Religious Communities and Public Sphere: Political Articulations of Muslim Identity in Kerala

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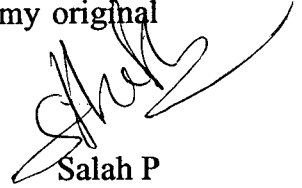*For the Award of the Degree of*

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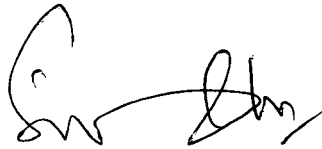Fax : +91-11-26742539

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Certificate

This dissertation entitled *"Religious Communities and Public Sphere: Political Articulations of Muslim Identity in Kerala"* submitted in partial fulfillment for the M.Phil degree of this University has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my original work.
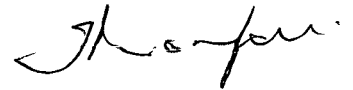
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We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

Surinder S. Jodhka
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Contents

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introduction

Every society has its own public sphere(s).The public sphere is the reflection of the social relationships, culture, politics and other aspects of a society. The term public sphere is first introduced in the work of Jurgen Habermas (1989) titled 'The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the category of Bourgeoisie Society'. The idea of public sphere as a sociological category gained more significance in recent time. Though it is less in number, there are studies on public sphere with variety of themes. The relationship between religious communities and public sphere is a relevant issue in sociology. The nature and mode of engagement of religious groups in the public sphere varies when significant changes take place in society. In South Asia, modernity as broader context and process influenced the interference of religious communities in the public sphere. This study is mainly an attempt to understand the sociological implications of the engagements of Mappila Muslims in the public sphere of late colonial Kerala, particularly the period after 1921.The study also tried to analyze the transformations in post colonial period in a brief manner.

The movements in public sphere of present day Kerala invoke to look at the involvements of religious communities. Generally the scholars considered the public sphere of Kerala, especially of the post -colonial period as vibrant, rational and critical (Biju 2007). The non interference of traditional forces such as religion and caste mainly due to the left political interventions in Kerala is considered as the primary factors in the formation of such a public sphere. There are two assumptions underlie this view. Firstly, it assumes that a critical, rational public sphere can be possible only through keeping religion and caste away from the public sphere. Secondly, the public sphere of Kerala developed as a result of a critical and rational debates where religion and caste were absent in all sense. Moreover, this is accounted as one of the major factors for the social development of Kerala. The interference of 'communal' forces in the public sphere in recent time got attention in such discussions.

As a matter of fact, the contemporary public sphere of Kerala is not free from either the involvement of religion or the influence of caste. Whether related to social development, education, politics, economy or culture, religious and caste groups involve in the debates and are highly influential in the public sphere. They manipulate the public opinion and influence the government's decision. Broadly, the involvement of communities in the public sphere is a social reality in Kerala. This proposed study begins with the assumption that, to understand contemporary public sphere, it is important to have a sense of the social history and the formation of public sphere. In Kerala, colonial period was the significant phase where communities acquired a new meaning in the public sphere. The colonial processes had/have larger implications in the later movements in the public sphere.

In this context some of the questions are relevant. Was the public sphere free from the influence of religion or caste in a stratified society like India in general and Kerala in particular at any time? Is it possible to understand public sphere merely in terms of consensuses? If not, how can we understand the conflicts and subordination in the public sphere? By posing these questions, this study tries to look at the relationship between the formation of community identities and the public sphere in Kerala. The study particularly focuses on Mappila Muslims, mainly located in the Malabar region of Kerala.

Review of Literature

This study is conducted through various strands of literature surveys. The literature about communities and identities gives various views on how community identities form and transform in societies. The varieties of perspectives available on communities and collective identities enriched the theoretical part. The discussion on the studies conducted on public sphere enabled to look at the empirical context with valuable insights. The discussions surmounted the narrow understanding and expanded the ideas of public sphere. The debate of secularism gave an added weight to view the relationships between religion and public sphere in South Asian communities. Overall, the theoretical discussions induced to raise questions regarding the participation of Muslim community and the public sphere in Kerala.

This study covers the larger discourses over the Muslim community in Indian context to make sense of the trends and perspectives that have been applied to understand them. There

were lots of literature available concerning the empirical contexts, both in the social history of Kerala in general and Mappila Muslims in particular. These studies were analyzed and the factual explanations substantiated the arguments. But regarding the public sphere, there were only few studies which directly speak about it, still it was possible to make sense of the nature of the public sphere formed in colonial Kerala by looking at the facts.

Objective of the Study

1 To understand the relationship between community and public sphere through a survey of existing literature.

2 To understand the formations/transformations of community identities and their relationships in the public sphere in colonial Kerala. .

3 To analyze the sociological implications of the engagements of Mappila Muslims in the public sphere in colonial and post colonial Kerala.

Design of the Study

Chapter 2- Religious Communities and Public Sphere: a Theoretical Discussion

In this chapter, a theoretical attempt to look at the relationships between the three important categories used in this study namely religion, community and public sphere will be taken. Firstly it looks at the contributions of classical sociologists about religion and politics and then reflects on the relationship between religion and public sphere. Secondly, this chapter looks at the larger discourses about communities and identity formations in general and in Indian context in particular. The contrasting perspectives on public sphere are a major focus of analysis. The theoretical discussions on the relationship between religion and public sphere and the critique of secularism will also be the focus.

- Classical sociologists on religion and politics
- Discourse on communities and identities
- Community identity in India
- Public sphere: contrasting views
- Public sphere in colonial India
- Religion and public sphere

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- Critique of secularism and public sphere in India
- Conclusion

Chapter 3 - Contextualizing Communities: the Colonial Kerala

This chapter is an attempt to locate Mappila Muslims in the larger social context in colonial Kerala. And because of this, the transformations in caste and religious groups in colonial period are put for analysis here. I try to look at some of the theoretical reflections in sociology over the transformations of caste which were part of the socio-political processes in colonial time. In contextualizing communities, the idea of region is important. This chapter is an effort to explore the significance of the region in understanding the community formations/transformations in Kerala and how the unification of the region helps in the imagination of communities. It tries to look at some of the studies conducted on communities and public sphere formed in this period. There are different perspectives through which community dynamics in the public sphere has been looked at. Modernity was a central theme in many of the studies and it is classified as a broader framework in this study. There were other perspectives like Marxism which has been discussed. An endeavor has been made to explain some of the empirical factors that consolidated the community identity.

- Caste in the political sphere: some reflections
- History of community mobilization in Kerala
- Region and communities in Kerala
- Modernity, communities and public sphere
- Other perspectives
- Factors which consolidated community formation
- Conclusion

Chapter 4 - Mappila Muslims and Public Sphere in Colonial Kerala

This chapter starts with the literature survey of the studies on Muslim community in South Asia with a particular reference to India. It brought out the picture of the theoretical perspectives available on Muslim community in India. The latter parts analyses the historical trajectories that Mappila Muslims had undergone in colonial

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Kerala. The literature survey of some of the study written about Mappila rebellion helped to contextualize the community. Simultaneously the study identified the problems in earlier studies and it induced to search for a nuanced understanding of identity formations/ transformations of community and its engagement in the public sphere. The complex process within and outside the community has been analyzed.

- Studies on Muslim community in India
- Mappila Muslims in Kerala: a historical background
- Mappila Muslims and public sphere: Malabar rebellion and after
- Nationalist discourse and public sphere
- The political sphere and Muslim league
- Language in the public sphere: marginality and counter publics
- Elites and public sphere
- Conclusion

Chapter-5 Muslims and Public Sphere in Post Colonial Kerala

This chapter is a retrospection of the post colonial situations of the Muslims in the Public sphere in India in general and Kerala in particular. The chapter briefly explained the major issues and problems that Muslims in India faced in the public sphere after independence. The issues like crisis of secularism, the social conditions of the Muslims as minority in democracy, discourse on reservation policies etc are taken for analysis. An attempt has been made to understand the distinct situation of Muslims in Kerala compare to its counterparts in India.

- Muslims and public sphere in contemporary India
- Reservation discourse and public sphere
- Muslims in post colonial Kerala

Methodology

This study is primarily based on the secondary sources. The historical method has been taken into consideration while discussing the public sphere and the Mappila Muslims in Kerala. Though I haven't done any fieldwork, it is not true that this work does not have the primary inputs as I myself belong to that region.

Theoretical Framework

The broader theoretical framework of the study draws from the literature on communities, public sphere and religion. This study is inspired by the post colonial perspective which looks communities as a colonial invention, as part of discursive processes and institutional practices. In addition, I have dealt with Habermas's notion of public sphere and its criticisms that reframed public sphere as a realm of power and conflict instead of mere consensuses and collective groups as a quintessential agent of action other than individuals. To make a comprehensive framework, the study also looks into the critique of secularism that sees religion as part of public life in South Asian communities.

Chapter 2

Religious Communities and Public Sphere: A Theoretical Analysis

For a theoretical framework, this chapter looks at the relationship between religious community and public sphere. Social science in general and sociology in particular engaged with the issues associated with religion, community and public sphere with different themes. But the complex relationship between religious community and public sphere has not been taken into consideration in sociological studies barring some recent developments. I think that it is possible to have a theoretical framework to study religion and its engagement in the public sphere by looking at the available discourses on community, religion and public sphere. By linking these three ideas theoretically I try to build a comprehensive approach to look the Muslim community in Kerala.

Classical Sociology on Religion and Politics

In classical sociological works, there is hardly any debate regarding the relationship between religion and public sphere. But, Marx, Durkhiem and Weber tried to explain the role of religion in the social lives. The perception of these thinkers on the relationship between religion and politics need to be mentioned here. Marx had his own vision on the relationship between religion and politics. For him, religion was the opium of the masses. Marx and Engels said that religion is part of the dominant ideology, a set of beliefs which permeate consciousness and uphold the interest of the ruling class, making the social order seen natural and inevitable (Beckford and Demarth111, 2003). In Marxian view religion is part of a larger superstructure. The spread of religion into the lives of ordinary people is part of the penetration of state into society, a top-down process of unification around a national culture as part of modernisation (ibid). The implicit idea in Marx's thought is that religion acted as an ideology of dominant class, a device for unifying the ruling class by giving them coherence and consciousness of their own superiority.

Though the most important contribution of Weber on religion is his analysis on the inheritance of religion in launching modern capitalism, he provided a wealth of analytical

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devices for understanding the way in which religion mesh with the larger system of stratification and politics. In Weber's account on political sociology, religion was a central issue especially when he talked about 'political legitimacy'. Weber looked at how the notion of power is legitimised by reference to religious costumes or traditions even in societies where legal, rational administrative systems are established. (Scharf 1970).Here, Weber looked at religion as a mobilising mechanism for rational purposes. Like Marx, Weber also viewed that religion has been historically an aid to social continuity of the politically dominant classes. Weber's analysis on status group explains how religious practices became standards for the conduct of their lives. According to Weber religion gives a culture, a lifestyle and also sets of level of prestige for a group or a community in the surrounding society.

Durkhiem considered religion as a socially cementing force. He says that what was real behind the religion was indeed the social. He argues that, like art, language, law and politics, religion too is socially produced and socially oriented (Davie 2007). He viewed religion as a set of beliefs and practices, relating to the sacred which create social bond between individuals. Durkhiem argues that religion can only be understood by concentrating on its social role in uniting the community behind a common set of rituals and beliefs.

