad family, Syed Munavvar Ali Shihab (the president of Muslim Youth League) and Syed Rasheed Ali Shihab (Chairman of Kerala *Wakf* Board), about their participation in the *Mujahid* state conference held in Malappuram. The dissent against their decision to attend the conference

¹³⁵ This speech was made by a Samastha spokesperson, Abdussamad Pookkottur, in a conference conducted by Pannoor Town Muslim League Conference.

invited a series of critical remarks from Samastha Kerala Sunni Students Federation (SKSSF), student wing Samastha, which forced Samastha to seek an explanation.¹³⁶ Both of these leaders are religiously affiliated with the Samastha and were hence restrained by the organisation to attend the meeting.

However, the Muslim League Kerala state unit used different means and strategies to attract the popular support of various Muslim groups. At times, the party would address the concerns and suggestions of the AP *Sunni* faction and *Jamaat-e-Islami* despite their issues with the parties. By considering the opinion of its political rivals in religious matters, the party enlarged its political possibilities among the community. An interesting example is the joint conference of Muslim organisations held at Calicut in 1985 to discuss the Muslim Personal Law in the wake of Supreme Court judgement on Shah Banu case.¹³⁷ This meeting included all religious organisations along with League (Karakunnu 2014). Another instance is a joint meeting of Muslim community organisations led by the Muslim League held at Calicut in December 2016. The meeting intended to discuss the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the wake of criminalising Triple *talaq*. The meeting was summoned to demand that the government should not implement the law and take it back as the organisation believed it to be against the constitutional morality of the country. The meeting was attended by the representatives of different Muslim community organisations such as EK *Sunnis*, *Mujahid*, *Jamaat-e-Islami*, except AP *Sunnis*.¹³⁸ Several such meetings have been held under the Muslim League; the most recent one being the one on Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019 to discuss the concerns of the Muslim community over the issue.

These joint meetings have helped Muslim League to consolidate the community's interest in its favour as these meetings gave a strong signal to the community, as well as the other sections of the state population, that the party represents the common interest of Muslims in Kerala. It also strengthened the communitarian network among different sects, thus

¹³⁶ Deccan Chronicle (27th December 2017). "Move for Panakkad Hyderali Shihab Thangal on Salafi stage Triggers Row." Also see, The Hindu (3rd January 2018). "No Action against Panakkad Section."

¹³⁷ See Sub-section II: 6.2 (1) "*The Muslim League and the Muslim Personal Law*" in the Chapter Six of the thesis.

¹³⁸ AP *Sunnis* participation in such meetings often depends upon the political conditions of the state and also depends the political relation between IUML and AP *Sunnis*. For details, Scroll.in. (2016 December 13). "Warring Muslim groups in Kerala have joined forces to fight the government on Uniform Civil Code."

benefitting the party in various ways. This led to the strengthening of the party's communitarian political claim in electoral politics as it was even supported by the *Jamaat* and AP *Sunnis* along with EK *Sunnis* and the *Mujahid* in the elections.

The political claim of Muslim League for ample representation, for the fifth ministership in the UDF government during 2011- 16 also invited many communal arguments from the state and general public.¹³⁹ However, the party put forward its political claim for the fifth ministership according to their electoral performance. This legitimate political demand of the Muslim League led to an intense communal and political furore in the state. Not only had the alliance partner INC, but the caste and community-based organisations of Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians stood up against this just demand of the party. This was also endorsed by the Left Parties, though it had nothing to do with them. Their argument was that granting the fifth ministership to IUML would break the communal equations in the state. However, this political claim of the party was supported by the Muslim community, including AP *Sunnis* and *Jamaat-e-Islami*, for larger community interests.

For a better understanding of the situation, it is worth to note the communal configuration of UDF government during 2011-16. The UDF has formed the government with a narrow margin of 72 out of 140 seats. The Congress, the leading alliance partner, had received ten ministers as against four of Muslim League. Out of 72 MLAs, there were 26 Hindus; nine ministers and one speaker; six ministers and one deputy speaker out of 16 Christians. There were 27 Muslim MLAs including five Congress members but the community received only four ministers. In such circumstances, the Muslim League demanded one extra ministerial portfolio; however, it was rejected out rightly by placing the communal equations. However, finally, Congress had no other options but accepted the political claim of the Muslim League. As a result, IUML was granted the fifth minister for Parliamentary Affairs. Rather than having just an extra minister, the party carried forward the issue as a question of Muslim political existence in the state.

¹³⁹ In the election, IUML secured 20 out of 23 seats contested in, with a margin of 7.92% of the total votes polled. INC contested in 81 seats but managed only 38 seats (EPW 2011). The government was formed under the Congress in which IUML had four ministers at the beginning such as P.K. Kunjalikutty (Industry and IT), MK Muneer (Social Welfare and Panchayat), PK Abdurabb (Education) and V.K Ibrahim Kunju (Public Works Department).

Similarly, in 2019 Lok Sabha election, the party's claim to the UDF alliance for an extra seat instead of two seats out of total twenty seats in the state was also supported by the Muslim community despite the severe communal criticism from other religious and caste communities, including its alliance partner, Congress. *Madhyamam*, the mouthpiece of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, had published several articles to support the Muslim League in this regard.¹⁴⁰ The community groups also endorsed the developmental claims (educational institutions, hospitals, road and transport, etc.) of the party in the Malabar region for the larger interest of the society.

Although the support of rival Muslim organisations, in varying degrees, strengthened Muslim League's communitarian claim, the intracommunity rivalry has been a significant challenge for the party in consolidating the community. The *Mujahid*, who rendered unconditional support to the party since its inception has gradually distanced themselves from it over a period of time. Due to the differences between the *Mujahid* groups and some of the tactical moves by the CPI (M) led Left Front, one section of *Mujahid*, Madavoor group, has made a political inclination with them. This is similar to what happened after the split amid *Sunnis* in the 1980s where EK *Sunni* group stood with the Muslim League while the other sections supported CPI (M). Many factors that worked in favour of the Muslim League, though not religious, has also worked in favour of CPI (M) as they have held state power alternatively every five years (Shafeeque 2018). The close relations of Muslim League to one section of each sect (like EK *Sunnis* or the official group of *Mujahid*), have created issues for the other sections and this has led to them extending support to CPI (M).

The electoral mobilisation of Muslim League is based on mutual respect for both *Sunnis* and *Mujahid*, and the policies of the party have been inclusive and in certain religious issues, including the other sections (non-*Sunni*) of the community. This political unity sustained the electoral base of the Muslim League. Hence, it is not easy for a political party outside the community to wield influence over the community as they work on the lines of faith-based politics. However, it is easy for the Muslim League to utilise faith-based

¹⁴⁰ Sihabudeen Palliyalil. (12th February 2019). "Is Muslim League only Responsible for Community Equation." (Title Translated from Malayalam).

politics to have access to the community without much difficulty. These mutual religious and political respect and transactions remain vital forces in strengthening the Muslim communitarian politics in Kerala. However, the Muslim League's political authority has faced many challenges from the community in the turbulent phase of the post-Babri context, where newly formed Organisations started questioning the political legitimacy of the party.

Section IV

5.4 The Changing Nature of Community Politics in the post-1990s

The political landscape of India has been changing significantly since the late 1980s and early 1990s due to the increasing debates and discussions surrounding communities and identities. As Surinder Jodhka observes, the essence of Indian constitution- secularism- was faced with a contentious debate that questioned the historical-cultural diversity of the country; specifically of minority cultures. Initially, questions on gender, particularly about the Shah Bano case, and the incident of *Sati* was reported from Rajasthan. The issues of environmental politics also emerged during these days such as the Chipko Movement in Uttar Pradesh, Narmada Bachao Andolan in the tribal villages of Gujarat and Maharashtra, etc. The period also witnessed the emergence of an active community and identity-based politics from Dalits and Muslims, particularly after the Mandal Commission Report and demolition of Babri Masjid (Jodhka 2000). The transnational scenario of globalisation, which cut short the global distance also ignited the question of religious and community identities, was also gaining traction in the country during those days (ibid).

Similar to the broader Indian context, the Mandal Commission Report of 1980 and the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 made a new turn in the politics of Kerala as well. The gradual development of Hindutva forces and its challenge to Muslims resulted in the emergence of many socio-political organisations in the state. Disenchantment with the established politics of the two political fronts, UDF and LDF, also contributed to the growth of new formations based on identity (Chiryanakandath 1996). The Muslim political outfits such as the People Democratic Party (PDP), National Development Front (NDF) which later evolved to Popular Front of India (PFI), and then its political wing Social

Democratic Party of India (SDPI), Indian National League (INL) and Welfare Party of India (WPI) backed by *Jamaat-e-Islami* emerged out of such a political context. The developments of these intracommunity socio-political Organisations produced different forms of 'Muslim identity choices' which, to an extent, challenged the politics of Muslim League, mainly its 'moderate political identity.'

The Peoples' Democratic Party was formed by Abdul Nazar Madani,¹⁴¹ a religious scholar, in 1993. PDP was the successor of *Islamic Sevak Sangh* (ISS), which was banned by the Indian government in the wake of Babri demolition along with three other Organisations.¹⁴² The emergence of Madani from the Southern part of Kerala made tremendous changes to the political landscape of the state. Madani was perhaps the first political leader in Kerala who raised the slogan 'power to the oppressed,' in an expansive sense that included Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis (Kochu 2014). It challenged the politics of Left, Congress and Muslim League. As a powerful orator, he mobilised several Muslim youths not only in South Kerala but in Malabar as well, a stronghold of Muslim League (Chiriyankandath 1996).

According to Madani, the formation of ISS was mainly owing to the inefficiency of the Muslim League to protect the Muslims from various atrocities. It also aimed to empower the Muslims of the southern region of the state in the absence of a robust Muslim organisation, which resulted in isolation and vulnerability of the community. The Hindutva atrocities against the Muslims of North India and their insecure position, even during the Congress regime, were the main reference points of Madani (ibid).

PDP proved its political presence in the 1996 by-election held for the Guruvayoor Assembly constituency in which the party placed its candidate against both Muslim League and CPI (M). The Muslim League candidate, Abdul Samad Samadani, was a powerful personality among *Sunni* Muslims, with a background in religious scholarship. However, Samadani lost in the party's sitting seat against CPI (M) candidate, P.T. Kunju Muhammed,

¹⁴¹ Abdul Nazer Madani, son of a village school teacher in Quilon district. He acquired the Arabic degree of 'Madani' from a local religious institution and undertook further studies at the *Jami'a Nuriyya* Arabic College, Malappuram, and the leading *Sunni* training college for *ulama* in Kerala.

¹⁴² ISS was banned along with *Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh* (RSS), *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP), and *Jamaat-i-Islami* to avoid communal tensions in the country (Chiriyankandath 2007).

a film director. PDP grabbed 15% of the total vote polled, which indirectly resulted in the defeat of the Muslim League (Chiryankandath 1996). Over time, the political base of the party got shaken after the arrest of the party leader Nazar Madani due to his alleged involvement in the Coimbatore blast case.¹⁴³ In the 2016 Assembly election, PDP fielded 15 out of sixteen candidates in Malappuram district alone but failed to attain even one per cent of total votes polled. Except in two constituencies, Vallikunnu and Kottakkal, PDP could not gain more than 2000 votes.¹⁴⁴ The emergence of PDP proved the possibility of a new political party among the community controlled by Muslim League for decades.

Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait founded the Indian National League (INL) due to internal clash within the leadership of Muslim League after the demolition of Babri Masjid. As an influential parliamentarian, Sait raised his voice for Indian Muslims and other downtrodden sections of the society. He presented Muslims as national subjects as opposed to reducing them into a communal category. He worked for the ‘dignified life of Indian Muslims’ and stood for the ‘unity and integrity of the community.’¹⁴⁵ Sulaiman Sait also worked as a bridge between North and South Muslims of the country.

After the demolition of Babri Masjid, Sulaiman Sait, who was then the national president, demanded that the Muslim League withdraw the support of Congress Government both at the state and the centre. He accused Congress of its failure to protect Muslim sentiments as the party was bounded with the majoritarian outlook. He also maintained that responsibility lies with congress for the subsequent communal clashes which claimed the lives of thousands of Hindus and Muslim throughout the country. However, his demand for withdrawal was not acceptable to the IUML, since according to them, it would invite more problems to the community in future. The party mouthpiece, Chandrika, vehemently criticised the demand by highlighting communal issues. Sait called the party's reluctance

¹⁴³ Abdul Nazer Madani was arrested in 1998 by Tamil Nadu police due to his alleged involvement in connection with Coimbatore bomb blast- which claimed more than fifty lives. He was imprisoned for around ten year without any trail and then released without any charge. In 2010 Madani again arrested by the Karnataka police and was put into prison for his alleged involvement in Bangalore IPL stadium blast and trial is happening.

¹⁴⁴ The Hindu. (21st May 2016). “SDPI, WPI and PDP Create no Ripple.”

¹⁴⁵ Mahboob. P.A. (26th April 2017). “Sait Sahib: Making Life as Struggle.” (Title Translated from Malayalam).

to quit the government as a political and ideological disaster.¹⁴⁶ Due to his continuous criticism against the Muslim League, the party removed Sait from the national executive committee.

The INL was formed in this context, on 23rd April 1994. Two of the Muslim League state legislatures, P.M. Abubacker and U.A. Beeran, also resigned and joined with Sait (Chiriyankandath 1996). The primary objectives of the party were to protect and preserve the identity, dignity of all Indians, particularly the underprivileged segments of the society. The party made efforts toward drawing individuals from all levels of society into the national mainstream and towards complete participation in the process of national rebuilding and reconciliation.¹⁴⁷

Though the INL works as an independent party, it extended unconditional electoral support to LDF in Guruvayoor by-election of 1996 against Muslim League, which then helped them to join LDF fold, though not officially. As a result, INL could challenge the political dominance of IUML in Malabar on certain occasions. For example, in the 2006 Assembly election, INL candidate, P.M.A. Salam, defeated the Muslim League candidate TPM Zahir. INL candidate got elected with a margin of 51.91% of votes against 37.60% of IUML.¹⁴⁸ Over time, many of the INL leaders came back to Muslim League, including PMA Salam. Like PDP, INL also failed to gain much electoral support from Muslims, except in posing challenges in certain local body elections.

The National Development Front (NDF) emerged in 1993, with the slogan of 'Freedom, Justice and Security,' to address problems of Muslims, Dalits and other marginalised communities in Kerala. It was also formed during the turbulent post-Babri context against the rising threat of Hindutva forces and the supposed inaction of Muslim League. However, the mainstream political parties in Kerala, including Muslim League, perceive, the politics of NDF suspiciously due to its alleged involvement in many communal incidents. They allege that PFI is a 'communal outfit' which injects extreme political ideologies to the

¹⁴⁶ Chandrika. (14th April 1994). "The Resignation of Sait." (Title Translated from Malayalam).

¹⁴⁷ A Website about Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait: <http://ebrahimsulaimansait.in/>.

¹⁴⁸ The Election Commission of India (2006).

https://eci.gov.in/affidavits/AFF_AENov2006/Kerala/25/AC25CANDIDATE.htm.

Muslim youth, as Hindutva does in case of Hindus. However, PFI denies all such allegations and argues that they work in a democratic manner (Chiriyankandath 1996).

In 2007, NDF merged with the other two Muslim organisations, Manita Neethi Pasarai (MNP) in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Forum for Dignity (KFD) in Karnataka, and formed Popular Front of India (PFI).¹⁴⁹ Two years later, PFI formed its political party at the national level known as Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), under E. Abubackar, on 21st June 2009. The party was formed in Delhi, with the slogan of “freedom from hunger and freedom from fear.” The ideologies of the SDPI includes National integrity, communal harmony, and democratisation of society and nation. It also aims to enforce the human rights, and the development and protection of the social and cultural identity of Muslims, Dalits, and Adivasis.¹⁵⁰

In Kerala, the SDPI is a constant presence, particularly in local body elections in which the party grabbed 51 seats in 2015.¹⁵¹ However, the party has so far failed to make any significant spark in the general elections of Kerala. In the 2016 Assembly election, SDPI fielded sixteen candidates in the Malappuram district but secured only 1.51% of the total votes polled which is paltry when compared to the 47.05% of the Muslim League alliance.¹⁵² SDPI's failure to defend the joint attacks of mainstream parties in Kerala could be a reason for its slow growth.

The Welfare Party of India is the political wing of *Jamaat- e- Islami*. It got formed on 18th April 2011. The party came up with the slogan “voice of the voiceless” to protect the democratic rights of the downtrodden sections of the society.¹⁵³ In the initial phase of post-independence, *Jamaat* was not inclined with the idea of the nation-state, secularism, and

¹⁴⁹ P.M. Abubacker. (2007). *Empower India Conference*, pp, 22-4. A Conference was organized by Popular Front of India at Bangalore.

