



Social Solidarity and Politicization of Muslims in Kerala during 1956-2006

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Abstract This article explores the influence of group feeling or social solidarity which is the theory great philosopher and theoretician Ibn Khaldun, who professes the influence of material elements in the progress of human being before the Marxism, on the political polarization and progress of Muslim community in Kerala. The speedy growth of the Muslim League the political organ of Kerala Muslims was one of the major factor which accelerated the process of community development among the Muslims.

Key words : political polarization , theory of Asabiyyah, Ibn Khaldun, group feeling or social solidarity, political consciousness, Muslim league in Kerala.

The socio- religious reform movements among the Muslim Community mainly concentrated on the issue of the purification of religion of Islam. It aimed at the emancipation of the religion of Islam from the clutches of Hinduism and Christianity. This Islamic identity, which emerged in Kerala by the efforts of the religious reform movements in the early decades of 20th century, transformed the social landscape of Malabar into a fertile ground for the development of a sectarian political consciousness among the Muslims of Kerala. The British policy of recognizing religion as the unit for its political and administrative measures like separate electorate, special treatment of Mappila education, etc. accelerated the community oriented political perspectives among the Mappilas. Religious identity and social solidarity among the Muslims became the rallying point for political organization and mobilization in Malabar.

According to Gilles Amedo, the transitional process of change requires (1) time, (2) space and a (3) form of cover. Since **the time** of the origin and spread of Islam in Kerala, the religious political and social life of Muslims have undergone significant changes. **The space** of Muslims under the patronage of local rulers in Kerala was favourable for their religious expansion. The third aspect, **the form of cover** that is Islam itself and Islamic social solidarity or *Asabiyyah* helped a lot in the transitional process of Muslims in Kerala. According to the *Encyclopaedia* of Islam, the Arabic word *Asabiyyah* means ‘spirit of kinship’ in the family or tribe. Already used in *Hadith* (tradition of the prophet) in which the prophet condemns *Asabiyyah* as contrary to the spirit of Islam, the term became famous as a result of the use to which it was put by Ibn Khaldun, who made this concept on the basis of his interpretation of history and his doctrine of the state. *Asabiyyah* is, for Ibn Khaldun, the fundamental bond of human society and the basic motive force of history. It is the core of Ibn Khaldun’s thought

concerning the rise and decline of the civilization.¹ It is also a source for economic development and political stability. In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the importance of having a sense of solidarity is the state of mind that makes individuals identify with a group and subordinate self to the group, in order to establish peace and social development. The implication of Ibn Khaldun's social solidarity concept to the present world is imperative. This article traces the development of social solidarity or *asabiyyah* among the Muslims of Kerala and how far it influenced in their political polarization and development.

Post rebellion remedial measures of the Congress in Malabar itself resulted in the widening of the gulf between the Congress and the Muslims. The activities of relief committees formed after the rebellion of 1921 under the leadership of the Congress mainly worked for the Hindus of the affected area. This destroyed the credibility and influence of the Congress among the Mappilas. It gave great mileage to the Muslim League to act as the sole political Party of Muslims in Kerala. K.N. Panikkar observes that "although the Rebellion was not intrinsically communal, its consequences were decidedly so."² The Mappilas nursed a sense of betrayal as the congress leaders had turned away from them at the time of their distress.³ The irony of the situation is that when the Mappilas and the British army were fighting fiercely, the congress leaders were preaching non-violence outside the riot region with much safety and comfort.⁴

The socio-religious reform movements and the Khilafath agitations developed a national spirit among the Muslims, which is unique in character. The Khilafath movement sharpened a sense of Muslim spirit among Tamil Muslims and a perception of themselves as a regional minority group, subsumed their previous tendency to think of themselves as members of a village or district quasi-caste.⁵ This was also applicable to the Muslims of Kerala. According to Abdul Razak, before 19th century,

Mappilas did not understand themselves as part of a larger North Indian Muslim identity, nor of a transnational Islamic *Ummath* (Community). But, after the Khilafath movement, they began to see themselves as part of a national Muslim Community and in turn, the North Indian Muslim groups began to extend their help to the suffering *Mappilas*, particularly during the post-rebellion period. Malabar Muslims were submerged in the larger Indian Muslim political formation.⁶ The excessive dependence on traditional religious practices created a non-institutional kind of politics with a remote but occasional glimpse of nationalism functioning among the Muslims. The