In general, three of them tried to explain how religion plays its role in the social life of people. Their contributions are remarkable in the political sociology of religion. At the same time, there are limitations to use these ideas to study diverse historical realities. For example, a difficulty with the argument of Marx is that religion has not always been 'opium' that perpetuated dominant ideology. Many times, religion provided an organising device to mobilise large number of marginalised people for liberation (Beckford, Demarth 111, 2003). Marxist account on religion has not been carried forward with nuanced understanding. Whereas Weber's account showed more sensitivity to historical realities and cultural differentiation but that were not developed further enough. And Durkhiem's view on religion could not explain much in term of its affiliation with political processes.

There are serious limitations in the perspectives that emerged in sociology while conceptualising religion. The perspectives like functionalism looked at religion and society as non problematically monolithic entities operating on each other uniformly over space and time (Aloysius 1998). B.S Turner (1983) pointed that the sociology of religion has tended to regard the crude metaphor of base/ superstructure in classical Marxism as the only possible Marxist account of ideology in which religion is simply a reflection of economic relations of production. The phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches to religion tend to commit to the actors definition of reality. By concentrating on meaning of social actions, they tend to ignore the way in which the social structure shapes or limits actions (ibid). Overall, the sociology of religion has remained deeply embedded in a conventional frame of knowledge and focused on a narrow range of topics. The sociology of religion should not reduce religion as a cultural phenomenon or as a tool to economic interests or political requirements as it appeared in most of the works. Religion is part of the complex socio- political processes in every society; therefore we have to go beyond all these explanations to unravel the complexities involved in the relationship between religion and politics in society.

Discourses on Communities and Identities

This part looks at sociological discussions on communities and identities in general and the Indian context in particular. Though collective identities are not same as communities, the theories on collective identity give the idea about formations/transformations and persistence of communities in social world. 'Collective identity' has not been one of the major preoccupations of modern Sociology (Jodhka 1999).Initially, micro sociological perspectives like social psychology and symbolic 'interactionism' developed a concept of identity, which centered on the formation of individual's sense of self. These perspectives which emerged in 1970's focused on the formation of 'me' that explored the ways in which interpersonal interactions molded individual identity. But the study in past few decades on identity proves antithetic to the traditional concerns, the discussion around identities shifted to questions of collective identities and their political implications.

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Though community identity is a new concern in sociological thought, it is a concept grounded in classical sociological works. Durkhiem's 'collective conscience', Marx' 'class consciousness' Weber's 'Vestehen', and Tonnies' 'Gemeinshaft' etc are examples of this (Cerulo 1997). To define community in a traditional way, any collectivity of people that seems to have some kind of enduring social identity, solidarity and boundedness come to be regarded as community. And such communities are often regarded as natural groupings based on ties of shared blood, territory, language and culture (Upadhya 2001).These kinds of perceptions are generally known as 'primordialist' view (ibid). There are many other views as well in social science to understand communities. Here I first consider some of those perspectives available on collective identity like primordialism, instrumentalism, post structulism, Marxism etc.

Primordialist View:

This perspective is more used to understand ethnic and religious groups. It assumes that identities are deeply rooted in affective ties that shape primary loyalties and affinities. According to this view, all actors possess a strong sense of ethnic, racial or religious identity that primarily shapes their actions and world view (Yasher1998). In other words, all the features of a community that integrate it as a collective entity are definitely natural and essential in character. Though this view gives insight about the existence of deeply rooted identities like religion, it fails to problematize the conditions under which they become politically salient and engender political mobilizations (ibid).

Marxist View:

In Marxism, class is the primary basis of exploitation and therefore the source of identity. Marx's distinction between 'class in itself' and 'class for itself' is crucial in understanding identity. By 'class in itself', Marx refers to a particular social group, understood in terms of its social location in the relationship to the means of production (Marx 1959). A 'class in itself' develops into a 'class for itself' when they develop class consciousness, therefore, the development of class identity derived from the principal contradiction is the primary identity. Though Marxism recognizes class as the primary form of exploitation, it also offers theoretical interpretations of other forms of oppression based on gender, race and ethnicity. There are new

approaches available within Marxism elaborated upon by Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser etc which deal with the identity issue. The new studies in Marxist framework try to understand the cultural and ideological construction of identity. For example, Himani Banerjee (2001) drawing on Gramsci, looks at the aspects of class as social and ideological formations that act as the basis of identity. In her view there are different types of identities both 'invented' and 'inventing'. In her view, identities are cultural and ideological constructions at one level, but at the same time it must be seen in the particular socio- historical context and, therefore, agency and ideology are equally significant.

Post Structuralist, Post Modernist and Constructionist Views:

Despite differences, post structuralsits, post modernists and constructionists share a common view on collective identity. They commonly assume that identities are not given or ordered but are socially constructed and evolving. Post structuralists argue that individuals do not necessarily identify with or act according to structurally defined positions, structural conditions do not determine or define actors in any kind of uniform, unitary fashion (Yasher 1998). Post modernists focus on the local context, and dynamic process by which agents negotiate their identities. Community identity, from this perspective, is both constituted by social conditions and negotiated by individuals. 'Constructionists' argue that collectivities are social artifact- an entity molded, re-fabricated, and mobilized in accordance with reigning cultural scripts and centers of power (Cerulo1997).

Instrumentalist View:

The instrumentalists assume that individuals generally have political and material preferences and are goal oriented, and act intentionally, and engage in utility-maximizing behavior. By challenging 'primodialist' view instrumentalists questions why individuals choose to act collectively. In this view, the politicization of community loyalty is largely instrumental in achieving other goals. In this view, the conditions under which community becomes politicized are less relevant than modeling and predicting the utility of and capacity for collective acts (Yasher1998).

Community Identity in India

The above mentioned perspectives are the general classification of theoretical views on collective identity. Now, let me discuss the discourse over community in South Asian context with a particular reference to community identity in India. The understanding of community in India has been generally associated with traditional or pre-colonial Indian society. The very conceptualization of community itself is derived from the primordial view of Western sociology discussed above. Many of the studies in earlier periods both in Anthropology and Sociology in India did not show any departure from this view, rather the history of colonialism has an added weight in these studies. In such a discourse, if using Edward Said's term 'orientalist' discourse, community is considered as something that the East has retained but the West has lost (Van Der Veer 2001).The assumption is that, in the non western world, people are still bounded by tradition, costume and irrational religious beliefs. This notion of community is associated with whole series of oppositions: East/ West, irrational/ rational, traditional/ modern, spiritual/ materialistic and so on.

There was a larger shift in this tendency in recent days which tried to look at the emergence of community and identity in terms of the responses towards the broader political process in colonial and post colonial period. The conceptualization of community in mainstream Indian sociology in terms of 'primodialist' view has been questioned by 'constructivist' understanding of community (Upadya 2001)). It suggests that most of the communities and identities we see today did not exist in pre-colonial times but have emerged in the recent past, particularly during colonial rule (ibid). The scholars of this persuasion draw inspiration mainly from Foucault and Said. They argue that caste and other community identities were invented under colonialism in the operation of certain political and discursive processes, and there by identify the colonial state as the primary source of such identities. This post colonial perspective emerged as a critique to the earlier colonial discourse on community. In these studies the attention is paid to the ways in which social life is discursively constructed. There are lots of works that describe the processes by which ethnic, regional and religious identities have been historically produced and mobilized. Sara Joseph (1998) called this tendency as 'communitarian' perspective. The western communitarian ideas helped the post colonial scholars to look at factors like colonialism, imperialism etc to

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understand the community dynamics in India. Communitarian thinkers in India celebrate the politics of difference, the project of restoring communities as political actors (ibid).

Some of the scholars looked at the administrative processes in colonial period and considered it as a very crucial factor in the formation of community identity. Their argument is that the fuzzy boundaries of communities in pre-colonial period were replaced by discreet categories as part of census enumeration and classification of colonial rulers which crystallized the identity by making consciousness among individuals (Kaviraj1997). The discursive operations in colonial period induced people to see and organize themselves in terms these categories. In short, the modern governing practices constituted a new meaning for community; it produced a brand of modern collective consciousness in India in which the politics of cultural difference was so central.

The studies which emerged on community in this track tend to romanticize the pre-modern era where pluralism of the pre- modern life and co- existence of communities without fixed boundaries were depicted as ideal society. Therefore, many times, the critique of modernity in terms of community studies implicitly provided an authentic value to older society. Simultaneously the critique of modernity has a radical intent also, especially when it discusses subaltern groups (Joseph1998)). In this context it is important to discuss subaltern studies.

Communitarian studies also come under the subaltern framework at least in few works, the most important is the work introduced by Ranajith Guha. The centrality of community in such studies is reflected through the stories of indigenous movement in colonial period and the popular experience and memory largely neglected by elite historiography. The subaltern actors such as women, out castes, peasants and other collectivities resisted and fought against hegemonic power. These issues have been discussed at length by subaltern historians like Ranajith Guha in relation to the peasantry and peasant consciousness. The relationship shaped by 'dominance' and 'subordination' in the interaction between collective groups was the major interest in those studies. The articulation of power in both institutionalized arena and discursive aspects determined the interaction of communities in terms of dominance and

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subordination (Guha1983). In short, if we look at the history of many regions, the collective consciousness that emerged in colonial period was subaltern consciousness, and it was a central theme in many of the recent works (Spivak1992). But it is a fact that the subaltern studies remained as a shadow presence in communitarian studies.

In communitarian writings, Sara Joseph (1998) pointed that, the trend is for the issue of multiple cultural identities to be discussed in term of consciousness. In those studies the material aspect of culture gets little analysis; moreover the idealized communitarian character attached to subaltern movement by these scholars did not notice the separations within such movement (ibid). Similarly, Upadya (2001) says that it ignored the concrete political or economic structure within which community construction takes place; it neglects the role of agency and overemphasizes the knowledge system and discourses of the state. They did not escape from the traditional communitarian and indigenist theories which considered the community as an authentic social unit; therefore it reproduced the colonial or orientalist understanding of social processes (ibid).

This study broadly agrees and follows the post colonialist view that community identities are mainly formed in colonial period as part of colonial discursive processes and institutional practices (those who hold this view mainly follow the arguments of constructivist or post modernist though some differences prevail among all these).

Public Sphere- Contrasting Views

As mentioned early, the idea of public sphere gained significance in sociology in Habermas's work (1989) 'the structural transformation of public sphere: An Inquiry into the category of Bourgeois society'. In his work he discusses the bourgeoisie public sphere which emerged in 18th century Europe after the separation of state and church in the wake of the development of capitalism. He says "The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity and social labor" (Habermas1981:27). In such a public sphere

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the authority was contested by the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues (ibid). He found it as a domain of 'common concern', a space for critical debate and it is inclusive in nature. There developed a political consciousness in the pubic sphere in opposition to absolute sovereignty of state, people articulated the demand for abstract laws and principles in that public sphere. Public sphere then became a functional element where civil society articulated their self interest and state authority corresponded with the civil society through public sphere (ibid). To put his ideas simply, public sphere meant a social space of communication where citizens deliberate upon their common affairs, this is an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. It is a site for production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. This concept of public sphere permits to keep in view the distinction between state apparatuses, economic markets, and democratic associations, distinctions that are essential to democratic theory (Frazer1990).

There is a normative potential attached to Habermas' public sphere (Van Der Veer 2001, Bhargava 2005). His normative intent was to focus on the importance of enlightened critique of reason and rationality (Van Der Veer, 2001). It contains formative elements of a common space where free and equal individuals meet to discuss and debate issues of common concern, arriving there by at a normatively binding public opinion (Bhargava 2005). The origin of public sphere he explained had a context, which is the separation of state and church in Europe. But it is an evolving institution which was a Bourgeoisie public sphere that had undergone several transformations.