¹⁵⁰ The formation SDPI in national level by linking many similar identity Organisations in regional level such as Association for Social Justice in Andhra Pradesh, Citizens' Forum in Goa, Social and Educational Forum in Rajasthan, Nagarik Adhikar Suraksha Samiti in West Bengal and Lillong Social Forum in Manipur with some powerful slogans and ideologies (SDPI website).

¹⁵¹ Indian Express (8th November 2015). “Kerala Local Body Polls: Parties Floated by Fringe Muslim Outfits gain Seats.”

¹⁵² The Hindu. (21st May 2016).

¹⁵³ Website of Welfare Party of India: <http://welfarepartyofindia.org/>,

democracy, as they believed these concepts to be against the Islamic tradition. However, in the later years, especially in the 1970s, understanding the particular political situation, *Jamaat* decided to engage with the existing condition of the Indian state (Ahmad 2009).

Before the formation of WPI, *Jamaat-e- Islami* in Kerala engaged with public politics through its youth movement, Solidarity Youth Movement (SYM) formed in 2003, according to them, “Solidarity has been successful in mobilising and bringing to the forefront issues ranging from sustainable development and ecological activism to state terrorism, unlawful detention, profiling, racialisation, fascism and Sangh Parivar hegemony and Islamophobia.” Solidarity's guiding philosophy and its activities seek to transcend all barriers of faith, language, caste and creed.¹⁵⁴ As a social movement, SYM never participated in electoral politics of the state.

However, the Welfare Party of India was formed with the intention of political and electoral participation. According to the party, their objectives are to promote alternative politics in the country, a politics rooted in high standards of morality and ethical values which is free from crimes, corruption, selfishness, and all narrow-minded prejudices. One of the main aims of the party is to promote democracy, pluralism and inclusiveness and works for realizing the notion of cultural federalism.¹⁵⁵ The party does not intend to become a full-fledged alliance partner of any front in the state, but to act according to the context. According to WPI, both UDF and LDF have been in power for the many decades without any introspections, which led the state in developmental and welfare debacle. The presence of an alternate component, according to the party would make a significant contribution towards the state in general and its political culture in particular.¹⁵⁶ WPI was successful in capturing 42 seats in the last local body election in 2015.¹⁵⁷ However, received only 0.3% of the total votes in Assembly election in 2016.

Despite their emphasis on a particular religious or community identity, all these newly emerged socio-political organisations have tried to incorporate varied social and political

¹⁵⁴ Website of Solidarity Youth Movement in Kerala: www.solidarityym.org/.

¹⁵⁵ A Website of Welfare Party of India.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*

¹⁵⁷ Indian Express (8th November 2015).

issues such as the question of Dalits and Adivasis, environmental issues to maintain a broader framework of community and secular politics. The gradual developments of new intra-religious political groups have produced different forms of ‘Muslim political identity choices’ and have challenged the political space of the IUML, chiefly its ‘moderate’ political minority identity which was framed under the category of ‘good communalism’ (Varshney 2002) in the public politics of the state. However, these Organisations have failed to mobilise the community, largely, due to various reasons.

There are two reasons for the marginal presence of newly formed organisations among the Muslim community. The first one is rooted in religious concerns. Unlike the Muslim League, all these new organisations, except the Welfare Party of India, failed to achieve any support among various religious groups of the community. Though their politics is based on the Muslim subject, they have been unable to make any inroad due to the absence of institutionalised support from the community. In a highly competitive communitarian structure of the state, it is very difficult to survive without the institutionalised support of the community. This is evident when we look at the fact that it is the support of Samastha and *Mujahid* that sustains the politics of Muslim League. Which could partly be because the religious leaders of both Samastha and *Mujahid* often remind the community to keep away from ‘electoral hardliners’, which shakes the political possibilities of these organisations among Muslim masses. Though *Jamaat-e-Islami* backs the WPI, the proportion of *Jamaat* is numerically less compared to *Sunnis* and *Mujahid*. Besides, Samastha and *Mujahid* have been opposing the political doctrine of *Jamaat*, which restricted WPI among its members.

There is a common understanding among the broader spectrum of Muslims in the state that the politics of newly formed organisation may affect the communal peace and harmony of the state. Samastha and *Mujahid* conducted many ‘awareness programmes’ about the ‘dangers’ these organisations can pose to the community. In 2007, *Sunni Yuvajana Sangham* (SYS) conducted a state-wide “Anti-Terrorism Message Rally” against the increasing nature of majority and minority communalism. PFI was one of the main targets

of the rally, in which SYS stated that any form of ‘communalism’ within or outside the community is harmful to communal harmony.¹⁵⁸

In the last many years, SKSSF has been conducting ‘human chain’ on the Republic Day, 26th January, with the slogan ‘safeguard national interest for communal peace’ in which they vehemently criticize both majority and minority communalism. According to a Samastha spokesperson, Pinangod Aboobacker, *“as a believer, the Muslims do not have the right to criticise the majority communalism until and unless we oppose communalism within the community. And both communalism are dangerous to the community and society.”*¹⁵⁹ This critical stand of the larger community makes it difficult for the expansion of these new political groups.

On the other hand, mainstream political parties of the state target these new groups politically by placing them as a ‘threat’ to the secular polity. The CPI (M) state secretary alleged that SDPI is an ‘Indian version of the Islamic state.’¹⁶⁰ The mainstream parties fear that the powerful political slogan carried by these groups may influence the different sections of the society, like Muslims, Dalit Adivasi and other marginalised groups, which would adversely affect them. At the same time, they accept either open or hidden support of these groups for electoral success. In 2009 parliament election, Communist Party received open electoral support from PDP in Ponnani constituency to defeat IUML.¹⁶¹ However, IUML retained the seat with a majority of 82,684 votes.¹⁶² Such electoral alliance is common in Kerala with both fronts, mainly in local body elections.

Muslim League targets these new political parties in two ways. One is to defend its electoral constituencies of the party as these groups are mainly located in Malabar due to the Muslim demography. The other is to protect the secular credentials of the party in society. The political strategy of the IUML is to brand new organisations, particularly SDPI, as ‘internal

¹⁵⁸ This rally was conducted under the captainship of Panakkad Umar Ali Shihab Thangal, state president of *Sunni* Yuvajana Sangham, a sister organization of Samastha. It was inaugurated by Muhammedali Shihab Thangal, state president Muslim League, which, conferred a consensus among Samastha and Muslim League on the issue.

¹⁵⁹ Person Interview with Pinangod Aboobacker, on 10th May 2016 (08:pm), at Pinangod of Wayanad.

¹⁶⁰ India Today. (18th July 2019). “SDPI is an ‘Indian version of Islamic state’: Kerala CPIM Chief.”

¹⁶¹ CPIM. (2009). “Election Result and Party policy” (Title Translated from Malayalam).

¹⁶² Lok Sabha Election. (2009). Election Commission of India.

enemy' to prevent their political and electoral possibility. By placing them as the internal enemy, IUML ensures its 'secular' face and place itself in the fold of 'good communalism.' By answering such communal categorization, E.T. Muhammed Basheer says that,

*The Muslim League and other community Organisations formed in the 1990s place their political argument in two different ways. The Muslim League by and large tries to locate the issues democratically, through a constitutional language and mechanism that engage with the pluralist Indian society; whereas the newly formed Organisations present their argument, mostly, in an emotional manner. And such emotional approaches in politics do not last long. Therefore, the competition between the Muslim League and its intra- community counterparts is based on two different ideologies.*¹⁶³

Due to this political and ideological differences, Muslim League, in many instances, deliberately avoids the presence of these group in Muslim meetings and conferences conducted to discuss common community issues. For example, a meeting was held in Kottakkal, Malappuram, in July 2010. While all major Muslim community groups like EK Sunni, AP Sunni and different *Mujahid* factions came together, the *Jamaat-e-Isami* and PFI were excluded from the meeting.¹⁶⁴ By calling this meeting, the party ensured the larger community support against these two, alleged, political hardliners.¹⁶⁵ What emerges from the above is that the religious and political strategy of the community reduces the political possibilities of these newly formed organisations. As a result, none of these political groups could emerge as a vital bargaining force in Kerala politics like the IUML, which has successfully wielded their political power in the last seventy years.

¹⁶³ Personal Interview with E.T. Muhammed Basheer, National Secretary of IUML, on 06th July 2017, at Kuruva Village of Malappuram District.

¹⁶⁴ Two Circles.net. (2nd August 2010). "Muslim Organisation to Hold Campaigns Against Terrorism."

¹⁶⁵ Interestingly enough, the *Jamaat* was invited for the *sharia* meeting, organized by IUML in 1985, and many such meeting in the post Babri period. In 2010 scenario, *Jamaat* was in discussion to form a political party, in such a condition Muslim League excluded their presence in the meeting as it would popularise them. However, in the Modi regime, *Jamaat* was invited in community meeting such as *Triple Talaq*, CAA, as Muslims perceive, their religious and cultural life in threat.

Conclusion

The thesis argues that the political structures of Kerala operate mainly through communitarian nature. The institutionalised nature of communitarian identities was formed after the Liberation Struggle of 1957. By constituting a political block in aligning with different parties, these community groups ensured their political existence within the state, in which the Muslim League plays a dominant role. The Muslim League succeeded in forming a political community despite the theological differences that are constitutive of the Muslim community in the state. This political strategy of the party transformed the Muslim community into a pressure group in electoral politics.

Though the hold of Muslim League within the community and its 'moderate identity' received a significant challenge in the wake of Babri demolition in 1992 as the newly formed groups targeted IUMML politically. Even though they gained momentum in the initial days, but failed to mark their presence in the communitarian political structures of the state. IUMML strategises its politics with the help of different religious groups to reduce the political possibilities of these newly emergent groups. The IUMML's recent evolving strategy to unite the community in common issues, even the political opponents, AP Samastha and *Jamaat-e-Islami*, made them 'sole spokesperson' of the Muslims.

Chapter 06

The Role of the Muslim League in Legislature: Representation and Rhetoric

The base of democracy lies in a representative model of government in which citizens elect representatives to represent their concerns, deliberation, and grievances in the law-making bodies. The idea of political representation has been extensively dealt with in the discipline of political science and beyond by various political thinkers.¹⁶⁶ John Stuart Mill, in his work, *Consideration on Representative Government*, proposes two criteria for a good government; the tendency of the government to promote the common good, and the capacity of the government to make use of the capacities of the populace for the common good. The best government, according to Mill, is where the representatives are elected through the universal suffrage, and the purpose of electing representatives is to articulate the concern of its citizens through debates and discussions (Mill 1977).

Hanna Pitkin defines “the concept of representation as an activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives ‘present’ in public policy-making processes. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on behalf of others in the political arena” (Pitkin 1967). Similarly, Andrew Heywood views that representation is a relationship through which an individual or group stands for, or acts on behalf of a larger collection of people. Hence, Political representation admits a link between two otherwise distinct entities – government and the governed – and implies that through this link, people’s views are articulated, or their interests are secured (Heywood 2004: 233). A more detailed definition is offered by German social theorist, Robert von Mohl, who observes “representation is a process through which the influence, which the entire citizenry or a part of them have upon governmental action is, with their expressed approval, exercised on their behalf by a smaller number among them, with binding effect upon those represented” (Quoted in Johari 2008: 467).

Key functions of elected representatives are to make policies and programs according to the demand of the citizens. In other words, representation is political assistance with the

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Hobbes (1651), *Leviathan*. John Stuart Mill (1977), *Considerations on Representative Government*. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), *On the Social Contract*. John Dewey (1954), *The Public and Its Problems*. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (1787), *The Federalist Papers*.

consent of the represented. In another account, Andrew Rehfeld views that “political representation is a result from an audience’s judgment that some individual, rather than some other, stands in for a group in order to perform a specific function” (Rehfeld 2006:2). Here the audience means the relevant parties before whom a particular case of representation needs to be accepted. Hence political representation supposedly involves, *inter alia*, authorisation, accountability, and the looking out for another's interests.

In a liberal democracy, political representation is maintained through free and fair elections to enhance public support and vigil for the representative institutions. Democracy is one form of government that allows people to rule themselves, where free and fair elections strengthen the legitimacy of the political community. Democracy works effectively based on the responsive relationship between the representative and the represented. Unlike Western liberal democracies, the primordial identities such as religion, caste, and communities decide the ‘political’ of India since independence. These identity groups are represented by various political parties to assert their rights guaranteed by the constitution. Indian Union Muslim League is one such political groups that represent the concerns of Muslims in law-making bodies of the country.

As a community political party, since its inception, the Muslim League has been representing the community and articulating their political interests in the development of the Muslims. How far is Muslim politics possible in a majoritarian Hindu state given that the Muslim League has to simultaneously engage with the interest of the Muslim community and the larger public. It can be seen that the Muslim League mainly functions for the benefit of the community without compromising the interest of the majority community for that purpose. The party uses a secular language to represent the community in law-making institutions; however, it also asserts the community rights guaranteed by the constitution. The representation of community concerns and ensuring fairness in distributing developmental aids sustain the Muslim League’s politics among the community and state. Hence, the politics of the Muslim League is an amalgamation of community and state.

This chapter focuses on the role of the Muslim League in making legislations, both in parliament and Kerala assembly. The chapter is divided mainly into two sections and many

subsections. The first section, “The Role of the Muslim League in Kerala Legislative Assembly,” tries to understand the significance of the Muslim League’s engagement in Kerala Legislative Assembly to achieve political ascendancies and to enhance their stake in the formulations of policies for the Muslim community and the larger public. The second section, “The Role of Muslim League in the Indian Parliament,” focuses on various issues and debates to understand the nature of Muslim representation in Hindu majoritarian politics, particularly in parliamentary politics.

Section I

6.1 The Role of the Muslim League in Kerala Legislative Assembly

The main aim of the Muslim League was the socio, economic, educational, and cultural development of the community; in other sense, the ‘honourable existence’ of the Muslims in India. Intending to be in power politics, the Muslim League has ensured its presence since the first Kerala Assembly of 1957. This section explores four significant issues to understand the administrative capacity of the Muslim League in Kerala politics. The first section, “The Formation of Malappuram District,” focused on how the party advanced its necessity and sanctioned a new district in Kerala. It also analyses how the party overcame the communal agenda of both the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Jana Sangh in these processes. The second section, “The Establishment of the University of Calicut,” discusses how it strengthened the educational development of the region. This part also focuses on the Muslim League’s intervention in language struggle against the Communist government of the 1980s to restore language studies (Arabic, Urdu and Sanskrit) in Schools as a measure to protect the cultural rights of the community. The third section, “The Muslim League and Narendran Commission Report,” of 2002 deals with the report concerning adequate representation for the backward class communities in public service undertakings. This section also looks at how the majoritarian nexus within the state hindered the government approval for proper representation in various employment opportunities.

6.1 (1) *The Formation of Malappuram District*

The following speech made by Muslim League leader, K.N.A. Khader, in Kerala Assembly about the bifurcation of Malappuram district, helps us to understand the demand for the district even in the present context.

This calling attention is to form a new district by bifurcating the present Malappuram district, based on population. This bifurcation is to improve democratic decentralisation and for the comprehensive development and speedy administrative purposes. Even after fifty years of district formation, Malappuram lacks proportionate development. The district is in need of more taluks, panchayats, hospitals, schools, and colleges, etc. for the speedy development. At present, 40,000 students are waiting for their Higher Secondary seats after matriculation. Geographically the district is too large, and one has to travel a hundred-kilometres to reach the headquarters from one end. The new district would help in the development of the coastal region as it extends from Puthuponnani to Kadalundi. It is the most populated district in the state with 44 Lakhs, and the difference to the second most populated district, Trivandrum, is 11 Lakhs. The difference in population between Wayanad and Malappuram is more than 35 Lakhs. Kerala is the only state where the number of Lok Sabha seats is more than that of the number of districts. Hence, I remind you that the demand for a new district should not be lumped as regionalism or communalism.¹⁶⁷

As a response to Khader's submission, E.P. Jayarajan (Industries and Sports Minister), on behalf of the Chief Minister, replied that the formation of a new district is not scientifically possible, and it may cause communal turmoil in the state. He added that there are severe doubts on Indian Union Muslim League's demand for bifurcation.¹⁶⁸ The Malappuram district secretary of the CPI (M), E.N. Mohandas, argued that the demand for a new district

¹⁶⁷ Chandrika. (26th June 2019). "Malappuram Distct should be Divided and New District should be Formed, KNA Khader; New Districts Not under Consideration, Minister." (Title Translated from Malayalam). Also see, Suprabhatham. (26th June 2019). "A Debate on Bifurcation of Malappuram District in Legislature." (Title Translated from Malayalam).

¹⁶⁸ Mathrubhumi. (26th June 2019). "The New District is not practically Possible in Malappuram, and what is the Intention of Muslim League; E.P. Jayarajan." (Title translated from Malayalam).

is not for the people of Malappuram, but for the Muslim terrorist Organisations, and Khader is talking on behalf of terrorists.¹⁶⁹ Such are the usual responses from the authorities, whenever demands related to Malappuram is raised due to the Muslim demography. The stigmatization of Malappuram has not changed much even after five decades of the district formation.