¹ Asyraf wajdi Dusuki, "Ibn Khaldun's concept of social solidarity and its implication to group based lending scheme", paper presented at Monash University IVth International Islamic Banking and finance conference, Kuala Lumpur, 2006

² K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State, Religion and peasant uprising in Malabar, 1836-1921*, p. 190.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁴ M.P.S. Menon, *Malabar Struggle* (Mal.), p. 144.

⁵ Kennet Mc Pherson, *The social background of politics of Muslim of Tamil Nadu:1901-1937*, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.VI, No.4, pp. 381-402.

⁶ P. P. Abdul Razak, *Colonialism and community formation in Malabar A study of Muslims of Malabar*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Calicut, 2007, p. 263.

miserable end of the Riot of 1921 strengthened the suspicion that had already developed among a larger section of Muslims resulting in an aversion in the notions of nationalism and politicalisation.⁷ They concentrated on their personal religious life. They secluded themselves from mainstream political affairs. However, this political and social alienation of the Muslims began to change by the emergence of different religious organisations among the Muslims of Kerala. It molded the Mappila identity as 'Islamic'. The concept of state, nationalism, etc, came under the purview of Islam. The revival of Muslim league especially in Kerala after independence, is highly noticeable with its multi-farious note almost all the coalition ministries after 1957 and got representation in legislative assembly and the Parliament.

Islamic revivalism was the triggering force behind the sectarian and religion based politicization of Muslims in Kerala. Islamic revivalism triggered in Kerala through *Salafi* or Mujahid movement, *the Jama at e Islami*, the *Ahmediya* movement and the *Tabligh Jama at* to name only a few. It moulded the Islamic identity eventhough there remained an ideological difference between these organisations. The political activism and revivalism preached by leaders like Jamaluddeen Afghani, Muhammed Abduh and many others echoed in the minds of Muslims in Kerala, moulding the religious Nationalism and politics in them. Thus, Islam became the icon of political movements. The activities of the Muslim League that concentrated on the welfare of the community were deep rooted in Malabar because of its religious nature. The intellectual attitude of Islam and its spirit of 'universal brotherhood' generated a social solidarity, political unification and desire for development or modernisation. It is also true that the religious and reformist tendencies also alienated the Muslim masses in Kerala from Nationalist Politics of the period. However, some of the early reformers had a political vision especially as in the case of Vakkam Maulavi who gave equal importance to the Muslim Political resurgence.⁸ He started the newspaper named *Swadeshabhmani* in 1906 for the fulfillment of his political activities. The first issue of the newspaper declared that the aim of the *Swadeshabhmani* was to work for the welfare of the people and assured that they were not afraid to depict the suffering of the people though this called for the attention of the authority.⁹ He supported the nomination of Abdul Rahman Sahib to the legislative assembly, who was nominated by the Muslim organization named Istahul Muslimeen in 1931.¹⁰ He also welcomed the organisation of All Kerala Muslim Conference that aimed to work for the upliftment of social and political life of Muslims in Kerala.¹¹ Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham formed at Kodungalloor in 1922 was the first attempt at reform and it politicised the Muslims

⁷ K.K.N. Kurup and Ismail, *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in the 20th Century*, p. 204.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹ *Vakkam Maulaviyude Deepika Ottavalyathil* (Mal.), p. IV.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

of Kerala. However, later the activities of the *Majlis* concentrated only on reforming and reviving the religion.