Later many scholars disagreed with Habermas view of public sphere. Habermas's ideas based on consensus were questioned by those who advocated Foucault's notion of power and conflict. Bent Flyvbjerg (1993) says conflict and inequality is inherent in the public sphere, so we need to look at the problem of exclusion, difference and the politics of identity. There are 'declared standards' and 'manifest self understanding' in the public sphere that exclude certain groups which Habermas did not realize (ibid). In the public sphere even if declared standards do not exist, some groups may not be able to participate, then they may assert through non discursive means to gain access in the public sphere, the politics of activism, power politics etc. It may lead to the formation of counter publics. So,

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the public sphere is not a single overarching sphere as explained by Habermas. There were competing counter publics contemporaneous with the bourgeois public sphere in the form of nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics and working class publics (Frazer1990). Frazer says "Virtually from the beginning, counter publics contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative style of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech" (Frazer 1990:61).

What Frazer argues is particularly significant in stratified society because inequality reflects in the discursive arena may lead to the advantage of dominant group and the disadvantage of subordinates. The tendency of absorbing the less powerful and marginalized in the public sphere is also a historical reality. In such a public sphere the consensus that purports to represent the common good in such a social context should be regarded with suspicion because the consensus may be constructed by the effects of dominance and subordination (ibid). Frazer talks about the possibility of different publics. Subaltern groups make counter publics through parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinate social group invent and circulate counter discourses; assert their identities, interests and needs. The engagement of collective groups based on caste, religion, gender etc are common in the pubic spheres other than individuals.

By drawing inspiration from the critique of Habermas's formulation of public sphere, I look public sphere in terms of participation of communities other than individuals. I consider public sphere as a realm of conflict as well as consensus.

Public Sphere in Colonial India

The idea of public sphere gained significance in the Indian context in recent studies. Neeladri Bhattacharya (2005) questioned the 'teleological' assumptions of Habermas by examining the public sphere which emerged in the colonial India. By referring to colonial public sphere he asks "was the public sphere as it emerged in India such a consensual space?, was it a space for rational debate defined by the use of critical reason?" (ibid: 132). By emphasizing on the possibility of collective engagement in public he agrees with Frazer's view. He argues that public sphere is not just a space where private individuals appear as

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public; it is also a space where communities are forced to come together. The emergence of the public sphere in colonial period allowed communities to transform community matters into public issues and inner community matters into public battles. He noticed that one of the projects of the colonial public sphere was the introduction of individual identities through law which specified rights and obligations and made public categorizations and classifications. There the social relations were reclassified and recasts within fixed, determinate through publicly recognized categories and public code. On the one hand community opened itself outside world; on the other hand it encloses itself within harder boundaries and community asserted against another in the public sphere. The significance of such an understanding lies in the fact that in a stratified society the analysis must be focused on diversity and inequality.

The nationalist movement and related political processes determined the nature of colonial public sphere. The particular public formed in colonial period got attention in many studies. The language of common good, of public interest, national interest etc becomes part of general discourse of nationalism as it emerged in India (Batacharya 2005). Partha Chatterjee's (1998) idea of two domains in colonial India is significant here He says, one domain was the material domain dominated by the modern science and technology, to which colonized people were not acquainted with. So, it was an alien thing for them. The other domain was the spiritual, the inner domain influenced by Indian tradition, which marked the cultural identity of nation. The opposition between the two domains was re- articulated in the opposition between outer/ inner, public / private, western/ Indian, modernity/tradition, male/ female and political/ cultural (ibid). In the outer sphere, the superiority of the west and the ideals of modernity as well as its institutional forms and procedures were acknowledged. Chatterjee depicted the inner spiritual domain as a cultural weapon in the public sphere that resisted the colonial imperialism.

M.S.S Pandian (2002) interrogates Chatterjee's argument. He argues that the inner domain used as weapon of cultural resistance to imperialism in the form of national community excluded the subaltern voice, the 'traditions' of lower castes. When the 'national community' and 'national culture' are depicted as a cultural resistance against colonial

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domination, what is missing in such studies is the history of subordination of subaltern groups within this 'national culture'. It shows the complex relationship between caste and public sphere in colonial period. There was exclusion of some sections like lower caste groups, women and other communities within the dominant pubic sphere. Moreover, the resistance of lower castes in the public sphere not only against colonial power but also against the hegemonic caste groups has not been explained satisfactorily in colonial studies.

It is clear that some communities were excluded from the public sphere. But inclusion and representation of communities in the public sphere was also considered as important in nationalist discourse (Bhattacharya, 2005). The elite section represented the community interest on a wider platform; re- affirmed the language of individual within the community public (ibid). The nationalist agenda for inclusion of communities enabled elites to represent for communities. Several times, this elitism excluded the mass interest and it marginalized their values and practices.

In colonial period traditional communities entered in the public sphere in the form of political society. Aditya Nigam (2005) refers to the idea of political society proposed by Partha Chatterjee and says that it is a space where pre- modern communities tried to negotiate with the modern socio-political processes. Public sphere is a terrain of political society that negotiates with the state through the mobilizational avenues provided to them by democracy and elitism which is part of the political society and public sphere. Rajeev Bhargava (2005) suggested that the idea of political society and public sphere are some what similar and both opened up under the conditions of modernity. Political society is a society outside the domain of power, it is political because the objective of institutions and persons acting within this space is to influence official institutions, supervise their functions or keep a check on their activities.

Religion and Public Sphere

There is a complex relationship between religion and public sphere in all societies. By looking at the literature available, this part will analyze the relationship between religion and public sphere. Habermas in his earlier work did not look the role of religion in the public

sphere. As Rajeev Bhargava (2005) notes, the discussion of Habermas on public sphere relies on an extremely thin idea of culture and identity, so the neglect of religion is obvious. But Habermas later made some kind of revision on his view of public sphere. He recognized the importance of considering religion as a factor when discussing public sphere. He is of the opinion that religious traditions and communities of faith gained a new, hitherto unexpected political importance (Habermas 2006).The religious fundamentalism of contemporary time in the Middle East, Africa, South East Asia, and the Indian subcontinent provoked him to rethink about religion in the context of modernity.

In his view, the crisis of modern state is its failure to complete its agenda of secularizing society. In other words, the pathology of 'unfinished projects of modernity' leads to the assertion of communities of faith or religious groups. These processes in contemporary world forced Habermas to revisit public sphere and the role of religious communities especially in South Asia. Habermas offered a solution without departing from his fundamental assumptions of public sphere. For him, the secular state has to be placed on a non-religious footing. The democratic procedure is able to generate such a secular condition legitimated by virtue of two components- first, the equal participation of all citizens in a critical rational way and second, the recognition of the communities of faith in the political realm (ibid). He thinks that religious citizens must give priority to the secular reasons that dominate in the public arena. On the other hand the problem with secular citizens is that they perceive religious communities as pre- modern and views that religion no longer has any intrinsic justification to exist, after the separation of state and church. So, the secular citizen must grasp their conflict with religious opinion as reasonably expected disagreement, secular citizens should be willing to seriously enter and engage in a discussion on statements linked to religious truth claims. So, he urged for a negotiation between rational citizens and communities of faith on behalf of the state.

Peter Vander Veer (2001) in his book 'Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain' explained the development of public sphere and its relationship with religion. He gives examples of empirical cases and shows how important religion is for the creation of the public sphere. He says that Hebermas analysis of the enlightenment traditions

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belong, at the theoretical level, very much to the discourse of modern, European self representation. A striking element in Habermas' self representation is the neglect of religious public opinion because it cannot be regarded as rational and critical. He acknowledged the productive side of Habermas' argument, his focus on the sociology of public sphere, both the discursive possibility of critical debate and the tendency of public sphere to expand and allow a growing number of participants. He says that the notions of publicity, the public and the public opinion captured by Habermasian concept of public sphere are important and can be used for comparative purposes if we are not constrained by Habermas's secularist perspective.

Simultaneously he holds a view opposite to Habermas that the separation of state and church does not lead to the decline of social and political importance of religion. With the rise of nation state enormous shift occurred in what religion means. He says that 19th century public sphere was not at all secular because the public sphere emerges out of the interaction between the missionary activities and the counter activities of Hindu resistant groups or Hindu reformism as in Islam and Sikhism (ibid). The elitism among religious community which depended upon control of institutions, rituals, practices, new reforms in terms of education and so on, lead to the stronger influence of religion in the public sphere (ibid). The studies among social scientists centered on an assumption that modern west is uniquely secular and East is religious, it actually reduces complex history and dichotomizes the idea of secularism and religiosity (ibid). He says that in the creation of public sphere in Britain the role of evangelical movement is crucial. In India, these missionary movements are mirrored by a whole range of religious movements that are instrumental in creating public sphere in India.

His arguments are influenced by the works of anthropologist Talal Asad. Talal Asad (1993) criticized existing anthropological studies, laying emphasis on the politics behind knowledge construction in western anthropology. He criticized the existing view of religion that sees it as an autonomous essence, not to be confused with the essence of science, or politics, or of common sense and defining it as a trans- historical and trans-cultural phenomenon. He says that the separation of religion from politics is a modern, western norm,

the product of a unique post-reformation history. He looked at religious discourse in political arena as a disguise for political power.

The argument of Asad is that there is a construction of religion as a new historical object; anchored in personal experience, expressible as belief sentiment, dependent on private institution, and practice. The construction of religion ensures that it is part of what is inessential to our common politics, economy, science and morality. Talal Azad observed that Habermasian view of the progressively liberating aspects of secular, bourgeois society is influenced by Kant's idea of public, publicity and critical reason. He says that public sphere is necessarily articulated by power and there is no public sphere of free speech, because there is a pre- established limit attached to public sphere. So, even if somebody asserts himself or herself in the public, it may not be necessarily recognized. So, the access for certain individuals and groups in the public sphere have always been restricted in all societies. The exclusion of religion in the public sphere in certain societies must be understood in terms of power and politics in society. In his view there was always a conscious attempt to privatize religion from public or politics, because it threatens power.

A discussion on secularism will bring out the issues associated with religion and public sphere more clearly. Talal Asad unravels the history of secularism in his book 'Formations of the Secular Christianity, Islam modernity'. He says that "Secularism is not simply an intellectual answer to a question about enduring social peace and toleration. It is an enactment by which political medium (representation of citizenship) redefine and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender and religion"(Asad 2003). This clearly states the broader context in which religion became privatized from the public. He refers to India and says that though it is a country with a secular constitution, the problem of communalism persists. He pointed that the assertion of excluded, unfit communities, whether it be lower Caste Hindus, Muslim or Christians, is considered pathology of modern society by saying that they are not secular. Here secularism becomes a mask to control power.

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Critique of Secularism and Public Spheres in India

In India the issues regarding religion and public sphere has been addressed through the secularism debate. The concept of secularism has been a favorite among communitarian thinkers as an example of an alien category which was imposed on Indian society by the colonial power. The two main arguments have been put forward by communitarian critique of secularism is that, secularism is alien to India and that a secular state would not be able to defend religious plurality (Kaviraj 1997). It is observed that secularism has a deep root in Christian worldview (Asad 2003; Madan1997).In communitarian writing, the indigenous notion of tolerance between religious communities has been defined as an alternative to secularism. Communitarians have argued that Indian society has practiced tolerance without being secular in the Western sense. The sharing of everyday practices and rituals at the local level by the communities of different religious persuasions is often cited as an example of such tolerance.