The Malappuram district was officially formed on 16th June 1969, after a series of interventions in the Kerala Assembly and outside. It was formed as the tenth out of fourteen districts in the state, considering the socio-economic backwardness of the region (Hardgrave 1977; Azeez 1992). Surprisingly, none of the other districts -all of them have Hindu majority- came under the scrutiny of communalism as in the case of Malappuram. The demographic composition of Malappuram, with Muslims being the majority, led to intense political debates and protests at the state and national levels. The supporters and the opponents of the district accused each other in the name of communalism and partisanship. The political opponents of Muslim League argued that the perpetrators want to divide the state again in the name religion, as in the case of Pakistan.

The political demand for Malappuram was included in the common minimum program of the United Front government headed by E.M.S. Namboothiripad. Bapputty Haji, the president of Kuruva panchayath of Palakkad, was the first person who proposed the idea of 'Malappuram district' by citing the need for comprehensive development of the region (Basheer 2015). Subsequently, C.H. Muhammed Koya proposed a resolution in the state conference of the party held at Calicut in 1968. P. Abdul Majeed, a legislator of the party from Mankada constituency, officially demanded the new district in Malabar by citing the socio-economic backwardness of Eranad and Valluvanad taluks of Malabar (Vadakara: 1985; Basheer 2015). Muhammed Koya and M.P.M. Ahmad Kurikkal (1921-1968), then steadily pressed the government to form the new district despite the political and communal campaigns of INC and Jana Sangh (Basheer 2015). Due to the constant political pressure from Muslim League, Chief Minister E.M.S. announced the government plan to constitute

¹⁶⁹ News 18, (25th June 2019). "Muslim League MLA K.N.A. Khadar Repeatedly Calls to Bifurcate Malappuram to Form a New District." (Title translated from Malayalam).

a new district by carving out the portion of Kozhikode and Palakkad on 22nd October 1968 for comprehensive development of Malabar.¹⁷⁰

The declaration of the district triggered state-wide protests and anti-Muslim propaganda, both by Jana Sangh and INC. Jana Sangh, along with RSS and Hindu Mahasabha began a severe communal campaign, and they distributed pamphlets titled 'Malappuram or *Moplastan*' and also branded the district as 'the illegitimate child of the old Two Nation theory' (Hardgrave 1977) as well as 'mini-Pakistan' (Basheer 2015). In a later stage, Jana Sangh invited many RSS cadres from different parts of the country to intensify the protests. National media such as Free Press Journal of India (FPJ), Statesman and Hindustan Times reported that the new district formation is a conspiracy of communists, Muslim League, and other Muslim outfits. Also, the new district is against the national interest and the integrity of the country, and the move is nothing but an anti-national activity to help Pakistan. Jana Sangh observed an anti-*Moplastan* Day, on 06th March 1969, in Trivandrum, in which the national president, A.B. Vajpayee, stated that the formation of the district is against the idea of national integration and Indianness, and urged people to unite against it (ibid).

The veteran Congress leader K. Kelappan, popularly known as 'Kerala Gandhi,' also joined hands with Jana Sangh. He was appointed as the chief advisor of Anti-district Association formed by Jana Sangh (ibid). Kelappan connected Mappilas to Pakistan and accused that the intention of a new district is forced religious conversions of Hindus (ibid). He further stated that the Muslim League does not have any right to exist as a party. Kelappan's presence in the protest raised the issue to the national level, which resulted in many demonstrations in Bombay, Delhi and so on. On the other hand, Jana Sangh called for a series of protests in front of Calicut district headquarters from 2nd June 1969 to 16th June 1969 in which more than 500 people attended were from outside the state. Though the Jana Sangh failed in their attempt to stop the formation of Malappuram, they could increase its membership due to the severe communal campaign against Muslims (Menon 1995).

¹⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1970). Vol. XXIII No.11: 1025-26. Trivandrum, Government Press.

The Congress also began an intense campaign against Malappuram both in Assembly and outside. The INC was much concerned about the Muslim League's involvement in the district as it would adversely affect the political desires of congress in the region. Congress member, N.I. Devassikutty wanted to know whether the government had received any petition from Muslim League state committee for the new district. Revenue Minister, K.R. Gouri, replied that the government had not received any particular petitions from them. However, it had received many petitions from different Organisations, including local committees of the Muslim League.¹⁷¹ The Chief Minister stated that the reOrganisation is mainly concerned for the "administrative convenience" of the region.¹⁷² K. Karunakaran (1918-2010), the senior leader of INC in the house, claimed that there are no issues if a district helps a community; however, he then accused E.M.S. of trying to harness the Mappila insurgent experience to communist ends.¹⁷³ KPCC president T.O. Bava pointed out that the formation of Malappuram is a political strategy to appease the Muslim League, and such a move would destroy the communal harmony of the state (Basheer 2015). On the other, the Youth Congress conducted an 'anti-district yatra' where M.M. Hasan stated that the Malappuram would result in communal divisions in the state (ibid).

There were also fissures among the alliance partners of United Front. The CPI (M) member, K.P.R. Gopalan, warned that the government should take the responsibility if the new district formation ends up vitiating the harmonious communal relations in the state.¹⁷⁴ Contrary to that, the other members of the coalition such as P. Govinda Pillai of CPI (M), P.S. Seenivasan of CPI, and Kerala Congress leaders K.M. Mani and K.M. George supported Muslim League's demand by citing the poor socio-economic conditions is a result of Malabar Rebellion and subsequent events. They also criticized the communal propaganda of the Congress and Hindutva groups against Malappuram (ibid).

C.H. Muhammed Koya stressed the importance of the new district in the assembly by pointing out the deplorable condition of the region. Koya firmly criticized the Pakistan argument put forth by Kelappan, as well as the Hindutva argument of forced religious

¹⁷¹ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1969). Vol.XXII, No.6: 844-45.

¹⁷² *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1970). Vol.XXIII. No.15: 1335.

¹⁷³ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1971). Vol.XXIV, No.4: 253:4.

¹⁷⁴ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1970). Vol. XXIII, No.20: 1821-5.

conversion (Vadakara 349:1985). Bafaqi Thangal published few articles in Chandrika stressing the need for the district and criticized others for communalizing it. He stated that the party would never give up the political demand, and also urged the people to stand together against the communal propaganda for the larger good of the state (Thangal et al. 2013: 211-13).

In another attempt, a group of people filed a writ petition in Kerala High Court to stop the official proceedings of a new district. They argued that Malappuram is based on a communal line, and the Muslim majority district would create problems for Hindus in future. The court declared that the authority to constitute a district is vested in the state government and the court has nothing to do in the political matters of an elected government. Similarly, as a response to many letters against the district formation, Central Home Minister, Yashwantrao Chavan, stated that it is the authority vested in the state government to form a new district, and the centre has no right to control federal matters of the state (Basheer 2015).

K.R. Gouri argued that the new district is necessary for the administrative convenience and development of the region. The cabinet sub-committee, including E.M.S, K.R. Gouri and C.H. Muhammed Koya, approved the plan for the new district, Malappuram, and the same was presented in the cabinet, on 5th May 1969. The district was officially announced by the Governor of the state, on 7th June 1969. The district of Malappuram formally came into existence on 16th June 1969.¹⁷⁵

The demographic dominance of Muslims in the district gave a cakewalk to the argument of Hindutva forces, as they perceive Muslims/Mappilas as fanatics, which has its roots in the context of the 1921 revolt (Panikkar 1989; Ansari 2005). The stigmatization of Malappuram/Mappila has been prevalent in the state in which the socio-political discussions on Malappuram always presupposed a ‘communal other.’ It has become part

¹⁷⁵ *Kerala District Gazetteer: Malappuram*. (1986). It is the tenth in the series of district gazetteers in Kerala. This *Gazetteer* was compiled by Dr. C.K. Kareem and published by the Government of Kerala.

of normative discourses, casteist public consciousness of the state, as well as popular mediums like cinema, and newspaper. While Mappilas of Malabar retains the region's heroic anti-colonial struggles and Muslim cosmopolitanism in their popular imagination, the political opponents dubbed the move to form Malappuram as an act of creating a 'Moplastan.' This branding of Mappilas, to a great extent, is part of a larger conspiracy of Hindutva project of creating the 'other' aimed at Hindutva consolidation.

6.1 (2) *The Establishment of the University of Calicut*

Calicut University was established on 22nd July 1968 due to the effort made by Education Minister of Muslim League, C.H. Muhammed Koya, at Tenchipalam in the present Malappuram district. It was a long-standing demand of the region, particularly after the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, to establish a higher educational institution to enhance the educational conditions of the region. However, the Muslim demography of the region resulted in dubbing the university as 'Pakistan University' by the political and communal opponents (Aziz 1992: 79).

The educational development of the community was one of the primary concerns of Muslim League since its formation. The party have sent many circulars to local committees which insist on promoting children's education without any fail (Thangal et al. 2013). The early leaders of the party, such as K.M. Seethi Sahib, B. Pokker Sahib, Bafaqi Thangal, and C.H. Muhammed Koya, were instrumental in setting up of many educational institutions across the state. As a result, the first Muslim higher educational institution, Farook College, was established in 1948 in Calicut. Interestingly, Farook College was formed after 132 years of the first Christian Management College in the state, CMS College in Kottayam. The party also had a governing responsibility to convince people about the future possibilities of modern education, who were completely detached from modern education due to the strong opposition to colonialism. This created a spark among the community, which later significantly contributed in the area of modern higher education in South India (Muhammed 1990; Muhammed 2007).

The formation of a university in Malabar was the major election promise of Muslim League and United Front Government. The idea of the University of Calicut was developed and

suggested C.H. Muhammed Koya when he was a member of parliament in 1962. He worked extensively for the success of the university when he became the education minister of the state. The University of Calicut is known as the ‘brainchild of Muhammed Koya’ (Menon 2013: 34). The need for a university in Malabar region was also suggested by the Kothari Commission of 1964, appointed by the central government.¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, E.M.S. appointed an expert committee led by Prof. Samuel Mathai, the vice-chancellor of Kerala University, to examine the demand for a university in Malabar. After numerous meetings and discussions, the Committee unanimously recommended the immediate establishment of a University in Malabar.¹⁷⁷

Meanwhile, C.H. Muhammed Koya continued his demand for the university in the assembly in its various meetings. According to him:

Kerala University is one of the largest universities in India, in which 1.4 lakhs students and 149 affiliated colleges exist. For the betterment of administrative purposes, it is essential to establish a new university as the Kothari Commission suggested. Moreover, everyone knows the fact that the Northern districts of Kerala are educationally backward. I believe that the establishment of a new university would certainly be a remedy for the educational development of the Malabar region.¹⁷⁸

The discussion on the University of Calicut had sparked many communal controversies from the right-wing forces. Organizer, the mouthpiece of Janasangh, wrote that Muhammed Koya built an ‘Aligarh’ in Kerala, a hub of communal and anti-national people (Muhammed 1994; Basheer 2015). However, the Muslim League was confident in its demand and pressurized the United Front government as a coalition partner. As a result, the university was established through the ordinance issued by the government of Kerala

¹⁷⁶ Kothari Commission, officially known as National Education Commission (1964-66), was set up by the government of India under Prof. D.S. Kothari (Chairman, University Grants Commission). It was the first Commission with detailed terms of reference on education. The Commission began its operation on 2nd October 1964 and submitted the report on 29th June 1966. The Commission submitted a detailed report, and its recommendations were included in India's first National Policy on Education in 1968.

¹⁷⁷ See the website of University of Calicut: <https://www.uoc.ac.in/index.php/the-university/brief-history>.

¹⁷⁸ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* (1970). Vol. XXIII No.09: 825-55.

on 22nd July 1968 (Aziz 1992). The establishment of the university is considered as one of the laudable achievements of the party, both in policy and political levels.

The establishment of Calicut University has produced significant changes in the educational portfolio of Mappila Muslims of Kerala. Subsequently, there were many educational establishments formed under community initiation, which promoted the educational development of the region. The educational and social development of the Muslims in Kerala has been cited by many studies (Muhammed Ali 1990; Muhammed 2007), as well as the Sachar Committee. Sachar committee went to the extent of praising the role of the Muslim League in enhancing the community at various levels when compared to the situation of Muslims in other parts of India (SCR 2006). It wouldn't be an overstatement to claim that it is the political presence of Muslim League along with the community Organisations that helped the Muslims to achieve standard education in the state of Kerala.

Apart from these achievements, Muhammed Koya had adopted many laudable measures for the benefit of students and teachers. School education and secondary educations were made entirely free. Arabic and Sanskrit Colleges were affiliated to universities, and permanent posting was given for language teachers in schools and colleges. Another crucial policy initiative was the direct payment of salaries for college teachers. Moreover, IUML succeeded in reserving ten per cent of government jobs for the community in Kerala, special scholarship for Muslim girls and many new schools in Muslim backward areas (Miller 1992; Aziz 1992).

It is noteworthy that the major universities in the state, Agricultural University (1971), Cochin University of Science and Technology (1971), Sanskrit University (1993) and Malayalam University (2012), and so on were established by Muslim League when they were handling education ministry and had faced no opposition (Konar 2014; Basheer 2015). However, in the last UDF Government of 2011, the education minister of Muslim League decided to establish an international Arabic University which, however, received severe criticism from their political opponents as well as from the alliance partners of UDF. Due to the defiance of the Chief Secretary and the Finance Department, citing the possible

communal polarisation and insufficient funds, the Muslim League failed to achieve the plan. According to K.P.A. Majeed, the state Secretary of the party, “*the Arabic University becomes ‘communal’ because the idea was proposed by the Muslim League.*”¹⁷⁹

Another significant intervention of the party in the field of education was the Bhasha Samaram (Language Struggle), which took place on 30th July 1980. This is, perhaps, the only language struggle for learning the Arabic language in India, along with the other two languages, Urdu and Sanskrit. The protest was against the Communist government in their attempt to remove the learning and teaching of these three languages from schools. The government decided to implement the new policies by the pretext of ‘increase the standards of education.’ However, Muslim League alleged that the intention behind the new policy was mainly to remove the minority languages, Arabic and Urdu, to satisfy the majoritarian sentiments, as the Sanskrit was learned by a minor Hindu population, mostly, upper-caste (Kuttassery 1982; Moulavi 1990; Saidalavi 2019).¹⁸⁰

In 1967, education minister of Muslim League, C.H. made special legislation for the protection of the Arabic language in different ways (Aziz 1992). The government-appointed permanent Arabic teachers in schools instead of special teachers and the minimum number of students were reduced from 100 to 28 for the approval of language posts. The treasury also paid the salaries of the Arabic College teachers as well (Saidalavi 2019: 88-100). Through these policies and programs, the party ensured the participation of the community in the processes of modern education to achieve social and cultural progress (Kuttassery 1982; Moulavi 1990).

However, the new policies of the Communist government override all these measures taken by the Muslim League. The party explained that “this epoch-making struggle was aimed at safeguarding the secular fabric that our country has acquired through a rich tradition of

¹⁷⁹ Person Interview with K.P.A. Majeed, Kerala State Secretary of Muslim League, on 19th June 2016, at Kuruva Village of Malappuram District.

¹⁸⁰ This part, “Bhasha Samaram” is mostly indebted to the following three articles. The first article is written by Muhammed Kuttassery (1982). “Arabiyude Valarchayum Muslim Leagum,” the second article is written Kolathoor Muhammed Moulavi (1990). “Bhasha Samaram: Athinte Paschathalam,” and the third one is authored by C.P. Saidalavi (2109). “Bhashasamarathile Chorapaadukal.” These three articles are published in souvenirs published at different times.

linguistic-cultural diversity.”¹⁸¹ Muslim League MLAs submitted a representation to the education minister, Baby John (1917-2008), to continue the language studies in an existing manner. However, the government refused the representation submitted by the party (Moulavi 1990). As a result, the protest triggered initially from Arabic Teachers Association, and later it was carried by the party (Saidalavi 2019: 89). Subsequently, Muslim Youth League (MYL) called for a protest on 30th July 1980 at fourteen district headquarters of the state.¹⁸² Where the police fired at the protesters of Malappuram in which three party members were shot dead and injured many.¹⁸³ This incidents triggered an intense debate in the state legislature, and outside, which resulted in the withdrawal of the controversial circular (Moulavi 1990). The Bhasha Samaram is considered to be an unparalleled political struggle in the history of Kerala. It was a political victory of the party over the communist party to uphold the cultural rights of the religious minority. It helped the party to get more vigour among the community and ensured its political influence despite ideological differences.

It is easy to brand the Muslim political demands as communal, and it has wider appeal among the mainstream society of the state, as the politics of the country has always been nurtured in the majoritarian appeasement. It might be challenging to understand the ordinary sensibilities which restrict the establishment of a language university as a catalyst in communal polarisation. What might be the inherent potential of the Arabic language to instigate communalism? It can also be dubbed as the structural and normative hate and phobia produced by the West against Muslims and Islam, getting deflected even to the Arabic language, which is influencing the ‘public sphere’. Even though Muslim League has been at the forefront of the democratic and secular politics of the state, the secular liberal political find it impossible to make sense of League’s politics outside the rubric of the ‘sectarianism.’