Muslim political leaders, who represented the Muslims in Travancore legislature assembly, repeatedly raised the question of the number of Muslims in public service and suggested to fill the vacancy of Muslims in higher posts in the Secretariat. Mr. Hydrose K.A, the Muslim Council member from Alwaye, voiced in the question hour of Travancore legislature Assembly,¹² that the Muslim representation in public service was very low when compared with that of the other communities. He also raised the concern that the cry for representation of Muslims in public service was not merely for the sake of earning their lively hood but also for the sake of occupying positions of trust and responsibility and thereby to experience their rights of citizenship. There were many merchants, industrialist, and landowners among the Muslims who paid a large amount of income tax. But the members of the community were not duly represented in the government service. He also suggested that in the vacancies of district judges occurring in the near future, Muslims might be appointed. There were several cases involving questions of Mohammedan law which required an intimate knowledge of the Quran. Those who had no such knowledge were deposing such cases. Hence, the need for Muslim judges is essential. He also demanded to appoint a Muslim in higher rank of the secretariat in order to take decisions on Muslim issues. In reply to this the Diwan declared that the Muslims have equal opportunity as the members of the other communities for being appointed to any vacancy. There were no qualified hands from the Muslim community to fill the clerical posts in the secretariat during this time. The demand for representation in public service by the Muslim elite groups shows the political sectarianism and consequences to better the lives of the members of the community. This thought about the welfare of the entire community was the product of social solidarity deep rooted in them under the banner of Islam.

The census reports from 1911 to 2001 shows that there is a gradual and steady growth in the population of Muslims in Kerala.

The following table shows the growth rate of the major religious groups over the decades in percentage.

Increase of religious groups in percentage

Table .2

Year	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Others	Total
1961-1971	20.98	3.84	22.53	17.13	23.34
1971-1981	15.44	26.20	15.24	18.59	17.59
1981-1991	11.88	22.70	7.15	82.60	13.38

¹² *Travancore Sree Mulam Popular Assembly proceedings*, session 28, submission on Muslims and Public service, 19th March, 1932.

Muslim Politics in Kerala

Even prior to the formation of Muslim league in Malabar, Muslim Aikya Sangam in its 3rd Annual congress held at Calicut on 4th June 1925 passed a resolution demanding separate electorates for District and Taluk Boards as was the case with Legislative Assembly.¹³ By 1920's itself election appeals appeared in Malayalam dailies requesting to cast votes on the basis of religion, For example, Purakkatt Moosa, the candidate to Madras Legislative Assembly election of 1923 made the following appeal to the Muslim voters of Malabar through *Mathrubhumi* daily.

“Since I have got good command over English and Hindustani and a thorough knowledge in Islam and its tenets I am able to safeguard the interests of Islam. Hence I request the Muslims, who are serious about the well being of the Muslim community to cast your in favour of me”.¹⁴ Muslim organisations like the *Jamiyyathul Iqwan sangham*, the *Calicut Muslim Majlis Committee* and Kerala Muslim Yuvajana Conference demanded for separate electorate for Muslims to local boards and representation in the Legislative Assembly based on numerical strength.¹⁵ By the efforts of Muslim Aikya Sangham, started in 1922, Malabar had become a fertile land for the growth of separate political ideology. The leaders of Aikya Sangham like K.M. Seethi Sahib, K.M. Maulavi, Abdul Rahman Sahib, Moidu Maulavi etc were very active in the non co-operation and Khilafath movement. At the all Kerala Muslim conference held at Tellichery on August 22, 1931, a resolution was passed to organize *Muslim Majlis* for the political and economic progress of the community.¹⁶ Supporting the resolution K.M. Seethi Sahib remarked, “A crowd without common fraternity and ideals cannot be called a community”.¹⁷ This remark aimed to unite the Muslims under one political party to fight for the educational and economic progress of the community.

Muslim league that formed in 1936 in Kerala actively participated in the elections to the legislative assembly. It attracted the poor people among the Muslims by establishing traditional religious leaders like Thangals or Sayyids who claim to be the descendents of the Prophet. The presidents such as Syed Abdurahiman Bafakhy Thangal of Calicut, Panakkadu Pookoya Thangal and Syed Shihab Thangal of Malappuram had to bear a halo of divinity acquiring worshipful obedience and indiscreet respect from poor illiterate and innocent masses. A glance through the resolution of the first District Muslim League council held at Tellicherry in December 1937 would reveal the concern of the Muslim League¹⁸.