The social change in colonial period made a fundamental change in the character of religious communities especially through the processes of modern enumeration and censes mapping which shaped the self perception of groups (Kaviraj 1997). Colonial policies encouraged clearer self definition of major religious communities with their belief and it resulted in conflict between communities (ibid).The colonial policy over religion was ambiguous; it tried to privatize religion from public when it threatened the power, at the same time they promoted religious assertions for their benefits. Referring to South Asian society, T.N Madan (1997) says that secularism is a social myth which draws a cover over the failure to separate politics from religion in a society in which its members live. He views that South Asia's religious traditions are totalizing in character, and religion is constitutive of society. Secularism as an ideology has emerged from the dialectic of modern science and Protestantism, not from a simple repudiation of religion and the rise of rationalism.

Ashis Nandi (1989) argues that the imported idea of secularism has become increasingly incompatible and uncomfortable in South Asian society. According to him, in the eye of secularism, one can follow religion in private life, but in public life, one is expected to leave one's faith behind. Secularism stands for public life where religion is not admitted. He

argues that, after the emergence of secularism, religion in South Asia has split into two: faith and ideology. By faith, he meant religion as a way of life, a tradition which is non monolithic and operationally plural. By ideology he meant religion as a sub national, national or cross national identifier of populations contesting for or protesting non- religious, usually political or socio- economic interest. The modern state always prefers to deal with religious ideologies rather than with faiths. Believers are excluded from the public, as they are supposed to be scientific and rational to be able to engage in the public. The crucial point Nandi made is that, religion provides an overall theory of life, including public life, which is not tolerable for those advocating secularism.

According to Akeel Bilgrami (1997), neither the pre- modern conception of the innocent spiritual integration of religion and politics, nor the Nehuruvian separation of religion and politics can cope with demands of Indian political life. He pointed out that Nehru's failure to provide for a creative dialogue between communities is not just a failure of immediate post independence period of policy formulation by the state. There are very crucial historical antecedents to it. Communal representations always dominated Indian politics, therefore secularism never got the chance to emerge out of a creative dialogue between these different communities, and he called it as Sui genres (ibid).

The debate over secularism shows that public sphere is the realm where the fate of religious communities was determined in relation to the policies and processes of secularism. The secularization processes in the colonial and postcolonial period transformed the nature of the engagement of religious communities in the public sphere in complex ways.

Conclusion

Colonial period witnessed major changes in the form, nature and engagement of communities in the social world. Public sphere is the realm where these changes were reflected. There is interpenetration between communities and the public sphere it engages with. The interference of power and subsequent conflict and subjugation of collective groups in the public sphere were part of the socio- political processes in colonial period. It influenced the fate of communities in the public sphere. In turn, assertion of communities

impacted in the discursive and institutional arenas of public sphere. The complex relationship between religion and politics had an added impact on the engagement of various religious communities in the public sphere. Public sphere needs to be defined here in a particular way. There is no consensus over the idea of public sphere and it appears as a vague category. Here I consider public sphere as a broad realm between private space and the domain of the state. There can be different forms of public sphere like literary sphere, political sphere, institutional arenas etc. Political organisations, civil society, associations etc dealing with the issues of 'common concern' can be seen as components of that public sphere.

Chapter-3

Contextualizing Communities: The Colonial Kerala

To understand the role of communities in the public sphere in India, we need to contextualize communities in a particular socio- political terrain of the region which constitutes a public sphere. For that purpose, it will be worthwhile to locate colonial Kerala as a region consisting of various communities.

The transformations of fuzzy, fluid social groups in relation to the structural changes in colonial Kerala have been understood in different ways. Caste was the predominant category of analysis in most of the studies dealing with the transformation of social groups in colonial Kerala. But religious groups are equally important in understanding the community dynamics of the region. The participation of communities in the public sphere has something to do with the 'discourse' of caste as well as religious groups (Dirks 2001; Menon 2002). The literatures about the social history of Kerala provide the inference that there was interpenetration between caste and religion in the public sphere. It can be seen at two levels. First, the nature of the caste movements emerged in that period was intrinsically tied up with religious beliefs and practices of the people. Such religiously expressed social protests of lower castes and other marginalized communities found expression in a variety of ways like construction of new religions, appropriation of new religions, re-fashioning of Hindu tradition etc (Aloysius 1998).Secondly, the participation and fate of religious communities like Christians and Muslims in the public sphere in Kerala are well associated with the interference of caste groups in the public sphere, especially in the political sphere. This interpenetration between caste and religion in different forms was a crucial factor in the transformation of communities in the socio-political sphere; therefore, the elucidation of the nature of this linkage between caste and religion is significant.

This chapter is divided into three parts; the first part tries to mention some of the ideas found in the prevailing studies about the transformation of caste in colonial India in general. Second part deals with how the formations/ transformations of communities in colonial

Kerala have been understood by scholars. It will start with a specific discussion over the region and its relationship with formations/transformations of communities. In the third part I try to discuss some of the factors operated in Kerala that accentuated community intervention in the public sphere.

Caste in the Political Sphere: Some Reflections

Before coming to the picture of Kerala, I here deal with the some of the works that looks at the transformation of caste in the colonial socio-political situation. M.N Srinivas (1962) looks at the dynamics of caste at two levels: the political level and the social and ritual level. In his view, caste assertions and mobility can be understood as the processes operated at political level during colonial period which weakened the ritual aspect of caste. So, when caste groups are interfering in the public sphere, the ritual aspect of the caste starts weakening and it becomes a political group. His comparative understanding of caste brought the regional variations in the nature of the transformation of caste. For example in the case of Kerala, the integrated Christian population, well knit group of Muslims in Northern part and the Hindus constituting the demographic picture is considered a remarkable factor to look at the dynamics in Kerala with its own specificity. In his observation, Brahmins did not westernize properly in Kerala, they were reluctant to participate in education and other modern opportunities at initial level. Nairs[1] were the dominant caste and Ezhavas[2] had undergone the process of 'sankritization' [3] and achieved social mobility.

Tradition and modernity debates discuss the transformations of caste groups in colonial period. Rudolph and Rudolph (1984) placed the discussion over community in the context of modernity-tradition debate. They argue that the pure dichotomy of tradition and modernity is a wrong assumption. The fact that the traditional forces such as caste and

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1 One of the entrenched caste groups in Kerala in colonial time.

[2] One of the historically subordinated caste groups in Kerala.

[3] A concept introduce by M.N Srinivas to put simply, this is the process by which lower caste groups imitates the life style, rituals, and practices of upper castes to achieve social mobility.

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religious groups survived even after penetration of modernity, it questions the assumption of the dominant paradigm of modernity. In all societies, social change not only derives from the external objective conditions which are revolutionary, rather the alternative potential within the system or tradition also generates it (ibid). They used the concept of 'paracommunities' to understand the new formation of caste in the political level to pursue social mobility, political power and economic advantage. The 'paracommunity' resembles in the form of the voluntary associations or interest groups in the public sphere. The formation of 'paracommunity' leads to the structural and cultural changes in society by providing an adaptive institution where traditional and modern feature can merge and fuse. According to Rudolph and Rudolph, the replacement of sacred hierarchical feature of Indian society generated a space for the pursuit of social power, status and economic interest.

The studies which look at caste as a modern phenomenon discuss how caste became an irreducible factor in political sphere. Dirks (2001) argue that, caste is a modern phenomenon, a product of discursive practices invented under colonialism. During colonial rule, caste became the single most important category to express, organize and symbolize India's diverse forms of social identity, community and organization. Precisely, he viewed caste as a colonial construction. Some of the observations of Dirks are relevant in this context. He argues that caste was never subsumed to the analytical dualism that made the separation of social and religious as found in Europe. Moreover, he says that the examination of colonial history of caste will compliment any investigation of the affiliation of religious identities with political communities in South Asia. He pointed out that, during colonial time caste was identified as anti-state, anti-individualistic, totalizing and religious both by scholars and administrators. He also pointed out the importance to recognize the role of missionary that represented Christianity as true religion and something which allow the genuine separation between the political and social on the one side and the religious on the other.

Caste did not disappear, instead emerged as a political mechanism in colonial period (ibid).There emerged conflicts in colonial period with special face in the wake of politicization of caste around the census (ibid). He views that the competing claims of different groups in the public was always a threat to public order and smooth administration.

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It led the colonizers to think and establish public sphere in India as distorted and underdeveloped, and this agenda was not simply found in official level rather the whole anthropological enterprise and missionary attempts joined with the former (ibid).

Anyhow, there were some kinds of transformations taking place for all social groups in the colonial period. In the public sphere, the traditional groups based on ascribed status became what Partha Chatterjee called as 'political communities' (Chatterjee 1998). They emerged as a wider group in response to socio-political processes of colonialism. There was a complex process of interpenetration of caste and religion at one level, at another level there emerged a conflict between communities and the colonial force. There had always been a conscious attempt from colonizers to restrict caste and religious assertions because it threatened the power.

History of Community Mobilizations in Colonial Kerala

The social history of colonial Kerala is featured by community mobilizations. The late 19th and early 20th witnessed the rise of caste and religious groups in a new form in the public sphere. From this period onwards, the consolidation of each community has been taking place in response to socio- political processes. Ezhava community reformed under Sreenarayana Guru and mobilized for its own needs. Like wise Ayyankali worked for the most backward sections of the society and motivated to mobilize 'untouchables' as a group to get out of discriminatory practices and social justice. Similarly upper caste groups like Nayars and Namboodiri's were also mobilized to reform community and to protect their interests. The case of religious groups like Muslim community was not different from this; they also organized under strong leaderships. There are different ways through which these processes have been analyzed in literature.

Region and Communities in Kerala

The socio-political changes in colonial period and the nature of subsequent formations/ transformations of communities vary from one region to another. Bernad Cohn says "There are regional differences in South Asia, just as there is a reality to think about South Asia as a geographic and historical entity or Indian Civilization as a cultural

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unity"(Cohn1996:36).Any attempt to study communities in a given region necessitates an insight about the specific social history of that region. In other words, the territoriality of a given region becomes meaningful only when it is claimed by some community/communities (Jodhka 2006).In that sense, Kerala must be seen as a historical, cultural, linguistic and structural entity that constitutes the confluence of communities.

Firstly, the question of differences within the region in colonial time needs to be looked here. The notion of colonial Kerala as a homogeneous entity is contested by arguments that Kerala was divided by three princely states called Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The studies show that there are variations in terms of cultural practices, social relationship and in the wave of social reforms in colonial period in these three regions (Aloysius 2005). The caste system was not as rigid in Malabar when compared to other regions. Likewise, reform movements first emerged in southern region (Travancore), while the community assertions occurred mainly in the form of caste in south, in Malabar; the northern region it was more religious basis (ibid).

But, there are evidences to suggest that colonialism helped to integrate the region despite these differences. For example the integration of the region was made possible with expansion of community boundaries (Arunima 2006). In other words, there was something unique emerging in colonial Kerala. This unique feature is nothing but the transformation of traditional social categories like caste, religion etc into 'political communities' together with the imagination of region. So, the imagination of Kerala as a region and emergence of community identities are related processes. She addressed this question by looking at the public sphere that emerged in colonial Kerala. The idea of 'imagined community' is applied to conceptualize the impact of print media and development of language in public sphere of Kerala. She pointed out that the standardization of Malayalam language in colonial period resulted in the imagination of region among people of Kerala as a single community. The standardization of Malayalam language created a regional public sphere, but then, that was not a regional public sphere alone, instead it also helped to the imagination of communities of ethnic, religious and caste groups. Standardized Malayalam language acted as a medium through which each community constructed a past of their own. In other words, the process

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of expansion of territorial affinity of Malayalam speaking people in colonial period as a single region simultaneously created the ground for community imagination within the region. This enables us to read that the internal demarcation in the region in terms of territorial, political and cultural factors challenged to an extent in the case of emergence of community identity.