¹⁸¹ An article, “A historic Struggle Championing the Cause of Arabic Language,” published by Muslim Youth League about Bhasha Samaram of 1980.

¹⁸² P.K.K. Bava. (30th August 1980). “Muslim Youths in Kerala are in Battlefield.” (Title Translated from Malayalam).

¹⁸³ Three young party workers from Malappuram district were Abdul Rahman (22) from Puthoor Paallickal, Abdulla aka Kunjippa (24) from Kalikavu and Kothengal Abdul Majeed (24), from Malappuram (Moulavi 1982; Saidalavi 2019). For more details also see Chandrika. (31st August 1980). “Malappuram Firing: Five Dead.” (Title translated from Malayalam).

6.1 (3) *The Muslim League and Narendran Commission Report (NCR)*

The Government of Kerala appointed the Narendran Commission under the chairmanship of former High Court Judge, K.K. Narendran, on 11th February 2000.¹⁸⁴ The commission was assigned to report the representation of Backward Classes in various government services and public undertakings, autonomous bodies, and institutions under the state government, including the universities. The commission submitted its report in September 2001 to the Congress-led UDF government. The commission suggested ‘special recruitment’ to ensure their representation in various services in a proportional manner (NCR 2001). As a coalition partner of the Congress, Muslim League along with Janathipathya Samrakshana Samithi (JSS) demanded the implementation of the NCR.

Historically, the Muslim League had always stood for reservation and affirmative action for the marginalised sections of the society, based on the social backwardness. Muhammed Ismail argued in the Parliament that the party implore to retain separate electorates, which alone will give them the right sort of representation in the legislatures (Khalidi 1993: 45). When the Mandal Commission entitled only Mappilas for OBC reservation of 1993, Muslim League pressurized the central government to include the whole Muslims in the state for reservation list.¹⁸⁵ In the Kerala Assembly, the party leader of the house, C.H. Muhammed Koya stated that reservation is not anyone’s charity, but a constitutional right (Vadakara 1985: 262). The party had obtained a backward class status for the Mappilas while it held the balance of power in the state cabinet of 1967-69 (Aziz 1992). Muslim League also resisted to bring in economic criteria for reservation during the first communist government, and Congress-led, K. Karunakaran, the government of 1982-86, in which the party was also a part.

¹⁸⁴ The Commission was appointed by E.K. Nayanar, CPI (M) led government, as per Notification SRO No. 136/2000. Apart from the Chairman the Commission also included two other people, K.B. Rabindran Nair, former Chief Secretary and Savankutty, former Chairman of Kerala Public Service Commission (KPSC). The Commission held 51 sittings, three sittings were held in Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut with public Organisations, two sitting with the Chief Justice of Kerala High Court and one sitting with the Chairman of KPSC. The Commission collected most of the data from KPSC and from 299 various government departments. They identified the eight OBC communities of the state, Ezhava, Muslim, Latin Catholic, Nadar, Converted Christian, Vishwakarma, Dheerava and other Backward Hindus. These communities constitute 66% of the total population and lack adequate representation in various service sectors.

¹⁸⁵ Basheer, T.P.M. (30th April 2018). “Reservation and the Left.” (Title translated from Malayalam).

Narendran Commission submitted a report with the recommendation of three lakhs per year as the income criteria.¹⁸⁶ The commission also said that the income of other family members, except father and mother, and income of the family from other sources like agriculture, business, or industry were not to be taken into account of consideration to set the creamy layer. The commission collected various representations from the backward classes and the forward caste Organisations. The forward castes demanded merit-based recruitment or economic reservation in which Muslims and Ezhavas should be excluded as they have adequate representation in the government and politics. The OBCs claimed reservation on a proportional basis in employment. Muslim Organisations demanded categorically for special recruitment as in the case of 1961, where the special recruitment was made for Muslims, Christians along with STs to fill the vacancies (NCR 2001).

The NCR highlighted that the Muslims of Kerala are the most backward community compared with the SCs and STs. According to the Commission, the employment rate of Muslims constitutes only 9.88% as against 25% of their total population, which means the shortage is -14.82%. More specifically, only 46,500 out of 4, 70,275 employees were Muslims in various government departments as on 01st August 2000. The report stated that this employment rate was lower than the quota reservation approved by the Kerala Public Service Commission. The commission proved that Muslims are one of the most underrepresented communities in employment with 7383 backlogs of employment owing to backwardness in education (NCR 2001).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Narendran Commission was in the context of the Mandal Commission Report in the 1980s, and subsequent Supreme Court constitutional bench verdict on 16th November 1992 in which the Creamy Layer of OBC was excluded from availing the benefits of reservation¹⁸⁶. Then the government of India appointed the Ram Nandan Prasad Commission on 16th March 1993 to determine the income limit of Backward Classes. The commission recommended that people with an annual income of one lakh are under the category of Creamy Layer. However, the NSS submitted a petition against the Act in the Supreme Court where the Court quashed the Act and appointed Justice Joseph to submit a new report to limit the creamy layer. The Commission submitted the report and suggested one and half lakh as the income limit of creamy layer which invited various protests from the OBC communities.

¹⁸⁷ The Commission categorized the shortage of posts according to the group-wise of employment. The shortage of employment in Group I (State government) was 3768, Group II (Public undertakings) 2649, Group III (Universities in Kerala) 97 and Group IV (Autonomous bodies and institutions) 869. It further pointed out that Group I categories, in which the percentage of IAS was 1.6%, IPS 2.16% and IFS 1.06%, are having a serious lack of representation in employment. Surprisingly the employment rate of Muslims was lesser than that of SCs and STs in Kerala. The employment rate of SCs in IAS was 15. 47%, IPS 3. 60%, IFS 15. 96% and STs IAS 3. 87%, IPS 1. 44%, and IFS 2.13%. However, the forward communities constituted

However, there was no serious discussion on the report for more than one and a half years from the mainstream parties and upper-caste Organisations until the Muslim League came up in support of the report. Muslim League MLA, Kutty Ahmad Kutty, opened up a resolution in Kerala by citing the importance of special recruitment to fill up the backlogs, on 14th February 2003.

The Narendran Commission proves that the assigned reserved quota to the Backward Castes in employment is much lesser than they are eligible. The commission found 1825 backlogs to be filled for backward caste communities. Though the commission asked the Public Service Commission for 30 year's employment list but PSC delivered only eleven years report. There is lobbying against the NCR, and they are trying not to implement the report. The special recruitments extend to the cooperative sector, aided schools and other institutions that receive funding from the government. I urge the house not to use this opportunity for your political gain. For us, it is a battle between life and death.¹⁸⁸

Ahmad Kutty concluded his speech by quoting Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "it is in your interest to be our masters forever, but it is not our interest to be slave of you forever."¹⁸⁹ Along with him, another member of the party, E.T. Muhammed Basheer, also demanded the immediate implementation of the NCR. They demanded the government to take immediate action on the issue and warned them about planning for a protest along with other backward classes. By supporting the resolution, E.T. Muhammed Basheer (Education Minister) stated that,

The government has not taken any decision on the NCR in the last one and half years. The report states a shortage of 18,000 employments for the concerned communities. The government is held responsible for taking necessary action to implement the reservation as mentioned in the election manifesto. The reservation is an effective measure to uplift the socially backward communities due to historical reasons. Everyone talks about social

39% employment as against their population of 24%, an excess of 15%. The Ezhava, the lower caste among Hindus, had 21% of employment as against their population of 20% in 2001 (NCR 2001).

¹⁸⁸ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly*. (2012). Vol.118, No. 08: 220-45.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*

justice, but when it comes to the pragmatic level, we often use a frozen attitude. However, it is the constitutional duty of a government to enforce the report at the earliest¹⁹⁰.

The minister of Industry, P.K. Kunjalikutty, stated that the

IUML has always considered the reservation issue as an ideological and fundamental one. The party will take a firm stand and is prepared for any sacrifice on an issue affecting the backward classes. Being in power, the IUML is committed to ensuring that all backward sections get what is legitimately due to them.¹⁹¹

The party understood the necessity of carrying the report for the benefit of the backward communities in which the Muslims are one of the principal beneficiaries. In 2005, Muslim Youth League conducted a Youth March from Kasargode to Trivandrum, demanding the enforcement of NCR to ensure the power and development of socially marginalised communities (Rasheed 2008: 520). The demand for implementing NCR was supported by different Muslim community Organisations and political parties.

In short, both LDF and UDF government failed to implement NCR due to the fear of losing vote bank from the Hindu upper-caste community. NSS always resisted the government plan to implement the NCR or any positive measures in this regard. Interestingly, the 'lower caste' community, SNDP, was also not in favour of special recruitment as it mostly benefitted the Muslims. Although they were in favour of NCR, they joined with NSS on many occasions for broader Hindu consolidation.

However, it is interesting to see that there was not much political chaos, at the state and national level when the government implemented the economic reservation. For example, in 2017, the left government of Kerala decided to implement the 10% economic reservation in the five Devaswam Boards through Devaswam recruitment.¹⁹² Despite several criticisms

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*

¹⁹¹ Menon, Mukundan C. (2004 August). "Narendran Panel on BC Job Quota: League locks Horns with Upper Castes."

¹⁹² The government had also decided to increase the OBC's reservation of 14% to 17%, and increased 6% of other backward communities instead of 3%, and 10% reservation for SCs and 12% to SCs. For more details, see, Chief Minister Kerala. (15th November 2017). "Devasom Boradil Munnokka Samudaayangalile Pavapettavarkku Samvaranam (Reservation in Devaswom Board for the Poor People of the forward communities)". An Online press release of Chief Minister of Kerala.

from the backward Hindu communities, the government went on with the economic reservation policy for the upper castes. Muslim League accused CPI (M) and BJP of their favouritism to the economic reservation.¹⁹³ As a majoritarian Hindu nation, it is easy to implement any policies for the benefit majority community; on the other hand, it is a difficult task for the minorities to get their constitutionally privileged rights.

In the recent past, the BJP-led central government has passed a bill in the parliament to grant 10% reservation for the economically weaker sections among the forward caste communities. All the political parties supported the legislation except Muslim League and *All India Majlis- e- Ittehadul Muslimeen* (AIMIM). Muslim League member, E.T. Muhammed Basheer, argued that the idea of the reservation is not a poverty alleviation program and the very idea of reservation in the social upliftment of the backward caste communities. He further added that the economic reservation is against the spirit of the Indian constitution.¹⁹⁴

It is also worth noting that the present communist government in Kerala was the first state to welcome the economic reservation implemented by the BJP led central government. This act of economic reservation shows how majoritarian sentiments of the country gained political momentum without any political disturbances in the country. Similarly, discussions on the Narendran Commission Report in Kerala were reduced as a mere Muslim issue and was treated as a sign of Muslim political appeasement. Hence, the full-fledged implementation of the Report is still a crucial task as it is being defined in communal terms. Muslim League has received wider criticism within the community due to their lag in fulfilling the commission's recommendation. In general, one can see that community politics has flourished in Kerala where each community competes for resources and positions. However, as in the case of national politics, the impact of majoritarianism has been evident in the political structure of the state right from its beginning, where the Muslim political assertion is considered communal.

¹⁹³Chandrika. (29th January 2018) "There is no Compromise in Reservation: Kunjalikutty." (Title Translated from Malayalam).

¹⁹⁴ Malayala Manorama. (8th January 2019). "Lok Sabha passes bill to give 10% quota for poor in general Category." Also see, The Hindu. (8th January 2019). "Muslim Groups Oppose New Quota Policy."

Section II

6.2 The Role of the Muslim League in Indian Parliament

It is important to note that Indian Muslims are under-represented in the political structures of the country than any other community. Rather than giving adequate representation, the mainstream political parties operate their politics by invoking the sentiments of religious minorities in the post-independence period where the representation of Muslims often come as tokenism. One of the primary reasons for the situation is the absence of a strong national political party among the community. Further, Muslims rally behind different political parties that belong to all major political lineages- the left, centre and right, and express their political opinions through various platforms. The role of regional community/communitarian parties are limited, and it often restricts itself to certain pockets. The mere suspicion about Muslim political identity, by branding them as ‘communal parties’ or ‘anti-national,’ hinder their political possibilities (Hassan 1990, 1998; Sikand 2007). Hence, it is difficult for Muslim political parties to survive with distinct identities in post-partition India. However, the case of Muslim League in Kerala is different from the above political situation of the country.

Muslim League has been engaging and highlighting the grievances of Muslims since the party’s formation. The visible presence of the party in the Constituent Assembly, and subsequently in Indian parliament shows the representative nature of IUML in the processes of law-making. To understand the specificities, this section is further divided into three. The first section, “The Muslim League and the Muslim Personal Law,” discusses the engagement of IUML on the issue of Muslim Personal Law and Uniform Civil Code, and how the party presented the community concern to the law-making bodies to protect their religious and constitutional rights. The second section, “The Demolition of Babri Masjid and the Question of Secularism,” focuses on the Muslim League’s interventions on the issues of Babri Masjid and the subsequent events that happened throughout the country. The third section, “The Muslim League and Anti-Terrorism Laws—TADA, POTA and UAPA,” deliberates on the nature of terror laws in the country such as Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which mostly target Muslims and other marginalised sections

of the society. How the IUML intervenes on these issues as a Muslim political party is a major concern in this part.

6.2 (1) *The Muslim League and the Muslim Personal Law*

In India, Muslim Personal Law (MPL) is based on the *Shariat* Application Act of 1937, which was introduced by the British government to protect the application of Islamic laws in personal legal relationships. The main idea of the act was to abolish the customary practices followed by Muslim communities of the country. The *sharia* guides the Muslim community in both religious and political matters based on the sacred texts *Quran* and *Hadith*. MPL deals with “marriage, succession, inheritance and charities among Muslims” without state interference. These laws do not apply to Muslims who married under the Special Marriage Act of 1954 (Larson 2001; Patel 2009; Agnes 2001; Narain 2008).

Issues related to Muslim Personal Laws and the Uniform Civil Code has played a major role in shaping the political identity of Muslims in post-independent India. Muslim League leader, Muhammed Ismail, argued for the protection of MPL during the time of the drafting of the constitution. He pointed out that, religious faith is more critical for a Muslim, and is guaranteed by the Indian constitution in article 117. According to him,

Personal Law is part of the religion and a section of people which professes this law... it concerns a particular community which is following a particular set of personal laws, and there is no question of compelling other people to follow that law. It is the question of the freedom of the minority or the majority of people to follow their law.¹⁹⁵

In another instance, Muhammed Ismail argued that *sharia* is laid down by the *Quran*, the Word of God. Muslims have no choice in the matter of whether one should follow it or not and that the secular constitution should not compel the people to give up their faith, as it is a fundamental matter connected with religion.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Muhammed Ismail. (1st December 1948). “Constituent Assembly of India Debates.”(Proceeding). Part. 1 Vol. VII, pp 1-19.

¹⁹⁶ Muhammed Ismail. (7th August 1952). “Discussion on Special Marriage Bill 1952,” (Parliamentary Debate: Rajya Sabha). Pp, 3294.

The Muslim League's criticism was evident both in the ground of their religious faith as well as in the constitutional ground. The party perceive that the protection of *sharia* is bounded with the party as it represents the Muslims of the country. Muslim League member, Banatwala, submitted a Non- Official Constitution Amendment Bill on 25th March 1985, and the bill sought to delete the UCC which come under article 44 of the Indian Constitution. In a speech in Lok Sabha, he stated that the "Muslim Personal Law has an Islamic injunction that has religious obligations as far as Muslims are concerned." He then adds that "secularism and democracy presuppose religious freedom, freedom in matters which concern the sanctity of religion." To force a community "do away with all these is not the democratic and secular way. It is an attempt at the creation of a Fascist Raj."¹⁹⁷

The issue of MPL and the UCC got further intensified after the Supreme Court judgment on the Shah Bano case on 23rd April 1985,¹⁹⁸ which then complicated the Muslim religious and political question in the country. The judgment ensured that if there is a conflict between the MPL and the section 125 and 127 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), MPL stand abrogated or cancelled and the CrPC will prevail. It triggered nation-wide political unrest not only among the Muslims but also the individuals and groups who support the Supreme Court's claims, including the Hindutva forces. Muslim leaders argued that 125 of CrPC applied to Muslims amounted to a direct contravention of *sharia* (Hasan 1989; Agnes 2001; Patel 2009).

As a religion-based political issue, the Muslim socio-political Organisations viewed the Supreme Court verdict as an incursion on *sharia* law. All India Muslim Personal Law

¹⁹⁷ These are two compiled speeches of Banatwala in Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha, on 29th March 1985 and 19th July 2002. For more details on his speeches on the issues of MPL please see the book *Selected Parliamentary Speeches of G.M. Banatwalla* (pp 12-22).