¹³ *Mathrubhumi* (Daily), 6th June, 1925.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7th July, 1923.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25th July, 1932.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Report of the Muslim League Council Meetings, 1937.*

Muslim league took up almost every issue concerning the community and by 1938 the membership of Muslim League rose up to 32000 in Malabar.¹⁹ In the District Muslim League meeting held at Calicut on 30th, April 1940, the Lahore Resolution of “Two Nation Theory” of All India Muslim League was accepted. This increased the gulf between the Congress and the League. In 1944, the Nationalist Muslims had convened an All India Meeting at Delhi under the chairmanship of Alla Baksh, the Prime Minister of Sindh and decided to form an All India Muslim Majlis a Nationalist forum to work among the Muslims against the “Two nation theory”. Thus, Malabar District Muslim Majlis was formed at Calicut with K.P. Nuruddin as president and C N Imbichammu as Secretary. Local units were also formed.²⁰ There happened a struggle between Majlis and league on this issue. The Malabar Muslim league supported the central league policies in relation to the partition proposal. The demand for separate nationhood was considered as a necessary step towards pan Islamic ideal. It was in this background that the Muslim league leaders proposed the establishment of *Mappilastan* (land of Muslims). They submitted the proposal to the Pakistan Committee members urging to constitute an independent *Mappilastan* comprising Ernad, Valluvanadu and Lacadives. The proposal for a separate Muslim majority province in South Malabar was publicly put forward in the Madras Legislative Assembly in mid June 1947. The fears of Indian Muslim in general and the Islamic political theory underlying Pakistan movement in particular coalesced to stimulate the proposal.²¹

Thus, the Muslim league, which was actually formed in 1906, took two decades to be officially established in Malabar. In 1937, it was established firmly in Malabar braving several hostile situations created in 1940’s like Partition, Ramasimhan Murder, Hyderabad action etc.²² The growth of Muslim league in Malabar of course, owned a great deal to British interests in helping to forge their separatist political identity as a counter poise to nationalist challenges, led by the congress. Thus, through the play of various factors and a steady and slow process, Mappilas who had not attached much significance to their distinct identity, transformed into a community with an awareness of a common Muslim identity. They have been living in multi religious groups and changed in to a political community when it was mobilized for a political action. Thus, the Mappila political identity, moulded with the religious teachings and group feelings or social solidarity of Muslims, developed under the banner of Islam.

When the state of Kerala was formed in 1956, the limited political potential of the Mappila community became more formidable as the Mappila proportion of the state population tripled. But they brilliantly played the game and they captured eight seats in the Kerala legislative assembly in 1957. Later it was eleven in 1960 and 1965,

¹⁹ Presidential speech of Hamid Khan in Muslim League meeting, *Mathrubhumi* (Daily), 27th July, 1938.

²⁰ *Mathrubhumi* (Daily), 20th April, 1945.

²¹ Roland, E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, p. 162.

²² The Muslim league’s involvement in Ramasimhan murder case of 1947 and in Hyderabad Nizam’s attempt to pressure his power was seriously debated in Malabar and Muslim League had to face stiff opposition from other parties. Ramasimhan and his relatives were murdered by Mappilas on 1st August, 1947 and it was alleged that Muslim League leaders took efforts in getting the culprits acquitted. See Roland, E. Miller, *Ibid.*, p. 229.

fourteen in 1967, sixteen in 1977, nineteen in 1980, eighteen in 1982, fourteen in 1987 and nineteen in 1991.

Muslim league became a state political party and the symbol, "ladder" had been allotted to them after the election in 1957 by the Central Election Commission. The growth rate of Muslim league from 1957 to 1967 is 75% and the growth rate from 1966 to 1977 is 7.14% and of 1977 to 1987 is 15.38 and of 1987 to 1996 is 13.33% and that of 1996 to 2006 is 46.15. During the general election of 1977, the Muslim league contested for 16 seats and won in 13 and in 1991 election, the Muslim league contested in 22 seats and won in 19 seats. The table shows that, Muslim league and CPI performed comparatively in the same manner.