The peculiarity of the region and community assertions is taken as an explanation for social development at least in few studies. For example, Aloysius (2005) highlights the importance to trace the historicity of the region and community formations in Kerala to understand contemporary social development fully. In colonial period, it was a small region untouched by major imperialist, anti- imperialist interventions compared to other states (ibid). The roughly divided population of Hindus, Muslims and Christians made this region unique. He pointed out that, though there were significant variations in different regions of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, by and large there was an ethno- linguistic unity in culture specific form of socio- religious hierarchy. In his view, though Malayali society was fragmented in terms of territorial politics, the people from Travancore to Malabar developed a common Malayali ethnicity even before British rule. The practice of Hinduism, the caste hierarchy and the presence of Christians and Muslims made this region unique from other regions. He opines that the emergence of the region is not fully associated with colonial changes rather the 'malayaliness' expressed itself across the region even in the time of non standardized language. The common social tradition, caste practice and ethno- wide festivals united the region much before colonialism.

The other factor that made this region different from the rest of the country is that, it was not politically monopolized, but political power was ambiguously distributed among several groups- the British, local rajas and dominant communities (ibid). In Aloysius's view there was a common enemy identified by all subordinated communities, that is caste feudalism. And the struggle against such common enemy played a role in the modern political identity of ethnic communities in Kerala. The ethnic assertions were not only characterized by the socio- political egalitarianism within the region but also by the quest to

sweep the hegemony of outsiders (both colonizers and the Tamil Brahmins who hold position in administration).This also strengthened the processes of unification of the region.

Anyhow, there are contesting views on the homogeneity of the region called Kerala. The territorial, socio-political and cultural differences are historical reality. But there are evidences to suggest that certain amount of commonality within the region contributed to the unification of the region. The socio- cultural changes occurred as consequence of colonial modernity helped to accentuate this process. More importantly, region wide community formations in terms of caste and religion had an added weight in the process of regionalization.

Modernity, Communities and Public Sphere

Modernity was the central theme in most of the studies dealing with community formations/ transformations. As mentioned above G. Arunima's (2006) study shows that the standardization of language not only leads to a pan-Kerala identity formation, but it also led to the imagination of different religious communities simultaneously. This process occurred through the writings of religious scholars in Malayalam. It was a process of remembering the history of religious community. The establishment of modern print culture facilitated the incorporation of a variety of events, places and people to create a genealogy of belief for every religious community. So, the replacement of older liturgical languages like Syrian, Arabic or Sanskrit by Malayalam lead to the formation of both Malayali ethnic as well as communitarian identity(ibid).Once the missionary enterprise inaugurated this, the contestation for space was observed between religious communities and caste. Her study shows that community identities whether it is based on caste or religion would endure despite modernization. She pointed that the processes of standardization of Malayalam did imply neither a total eradication of older literary, cultural practices, nor a creation of purely secular public sphere.

Dilip Menon's (2002) article looks colonial modernity as a context and a process in which collective groups are engaging in the publics with religious imaginaries. It looks at the South Indian experience with a specific reference to Kerala. The argument is that, the project

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of modernity inspired by colonial ambitions had a different impact in Kerala which actually worked against the predicted outcome, like development of individualism, reason and rationality. He says that, in practice, the individual is subordinated to social groups and political order, moreover, individual is located in a traditional private sphere within which colonialism feared to tread. Here the fundamental hierarchical and inegaliatarian notion of caste came to preside alongside religion as an irreducible essence of Indian civilization; therefore, modernity became rhetoric rather than the project of colonialism.

His view also goes in the track of Anderson' imagined community. It shows us that the imagined community is not simply a story of national community emerged in the wake of modernity; but it gives insight about the creation of a new kind of believing community also against the possibility of disintegration of religion, a dilemma generated after modernity. This argument of Menon with a reference to Kerala is very much justified and has been discussed in the first chapter in detail. Talal Asatd (1993) argues that any notion considering religion as something operating at private level, and has nothing to do with public life and politics, would be a wrong assumption. It was the colonial assumption that, state's institutions could accommodate all political issues and the issues relating to religion, caste and so on were 'apolitical' (Menon 2002). But the public sphere of Kerala witnessed the constant engagement, encounter and negotiation of religion with modernity in contrast to the prediction of the development of reason, rationality and individualism.

K.N Ganesh (2004) criticized the existing scholarships on modernity which are pre-occupied with the notion that social transformation is a process of moving from tradition to modern where all primordial ties fade away. He looks at modernity in Kerala in terms of revival of community consciousness and formation of identities on the basis of caste, community and religion. The essence of these formations in Kerala lies in the critique of modernity as an alien process, which was simply brought into Kerala by educated middle class (ibid). He says, the middle class project had a transitory and illusory existence, and is now turned into fragments by the very same forces (caste and religion) that emerge as a result of modernizing processes. The argument is that the formation of community identity was a middle class project associated with the emergence of modernity in Kerala.

Osella and Osella (2004) observed how members of a backward community – the Izhavas in Kerala engaged with modernity and capitalized on it for their social mobility. Their study depicts how Izhavas experienced social mobility by taking impetus from their caste reform movements and from sporadic militant actions in relation to social change. Their struggle has been taking place concomitantly with the flowering of modern institutions and a self-conscious commitment towards modern social conditions. There were lots of economic opportunities that emerged with the colonial economy. In this situation, Osella and Osella noted the scientific insistence upon empirical equality in Kerala that has been articulated particularly under the leadership of Sreenarayana Guru, the spiritual leader and reformer born in Izhava family. Under his initiative the illiterate laborers, blue collar workers, unskilled migrants, untouchable devotees and all section of the community experienced modernity in all its ambivalences and contradictions. By taking these examples, Osella and Osella pointed out that, modern practices are neither western imported, nor traditional;but arise instead through engagements between local and external universal ideals. Their attempt was to break the dualistic categories generated by modernity that the 'other' cannot be treated as external to modernity, and also that modernity cannot be seen as discrete western project.

Here, the impact of colonial modernity on collective groups rather than individual self is explained in different ways here. There is a consensus among scholars in one fact that colonialism opened a stipulation to all social groups of caste and religion to engage in public sphere either forcefully or freely. This public sphere was a realm of conflicts and negotiations and it led to the consolidation of community identities in Kerala.

There are many other views as well regarding the transformations of community in Kerala. The theory on ethnicity was applied by Prema Kurien to understand the changes in the nature of social groups in Kerala. Marxist and others tried to give explanation of these processes in their own fashion. The following part is brief review of those perspectives.

Other Perspectives

Community Formation as 'Ethinicisation':

The theory on ethnicity has been applied to understand the transformation of community in colonial Kerala. Following this approach Prema Kurien's (1994) studied the social groups in Kerala and it claims a different strand from other views. The formations/ transformations of caste and religious groups are understood in terms of what she called as 'ethinicisation'. Here, the structural change in the economic system in the wake of colonialism is taken as the explanation for the emergence of ethnic group. As a result, religious and caste identities that had been defined in terms of the position of each group within the larger social order reified and made immutable under colonialism and the sub-groups and sub-cultures developed into autonomous and distinct units. Apart from economic reasons, the political agendas of colonizers like divide and rule policy accelerated this process. The cultural and religious segregation led to the formation of ethnic groups. Their confrontation with aggressive missionaries espousing one religion and culture strengthened this process. Thus, rigid boundaries were created, existing differences exaggerated and it strengthened the ethnic identity in Kerala.

Ideology and Community Consciousness:

Ideology can be seen as a factor in consolidation of community identity. B.N Nayar (2003) looks at the role of ideology in strengthening community consciousness. In his view, Hindu community does not have a religious ideology permeating the minds of members of the group, instead the collectivity was found in terms of local worship and other religious practices related to temples. The totalitarian character of Hinduism in terms of rituals, symbols and the elements of values which integrate the system was absent in Kerala. He pointed that, all communities except the Hindus had developed their own religious ideologies as a precipitate of the institutional structure backing their social life and more particularly educational institutions. Here, he considered the religious ideology of Christianity and Islam as the basis of the strengthening of community consciousness. This lack of religious ideology among Hindus in comparison to the Muslim and Christian community has been considered as a major factor which enabled the growth of communism in Kerala. At the same time he rightly noticed certain religious mobilizations related to caste and caste associations.

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Anyhow, the presence of religious theology as the chief factor for the community consciousness is not an adequate explanation for growth of community consciousness. There were multiple factors operated in the formation of community identity.

Marxist Approach:

Marxist scholars have their own perceptions about the community assertions that took place in colonial Kerala. Following the Marxist approach, Houtart and Lemercinier (1978) explain the general features of the socio- religious movements that emerged in Kerala in 19th century and the way they organized in relation to capitalist relations of production. The authors try to see caste system in terms of ownership of the means of production. It looks at Muslims and Christians as the non Hindu, ethno- religious groups in economic terms as traders and merchants. They called these movements as middle class movements. They say that the introduction of capitalist mode of production into Kerala society dethroned caste as the organizer of the relations of production and it provided the conditions for the emergence of social movements. In this way, Kerala society entered into the capitalist mode of production and gave birth of class society (ibid).

They addressed the problem of the absence of radical transformation of structure on the basis of class. The lack of consciousness at class level and religious character of the movement prevented the radical transformation of socio- economic relationships. This explanation of caste as a system based on the ownership of means of production is problematic. E.M.S Namboodiripad, the Marxist political ideologue and historian opined that, the decline of feudal social system changed the social structure, and caste groups entered in the socio- political sphere as new form of community (Pillai, 2007). In general, the Marxists viewed the growth of community consciousness in colonial period as a consequence of lack of proper class antagonism in the wake of the emergence of capitalist mode of production. It is difficult to agree fully with this position because most of the movements emerged in this period had many other dimensions than mere economic.

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Communities and Communalization:

The political assertions of communities were perceived as communal mobilization. For example, George Mathew (1989) looks at the movements that emerged in Travancore region and argues that Nayars, Ezhavas and Christians mobilized their members with their 'primordial' religious impulses for the political gains. Temples and churches became symbols of the unity of a community. Educational institutions based on religious principles were started in the early 20th century itself by these communities (ibid). Each community had its own defined boundaries within which they looked at each other in a narrowed way. Though Nayars and Ezhavas were classified within the Hindu religious order, there were lots of differences between their practices and costumes. In Mathew's view each caste group and religious group was considered as a separate communal entity. This perspective looks at the early movements of caste and religious groups as the beginning of communalism in Kerala.

Caste as Civil Society:

There were attempts to compare the transformation of caste and its role in the new political sphere with civil society emerged in the western society. Dirks (2001) noticed that colonizers conceived caste as a form of civil society. If civil society in West appeared in the form of bodies like church, educational institutions, civic organization etc compatible with modern political process, caste in India appeared as resisting political force which needs to be regulated and restricted to private domain. G. Aloysius (2005) saw the early initiatives of submerged masses of the region which altered and structured the cultural practice with the help of external factors as the foundation of civil society in Kerala. He rightly observed that the emergence of institutions like judiciary, bureaucracy, and other public institutions legitimized principles of equality. It helped in eliminating social discrimination in socio-political and economic sphere.

Factors which Consolidated Community Formation

There are many empirical facts that give more insight to the micro as well as macro factors operated in Kerala in the community formations/ transformations. Some of the factors that accentuated these processes are explained here.