¹⁹⁸ In 1978, Shah Bano, an elderly Muslim woman, mother of five, fielded a petition in the court of judicial magistrate against her husband Mohammed Ahmad Khan for the maintenance as she was divorced through triple talaq after the 43 years of marriage. Initially the local Court directed Ahmad Khan to pay rupees 25 in a month for her maintenance, and Shah Bano files another suit in Madhya Pradesh High Court for a revised maintenance and the Court sanctioned the plea with a sum of rupees 179.20. As against the judgement, Ahmad Khan argued in the Supreme Court that MPL does not oblige to pay any ransom amount to the divorced wife other than the short period of three months. However, the Court viewed that the divorced wife was not in a condition to maintain herself, and Supreme Court dismissed his plea and directed to pay the maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. The judgement was followed by a severe political battle against the government from the Muslims, as it was against the *Sharia* law.

Board (AIMPLB) called for a joint protest in which all the major Muslim Organisations attended, and they demanded statutory protection for the MPL related to the maintenance. They viewed the reference in the judgment to the desirability of evolving a UCC, which questioned the suitability of MPL. AIMPLB submitted a report to the SC and argued that the MPL allowed a reasonable quantum of maintenance, though the period was limited to three months, called *iddat*. The Muslim political parties such as IUML and AIMIM viewed the SC verdict against the spirit of the constitution of the country and organized a crusade against what they termed as interference in the MPL (Hasan 1989; Jain 2007).

Rather than approaching the issue as a mere divorce and maintenance matter, IUML perceived it as a question of Muslim existence in a secular society. In April 1985, parliament member, Banatwala, presented a private bill in Lok Sabha to safeguard the continuance of the regime of personal law (Mody 1987; Hasan Zoya 1989; Jain 2007; Ghosh 2018). The party insisted in the parliament to overrule the SC verdict, which started a fiery debate in the house. Banatwala argued in the parliament on 10th May 1985 that,

Under Islamic law, the husband is bound to maintain a divorced wife only during the period of *iddat*, which is nearly three months, and not thereafter... Section 125 of the CrPC provides that in the unfortunate event of a divorce, the ex-husband shall be responsible for providing maintenance to the divorced lady till she remarried or till her death... The recent judgment is in flagrant violation of the Muslim Personal Law... I must make it extremely clear that no Muslim can ever subscribe to such gross violation of the *shariat*.¹⁹⁹

Banatwala's raised criticism on the SC judgment by highlighting the misinterpretation of the *Quran* by the Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud. Chief Justice observed that the *Quran* itself provides maintenance to divorcee and that maintenance can be extended until the period of remarriage. Against these remarks, Banatwala argued that Islam prescribes the maintenance to the divorcee only up to three months. The Muslim League affirmed that 'the Divine law is unchallengeable' (Noorani 2003), hence the section of 125 CrPC to be amended to exclude Muslims from the law. Another member, Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait,

¹⁹⁹ *Selected Parliamentary Speeches of G.M. Banatwalla* (pp, 12-22).

argued that no Muslim will ever tolerate any interference in the *shariat* or Personal Law (Ghosh 2018; Narain 2008).

On 21st December 1985, a seventeen-member delegation by AIMPLB under the chairmanship of Syed Abu Hasan Ali Nadvi, a leading Muslim scholar, and Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait met the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Congress leaders to express their concern over the issue. They demanded to amend section 125 of CrPC to nullify the SC judgment (Noorani 2003; Ghosh 2007). Rajiv Gandhi was left with no other option than to reverse the bill in favour of the popular Muslim sentiments. Z.R. Ansari, the union minister, delivered a three-hour speech criticizing the SC judgement as “prejudiced, discriminatory and full of contradictions.”²⁰⁰ Ansari then requested Banatwala to withdraw his private bill to introduce the official bill to find out a better solution to maintain the Muslim sentiments. At the same time, Congress Muslim leader, Arif Mohammad Khan, Minister of State for Home Affairs, raised the banner of revolt against the private bill, which seeks exemption to Muslims from the provision of 125 of CrPC (Modi 1987). Khan resigned later when the bill was passed (Hasan 1989).

On 9th May 1986, after an intense debate in both houses of the parliament, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce Bill)²⁰¹ was introduced by the Rajiv Gandhi to amend the 125 CrPC to restore the MPL. The bill guaranteed a divorced woman shall be permitted to a reasonable and fair provision of maintenance paid to her within the *iddat*

²⁰⁰ Z.R. Ansari. (20th August 1985). “Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill”. Parliament Debate: 08th Lok Sabha. Vol. XII, No: 24 pp 419-29.

²⁰¹ In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, (a) ‘divorced woman’ means a Muslim woman who was married according to Muslim law, and has been divorced by, or has obtained divorce from, her husband in accordance with Muslim law; (b) ‘*Iddat* period’ means, in the case of a divorced woman, which means (i) three menstrual courses after the date of divorce, if she is , subject to menstruation; (ii) three lunar months after her divorce, if she is not subject to menstruation; and (iii) if she is enceinte at the time of her divorce, the period between the divorce and the delivery of her child or the termination of her pregnancy, whichever is earlier; (c) ‘Magistrate’ means a magistrate of the First Class exercising jurisdiction under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 in the area 2,f 1974 where the divorced woman resides; (d) ‘prescribed’ means prescribed by rule made under this Act. Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, a divorced woman shall be entitled to- (a) a reasonable, and fair provision and maintenance to be made and paid to her within the *Iddat* period by her former husband; (b) where she herself maintains the children born to her before or after her divorce, a reasonable and fair provision and maintenance to be made and paid by her former husband for a period of two years from the respective dates of birth of such children; (c) an amount equal to the sum of *Mahr* or dower agreed to be paid to her at the time of her marriage or at any time thereafter according to Muslim law; and (d) all the properties given to her before or at the time of marriage or after her marriage by her relatives or friends or the husband or any relatives of the husband or his friends. (For details see the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Divorce Bill, 1986)

period by her former husband.²⁰² The bill was aimed at doing away with the relevant CrPC article and providing remedies for divorced Muslim women according to the MPL. Any controversy on its implementation could be taken to court but not the question of maintenance *per se* (Ghosh 2018). It is also applicable to all such divorced Muslim woman who was married according to MPL or obtained a divorce from her husband under the provision of the same. The bill legitimized the argument of AIMPLB and IUML that a woman's natal family should preserve her after the divorce and not the husband as she has ceased to be his wife. It further upheld that the successors of her property would be accountable for her maintenance following the property to be inherited, without fixing the amount of property to be inherited by the divorced woman. Where a divorced woman has no relatives or any one of them does not have enough means to pay the maintenance, and it was assigned to the State Wakf Board (Jain 2007).

The act was enacted amidst protests from women's rights groups, Muslim intelligentsia, and progressive social Organisations, who viewed these sections with suspicion. To them, the act symbolizes the loss of secular credentials in public policy and the communal tendencies of the ruling Congress government. On the other, the supporters viewed the enactment of the act as the preservation of secular values of the country or the protection of the constitutional rights of the Muslim minority (Hasan 1989; Agnes 2001; Modi 1987).

After three-decades of debates over the issues, BJP led NDA Government introduced a new Bill in the parliament, on 28th December 2017, Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) by Ravi Sankar Prasad (Minister of Law and Justice) with the purported purpose to protect the rights of married Muslim women and to prohibit divorce by pronouncing *talaq*.²⁰³ The bill emphasised that the triple *talaq* is a criminal offence. According to the 2011 Census data, the divorce rate among the Muslims was just 0.56% as against the 0.76 among the Hindus (Census 2011). However, the BJP government tried to enforce the bill only on the Muslim community. The opposition alleged that the bill indented to target the Muslim husband to put them behind the bar. It sparked a wide range

²⁰² The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. (Act No: 25 of 1986). The Act came into existence on 19th May 1986.

²⁰³ The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by Ravi Sankar Prasad (Ministry of Law and Justice) on 28th December 2017.

of criticisms in the house. IUML leader, E.T. Mohammed Basheer from Ponnani constituency, opposed the bill along with certain opposition members of the house.²⁰⁴

This bill is a violation of Article 25 of the Constitution... Muslims of India with respect to marriage, succession, inheritance, and charities are governed under Muslim Personal Law. Muslim Personal Law has the protection of the fundamental rights as guaranteed in article 25 of the constitution. This is an encroachment of the Personal Law. Any legislation can be made by way of a Constitution Amendment Bill. Besides this, the proposed legislation contradicts Muslim Women (Protection of Rights upon Divorce) Act, 1986. This bill is unwanted and politically motivated. The matter of *talaq* has been converted into a criminal offence.²⁰⁵

The party-state committee secretary and the Member of Parliament P.K. Kunjalikutty alleged that there were many “lacunae” and contradiction in the bill, and this bill resulting in the incarceration of Muslim men. He added that he would oppose the bill with the help of secular-minded parties.²⁰⁶ IUML has vehemently opposed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2018 as well. The party argued that the bill is unconstitutional, and the legislation in the name of protecting Muslim women’s rights is an attempt to abolish the MPL and to establish the UCC.²⁰⁷

Two significant reasons that prompted the Muslim League to bring issues in the parliament as it was related to religion and faith of the community. As a community political party, the Muslim League is accountable to the broader Muslim public of the country. And it is the moral and political responsibility of the Muslim League to protect the religious faith of the community as guaranteed by the constitution. On the other hand, this has helped the

²⁰⁴ AIMIM member, Asaduddin Owaisi, Biju Janatha Dal member, Bahartruhari Mehtab from Cuttack and ADMK member, Anwar Rajha from Ramanathapuram, and many other MPs from different opposition parties. Asaduddin Owaisi argued that the parliament lacks legislative competence as the bill violates the Fundamental Rights and lacks essential legal coherence and is inconsistent with the legal framework. However, despite the objections from the opposition parties, the Bill was passed by Lok Sabha with a comfortable majority which made the triple talaq a criminal offence, with the jail term of up to three years. For details, The Hindu. (28th December 2017). “Lok Sabha Passes *Triple Talaq* Bill.”

²⁰⁵ E.T. Muhammed Basheer. (28th December 2017). “The Introduction of Muslim Women (Protection of Right on Marriage) Bill, 2017.” 16th Lok Sabha. Vol. XXVII, No: 08, pp 901-903

²⁰⁶ The Hindu. (27th December 2018). “Muslim Bodies to Move Supreme Court if Rajya Sabha Passes triple Talaq Bill.”

²⁰⁷ The Hindu. (28th December 2017).

party in uniting the different sections of the community under a political platform despite their sectarian religious differences, which one way or the other benefits the politics of the Muslim League.

6.2 (2) The Demolition of Babri Masjid and the Question of Secularism

Babri Masjid was a historical Masjid demolished by Hindutva forces, on 06th December 1992. The demolition posed a serious question on the existence of Muslims in a Hindu majority state. While the community responded in different ways to Babri demolition, the response of IUML was measured in its style and tone. The party addressed the issue with ‘moderate’ political language both inside and outside legislatures. Varshney observes that the Muslim League restrained communal tensions in the state instead of inflaming issues for the electoral gain (Varshney 2002). Instead of seeing the demolition of Masjid as a Hindutva attack on Muslims, the IUML treated the issue as an attack on the democratic and secular credentials of the nation.

Babri Masjid is one of the major politically and communally sensitive issues post-colonial India witnessed. The issue became more complicated in the 1980s during the regime of Rajiv Gandhi during which the Hindutva groups strengthened their political campaign to ‘liberate the birthplace of Lord Rama’ as a part of larger Hindu consolidation (Van der veer 1994). In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi himself intensified the issue by starting his election campaign from Ayodhya by promising ‘Ram Rajya’ to attract Hindu voters (Hasan 2012; Bose 2018). The Mandir- Masjid controversy in Ayodhya became a symbolic focus of Hindu and Muslim identities within the country. For Muslims and secular Hindus, the Masjid reflected India’s religious diversity and its cosmopolitan character. For Hindu nationalists, it symbolized unwarranted deference to minority interests (William 2015). Hindu nationalists demanded the state to protect the political will of its Hindus, and its choice of actions gave Muslims a justified feeling of being an endangered minority (Van der veer 1994). By demolishing the Masjid, the Hindutva groups have struck the cosmopolitan identity of the country, and consciously using the issue to redefine the nation in explicitly Hindu terms (William 2015).

Muslim League has raised the Babri Masjid issue in parliament many times before and after the demolition. During the burning period of Masjid in the early 1990s, the party was in coalition with Narasimha Rao led Congress government. However, this relation never hindered the party from criticizing the government. The leaders of the party often reminded the government to solve the Masjid issue for communal peace and harmony of the country. Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait from Ponnani constituency addressed the issue in Lok Sabha for an amicable solution.

Nobody is against the construction of the temple. What we are against is that the temple should not be constructed demolishing the mosque. It is against the religious sentiments and the idea of secularism... We should respect the sentiments of all the communities; the sanctity of the Masjid should be respected; secularism should be respected; the Masjid should remain there, and the temple can be constructed without demolishing the mosque... We want a peaceful settlement. We want communal harmony. We want the communalism to be checked.²⁰⁸

When All India Babri Masjid Action Council decided to Boycott the Republic Day celebration of the country, i.e., on 26th January 1987, the IUML rejected the proposal considering national interests. The moderate political language of the party from both inside and outside the legislators proved the political commitment of the party for nation-building. After the two weeks of Masjid demolition, E. Ahamed, from Manjeri constituency, expressed the grave concern of the party on the issue. To him, demolition of Masjid was an assault on the secular fabric of this country, and failure of defeating the fascist forces would mean the nation is meeting the very fate of Babri Masjid all over the country. He urged Indians to isolate the fascist forces from the mainstream to protect the unity and integrity of the country.²⁰⁹ The party reminded the nation about the potential danger of fascist forces and called for an open joint venture from all the religious group against them.

²⁰⁸ Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait. (15th July 1991). "Motion of Confidence in the Council of Ministers." 10th Lok Sabha. Vol. 01, No: 05, pp 205-209.

²⁰⁹ E. Ahmad. (21st December 1992). "No Confidence Motion Moved by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee." 10th Lok Sabha. Vol. XVII, No: 16, pp 551-558.

Another influential leader of IUML, Sulaiman Sait (then national president), came up with a staunch criticism against party's stand towards Congress. According to Sait, Congress government failed to protect the Masjid; hence, they are responsible for the demolition. However, Sait was very sensible and truthful in his politics; he initially rejected the first no-confidence motion to remove the Congress government moved by Atal Bihari Vajpayee of BJP on 17th December 1992, just eleven days after the demolition of Babri Masjid. Sulaiman Sait was vigilant about the danger of Hindutva forces and hence extended the support to Congress to uphold the secular spirit of the nation.

However, there was an internal crisis among the top leadership level of the party. Sulaiman Sait insisted on the state leadership of the Kerala Muslim League to withdraw the support to Congress government to show the party's dissent over the issue. Failing to convince the party, however, Sulaiman Sait later voted for No-confidence motion moved by CPI-M member Ajoy Mukhopadhyaya, on 26th July 1993, against Congress. Among the two parliamentarians of the party, E. Ahamed voted against the no-confidence motion. By supporting the No-confidence motion, Sait delivered a long persuasive speech that targets both Hindutva forces and the Congress.

I must tell you that 6th December was the darkest day in the thousand years of history of our country...Who is responsible for this? It is the Congress Government is responsible for this. I am sure, the BJP and the entire Sangh Parivar could not have been able to demolish the Masjid had there not been a collaboration with the Central Government headed by Shri Narasimha Rao... until that black day, and the Musalman had some confidence on this government... They expected that they will have some security in this country, but with the demolition of the Mosque, the entire confidence had been lost... Until 6th December 1992, I believed that Congress was a secular party... But the Congress has lost all the credentials... Because the Prime Minister was responsible for the destruction of the mosque... This was done against all the provisions of the secular constitution... All these are factors which shake our confidence in the government.²¹⁰ 587

²¹⁰ Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait. (27th July 1993). "Motion of Confidence in the Council of Ministers." pp.587-58. Parliament Debate: Lok Sabha Debate.

Sulaiman Sait exposed the government's inability to ensure the security for the minority communities of the country. He urged the Congress government to replace Narasimha Rao for not fulfilling the party's manifesto, which ensured the protection of Masjid. He further accused Rao of acting on behalf of the BJP manifesto²¹¹. However, as an alliance partner of Congress, the Muslim League never endorsed Sait's stand against the Congress government, which finally ended up in his resignation from the party and parliamentary leadership in 1994. Sait accused that some leaders of the party were power-hungry for not seeing the Babri Masjid issue more important to Muslim sentiments. According to him, it is the fight between the power and political ideologies of the party.²¹² The resignation of the national president created political difficulties in the party. Sait then formed a political party, called Indian National League. However, except for a tiny group, the majority of people, both leaders and cadres, of the party stood with Panakkad Muhammedali Thangal, the state president. Muslim League feared that the immediate withdrawal from the government would create more problems for minorities in such a turbulent situation.