During the first election to the Kerala assembly Muslim league approached the Indian National Congress and Praja Socialist Party to form an alliance against the Communist Party on religious grounds as they were all believers in God. By the end of December 1956, All India Congress Committee leaders like S.K. Patel, Panambilli Govinda Menon and others came to Kerala to discuss and work out the details regarding an election understanding with the leaders of the Muslim league. They arrived at an agreement also. However, at the Indore AICC session when the matter came up for discussion majority of the delegates vehemently opposed to have any link with the League. At the same time leaders of the P S P tried to have an alliance with the communist party failing which, they approached the Muslim League. Consequently, an agreement was signed between them on 15 January, 1957.²³

In the following election, the Muslim league contested in fourteen assembly seats and three parliament seats. Thus, C.H. Muhammed Koya from Thanur, Chakkeri Ahamadkutty from Kuttippuram, MP M Ahamed Kurikal from Kondotti, Avukkadar Kutty Naha from Thirurangadi, K.V. Muhammed from Mankada, K Hasan Gani from Malappuram, Bava Haji from Tirur and M Chadayan from Manjeri represented Muslim league in Kerala assembly in 1956.²⁴ In the parliament election, only B. Porker Sahib could win the election from the Manjeri constituency. The first ministry of Kerala headed by EMS Namboodiripad came to power on 8th April, 1957. But the private school managers agitated against the education bill introduced by the Government under auspices of the Indian National Congress and Praja Socialist Party which resulted in the declaration of 'a liberation struggle' on 12 June 1959.²⁵ The Muslim League also decided to join the struggle against the government. This made a division among them. Thus progressive Muslim League came into being, which supported the Communist Party. They criticized the Muslim league against its participation in the Liberation struggle.²⁶ But, this party could not get a single seat in the election to assembly in 1960. It had no political influence on the Muslims because it

²³ M.I. Ibrahim, *C.H. Muhammed Koya: Political Biography* (Mal.), p. 114.

²⁴ *Statistical Report of General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala, 1957*, p.6.

²⁵ T. A. Mohamed, *Muslim politics in Kerala (1921-1967)*, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut, 2001, p. 236.

²⁶ *The Chandrika* (Daily), 22 September, 1959.

was supporting the Communist Party which was against the religious sentiments of the Muslims. Muslim League supported the Congress ministry of 1960 by declaring that they would save the state from 'Communist danger'. K.M. Seethi Sahib became the first Muslim speaker to Kerala legislative assembly. But after Sahib's death in 1961, C.H. Muhammed Koya was elected as the third speaker of Kerala Assembly defeating the Communist party candidate, Aysha Bai.²⁷ During the interim poll to the Kerala Assembly in 1965, Marxist party (CPI.M) made alliance with the Kerala Congress and made some election adjustments with the League. But no party could secure the majority. The adjustment with the Communist Party altered the anti communist policy of the Muslim league and they contested in 15 seats in the assembly election of 1967 with the alliance of the Communist party. Muslim League got 14 seats.²⁸ The successful candidates were E. Ahamed from Kannur, P.M. Abobaker from Kozhikode, Bava Haji from Tirur C.M. Kutty from Kuttipuram, Umer Bafaqi Thangal from Kondotti, M. P.M. Ahmmad Kurrukkal from Malappuram, M. Modeenkutty Haji from Thanur, Avukkadar Kutty Naha from Tirurangadi, V.P.C. Thangal from Ponnani C.H. Muhammed Koya from Mankada, Seethi Thangal from Guruvayoor, M.P.M. Jaffar Khan from Mattanchery, M. Hakeemji from Kazhakkottam and M. Chadayan from Manjeri. Hamid Ali Shammad from Kasargode was the sole defeated candidate by a small margin of 95 votes by a rival independent candidate.²⁹ This shows that Muslim League played well in its alliance with the Communist party. Eventhough the ideology of Marxist party was against the beliefs of Muslims, the Muslim League made alliance with the party in order to attain development through political power. At the same time, there happened a division among the Muslim League due to its alliance with communist party. A small group of Muslims formed a party named Samasta Kerala Muslim League on 16th November, 1966. They fielded six candidates in 1967 assembly election. All the candidates were defeated and their deposits forfeited in the election.³⁰ It can be noted that the religious unity among the Muslims under the banner of Islam made the party a strong and influential one in the Kerala politics. The Muslim identity of Mappilas was the reflection of the social solidarity that was developed in them through the teachings and preachings of Islam, which provided a political as well as social model for them. Modernisation process created some confusion in them but they coped with their spirit of religion and gradually adjusted with the scientific and technological development and social changes as well as the political relations competitive to sustain. Political activities of Mappilas made changes in the educational and economic backwardness. Kerala legislative elections became the bargaining and contestation ground of religious groups of Muslims, Christians, Ezhavas, Nairs, and the like. Kerala was rightly called the 'political laboratory' of India. Communalism as it finds expression in caste is the bane of politics in Kerala. The Christians and Muslims represented the religious

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 June, 1961.