Socio-Economic Changes and Community Formation:

The formations of communities in colonial Kerala must be seen as part of the new political and economic changes. The processes of community formations did not simply emerge from the objective conditions of modernity. Instead, it was a political weapon for both individuals and groups to achieve social mobility. The unrest of the communities began to reveal towards the end of the 19th century .The socio-economic organizations, new social and institutional values etc helped in strengthening community identity. It is, therefore, argued that the subtle, divided and fragmented categories became Christian and Muslims for practical purposes (Ayer1968). The opportunities opened up in colonial period led to competitions among communities. It is specifically noted that in Malabar it was on religious basis. Representation in the civil service and other administrative posts were the main source of contention among the different caste and communities in Kerala. There was a competition for both power and status. The scarcity of employment opportunities increased competition. The selection of candidates for appointments admits the claims and counter claims of various communities in the public sphere.

Caste Associations and Religious Organizations: Para Communities in Kerala

The political identity of the community crystallized in the colonial period through organizations and associations based on caste and religious groups. The emergence of organizations and associations was a response to political processes in colonial time. It leads to the new imagination of community in Kerala. We can call it as 'paracommunity', the idea introduced by Rudolph and Rudolph (1984)..This was the medium through which each social group made their claims in the public sphere. There was hardly any community or caste in the state without an association of its own for self development. They tried to create pressure groups by emphasizing caste identity in order to secure concession or rights from the governments. Newspapers and periodicals established by them helped in the dissemination of their ideologies. It was through the press, public meetings and debates that each group asserted their interests in the public sphere.

Caste associations worked to reform the community by raising voice against all injustices and evil customs in their community like dowry, child marriage and so on. The

internal reform was a preparation for every community to cope with the new public sphere; it demanded communities to internalize new values and institutionalize mechanisms for social mobility. The rapid spread of education, the growth of literacy among the backward castes and the consequent unemployment of the educated and the increased activities of caste associations intensified rivalry between communities. There were lots of large as well as small organizations, most of which were caste based and later became very powerful pressure group in politics. It includes S.N.D.P (Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Sagham) of Ezhavas, N.S.S (Nayar Service Society) of Nayars, Nampoodiri[4] Yoga Kshema Sabaha etc (Pillia-2007). Besides these, there were organizations like Malayali Sabha, Travancore Nayar Samajam, and Kerala Nayar Samajam etc.

Law and Community:

In many of the post colonial studies communities are considered to be a colonial invention. One of the major political reasons for this, they pointed out, was the enactment of law along with census enumeration as part of colonial 'governmentality' (Kaviraj 1997 Mamdani 2001). British government introduced laws concerning each community regarding the property rights, inheritance etc for every community in Kerala. It strengthened the community consciousness. The Christian Succession Act of 1916 based on the recommendations of the Christian Commission was designed to consolidate and amend the rules applicable to succession among the Christians in Travancore. Act X1 of 1932 amended the law relating to inheritance and succession among the Indian Christians in Travancore. The social legislation helped the communities to integrate themselves with the law regarding marriage, maintenance, succession and inheritance (Ayer 1968). In the Muslim community, the Mappila[5]Marumakkathayam[6]Act allowed the individual partition of Tharawad[7]. The Cochin Nair Act of 1937 -38 allow individual partition of the Tarawd property. These all are evidences to suggest that law played a major role in reaffirming community consciousness.

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[4] Brahmins in Kerala are generally known as Nampoodiris

[5] Muslims in Kerala are generally known as Mappilas

[6] It means descent through sister's children to determine the system of inheritance and family organization, it mainly prevailed among Nairs, but this system was practice among *Mappilas* in some parts of Kerala.

[7] It is a *Marumakkathayam* joint family consisting of all the descents of a common ancestor in the female line

Religious and Caste Groups in Administrative Processes:

The administrative mechanism of British authority was never free from the interference of religion and caste. Appointments in land revenues, palace and military departments were exclusively reserved for upper caste Hindus. Christians and Muslims felt that they were excluded on religious grounds. Christians were interested in revenue department because of its importance concerning their investments in land. The gradual introduction of electoral politics strengthened competitive politics. Members were elected to assembly and council more or less on the basis of property and educational qualifications. Each group looked at the activities of other group to decide their agendas. The preferences shown by heads of department to members of their own communities lead to clash between communities. The government rejected community based representation by saying that it will affect efficiency and create communal tension. But, in 1939 government decided to recognize all communities whose population was 2 percent of the total population of the state or about a lack or more as separate communities for the purpose of recruitment to the public service. Brahmans were exception there; they constituted only 1.3 % of the total population. The entire population was divided into fifteen groups. Hindus were classified as- Brahmins, Nairs, Kmmalas, Nadars, Ezhavas, Cherumar and other caste Hindus. Christians comprised Jacobites, Marthomites, Syrian Catholics,and other Christians. So, the recruitment processes were based on both efficiency and community considerations. This classification and enumeration crystallized the groups.

Therefore, there was a competitive politics among communities for power and position. The self presentation of one community in the public sphere was replicated in other groups and each group began to assert their identity.

Upper Caste Dominance in Government Jobs:

The dominance of upper castes continued in the new socio-political situation. For example, the lower caste groups pointed out that the higher grade officers in the services thwarted their ambitions to enter government services. Subordinated communities realized that government services became the exclusive preserve of upper caste Hindus who appropriated for themselves all the positions of power in the government. Conflict over

appointments and other movements against the dominance of services and legislatures sprang up in the second decade of the century. The Marthoma Christians and the non Malayali Brahmins and Nairs held a good number of posts in administration. Latin Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims had no sufficient representation in the government service. There was strong sentiment among all these groups against the upper caste groups, which encouraged them to mobilize politically.

Electoral Politics and Communities:

Later the caste and religious organizations demanded the nomination of their representatives in the Assembly. They also demanded more representation to their respective communities. When other communities raised more demands, government realized that not many Christian, Muslim, and Ezhava candidates were likely to get elected; and thus it was decided to increase their representations by nomination in 1931. Six Ezhavas, six Christians and four Muslims were nominated to the assembly every year. The government held a view that the formation of communal electorate tended to create and multiply communal cleavages in the country.

The reforms introduced by government in 1932 increased community consciousness. The poorly and inadequately represented communities decided to organize and work along strictly constitutional lines to get their grievances redressed. But some communities that were underrepresented came together and formed the 'abstentionist' movement against the governmental machinery. That was a major land mark in the history of community assertion in Kerala (Ayer1968). The 'abstentionists' believed that the position of the different castes and communities in society could improve only when they obtained representation commensurate with their numerical strength. Those who stood for community interest through such movements tried to detach from the nationalist movement.

Christian Missionaries:

There are different opinions about the Christian interventions in Kerala. For example, many of the scholars suggested that Christianity brought about the principle of equality and justice in Kerala. The introduction of English education is considered as one of the major

achievements. Most of the lower caste people embraced Christianity or Islam to escape from the oppression of caste system. It is a fact that the interference of Christianity in the public sphere of Kerala in a sense helped the lower caste to experience the benefit of modernity which allowed them to engage in the public sphere (Menon 2002). But, if we follow Dirks (2001) and others who criticized the secular policy of colonizers, one can argue that there was an agenda of imposing western values essentially rooted in Christianity. It generated conflict between caste groups and other religious communities, thereby strengthening community identities.

Intellectual Leaders and Social Reform:

In all parts of the country, colonial period witnessed the rise of intellectual leaders and social reformers who fought against injustice, oppression and discrimination. So, the role of such leadership must be conceived as the quintessential part of community formation. In that sense Sri Narayana Guru is the pioneering champion in Kerala. He was born in the Izhava community. He inaugurated the reform movement in Kerala. The famous message of "one god, one religion and one caste" indicted the vision he had in mind. He used the enlightened and egalitarian principles for 'de-Brahmanising' religion, universalisation of education, diversification of occupation and a rational approach towards life, society, history and culture. Many other reformers followed him, like Dr Palpu, Kumaran Asan, Sahodharan Aiappan, Chattanbi swamikal etc. Ayyankali is the other prominent figure who worked for the 'untouchable castes' like, Cherumas, Pulayas and Parayas. In the Mulsim community Vakkam Abdul Khader Moulavi and Makthi Thangal etc are the prominent figures.

There are contesting views on the activities of Sri Narayana Guru. Houtart and Lemercinier (1978) pointed out that the reform of Sri Narayana Guru was not at all secular because he mobilized Ezhvas in such a way that religion and caste did not vanish from social life. But, the role of religion in mobilization should not be looked through the prism of western secularism because it is very much linked to the social aspect, the material life. Religion was always part of the social life of the people and it is irreducible from the public life.

Religion and Caste Mobilization:

Anyhow religious factor was important in the movement like Ezhava emancipation movement. The lower caste movements were inspired by religious spirit. The activities like replacement of Ezhava Shiva[8] instead of Brahmin Shiva and the further kind of mobilization by using religious symbols clearly indicate that religion played a major role in the public sphere of Kerala in the social mobility of lower castes. The mobilization of communities that took place in the political sphere was based on religious faith and sentiments (Mathew1989). Similarly, religious conversion is an important event in the history of social emancipation of lower castes. The Ezhavas, Pulayas and the fishing groups like Mukhuvans were more eager for such radical acts. There was even conversion to Buddhism and Jainism. Here, the socially alienated community sought to overcome their deprivation by becoming members of a new religion (ibid).

Elitism and Middle Class Phenomenon:

It was the elites and the educated middle class section who initiated much of the movement and they represented the community in the public sphere. There developed a middle class among lower caste groups in colonial period. Though they constituted a minority, they led the movement from the front. The abolition of the discriminatory practices was the result of such initiatives; they tried to reform their community and inspired the fellowmen to gain education. But in practice it benefited those who were in better positions within the group (Houtart and Lemercinier, 1978).The benefits of the movements were restricted to a minor section in every community especially when the opportunities emerged under colonialism (Pillai 2000). But, it is important to note that public sphere was not always bounded by elite interests; the voices of the subordinated mass were always registered through such movements

Print, Public Sphere and Communities:

The proliferation of newspapers and journals in this period was the result of the development of public sphere in Kerala. Each group had their own newspapers, through which they articulated their interests. This mode of engagement in the public sphere was

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[8] Shiva is a God of those who follows Hindu religious belief.

found in different stages of community formation and assertions in Kerala. For Christians, *Nazraani and Malayala Manorama* etc were the newspapers through which they fought for their interests. Every community had their own publications to articulate their interests. Literary sphere was also very active in the colonial period. Unlike the literary public sphere in many other parts of the country, in Kerala it was not a domain of the upper castes alone. For example, there were novels written by lower caste people which represented the caste issues prevalent at that time. Dilip Menon (2002) pointed out that if *Indulekha*, a novel written by an upper caste author dealing with the Nair self in the colonial period, there were novels like *Saraswativijaym* written by a lower caste author who advocated conversion to Christianity as a cure for the social evils besetting Hinduism. So, the literary sphere was a domain of representing the collective self.

Conclusion

It is found that the public sphere of colonial Kerala were realms of communities of caste and religion. There was competition between collective groups to utilize the social, economic and political opportunities in colonial period. It was the time that the territorially bounded and scattered groups acquired a new meaning in the newly emerged public sphere with the penetration of colonial modernity. At political level they all claimed the status of a homogeneous community. This process is well associated with the development of the region called Kerala .The public sphere appeared as a realm of conflict between communities because when the hegemonic caste groups continued their positions in the new situation, subordinated sections asserted in the socio- political sphere with their own means. There were counter publics and counter discourses initiated by such groups to question the hegemony of upper caste groups. The activities of Sri Narayana Guru are a good example for this. The role of colonizers in this process was very ambiguous. The interaction between caste groups and religious groups showed some commonality in the public sphere in Kerala. Contrast to the general perception about caste groups and religious groups as two completely different organized forms, it is found that there was an interpenetration between caste groups and religious groups in Kerala as a result of peculiar development in colonial time. Each caste groups asserted with their own particular religious symbols and looked at their neighbor groups, whether religious or caste as a particular community. Similarly, religious groups

identified themselves with caste groups in the public sphere in a particular way. It is in this context one has to locate the trajectories in the engagement of Muslims in the public sphere of Kerala.