The party, however, continued their struggle in the parliament on the Babri Masjid. M.P. Abdul Samad Samadani, a member of Rajya Sabha, stated that "the demolition of Babri Masjid, was not a majority or minority issue. That was related to our great tradition — protection of our democratic principles and secular values... It was, also, related to the freedom of religious worship."²¹³ Another member of Lok Sabha, G.M. Banatwalla, criticised the strategic stand of the various governments on the Babri Masjid issue. "Babri Masjid is a standing symbol of defiance of Rule of Law, a mockery of the constitution and the derogation of the judiciary. Ayodhya represents the shattering of all the values which a civilised nation stands by." He demanded the rebuilding of Masjid not only for Muslims in India but for the secular-minded people of the country.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait. (27th July 1993).

²¹² Madhyamam. (11th August 1993). "Muslims will Support me." (Title translated from Malayalam).

²¹³ M.P.Abdul. Samad Samadani (06th December 1999). "Matters Raised with Permission: Demand for expeditious completion of the work of the trial Court and the Commission of Inquiry in regard to Babri Masjid Demolition." Rajya Sabha

²¹⁴ Banatwalla. (03rd December 2001). "Discussion under Rule 193: Ayodhya Issue." (Parliament Debate, Lok Sabha). Thirteenth Series, Vol. XX, No: 10, pp 401.

Since independence, the moderate political language has helped the party to gain a unique space in the identity politics of the country, which is appreciated even by their political rivals. The party never addressed the Hindutva groups emotionally but at the same time criticised Congress politically about its inability to deal with the issue. On the other, the newly formed Muslim political parties after Babri Masjid demolition severely criticised the party and accused them of being power mongers. However, this criticism never enforced the party to take any radical position to deal with the issues. They perceive the issue politically and constitutionally to protect minority rights in a majoritarian country to ensure political rights. However, the recent judgment of the Supreme Court in 2020 which intended to settle the dispute by handing over the disputed land to the Hindu community and thus to satisfy the majoritarian sentiments, shows the crisis of Indian secularism.

6.2 (3) *Muslim League and Anti-Terrorism Laws—TADA, POTA and UAPA*

Muslim League is one of the major political parties in India which has always raised its voice against ‘draconian’ anti-terrorism laws. On several occasions, the party has categorically demanded the government to withdraw such laws that curb the democratic rights of citizens. The anti-terrorism laws in India such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967 and later amended many times in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2019, Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act 1985, (TADA), Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act 2002 (POTA), etc. are intended to protect the sovereignty and integrity from any unlawful or terrorist activities against the country. However, these laws have been conditioned to target the Muslims and other marginalised communities by considering them as ‘dangerous people.’ The use of these laws is often politically and communally motivated. How TADA has been implemented shows how the ‘prevention of terrorist and disruptive activities’ became an instrument to contain and repress identity struggles, particularly the Muslims and Sikhs (Sing 2007). The main criticism is that these draconian laws hamper the constitutional rights of citizens in all possible manner.

(a). Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA)

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act²¹⁵ came into existence in May 1987, which was designed to deal with terrorist activities of the country. Although the enactment was initially for two years, it regularly got extended every two years. The last extension took place in 1993. In early 1995, the Chairperson of the National Human Right Commission (NHRC), Justice Ranganath Mishra, appealed to the parliamentarians not to renew it as the law is “draconian in effect and character” and “incompatible with our cultural traditions, legal history and treaty obligations.”²¹⁶ Section 4 (2) include as disruptive “any action taken, whether by act or by speech or through any other media or in any manner whatsoever” (Singh 2007: 51-2) which disrupts or intended to disrupt, directly or indirectly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India; “the Act itself has features which defied ‘due processes,’ giving scope for gross violation of human rights” (ibid: 52). Under this act, most movements of ethnic self-determination in their various manifestations were subsumed under the generic label ‘terrorist’ and ‘disruptive’ (ibid).

The government itself clarifies in the law-making bodies that how this law targets Muslims, Sikhs and other underprivileged sections in the society.²¹⁷ IUML has been in the forefront to question the misuse of TADA against the Muslims and other marginal communities. G. M. Banatwalla highlighted its abuse and lawlessness and argued that there are political motives behind the cases to target some particular sections of society. He strongly argued

²¹⁵ In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “*abet*”, with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions, includes, (1) “the communication or association with any person or class of persons who is engaged in assisting in any manner terrorists or disruptionists,” (2) “the passing on, or publication of, without any lawful authority, and information likely to assist the terrorists or disruptionists, and the passing on, or publication of, or distribution of, any document or matter obtained from terrorists or disruptionists,” (3) “the rendering of any assistance, whether financial or otherwise, the terrorists or disruptionists” (Gazette of India, (Extra.), Part II, Section 1, pp. 1 to 15, dated 3rd September, 1987). The idea behind the implementation of TADA was mainly to dismantle Khalistan Movement in Punjab, however it was gradually extended all over the country. For more details see *Lawless Road: A Report on TADA 1985- 1993*, published by People’s Union for Democratic Rights.

²¹⁶ National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi, India. Annual Report 1994–95.

²¹⁷ According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, almost two thousand peoples continued to be imprisoned under TADA at the end of 1996. In Punjab, thousands of Sikhs were rounded up, detained, incarcerated for years. On the other, a large number of those arrested in Delhi and UP were also Sikhs. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, the majority of those arrested were Muslims. “Home Minister, Digvijay Singh, reported in Rajasthan Legislative Assembly that of the 228 arrested, 101 were Muslims, 96 Sikhs, and 3 Hindus. No charges were established in 178 cases. In July 1993, the government withdrew cases against 72 persons. By 1993, Gujarat had climbed ahead of Punjab (14,457) in the number of TADA detainees with 3452 more TADA arrests adding to its 1992 total of 14,094” (Singh 2007: 53)

against the imprisonment and torture of citizens even after the repealing of TADA in 1995. To stop the implementation of TADA, Banatwalla moved a private Bill in the parliament to take immediate action on the abolished law. He presented his bill by saying TADA is dead, long live TADA, or in other words, the law is dead, but the lawsuit continues (Banatwalla 2007: 119). He further stated in parliament that from 1985 to 1994, almost 67,000 people were detained in 8000 cases in which only 725 people could be convicted, i.e., 0.81 per cent. The government also dropped 23,862 cases, which indicate the negligence and the draconian nature of TADA. He criticized that the government used this act against innocent people to appease the majoritarian concern; hence it is termed as the obnoxious character (ibid).

It is said that thousands of people were arbitrarily arrested, detained, and tortured under the TADA. The act was used as a weapon to crash down on political opponents and human rights defenders. In Gujarat, TADA was applied in cases associated with communal violence, in which most of the arrested were Muslims. In Bombay, in the large-scale organized violence against Muslims and linguistic minorities, TADA was not invoked against the perpetrators. Whereas the use of TADA against ethnic minorities has almost inextricably attached the epithets “extremists”, “terrorist” and “anti-national” onto them, turning them into objects of suspicion. It was also widely misused against the tribals of the North-Eastern states (Singh 2007: 53).

Following widespread allegations on the misapplication has received harsh criticism from national and international human rights Organisations, including United Nations Human Rights Commission, the Law Commission of India, NHRC, lawyers and other government officials themselves forced the government to rethink the TADA Act²¹⁸. Though the Narasimha Rao led Congress government froze the act on 23rd May 1995, the cases initiated while it was in force continue to hold legal validity.

²¹⁸ Refugee Review Tribunal Australia (August 2006)

(b). Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).

Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was another draconian law introduced by the BJP led NDA government after the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament on 13th December 2001.²¹⁹ The Indian government had earlier introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) on 24th October 2001 with three years' validity. The prevention of Terrorism Act received the consent of the president on 28th March 2002. The passage of POTA by the Home Minister of the country, L.K. Advani was in an extraordinary joint session of parliament on 26th May, after the Rajya Sabha rejected the act. The enactment of the law, which bypassed all the standard procedures of referral to a select committee of parliament, was termed undemocratic and an act of subversion of federalism from various quarters. The POTA is more infamous than TADA for its abuse and misuse by the authorities (Singh 2004).

The highlight of POTA is that it became draconian by playing the politics of communalism. The law paved an easy way to brand the Muslims as 'terrorists' and Adivasis as 'Maoists.' The way POTA was used in Gujarat shows how it became the legal and ideological instrument with which the forces of Hindutva rendered and legitimized the violence perpetrated on them with the complicity of state agencies in the wake of Gujarat Riots.²²⁰

In a parliament discussion on the repealing of POTA, the Congress leader Madhusudan Mistry points that 99.9 per cent of the POTA accused in Gujarat were Muslims. According to him, "if a person is found to be a Muslim, they would arrest him under POTA and brand him as an ISI agent or as an agent of Pakistan. This is the mindset of the Government in Gujarat and of the police force, which is working under it."²²¹ A large number of Muslims

²¹⁹ The Act was a continuation of the fight against the international terrorism sponsored by the US and other Western states to improve international cooperation against terrorism. The U.N. Security Council on 28th September 2001 unanimously passed an anti-terrorism resolution aimed to suppress the financial strength of the terrorist Organisations and to improve international cooperation (Singh 2004).

²²⁰ Gujarat Riot occurred in 2002 due to the burning of the coach was followed immediately by a protracted communal violence against Muslims in the state, in which over 2,000 persons, predominantly Muslims lost their lives and over 1,50,000 were rendered homeless and destitute. However, six charge sheets were filed, in relation with the burning of a train, under POTA that brought 131 accused, all of whom were from Muslim community. It is also important to note that it was the victimized Muslims who were charged under POTA of and not the perpetrators of violence (for more details see Sing 2004).

²²¹ Madhusudan Mistry. (06th December 2004). "Combined Discussion on Statutory Resolution Regarding Disapproval."

were booked under POTA in relation to the Mumbai blast case though the pogrom happened against the Muslims, including a minor Muslim girl (Sing 2004).

In relation to the terrorist attack on the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, on 24th September 2002, the Supreme Court acquitted all the six Muslims on 16th May 2014 who was charged with a death sentence and life imprisonment by the Special POTA Court. The court observed that,

Before parting with the judgment, we intend to express our anguish about the incompetence with which the investigating agencies investigated the case of such a grievous nature, involving the integrity and security of the nation. Instead of booking the real culprits responsible for taking so many precious lives, the police caught innocent people and imposed the grievous charges against them, which resulted in their conviction and subsequent sentencing.²²²

As was the case with TADA, the Muslim League was in the forefront to oppose POTA. Banatwalla pointed out the abuse and misuse of this law against Muslims and other weaker sections of the society. According to him, the proposed law is draconian, fascist and undemocratic in nature or a lawless law. And it would result in all kinds of harassment of innocent people adding to the miseries of the citizens.²²³ Banatwalla made a comparison of terrorism law in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) with Indian law. The provision for detention under the UK law is hardly 48 hours, which, with the approval of the Secretary of State, can be extended up to five days. But in the case of Indian law, the period of detention without showing any charge and without any trial is 90 days and can be extended up to 180 days. In the USA, the guarantees of the due process of law, the presumption of innocence, the right of the dependent on opening, speedy trial, the right of the individual to confront the witnesses are neither suspended nor circumscribed.²²⁴

²²² For more details see the judgement of Supreme Court on Adambhai Sulemanbhai Ajmeri vs the State of Gujarat. Criminal appeal No 45 of 2011.

²²³ Banatwalla, Gulam M. (18 March 2002). "Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2002." Parliament Debate: 13th Lok Sabha. Vol. XXIII, No: 13, pp 418, 541-43.

²²⁴ *ibid*

In another instance, E. Ahamed vehemently opposed the proposed POTA. He argued that the BJP government uses the POTA to measure the nationalism of religious minorities. He sharpened his criticism against the Hindutva agenda of branding Muslims as anti-national.

Indian Union Muslim League has already made it abundantly clear that we will oppose it tooth and nail... If this house passes this piece of legislation, I have absolutely no doubt to say that this will be the darkest day in the democratic history of this country... This is a draconian law. This has been aimed against political enemies. This has been aimed against the religious minorities... the POTA as a barometer to measure the nationalism of an individual, one cannot accept it. I have my nationalism; I have my commitment to this country. Who is this government to measure it and using this POTA as a barometer to say – “You are anti-national since you oppose this POTA, and you are national only if you will support this POTA?” Who are these people to take the monopoly of the nationalism and our commitment to the country? We cannot accept this.²²⁵

The POTA shows how extraordinary law becomes part of the specific practices of the rule of the state, congealing in the process the ‘us’ even as the ‘other’ persists as an indispensable constitutive element of a collective political identity. It is evident that ideological and ethnic—were sought to be subdued through the application of the Act (Singh 2007: 54). Due to the continuous complaints against the misuse and abuse of POTA, the Union Cabinet of the first Congress-led UPA government under Manmohan Singh repealed the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002 through the Prevention of Terrorism (Repeal) Act, 2004. To the UPA government, the determining logic of repealing the POTA was not because the law was inherently undemocratic, but it had been merely ‘grossly misused over the last two years’ (ibid: 304). While pledging to remove POTA, the Congress government ensured the possibilities of a strong law to curb the terrorist activities in the country. Hence, they amended the earlier Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967 by incorporating some of the provisions of POTA through the UAPA Act on 21st September 2004 (ibid).

²²⁵ E. Ahmad (26th March 2002). “Discussion on the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2002.” 13th Lok Sabha

(c). The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was initially passed during the regime of Indira Gandhi and later amended by various governments from time to time. The amendments took place in 2004, 2008 and 2012 by the Congress government, and it was later amended by BJP led NDA government in 2019. As in the case of earlier terror laws, this was also used as a political weapon against Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis. The vagueness of the definition of UAPA made it easy for various state governments to use it for their political mileage and crush the opposing voices. States like Gujarat and UP applied the provisions of UAPA to a whole range of activities and people, labelling them ‘anti-national’ and ‘terrorist’ (Sing 2004).

From the outset, as a coalition partner, the Muslim League marked their staunch criticism against the amendment of UAPA in 2004. The party argued that the law guarantees extra-constitutional power to the government and bureaucrats to do victimization according to the will and pleasure of their politics and communal agendas, which directly affects the Muslim resulting in them languishing in jail for years without any trials. E.T. Muhammed Basheer argued continuously in the parliament for immediate repealing of UAPA.

My demand is urgent repealing of UAPA. It is widely misused against the SCs, STs, Adivasi, and minorities. This law was enacted with high objectives to curb all the activities against the integrity and sovereignty of the nation. Unfortunately, this law has been misused in a highly condemnable manner. Thousands of youths are languishing in Indian jail without trial, and they are denied justice. This is a very burning issue as far as the nation is concerned... Hence I request you to the immediate withdrawal of UAPA.²²⁶

He also raised his grave concerns about UAPA even in the parliament of 2019. He stated that this bill is against the constitution and that it is tantamount to the curbing of the fundamental right which has been guaranteed by the country. The law has been used as an

²²⁶ E.T. Muhammed Basheer. (11th May 2015). “Special Mention: Need to Repeal Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.” 16th Lok Sabha. Vol. 05, No: 33, pp 28-29.

open license to keep the innocent youth from Muslim, Dalit, and Adivasi communities in jail for long years as accused. It is nothing but a human right violation (ibid).

E.T. Muhammed Basheer raised grave concern about the misuse of UAPA in the parliament in the context of Kerala. According to him, one Muslim religious scholar, Abdul Nazer Madani, and a young man, Zakariyya were charged under UAPA in 2008 and 2009 respectively and imprisoned in the Bangalore Parappana Agrahara Jail.²²⁷ The police failed to submit the charge sheet, and both of them are in prison for more than a decade. By citing these examples, he pointed out how this law acts draconian in nature, which targets Muslims and the underprivileged mostly.²²⁸

One of the most abusive nature of UAPA is that the accused can be kept in jail for an extended period, even without any trial. According to the National Crime Record Bureau, the police disposed 414 cases in 2016, 404 in 2015 and 276 in 2014, and at the same time, the number of pendency cases was 3548 (89.6%) in 2016, 3040 (88.2%) in 2015, 2549 (90.0%) in 2014. In 2016, the number of UAPA cases convicted in the court was 11; the court acquitted 22 cases.²²⁹ The number of pending trials in 2014 was 1,217 (97.4%) among the registered cases of that year. In the same year, the court convicted nine cases and disposed of 24 cases as there was no evidence (NCRB 2017: 204-16).

The Muslim League categorically argued that the government has to ensure justice for the innocent prisoners charged under UAPA. In 2008, 17 Muslim youth were arrested in Hubli,

²²⁷ Madani was arrested by Karnataka police arrested him for his alleged involvement in Bangalore IPL stadium blast case. His case has been pending in the last ten years despite the fact that he is physically challenged. Earlier Madani was arrested by the Tamil Nadu police in connection with Coimbatore bomb blast- which claimed the lives of fifty people, where he was imprisoned for around ten years without any trial, and finally was acquitted from all the charges due to the absence of evidence.