²⁸ *Statistical Report of General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala, 1967.*

²⁹ Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala, *Assembly Election since 1951*, pp.122-145.

³⁰ *The Chandrika* (Daily), 23rd February, 1967.

minorities and the Hindu backward classes and castes constituted the majority in Kerala. The battle for economic and political advantage is based on this social stratification.³¹ Communalism in Kerala, in general, is not of the violent kind, but cunning and exploitive. It is about sharing the spoils between the communities and castes with the politician as master of ceremonies. 'Malayalis' love their materialism too much to encourage real violence. Even the ultra Islamists were floundering because the average Muslim realised the merits of La Dolce Vita.³²

The community composition of the people of Kerala was evident in the constitution of a number of communal organisations. Chief among them are the SNDP of Ezhavas, NSS of Nairs, Catholic congress and the Muslim League. The organisations are disciplined pressure groups looking after the political, educational, economic and other interests of their respective communities, publishing their own newspapers and magazines. In fact they are the very pillars of political life in Kerala and the slightest shift in their voting pattern has an impact upon the fortunes of political parties in the state, for these communities are approximately balanced. It is undoubtedly stated that people in Kerala think in terms of Nairs, Christians, Ezhavas, Muslims etc. Caste or communal politics is the natural result of the caste or communal character of the society that existed for centuries. When people are divided into caste and religious communities in their day to day social life, the caste and communal psychology is bound to reflect itself in political life also.³³

The number of Muslim members in the legislative assembly from different political parties increased frequently. The year 1967 was a significant year for the Muslim politics in India. It became a ruling partner in the state government and vital and decisive force in Kerala. As per the previous understanding between the parties of the culture, Muslim league got two seats in the cabinet besides the deputy speaker's post. In the education and panchayat portfolios allotted to the league in which C.H. Muhammed Koya and M.P.M. Ahamad Kurikkal were declared nominees of the party, M.P.M. Jaffar Khan became candidate of the party to the post of deputy speaker. Besides the two league members there were two other Muslim Ministers in the cabinet namely E.K. Imbichi Bava of the CPM who was in charge of the Ministry of transport and P.K. Kunju of the Samyukta Socialist Party who held the finance portfolio.³⁴ The league members were constantly demanding adequate representation of Muslims in the Government services and the judiciary. Accordingly, due to their efforts E.K. Moidu was appointed the Judge of the Kerala High Court.³⁵ Besides that, it was only due to the pressure of the Muslim league that the Communist Ministry under the leadership of EMS Namboothiripad was fixed to grant 10% reservation for Muslims in the

³¹ K. Raman Pillai, *Coalition politics, the Kerala Experience, Rethinking Development Kerala's Development Experience*, Vol. I, edited by M A Oommen, p.99.

³² Paul Zachariya, Communalism and the good life, *India Today* (Weekly), August 24, 2012.

³³ Sadhana Sharma, *States politics in India*, p. 143.

³⁴ T.A. Muhammad, *op cit.*, p.244.