Chapter-4

Mappila Muslims and Public Sphere in Colonial Kerala

This chapter looks at the sociological implications of the complex relationship that developed between Mappila Muslims and the public sphere in colonial Kerala. It focuses on the period after 1920. Before dealing with the Mappilas of Kerala, the first part of this chapter contains very brief literature survey of the larger discourse over Muslim community in India that emerged in the academia. The second part would deal with a few important works conducted on Muslims in Kerala in the context of the Malabar rebellion and the following period. The third part would analyse the later developments in the public sphere keeping in view the engagements of the Muslim community.

Studies on Muslim community in India

The anthropological and sociological studies on Muslim community are comparably less in India, though in the recent time some developments can be seen. When the discipline of sociology developed in India, the area of Muslim community was more or less untouched. While the studies on caste became the fashion in anthropological and sociological research, the issues associated with Indian Muslims hardly came into the picture. In that sense one would suspect sociology in India as more of Hindu sociology than sociology of India (Fsazalbhoy, 2005).Taking an example she says, Dumont considered Indian culture as primarily Hindu, and other communities, religious groups and categories as secondary. In Dumont's work Muslim were of interest only in terms of how caste contaminated Muslim society, which according to textual practice should have been more egalitarian (ibid). Imtiaz Ahmad (1972) noted that, by not giving sufficient place to non- Hindus in the study of India we endure having Hindu sociology, Muslim sociology, Christian sociology; but no Sociology of India. But, recent period witnessed a slight shift in this trend and there are works which looked at Muslims from various perspectives. Peter Vander Veer(2001) points out how the orientalist assumptions dominated not only the theories in the social science that dealt with the caste system, but also discussions of Hindu- Muslim relations, which relied on textual material for their understanding of the place of religion in Indian society. Precisely, there is

no theory which looks at the interaction between different groups like caste and religion which affect each other. The following questions are relevant in this context. What was nature of the study of Muslims in India? What are the perspectives reflected in the studies already conducted? What kinds of issues were addressed relating to the Muslim community in India? Finally, how can one make sense of the larger debates over Muslims? This exercise would be helpful to gain some insights about the perspectives applied to understand Muslims community. It will also enable to understand the limitations of those studies.

It will be worthwhile to start with an emphasis on two broader strands in recent studies on Muslim community in India. Generally, it was the nature of the earlier studies conducted by both Indian scholars and scholars from abroad to see Islam and Muslim community purely on the basis of Islamic texts (Imtiaz Ahmad 1984 ; Asim Roy 2006). They tried to look at the reforms and revival of Muslim societies in terms of pan Islamic dynamics. On the other hand, this existing notion of Islam has been contested worldwide after 1970's. There has been a growing realization among anthropologists that Muslim societies were not a simple reflection of the textual religion, instead the cultural diversity of the regions is a crucial factor in understanding Muslims. The contradiction of text and context, universal and local, great tradition and little tradition etc became the major issues of debate. But it is more complicated and diverse than this dichotomy appears to us in the discussion over Muslim community.

Osella and Osella (2007) located the study of Muslim community in the context of modernity-tradition debate. They pointed out that there is a tendency to see Islam as an inevitable expression of a religious tradition militantly opposed to modernity. And Muslims are considered as non- modern conservatives opposed to the West (ibid). In their views, one needs to realize that, Islam is a 'discursive' tradition. The ideological positions are negotiated by and between *Ulema*[9] and ordinary Muslims and are constantly subject to modification. Francis Robinson (2007) argues that, historically Islam showed a kind of reformism in all parts of the world. There has always been a tendency of reorganising the community through reforming individual behaviour in terms of fundamental religious principles. Despite the differences, Osella and Robinson share a common idea that the practices of Muslims

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[9] *Ulema* is the religious leadership interprets the Islamic texts

necessarily have something to do with the text in any given context, therefore without looking at the text and the fundamental religious principles, it is impossible to understand the community.

But other strand which contested this view on Muslim community looked at how a religion with common text could at the same time have such different practices associated with it in different locales. Their attempt was to disregard the tendency to categorise Muslims as whole as opposed to Hindus as a whole (Fazalbhoy 2005). She pointed out that there are number of dichotomies like tolerant / fanatic, modernist/ traditional that operates in simplistic ways. In fact, sociologists have not contributed much to rectify such stereotypes, moreover, to a large extent, sociologists themselves seems to have replicated the majority- minority distinction in the study of communities other than Hindu communities (ibid).During the period of 1970's and 80's the scholars mainly from anthropology realised that Muslim societies were not a simple reflection of textual religion. Then the idea of lived Islam became a significant twist in further studies. It was a theoretical advance over the earlier studies on community. The intersecting of local and universal and great tradition and little tradition became a matter of research in later studies.

Imtiaz Ahamad's (1973) four edited volumes on Muslim community contain a variety of empirical studies which shows how the practice of Muslim community is different from region to region. One of the arguments is that Muslim community is also stratified which goes against the theoretical egalitarian ethos of Islam. The studies showed that the caste system was injected into Muslim community also, and there are similarities between the rituals and worship systems between Hindus and Muslims in many parts of the country. Therefore, the history of Muslims in India is the history of assimilation with local cultural practices and Islam is not a monolithic religion as it appeared in many works.

The pure dichotomy between lived Islam and textual Islam is also contested. The focus on lived Islam seems to have replicated the idea that there is textual and local, each clearly identifiable according to some external standards. In this context the question that Veena Das raised is important – she asks, "Can we think of a theoretical work which need

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not commit us irrevocably to the point of religious elite and which may be capable of reorganising the active role of community of believers in sustaining the ideas of Islam"? (Das1984:298). In her view the practices and lives of mass people itself offers a theology of life. Instead of using contrasting terminologies like elite and folk Islam or theology and anthropology, she offers new terms like folk theology and theological anthropology. She says that we cannot separate formal theology and folk theology completely and folk theology may be seen as complimentary to formal theology.

Likewise, Gail Minalt (1984) also points out the irrelevance of the kind of opposition between textual Islam and lived Islam. She says that the contradictions on the basis of textual Islam and lived Islam are false because they are talking about two different kinds of things. Those who look at textual Islam looks at the long term processes in which she sees Muslim practices seeking to approach ideal textual norms. The other strand looks at given places at given moments in time. So, the varieties in the study of relationship between belief and practice, text and context etc at any given time may help illuminate the long term dynamics. One of the important points Minalt raises is that the socio- economic conditions of a particular time is very significant in understanding reformism and revivalism. For example, in the colonial period, imperialist domination played an important role in revivalist movements among all religious communities in India.

Despite these dialogic interventions, there are limitations in the existing studies on Muslim community. Firstly, the literature survey shows that there are hardly any studies on Muslim community to locate in the sub discipline called political sociology. While reformism, lived Islam, stratification within the community etc dominated the discourse, the issue of power and politics, state and citizenship, identity, marginality etc were not brought into picture. The political context after 1990's might have enabled the scholars to look at these issues in various disciplines. But in the practice of sociology or anthropology in the early years, these issues have not come into picture. Therefore, a historical understanding of Muslim community in the broader socio-political context is required.

The other problem in the studies on Muslim community is its preoccupation with culture. There has been a general notion prevailing among colonial anthropologists, orientalist thinkers and nationalist scholars that Indian society consists of various religio-cultural communities with its own organic forms (Joseph, 1993). Though some of the recent studies brought out the cultural diversity and heterogeneity of the Muslim community, it did not escape the narrow understanding of culture.

The next part will start with a brief introduction about Mappila Muslims in Kerala, their history and culture and then there will be an endeavour to locate Mappilas in Malayali society. The history of Mappila Muslims has been written extensively, and it gives the picture of historical trajectories that Mappila Muslims had undergone in Kerala.

Mappila Muslims in Kerala: A Historical Background

Muslims in Kerala are generally known as Mappilas. Geographically they are more in numbers in Malabar, the northern part of present day Kerala. The term Mappila is derived from the word *Maha-pilla* meaning 'big-child', a title of honor conferred on immigrants, but there are many other interpretations also for 'Mappila'. Unlike North India where Islam arrived through conquest, in Kerala, the spread of Islam was through peaceful means of trade by the Arab traders and gradual conversion of natives to Islam (Wright 1966, Miller1990). Though there is no unanimity among the historians regarding the exact period in which Islam reached India, there is more or less an agreement that there was significant presence of Islam in Kerala in the ninth century itself (Dale 1980; Miller 1990 and Kunju, 1989). Islamic communities emerged around the mosques through the process of conversion of the natives. The conversion was not restricted to lower castes alone as there were instances of Hindu upper castes, especially Nairs converting to Islam especially in the northern Kerala.

According to the historians, Mappila community in Kerala was peaceful and harmonious. As a community, it played a vital role in the spice trade that had flourished in the Malabar Coast from eleventh to sixteenth century. They were the trusted associates of

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Zamorins [10]of Calicut and enjoyed monopolistic control over trade, which was the economic backbone of *Zamorins* as well. This tale of mutual trust and camaraderie underwent drastic shift with the arrival of Portuguese in 1497 as fierce battle ensued between Mappila and Portuguese for the control over spice trade and the Mappilas suffered heavily. The changing geo-political conditions compelled *Zamorins* to shift their allegiance to the Portuguese, which left the Mappilas in a miserable situation. The decline of fortune in trade and political power left the Mappilas as a community of petty traders, landless laborers and poor fishermen (Miller, 1976). The establishment of British of hegemony added the woe of Muslims.

As a community, there is something unique to the Muslims in Kerala when compared to the pan Indian Muslims. This is evident in a number of aspects starting from the very language. In Kerala, everybody including Muslims speak only Malayalam. This is in stark contrast to the rest of the country where Muslims predominantly speak Urdu. Kerala Muslims have a short stint of Arabic during their study in *Madrasa*,[11] but that is limited to the bare capacity of reading and writing. The centuries old co-existence had brought about significant similarities regarding dress and food habits between Muslims and other communities. The worshipping patterns also show the influence of Hindu religious life. Social and political lives in Kerala witness extremely close interactions and cooperation between Hindus and Muslims. Kerala was also celebrated as a state that exemplifies communal harmony among Muslims and Hindus, in contrast to the other parts of the country where communal riots are common (Engineer1995). Despite the cultural differences in the region there is a *Malayaliness* attached to the quality of life of everyone that makes a Mappila a Malayali (Miller1976).

There were some differences between the Muslims of north and south in terms of their social awakening and political mobilisation. The socio- political processes in later period somehow homogenised the Muslims in Kerala. But still, the issues addressing in this

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[10] It is the English version of the kingdom of Samoothiri. He was the ruler of the present day *Koazikode* or *Calicut* in 14th century.

[11] The institution providing religious education among Muslims are called as *Madrasa*

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study will be more related to Malabar region, after all, the majority of the Mappilas are from this region.