Zakaria Koniyyath, a 19-year native of Malappuram district on 5th February 2009, by accusing him of “providing technical services” for the Bangalore blast that happened in 2008. The police reported the arrest of Zakaria only after three days of his missing. Zakaria has completed a decade in prison along with Abdul Naser Madani. The two witnesses produced by the police later came out in public saying that the case was fabricated. He is waiting for the completion of the trial of the case without knowing what his role in it is. For more details see K.P Sasi, (4th February 2015) Zakaria's Story: Listen To The Sighs From Indian Jails!.

²²⁸ E.T. Muhammed Basheer (06th March 2013). “Discussion on Motion of Thanks on the President’s Address.” 15th Lok Sabha. Vol.XXXI, No: 09, pp 281-83.

E.T. Muhammed Basheer (26th February 2013). “Question Hour: Question Number 21: Acquittal in Terror Case.” 15th Lok Sabha. Vol.XXXI, No: 09, pp 19.

²²⁹ However, the number of the pending trial at the end of 2016 was 1455 (97.8%), and the year 2015 reported that 11 people were convicted under UAPA, whereas 65 cases were acquitted, and the pending cases were 1,253 (94.2), a bit lesser than previous year (NCRB 204-16).

Karnataka, under UAPA for allegedly planning a series of terror strikes across the state. Among those 17 arrested, four of them were Keralites. However, after seven years of imprisonment, all of them were acquitted without any charges. The Muslim League, E.T. Muhammed Basheer and K.P.A. Majeed (State secretaries of the party) demanded justice for the victims. They say that the accused has lost seven long years for an offence they did not commit. The government should give them compensation for that loss, and UAPA should be subjected to judicial review.²³⁰

In 2019 the BJP led NDA government further amended the UAPA with a more draconian nature. It allowed more power to the investigating officers to act according to their will and pleasure. The most dangerous provision in this amendment is that an individual can be designated as a terrorist if he acts against the will and desire of the government. In short, it curbs the democratic right of an individual to dissent against the government. The bill also empowers the Director-General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to approve seizure or attachment of property when the agency is investigating the case. The government passed the Bill in Rajya Sabha amidst protest from the opposition parties.²³¹

IUML vehemently opposed the new amendment by citing the bitter experiences from the past. The party opined that the act had been ruthlessly misused. The amendment intends to invest extrajudicial, extra-constitutional power in the hands of the government, and it is against the idea of cooperative federalism in the country. E.T Muhammed Basheer pointed out that this amendment also proves that this is more dangerous than TADA, POTA, and AFSPA. This will give an open general license to NIA to go to any stage and do the things according to their will and pleasure. In addition to the power vested with the government to designate an Organisation as a terrorist, this bill empowers the government to identify an individual as a terrorist on the same ground as specified in the parent act.²³²

One of the common points in all these terror laws is that the Muslims and the marginalised people are the primary victims. If the accused is from the Muslim community, he/she would

²³⁰ The Hindu. (3rd May 2015). "IUML: Repeal UAPA."

²³¹ The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill (02nd August 2019).

²³² E.T. Muhammed Basheer. (24th July 2019). "Legislative Business: Bill for Consideration and Passing: The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill 2019." 17th Lok Sabha. Vol. III, No: 28, pp 134-136.

be branded as a terrorist; if they are from Dalit or Adivasi communities, they will be labelled as Maoists. The consciousness of the society is habituated in such a way due to the conspiracy theories adopted by various governments and bureaucracy. On the other hand, if the accused is from the majority Hindu community, he/she will be treated only as 'accused' unless and until the authority proves the case. In many cases such as Mecca Masjid, Ajmer Sharif blast, Samjhauta Express blast and Malegaon-II etc. the culprits were from the Hindutva groups but enjoyed all the privileges.

IUML also raised the anger in the parliament about the increased incidents of mob lynching that was happening throughout the country. According to P.K. Kunjalikutty, mob-lynching is a common phenomenon in the country now, and the ruling party associated Organisations operate it. These groups target the minorities and Dalits, and there is a feeling of insecurity among them. He cited some of the examples of mob lynching, such as Muhammed Akhlakh, Muhammed Junaid, a teenage boy, who was targeted for his Muslim attire, and many other killings of Muslims in the name of cow, etc. He severely criticized the members of the house who justified the act and said that it is a shame for the nation.²³³

The recent protest by the party in parliament and outside against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 shows its constitutional commitment against religious discrimination by the government. The CAA "provided that any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December 2014... shall not be treated as an illegal migrant."²³⁴ However, the Act deliberately exempted Muslims from such migrant status. IUML argued in the parliament that the CAA is unconstitutional legislation that categorizes immigrants on the basis of religion and hence communal in nature. It is a plain violation of articles 14 and 15 (Right to equality and the prohibition of discrimination of citizen on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth) of the

²³³ P.K. Kunhalikutty. (31st July 2017). "Discussion under Rule 193. Discussion on the Situation Arising out of Reported Incidents of Atrocities and Lynching in Mob Violence in the Country." Parliament Debate: 17th Lok Sabha. Vol. XXVI, No: 11, pp179-181.

²³⁴ Ministry of Law and Justice. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

constitution.²³⁵ *The party* has appealed to the SC to declare the bill illegal, which violates the provisions for Fundamental Right, right to equality for the Muslim minority.²³⁶

Even though the Act intends the protection of persecuted minorities from the above-mentioned neighbouring countries, it reflects the communal agenda of the government. The Act did not give any constitutional protection to Muslims, one of the most persecuted minorities in and outside the country. This Act clearly projects India as the ‘natural’ home for Hindus, and migrant Muslims are dangerous outsiders who should be seen as threats to internal security. IUML, along with different community groups, has conducted several protests outside the house to withdraw the Act. The fundamental commitment of IUML is to ensure the constitutional rights of the minority, or dignified life, in a secular Hindu state.

Conclusion

Indian politics continue to be represented either as a reaction to Hindu nationalism or as a manifestation of minority communalism. In a way, Indian politics victimizes the Muslims and other marginalised sections of the society for their political aspirations. The Muslim League has stood for the socio, religious, and political rights of the community guaranteed by the constitution of the country. They raised voice against the treatment of Muslims as second-class citizens. Muslim League has, to some extent, succeeded in exposing the state/political discrimination against Muslims and demanded that Muslim lives matter; otherwise, the party asserts the honourable existence of the community. Muhammed Ismail stressed both in the parliament and outside that ‘being a Muslim in India is a constitutional privilege and not the charity of any person.’ Mainstream political parties treat Muslims as mere vote banks than addressing them as citizen subjects, and they use the community for granted. The absence of political consciousness and group solidarity is the main reason for the terrible conditions of Muslims in other parts of India.

²³⁵ The Hindu. (12th December 2019). IUML Moves Supre Court against CAB, Says It is Unconstitutional.

²³⁶ B.B.C. (12th December 2019). Citizenship Amendment Bill: ‘Anti- Muslim’ Law Challenged in Court.

Chapter 07

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to comprehend ‘political’ in the Indian Union Muslim League by analyzing the interconnection of religion and secular in the context of Muslim politics in Kerala. It uses the term ‘political’ with a broader inference that looks not only at the formal aspect of politics such as election, voting, protest demonstration, governing and policy formulation but also its informal structures. The phrase ‘informal structures’ broadly refers to the ‘everydayness,’ which includes Muslims’ behavioural patterns, both in public and private or political and religious life. This study redirects us to ponder the mutual constitution of political discourses of the Muslim community and their everyday living to contrive the question of Muslim Politics. Analyzing the nuances of ‘everyday’ Muslim politics, the study argues that the Muslim community’s politics operates within the permissible vicinity of the Indian constitution by continuously negotiating with their religious/communitarian identity, which in turn has made them a significant political force in the state Kerala.

The thesis argues that the Muslim League’s politics can be read in conjunction with Alfred Stepan’s concept of twin toleration: a method that connects religion and democracy. Stepan views (2002, 2014) that it is a mistaken assumption that democracy always requires a strict separation of church and state. Instead, he argues for twin toleration, which certainly demands mutual respect between religion and state for the successful operation of democracy. Indian Union Muslim League’s policies and politics agree to religious communities that can non-hesitantly cohabit with the constitutional norms and values. The various chapters in this study have attempted to show how the principles of twin toleration—the religious citizens towards the state and the state towards religious citizen – is validated in the everyday Muslim political context of Kerala. Muslim League believes how a Muslim can carry forward his/her politics without compromising religious identity. Similarly, the party also verifies the extent to which a religion-based political party can engage in a multicultural society, even though the Hindu community constitutes the state’s significant population.

The thesis firmly demarcates the Muslim League's politics from the broader definitions of 'political Islam' or 'radical Muslim politics'. The study, instead, places the party in the category 'Muslim politics.' Political Islam is a political ideology that articulates the necessity of establishing an Islamic state based on *Sharia*, where the separation of religion and politics is not possible. Contrary to this, Muslim politics operates within the realm of 'democratic secularism,' with Muslims as actors of 'community politics' occupying different positions in the social setting they live in. In short, political Islam conceives religion as a matter of dutiful and thus desiderative bearing of the identity, but Muslim politics understand religion as informed by the contextual and 'secular' (Eickelman & Piscatory 1996; Esposito & Vol 1996; Ismail 2011). Hence, the universal definition, and thus ideological motives of political Islam is not practically possible in India's political context. India's present Muslim community is formed by the discursive adaptations and negotiations with the postcolonial state and society. The democratic politics of the Muslim League opens up the prospect of understanding such discursive adaptations and negotiations. Besides, it also invites us to analyze the forms of 'political' outside state sovereignty. Hence, the study observes that political science's linear narrative for studying religion and politics would not be a viable toolkit to understand Kerala's Muslim politics.

Further, the dissertation also attempts to differentiate the Muslim politics of Muslim Leagues from Hindutva politics. Drawing direct parallels between the politics of the Muslim League and Hindutva often fails to look at the promises and perils of politics vis-a-vis Muslim politics in India. Hindutva groups such as RSS, Hindu Mahasabha, etc. are meant to Hinduize Indian public life, thereby to establish a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu nation). Their politics consider Muslims as the 'other' and often challenges Muslim's religious and political identity. On the contrary, the Muslim League's political ideology is not to establish a separate Islamic *Rashtra* but to work for attaining of constitutional privileges of the Muslims by remaining an integral part of the secular Indian state. Ashutosh Varshney observes that Muslim League's principal goal has been to preserve 'communal harmony' among diverse groups, which has helped the party to be part of an active political front in the state (Varshney 2002). This secure network has marked a 'space for Muslim politics' in a secular India.

Scholars like T.N. Madan, Rajeev Bhargava, and Partha Chatterjee opined that the concept of secularism in India has inherently been connected with its culture and tradition. Hence, the scholarly observations include the nature of the Indian state as 'secular' (Madan 1998; Bhargava 1998; Chatterjee 1998). Some scholars even discussed the enigmatic manifesto for anti-secularism in postcolonial India (Nandy 1998). Indian secularism operates amongst diverse ethnic and religious groups, asserting tolerance as its characteristic feature; and this diversity is termed as 'state-nation' (Stepan 2011). The Indian state has kept 'principled distance' (Bhargava 1998) from all religions while performing its political duties. Despite these moments of 'positive accommodations' (Chatterjee 1998) of religion and religious groups, there have been instances of violence among these groups. However, these secular principles are some of the thresholds available where a religious citizen can engage with the state, which, thus, ensures the protection of minorities in the country. Hence, this study on Muslim politics argues that the doctrine of 'multiple secularisms' (Stepan 2014) is an important space where religious people and community Organisations have an enunciated significance in the democratic process.

The role of religion cannot be discredited while studying politics and society in India. The relationship between religion and the public sphere is complex and historically formed. In this premise, we have to agree that the historical and material specificities of expression of faith are considered as one of the core values of Muslim politics. However, the Muslim League's political actions and articulations are always aligned to the national spirit, which, in turn, opens vistas to think about the democratization of Muslim politics in India. The foundation of the party itself is innately connected to such constitutional principles of the country. The name 'Indian Union Muslim League' itself denotes the party's religious and political manifestations. The 'Indian Union' represents the national interest and 'Muslim League' stands for the religious/community interests. Hence, the politics of the Muslim League is a manifestation of both of these ideals.

The constitution of the party also reflects its religious and political commitment towards the community and nation. The first two principles of the IUML's constitution stress the national interests such as upholding, defending, and maintaining the independence, freedom, unity, integrity, and honour of the state of the Indian Union and bearing the true

faith allegiance to the Indian constitution. The third and fourth principles reflect the religious and community interests such as protecting the religious, cultural, political, and educational interests of the Muslims, and promoting mutual understanding, goodwill, amity, harmony, and unity between Muslims and other marginalized communities of the country. It can be argued that there is a contract between the constitution of the party and the country, which connects a faith-based Muslim community with the secular Indian state.

Since its inception, the Indian Union Muslim League has always complied with the postcolonial promise of nation-building. The party articulated its politics within the established structures of the Indian nation-state. However, the party had not faced any ideological crisis while engaging with the secular democracy in the post-partition/independence period. Moreover, they succeeded in creating a group that can negotiate with the ethos of modern democracy. Muslim League was aware of country's majoritarian political structures in the context of partition. However, party's main focus was to empower the Muslim community in such a political context by keeping their religious faith alive. Muslim League's political legitimacy is derived from political engagements, enhancing the communitarian aspirations both on religious and material sides.

Indian Union Muslim League acts as the marker of Muslim political identity in Kerala. Though Muslim League was formed in the erstwhile Madras Presidency of present-day Tamil Nadu, its predominant realm of political activity was later shifted to Kerala. The formation of Kerala state in 1956 and its unique communitarian nature also helped flourish Muslim politics. The four major communities- Nair, Ezhava, Muslim, and Christian- have become the deciding factors of the state's politics through their demographic presence and lobbying capacities, particularly after the Liberation Struggle of 1959. Hereafter, the survival of the mainstream parties in Kerala depends on how they manage to get the electoral backing of these community Organisations and vice versa. These communitarian politics helped form an increased political consciousness among the community in which Muslim League maintains equal consideration to different sects among the community. Muslim League's strategy in constituting theologically divided *Sunnis* and *Mujahid* into a single political community helped to sustain its politics in the state. Along with this intra-religious

politics, the party also tried to formulate an inter-religious network among other marginalized sections of the society.

The primary task before the Muslim League, in its early days, was to ensure Muslim and other subaltern communities' political participation in mainstream politics. To constitute a political community, the party adopted the strategy of placing the 'traditional authority,' *thangals* and *ulama* in the leadership to attract a faith-based target audience. This religious leadership insists that the party members perceive the political activities as *ibadat*, and the need to keep moral and ethical standards in all their political actions. The *thangal* leadership, which leads the party, has never lost their spiritual value, and they are closely affiliated with Samastha, a prominent *Sunni* Muslims' religious authority in Kerala. The theologically convincing public opinions of these spiritual leaders would increase the democratic sensibilities of the community.

The early leaders of Muslim League insisted that a party member's primary concern should be to become a pious Muslim, and this should subsequently be reflected in their personal and public life. To put it differently, religion and faith mediate the temporal (socio-political or earthly) involvement of the believing citizen. In turn, this earthly mediation and pious character are informed by the virtues of Islamic tradition. This religious association is neither a simple political strategy nor a tactics for electoral capital, but an inherent characteristic of what can be called 'Muslimness' (The quality of being called a Muslim). The sense of religious and moral responsibility among the members helps create a sensibility of the *ummah*, an immense community interest, which gradually strengthens IUML's political authority.

Analyzing the interplay of religion and politics, the study argues that 'spirituality in politics' – a faith-based moral and ethical code – is the core of Muslim politics in Kerala. The inseparability of religion from politics and a citizen's responsibility to abide by the constitution form the core of the Muslim League's politics. The party's supporters believe that Muslim League is the only political party in Kerala where a Muslim can engage or uphold their 'religious faith' alongside 'Indianness.' This ensures that the primary responsibility of a party member is to perform religious duties, leading him/her to politics,

subsequently formulating citizenship. This religiously formulated citizen can hold morality and ethics in all his political manifestations. Hence, Muslim League's politics proves that the separation of religion from politics is not a necessary condition for the success of democracy. As Stepan points out, 'religion need not be off the agenda' from society and politics (Stepan 2012).

This entangled relationship between religion and politics of the Muslim League makes it difficult for other political parties to establish themselves as a strong force in the community on a large scale. One of the crucial factors is the leadership of *thangals*, which acts as a bridge between Samastha and Muslim League. IUML's engagement with the community and vice versa has revolved around mutual respect and dialogue. On the one hand, Samastha considers Muslim League as community's political authority; and consequently, Muslim League approves Samastha's religious authority in the community. This mutual respect among these two Organisations balances Muslim politics of the state. This religious-body backed politics is absent in other political parties, except in Kerala Congress's case, to some extent. This institutionalized form of support from the religious body has proved beneficial over the years; thus, ensuring the party's stronghold in Malabar. However, this is not a static phenomenon, and there are instances where IUML received an electoral setback at different times. For example, in the Assembly election of 1996 and 2006, the party considerably lost its electoral support due to its developmental debacle in the previous government and the newly formed community Organisations' challenges in the 1990s. Along with these developments, Samastha, the party's strong support base, often politically contradicts Muslim League in many issues, impeding the party's electoral performance several times.