³⁵ *The Kerala Kaumudi*, (Daily), 25 March,1969.

government services considering their under representation in the Government services.³⁶

In 1968, at a State Muslim league conference held at Calicut M.P.M. Ahammed Kurikkal moved a resolution demanding the formation of Malappuram District. He was able to convince the delegates with the help of statistics which showed that formation of a new district was the only solution for the eradication of backwardness in that area.³⁷ The demand of the Muslim League for the creation of a Muslim dominated district of Malappuram created great concern and immediate reactions from several quarters. The great opponent of formation of Malappuram district was Bharatheeya Jana Sangh. Batch Ray Vyas, the former president and member of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, made speeches against the formation of Malappuram district and was arrested in 1969. He stated that the Muslim League which demanded for Pakistan was still following the partition plan. He blamed EMS Namboothrippad that he was the man behind this partition plan. Muslim League got Malappuram district. They also demanded for a Muslim colony in Ranchi. He expressed his greater concern with regard to the future of our nation. The cities and villages will be on demand among the Muslim majority. If it like this what will be the future of our nation? ³⁸ O. Rajagopal, the secretary of Kerala Pradesh Jana Sangham declared that they would struggle until the formation of Malappuram district was cancelled. ³⁹ However, there was no such agitation in Malappuram district, because Hindus and Muslims of the area unanimously supported the formation of the district, which was the realization of their prolonged dream. Janasangham activists under the leadership of K. Kelappan organised a picketing strike on 16 June, 1969 in Malappuram during the inauguration of the formation of the district which failed on the first day itself. However, the agitation in Kozhikode and Palakkad continued. K. Kelappan made a communal remark that the Muslim majority of Malappuram district will convert all the Hindus to Islam.⁴⁰ Newspapers like *Mathrubhumi* and *Indian Express* wrote editorials ridiculing the demand of the League saying that Mappilas were still holding the kind of attitude that had resulted in the partition of India. ⁴¹

However, CPM defended the demand for the formation of Malappuram district on the basis of the upcoming Assembly elections and outside after the fall of the ministry they changed their opinion. E.M.S Namboodiripad, who was the Chief Minister of Kerala at the time of the formation of Malappuram district later concluded that the formation of Malappuram district had helped the Muslim league in a bigger way to increase their political and organizational base The authority of the new district

³⁶ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly*, Vol. VI, No. 1119.

³⁷ *The Chandrika* (Daily), 24 October, 1967.

³⁸ E.K.Nayanar, "Malappuram Jillyum Vidwesa Pracharanangalum" (Mal.), *Desabhimani Onam Viseshal Prathi*, 1969, p. 103.

³⁹ *Mathrubhumi* (Daily), 24 June, 1969.

⁴⁰ E.K. Nayanar, *op. cit.*, p.104.

⁴¹ *The Mathrubhumi*, 1 March, 1968 and *The Indian express* (Daily), 28 February, 1968.

went into the hands of the Muslim League and thereby helped the growth of Islamic communalism in the state.⁴² The inauguration of the new district on June 16, 1969 brought to Malappuram a sense of pride and joy and they held themselves high with much self-respect. Thus, the dream of *Maplastan* became a reality. The rate of the growth of Muslims (19.11%) was the highest in Malappuram district when compared to Hindus(12.8%) and Christians (11.7%) during 1991-2001.⁴³

Due to the strength in population and social solidarity, the Muslim League performed well in the Loksabha elections. During the parliament elections of 1977, 1980, 1984 and 1989, Ibrahim Sulaiman Sett from the constituency of Manjeri and G.M. Banatwala from the constituency of Ponnani won and represented the Muslim league in the parliament.⁴⁴ During the 1991 election, E. Ahmed and Ibrahim Sulaiman Sett won and was represented in Loksabha from the constituencies of Manjeri and Ponnani respectively.⁴⁵ During the parliament elections in 1996, 1998 and 1999 E Ahmed won and represented the Muslim League from Manjeri and B.M. Banatwala won and represented the Muslim League in Loksabha from the constituency of Ponnani.⁴⁶ But in the 2004 election, Muslim League lost its seat in Manjeri and T.K. Hamsa who belonged to the Communist Party of India, Marxist(CPM) and E. Ahamed won in Ponnani constituency.⁴⁷ Thus, the growth rate of Muslim league to Indian Parliament in Kerala was 98%. There happened a political twist in Manjeri when the CPI(M) candidate won.

The failure of Muslim League in Manjeri constituency in 2004 was a thought provoking incident. Most of the newspapers reported that Muslim league faced a formidable challenges from the religious groups within the Muslim community and there was a change in the attitude of common people to the Muslim league which only represented the elite groups of the community. This was a major indication to change its policies and activities. The impenetrable fortress of the Muslim League destroyed by the CPI (M) candidate in Manjeri in 2004 was a turning point. The IUML Poll managers secretly admitted that Hamsa's candidature had brought Muslim league's camp into fitters.⁴⁸

T.K. Hamsa who was once the president of the Malappuram District Congress Committee parted ways with the Congress in 1982 and contested as an independent from the Nilambur Assembly constituency with the support of the CPI(M). He defeated the congress leader Aryadan Muhammed in his home turf. Interestingly in his maiden electoral battle in 1980, he had tasted defeat as a congress candidate from the same constituency in 1987. He won from the Baypore assembly constituency by the CPI (M)

⁴² EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party in Kerala* (Mal.), Vol. III, p.29.

⁴³ "Basic Demographic Statistics for Micro level human development planning in Kerala", *Kerala State Planning Board, December 2009*, UNDP Page 8 HDRC unit working paper series 5.

⁴⁴ *Statistical Report of General Election, Loksabha, 1991.*

⁴⁵ *Statistical Report of General Election, Loksabha, 1991.*

⁴⁶ *Statistical Report of General Election, Loksabha, 1996.*

⁴⁷ *Statistical report of General Election Loksabha 2004.* The Election Commission of India

⁴⁸ Biju Govind, "Muslim League faces a formidable challenge", *The Hindu* (Daily), 13 April, 2004.

ticket. In 1991 and 1996, he repeated his winning performance from Beypore. He was inducted into the Nayanar Ministry and was given charge of Public works, Wakf board and Hajj affairs. He was also an advocate at the Manjeri Bar. He shouldered the uphill task to break the conventional mind of the electorate at Manjeri. He felt that he would win with the well oiled cadre nature of the CPI(M) and the undercurrents prevailed among the Muslim community favoured him. The support of the powerful sunni factions led by Kanthapuram A.P. Abubaker Musaliar and the new voters who were fed up with the policies of Muslim League helped him to win the battle. The Muslim League candidate, K.P.A. Majeed belonged to the *Mujahid* sect. Though the E.K. group of the Sunni faction which is supported by the Muslim League threw its weight behind him, the other Muslim organisations like the *Jama-at-e Islami* and organisations like the National Development Front (NDF) did not reveal their political stand.⁴⁹ The Manjeri Lokhsabha Constituency covering the two assembly segments (Beypore and Kunnamangalam) in Kozhikodu district and other five in Malappuram district comprised of 51% Muslims, 40 % Hindus and 9 % Christians. While the Christians were spread over the Nilambur Assembly constituency, the Hindus were moderately concentrated in Manjeri, Nilambur, Beypore and Kunnamangalam. The Muslims were spread in all the seven assembly segments including Wandur, Malappuram and Kondotty. T.K. Hamsa got 426920 votes and K.P.A. Majeed got 379177 votes in this election.⁵⁰

Conclusion

The political *Asabiyyah* or group feeling worked a lot among the Muslim political organisations because of the multifarious dimensions of political Islam. Muslim politics was formed on the basis of the religion of Islam itself. Eventhough, different organisations worked among the community in the name of Islam, the chief motive of all those was the same- the welfare of the community.

An important factor behind the development of Islamic solidarity in Kerala was the strict religious practice of Islam under *Mahal* Committees. *Mahals* acted as the religious political and social organization of the Muslims, which were the small units of Islamic community in every village. They played significant role in the empowerment of Muslim community in every aspects of life, including social cultural and economic structure of the Muslims. It acts as a country, court, economic source, charitable trust and cultural school also. It deals with all the affairs of the Muslim society. The innumerable number of *Mahals* along with *Masjids* formed the basic unit of the Muslim community. The main factors of the formation of *Mahals* were the *Masjids* and the Muslims surrounded and stayed along it. It was the learning centre of faith to the new converts of Islam. Every *Masjid* constructed for the prayer for five times and gradually extended and become 'Juma'. Thus, the *Mahal* or *Masjid* become the Islamic cultural place of the particular place, and thus became the centre of Islamic social party.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Statistical Report General Elections, Lok Sabha 2004, Volume II, Constituency data summary.*