However, most of the time, the party could overcome the electoral and Organisational challenges by reframing its Organisational structure and functions. New initiatives of structuring the party at the local level, cadre-based model, have been introduced and materialized to bring more discipline to the Organisation. The changes in the Organisational structure with the active interventions in philanthropic activities gave new energy to the party, which has visible impacts on the party's electoral and Organisational performance. Despite the poor performance of its alliance partners like the Indian National Congress, IUML could maintain its Organisational and electoral performance in its strongholds,

particularly in Malabar. The State Assembly and Lok Sabha election results of 2011, 2014, 2016, and 2019 underscore this argument.

Equally important to the religion/communitarian aspects, the study also looks at the Muslim League's political engagement with the state. It is, indeed, difficult to demarcate the boundary between the Muslim League's communitarian and state-centered politics. It is evident that religious beliefs and values influence its members' political behaviour; however, other factors such as material and developmental concerns also play an equally important role in deciding their politics. The party is engaging with the secular elements, electoral politics, and governance as part of its secular credentials. Hence, the study observes that the relationship between the Muslim League and the community is mutually indispensable.

Muslim League leads the community politically, and the community supports Muslim League electorally. However, the Muslim League holds relative autonomy over the community as it engages in public politics. This political authority of the Muslim League over the community leads the party to focus on the political aspiration of the community. Hence, it is understood that the Muslim League's politics is formulated between the binaries of religion/community and secular/political, a complex identity narrative, and IUML remains a political manifestation of that identity. Such a larger communitarian identity provides Muslim League possession of a 'political space' in the state. In this context, the mainstream parties are also forced to accommodate Muslim League and Muslim political concerns to maintain their government and politics.

Socio-economic development is one of the most significant markers of community consolidation in the state. The Muslim League engages with the Muslim community by consolidating them to achieve political ascendancies and enhance their governments' stake. The party's position in the state's power structure, with different political parties and alliances, formulate an influential political network in policy-making and policy implementation. As Steven Wilkinson argues, the politicians and political parties intended to protect the minorities from ethnic violence and safeguard their political interests in different conditions. In such a state, minorities are an essential part of their political and

governmental support base in a competitive multiparty system. There is a high probability of negotiation with the minorities and their political parties by the governing party to sustain the power, besides its preferences (Wilkinson 2004: 6- 7). By analyzing different Indian states, including Kerala, Wilkinson further observes that, if this is not the case, the politicians and the government either restrict or undermine the rights of the minorities (ibid). Similarly, Varshney also observes that the Muslim minority politics has a substantial base in Kerala due to caste and communal combination of the state's politics, which marked the Muslim League's presence in Kerala (Varshney 2000).

The term 'politics' is commonly assumed as a domain in which people participate in a series of power plays to determine who gets what. Political participation is an activity of citizens who attempt to influence their respective parties and governmental authorities to get legislation in favour of them. Like other communities of the state, Muslims also actively engage in it either with communitarian interest or with larger public's interest. The political participation and the community's support base depend on the power politics to achieve the material resources, which, one way or the other, constitute the developments. Hence, the Muslim League acts as a catalyst of political development to the community and society, with its limitation, which stabilizes the party's politics.

The Muslims have been a vital constituency ever since the formation of the state. Upgrade from eight seats in the first Assembly to eighteen in the present election shows Muslim League's political/electoral presence. More than that, due to the high voting share, Muslim League can predicate different governments on many occasions. Muslim League's political supremacy has permitted them to ascend the state's chief minister's post once and many other ministerial portfolios, in which the party holds education for a long time. This political supremacy of the party and the state's competitive nature also have much legislation according to the Muslim League's demand. The establishment of the University of Calicut and the formation of the Malappuram district as part of 1967-69 government are considered some of the party's laudable achievements, both in policy and political levels. Similarly, the party's success in the Language struggle of the 1980s also indicates the Muslim League's political potentials. The party succeeded in its demand as the government survived due to the Muslim League's support. The party's significant policy-level initiative is an integrated

education model that includes the government sector and aided and unified sectors, which subsequently contributes much to society's educational progress at large. The educational development was one of the prime concerns of the party since its formation. This helps the community to enhance their cultural capital along with other communities of the state.

Even though Kerala is famous for its communitarian political competition, it also visibly uses the anti-Muslim vocabulary from time to time. The rhetoric used by the Congress and Hindutva groups against the formation of the Malappuram district and Calicut University designated the majoritarian consciences of the state. The failure of different governments to implement the Narendran Commission Report also reads in such a political discourse. In the last Congress-led UDF government (2011-16), the Muslim League was forced to withdraw the attempt of establishing an International Arabic University due to the communal propaganda, including the alliance partners. Rather than addressing the political merit or the developmental claim, the political opponents inscribed a communal tone by calling it a 'Muslim conspiracy' to promote communalism. However, in many instances, the party gets open support from the community whenever it addresses more extensive political interests. For example, Malabar's developmental problems, the political claim of the Muslim League for the fifth ministership in the UDF government during 2011- 16, the community support for International Arabic University, and so on, replicate their support.

However, communitarian support to Muslim League is not static, and it depends on the political contexts. The party has received significant political challenges after the 1990s by the newly formed socio-political Organisations- PDP, INL, SDPI, and WPI- from the community in the wake of "Mandal and Masjid" issues. They accused the Muslim League of being inactive in various community and equity-related issues. Babri Masjid and the subsequent communal violence at the national level were significant issues in which the Muslims perceive their lives perilously. Similarly, the Muslim League, a major stakeholder of the Muslim community politics, failed to demand developmental aids and great political representation from the different governments according to the changing political and material conditions. The new intra-religious political groups and their gradual developments have produced various forms of 'Muslim political identity choices' and challenged the Muslim League's political space. In return, the Muslim League considers them as an

‘internal enemy’ to maintain their secular images in the larger spectrum of state politics. However, the party undermined the fact that the Muslim League was often presented as ‘communal’ in the state’s public and political discourses from time to time. However, the party was successful in its attempt to defeat these newly formed Organisations electorally; in many instances, the party was forced to address the issues they have raised. These newly formed community Organisations’ growth has led to many scholarly and political debates and discussions (Chiriyankandath 1996 (a), 1996; Visakh& Santhosh 2020). However, this also forced other mainstream parties to consider Muslim political demands seriously ever before. The political and electoral engagement of the Communist Parties in the recent past on minority communities also replicated such political development.

On the other spectrum of the story, the Muslim League’s political engagement at the national level was limited as it was confined only in South India. Besides that, the party has its limitation to engage with national politics and the majoritarian structure of the country. A major problem with Indian secularism is that it often operates with the majority community’s sentiments. Generally, it is argued that the subordinated religious groups often lack equal access to the material means of participation (Chandhoke 2005). Under its electoral politics, Indian secularism places the majority in pole position over minorities. In the quest for national unity, religious minorities are left with an undesirable choice: relinquish their distinctive identities or risk being seen as traitors, spoilers, or foreigners. (Nadheem&Rajan, 2007). Due to this majoritarian concern, India is termed a ‘Hindu secular state’ (Baxi 1999).

However, the party has marked its presence in national politics within its limitations by addressing various issues in parliament, such as Muslim Personal Law and Babri Masjid, anti-terrorism Laws, etc. From the beginning, the party opposes any move which curbs the reservation and affirmative action. Muslim League expressed their grave concern against anti-terrorism laws and called such legislation are ‘anti-constitutional’ that provide an open license to imprison innocent Muslims and other marginalized groups. They have raised their voice during the Mandal Commission Report and firmly demanded implementing the recommendations of the Report which grant 27% reservation for other backward castes (OBC). The party has strongly protested against both the CPIM led Kerala government, and

the BJP led Central Government to implement the backward sections' reservation among forward castes. Muslim League has maintained its stand that the economic reservation destabilizes the very principle of reservation.

The party's recent protest in parliament and outside against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 also shows its constitutional commitment against religious discrimination of minorities by the government. The CAA projects India as the 'natural' home for Hindus, and migrant Muslims are dangerous outsiders who should be seen as threats to internal security. On many occasions, issues related to the Muslim community are placed with communal overtone. This is due to the mainstream parties' unwillingness to consider the Muslim subject beyond the vote bank politics. And these parties always stand for the interest of the majority community as their electoral number rests mainly upon them. Furthermore, the number of Muslim representations in the parliament is considerably less, and there is no national-level political network among Muslims of the country. It is to be noted that Muslims' – the largest minority community in the country – representation in many state legislatures is nil. This nullified participation in lawmaking bodies is the main reason for the deliberate abandonment of Muslim issues.

The thesis argued that Muslim League successfully maintained a 'political capital' in Kerala compared to the rest of the Indian states. This has been achieved through constant engagement with state politics by capitalizing on the state's communitarian competition. One of the major stakeholders, Muslim League, has strategized this communitarian situation to benefit the community by engaging power politics in policy-making and implementation. In the seventy years of its political history, Muslim League has successfully represented the concerns of Muslims in the lawmaking bodies within its limits. When the mainstream political parties treated Muslims of the country as a mere vote bank, Muslim League played a significant role in transforming the community from an 'interest group' to a 'pressure group' in the state. This community political formation has helped Muslims achieve better socio-economic, educational, and cultural grandeur. Hence, the study argues that the Muslim League's principal aim is to ensure a dignified life for the Muslims and integrate them as 'citizen subjects.' This was well illustrated when Muhammed Ismail, the party's founding president, used the phrase 'the honourable existence of the community.'

The scholars often make a binary of religion and secularism; however, this dissertation argues that such a binary is practically impossible in the context of the Muslim League. The thesis argues that the concept of secularism needs to be analyzed by exploring the nuances of that particular community and society. The idea of religion and politics operates in the country's secular space in a more complementary terms rather than contradictory terms. Each group was allowed to perform their democratic duties regardless of their identities, which strengthened the democratic sensibilities. This dissertation will help to understand the role of the Muslim League in democratizing Muslim politics in Kerala. Thus, the study complicates the existing scholarship on the interconnections between community, religion, and politics, forcing one to rethink the modalities of the Muslim 'everydayness' in Kerala.

Limitation of the Study

One of the major limitations of the study is that it could not engage with the gender aspect of Muslim politics, particularly concerning the involvement and representation of women. Indian society and culture are firmly bound with patriarchy, in which women are excluded from the mainstream. The state of Kerala is also not much different from the larger Indian context. Kerala, one of the most literate states of India, has never had a women Chief Minister throughout its political history. In the case of the IUML, the party never elected an MP or MLA in its seventy years of political travel due to the normative patriarchal political nature of the state as well as the religious restriction for women to engage in public politics. However, the recent development of 50% reservation in Local Self Government, indeed, has changed the political atmosphere of the state, and it has to be addressed in detail. Hence, there is a significant scope of research on gender and Muslim politics in Kerala.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Name: (Not necessary)	Age :	Female		Male	
Occupation:	Ward:				
Panchayath:	Constituency:				

This **questionnaire** is prepared for my doctoral research (Political Science) titled “State, Religion, and Muslim Politics: Locating the ‘Political’ in the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala.” Kindly state your responses. Your personal details shall not be disclosed, shared or published under any circumstance.

- 1) Do you practice religion and observe rituals in your everyday life?
- 2) What were the primary reasons which persuaded you to join the Muslim League?
- 3) According to you, which factors differentiate the Muslim League from other political parties?
- 4) Do you consider working for the Muslim League a sacred activity, if so, why?
- 5) What are the reasons behind the Muslim League’s continuous success in Malabar in general and Malappuram in particular? Why are other political parties not able to exert enough influence in Malappuram?
- 6) How do you evaluate the Muslim League in dealing with the political issues related to the community?
- 7) How do you evaluate the Muslim League’s politics concerning the development of the community?
- 8) Compared to other religious communities in Kerala, do you think the Muslim community lacks enough representation in political and other realms?
- 9) What do you think is the reason for Kerala Muslims’ affluence in the educational, social and cultural sectors compared to the Muslims in other states?
- 10) Over several decades, the party’s state presidential position has exclusively been under the Panakkad Thangal family’s control. How do you perceive this ‘hereditary’ political power?

- 11) Despite the internal theological differences, how do you manage to unite politically behind the Muslim League?
- 12) Do you agree with the argument that the Muslim League's political existence is mainly due to the support of organizations like *Samastha* and *Mujahid*?
- 13) What is your opinion on *Samastha* and *Mujahid* organizations' intervention in the Muslim League's political decisions, such as selecting candidates for election and Muslim women's participation in politics?
- 14) What is your opinion on the Muslim League's interference in the religious affairs of *Samastha* and *Mujahid* organizations?
- 15) What are the major reasons for the emergence of new Muslim socio-political organizations in Kerala in the post-1990s, and how do you consider their political actions and articulations?
- 16) Do you think that the political parties that emerged during the 1990s reduced the importance of Muslim League in Kerala, if so why?
- 17) What do you think is the reason for the continued relevance of Muslim Leagues even After the emergence of various Muslim political parties during the 1990s?
- 18) Have you ever been a part of the charitable activities of the Muslim League? How do you evaluate the services of the charitable institutions of the party like Baithu Rahma and C. H Centre, etc.?
- 19) Do you think that the Muslim community in Kerala faces any issues due to their 'Muslimness' or the Muslim self?
- 20) As a Muslim political organization, what do you think are the Muslim League's significant contributions to the community? Specify?

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COMMUNITARIAN POLITICS AND POLITICAL ASCENDANCIES: A CASE STUDY OF INDIAN UNION MUSLIM LEAGUE

SIHABUDEEN P^{1a}

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to trace the nature of communitarian politics in Kerala, with a focus on how the Indian Union Muslim League (also known as Muslim League), has employed diverse religious and political strategies to create a 'political space' for the Muslim community in the state. The paper explores the significance of the party's engagement with the political structure by being part of governments within the frame of a secular democratic order to achieve its communitarian goal and thus establish political ascendancies from time to time. Muslim League's negotiations with electoral politics in order to achieve political power and enhance their stake in the formulations of policies, especially for the Muslim community, are explored in this paper. This paper also examines Muslim League's contribution to ending the 'political alienation' experienced by Muslims in the immediate aftermath of independence and enhancing the political consciousness of the community.

KEY WORDS: Community, Religion, Identity, Politics, Power, Muslim League.

INTRODUCTION

The political identity of Muslims has been a contested topic within the history of colonial and postcolonial India. The patent role played by religion in the creation of two independent nation-states—India and Pakistan—defined within the binaries of 'secular' and 'religious' nationalism, has problematized the very existence of Muslims within India. Their religious and political identity and loyalty towards the Indian nation is always questioned by the dominant religious group, which delegitimized the political articulations Muslims. As against the narratives mentioned above, this paper focuses on the Kerala unit of Indian Union Muslim League, a religion-based community political party, which was formed out of the post-partition political trauma on 10th March 1948, to protect the interests of the Muslim community in Kerala. Despite sticking to its religious identity, Muslim League has been able to create a 'political space' for the development Muslim community by holding political power of the state through various electoral alliances.

It needs to be pointed out at the outset that there is, indeed, a difference between Islamism/political Islam and 'Muslim politics' (by which I mean religious and community politics). Political Islam entails a political ideology by articulating the idea of the necessity of establishing an Islamic government. Here, the separation of *din* (religion)

from *dewlap* (state) is not possible because of which political Islam, based on *Sharia* (Islamic Law), cannot operate in the realm of secular politics (Hefner 2011: 167; Ismail 2011). Muslim politics, on the other hand, operates within the realm of secular politics, with Muslims as actors of community politics occupying different positions in the social settings which they live. Muslim politics does not engage in the construction of Muslim selves in a uniform manner as Islamist does. Its engagement with identity construction is informed by the power struggles that are embedded in the material, local conditions and global processes, and it makes use of a multiplicity of registers and frames of reference (Ismail 2011: 16- 28). For the actors of political Islam, religion is a matter of identity, based on religious faith whereas for the actors of Muslim politics, it is a personal or contextual choice. One must understand these two premises according to the contextual settings of politics and society (Eickelman and Piscatory 1996; Esposito and Voll 1996; Hasan 2007; Bayat 2013).

COMMUNITARIAN POLITICS IN KERALA

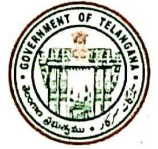
Religious and caste-based identities remain the bedrock of social and individual life in India. The relationship between the religion and politics on the one hand, and communal interaction between different religious identities – particularly between Hindus and Muslims – on the other, have been one of the central themes of scholarly literature in



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