The second chapter provided a picture of the community formations and their participation in the public sphere of colonial Kerala. The general trends and movements found in the public sphere of colonial Kerala in terms of the participation of caste and religious groups are very significant in understanding the sociology of Muslim community. The formation of the region, the development of associations and organisations, caste assertions in the political sphere, interactions and encounters with colonial rulers, socio-economic developments and all those features that influenced the transformations of social groups in Kerala were replicated in the dynamics of Muslim community also. So, the interaction of Muslims in the public sphere must be looked upon against this larger background. But, simultaneously there were some particular events that influenced the Muslim community alone. The Malabar rebellion of 1921, the nationalist discourse and development of a pan Islamic discourse were the other decisive factors in the participation of Muslims in the public sphere.

Mappila Muslims and Public Sphere: Malabar Rebellion and After

It is earlier stated that public sphere is not only a realm of consensus, but also a realm of conflict and subjugations. In stratified societies, the subjects involved in the interaction can be seen in terms of collective rather than individuals. Communities became essential units in the public sphere as part of modern political processes. The involvements of religious communities have more serious implications in the public sphere after the establishment of colonial rule and its institutions. The history of Mappila Muslims in terms of their engagement in the public sphere of Kerala was not exempt from conflict, subordination and negotiation. Here, Malabar Rebellion of 1921 is considered as a background to look into the Muslim community in Kerala.

For a sociological analysis of Mappila Muslims as a group engaged in the public sphere, we need to describe what constitutes Mappila Muslim as a community in the public sphere and how it is constituted. The formation of political identity is the most important

factor in making Mappila Muslims as a separate entity in the public sphere of Kerala. Malabar rebellion of 1921 can be seen as the background for the transformation of the community into a new political group in the public sphere of Kerala.

Malabar rebellion was the outcome of a series of revolts against the landlords and colonial state, which started in 19th century. The local uprisings led to the mass rebellion and culminated in the massacre of Mappilas in 1921. There are different views about the character of the revolt. Some of the scholars interpreted it as primarily a peasant revolt and considered the religious involvement in the revolt as a mere instrumental factor in mobilising the Mappila mass. On the other hand, some explained it in terms of religious assertion and considered religion as the primary factor in mobilising the people for the uprisings. There is a third argument which is more of an integrative view of the earlier two strands; it saw the equal importance of agrarian tension and religious mobilisation in the uprisings. Here, I look at two major works on the rebellion to locate Muslim community in that particular socio-political situation. One is the work of Stephen Dale who holds the second view and K.N Panikkar who holds the last view. I will also review a third writing which discusses the representation of Mappila Muslims in colonial writings after the rebellion.

Stephen Dale's (1980) study depicts a broad picture of the Mappilas of Malabar in the colonial period. He narrates a series of Mappila encounters that occurred in the Malabar region of Kerala throughout the decades of 19th and early 20th century in a detailed manner. He explains how the religious character of the Mappilas played a crucial role in the rebellion. Dale noticed that Muslims have always been in conflict with Christians and the Hindu community; they used the idea of *Jihad*[12] as a weapon of political resistance against all kinds of subordination and suppression of the community in the region. He considered Muslims in Kerala as a historically subordinated social group and says that this is identical with the conspicuous lack of a political, bureaucratic or militant aristocracy among Malayali Muslims. The origin of the struggle of Muslims in Kerala goes back to the conflict over trade with Portuguese. But in his view, it was during the period of British domination, that the Malayali

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[12] It literarily means struggle, there are various meanings attached to this idea, like struggle for self purification, struggle against evils in society, struggle for Islamic state, etc.

Muslims became an armed group with militant religious ideology. In his view, the war on Muslims in Kerala 'homogenised' them. The community perceived social violence as religious conflict which was sanctioned by the tenants of Islamic law. Mappila rebellion was an outcome of long term development of a militant tradition within the community in 18th and 19th century.

He rightly observed that the economic backwardness of Muslims was not merely because of British domination, but because of their subordinate positions in the feudal agrarian social structure. Upper caste domination and militancy also helped to create political consciousness and a sense of collective identity among Muslims. For example Nairs and Muslims have always been in conflict. Dale observed that the cultural practices of Muslims served to delimit the boundary between Malayali Muslim and Hindus. There was a conscious attempt from the religious leaders to possess Islamic identity and social autonomy. He criticised the Marxist scholars who looked at Rebellion as mere outcome of agrarian tension. He argued that most of the studies conducted on Malabar rebellion neglected the cultural attitude or religious ideology of the Rebellion. He thinks that the traditional Islamic ideology of Muslims is the core of their struggle and conflict. 'Islam in danger' was the principle issue which mobilised Mappilas for rebellion. He gave examples like the role of *Ulama* and *Mosques* in mobilising the community for the movement. He considered the violence of Mappilas as religiously sanctioned violence.

K.N Panikkar (1989) analysed Mappila rebellion in a nuanced Marxist perspective. He viewed Mappila rebellion as an agrarian revolt which emerged out of the tension between peasants and landlords on the one hand and the colonial state on the other. But he acknowledged that, while the pattern of rebel activities demonstrated antagonism to the propertied classes and the colonial state, the influence of religion was equally evident. The uprisings were rooted in the interplay of these two factors. He points out that 'traditional intellectuals' [13]like members of *ulema* and religious leaders like *Musliar* and *gazis* played a

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[13] Panikkar applied Gramnci's idea of 'traditional intellectual' to explain the struggles initiated by the Mappila religious leaders.

dominant role in shaping the outlook of rural Mappilas. The *thangals* [14] of *mampuram* [15] were the major traditional intellectuals of that time. He says, it is within this ideological world that is the domain of religion, the Mappila peasantry sought resistance for social action. He found that the cultural hegemony of the colonial state and the activities of Christian missionaries had created a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension among *Ulema* and the masses.

Panikkar explained why Malabar rebellion became a Mappila rebellion despite the fact that the lower castes Hindus were also subjected to the same kind of exploitation by the landed gentry. Unlike the Muslims, the lower castes were not only economically, but ideologically and religiously subjugated to the upper caste Hindus. There was a tendency to strengthen the bond within the Hindu fold dominated by the upper castes. Neither traditional intellectuals nor religious organisations helped the Hindu peasants to overcome these religious inhibitions and develop solidarity and evolve a rational for action. The possibility of providing either leadership or ideology, therefore hardly existed. The *Khilafat* [16] movement strengthened the conflict between Mappilas and colonisers. Both Panikkar and Dale are correct in saying that religion has always played a significant role in all Mappila actions in the public life. It is something which needs to be looked at seriously not only to make sense of the Mappila intervention of the early colonial phase, but also to understand the later dynamics in public life.

From these two accounts on Mappilas and Malabar rebellion, how can we draw a picture of Muslim community in the early 20th century? It is possible to argue that Mappila Muslims were a subaltern group like many other oppressed groups in Kerala. There was an intense conflict between social groups in terms of economic, religious and political interests. So, the public sphere in Kerala must be seen as a sphere of conflict between hegemonic

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[14] It is the Kerala version of *Sayyid* used in North India. *Thangals* are those who claimed their lineage from Prophet Muhammad

[15] The *Thangals* lived in *Manmpuram,* a place in *Malabar,* were the religious leaders who inspired for struggles against state and land lords, they played a major role in mobilising *Mapppilas* in 19th century.

[16] *Khilafat* means the representative of Islamic state. In colonial period British attacked the Islamic state called *Ottoman empire* in Turky, then the *Khilafat* movement emerged to restore the rule. The *Mappila* also organized and participated in this movement when it spread allover the country.

powers and subordinated groups. As Panikker pointed, in the case of some oppressed groups especially lower caste groups, the conflict was not intense because they had not completely come out of the hegemonic pre- colonial caste structure. But, in the case of Muslims it is clear that they confronted the upper class, upper caste landlords, they resisted colonial oppressive rule in and also they fought with Christianity and sometimes against Hinduism.

But, neither the Marxist framework of Panikkar nor the cultural framework of Dale is adequate to understand the Muslim community fully in colonial Kerala. Dale overemphasised on the cultural aspect and trapped in the orientalist notion as it appeared in many other writings that portray Muslim as aggressive and militant. Panikkar explained the religious aspect as 'false consciousness' which ignored the role of agency in the issue. By referring to African colonial history, Mamdani says that the political economy framework and class based analysis offered by Marxist and the cultural framework proposed by orientalist and nationalist scholars failed to analyse the political process and identity formations in colonial Africa (Mamdani 2005). He suggests that the formation of political identity cannot be understood in terms of mere economic processes or cultural factors, rather the role of colonial state and its agencies need to be addressed.

M.T Ansari's analysis is relevant in this context (2005). He analysed how Muslims were being identified in colonial writings during and after the Malabar rebellion. He argues that, in colonial writings, Mappila Muslims were firmly fixed in the frame of religion and the category through which the Mappila might be identified like peasant, working class and lower castes are overwritten through an emphasis on religion. He pointed out that, many of the colonial writings conceived and coined Muslims as 'fanatic', 'barbaric', 'ignorant', and so on. The argument is that, when Muslims constantly threatened the colonisers' interests they consciously tried to project Muslims as uncivilised and repeatedly reminded the need to control the body and the mind of the Mappilas. The 'fanatic' was enforced and administered into existence, it is a construct deployed by the colonial administrator for the political control of Mappila Muslims. He says that most of the colonial records emphasise the ignorance, criminality, blind faith in rumours and rituals, inability to comprehend the virtues of non-violence and the politics of national movement, lack of patriotism, their hatred of Hindus etc

as the essential features of the Mappila . Apart from colonisers, nationalist leaders including Gandhi and prominent nationalist leaders in Kerala reaffirmed the colonial notion about Muslims through their speeches and activities (ibid). The attitude creates an 'otherness' and it reflected in mainstream newspapers and magazines of that time. It reflected in the perception and interactions of neighbour communities also. This isolation of Mappila Muslims leads to generate a kind of identity consciousness among Muslims. The colonial discourse and institutional practices constructed an identity of Mappila Muslim. Through such constructions the political identity forms and community acquires a new meaning in the public sphere.

Simultaneously the internal process also played a role in the formation of identity. The propagation of religious ideology, establishment of networks through mosques, the leadership of *thangal*, activities of *ulema* etc in the time of the rebellion itself played a major role in homogenising the once scattered and fragmented community. In the cultural realm, the popular festivals and songs prising the martyrs and heroes called *Malas or Nerchappattu* enabled them to create a sense of community consciousness (Poonthala 2004). The relief activities through organisations and other local mechanism strengthened the solidarity within the community because the concern of any agency from outside was virtually absent (Muhammadali, 2004). It was in this period that Mappilas adopted distinct type of clothing and hair styles, food prescription, and rituals to demonstrate their separation from Hindus (Kurian 1994). On the one hand the political identity of Mappila Muslims emerged out of the construction from outside, on other it is constituted through internal dynamics.

Now the problem is how Mappilas in Kerala engaged in the public sphere in the post rebellion periods. As I discussed earlier this was a period of immense changes in the public sphere of Kerala. Muslim community responded to such a public in its own way. When analysing many of these processes, sometime the discussion may go back to the pre-1921 situation also. It is already mentioned that for the Mappila Muslims, religion was not separable from their public life, and it is very obvious that if they engaged in the public in the form of resistance and conflict, religion might have intrinsically tied up with their thought as well as action. The religious character of the Mappila were picked up and overlooked as

something uncommon and dangerous by colonisers and scholars. As Talal Asad (1993) points out that the separation of religion from the public is a modern western norm. Peter Vander Veer (2001) argues that the public sphere in India was not at all secular because it emerges out of the interaction with the missionary activities and the counter activities from Hindus, Islam or Sikh. It is also established in the earlier discussion that the division of sacred and secular or politics and religion are alien phenomena in Indian society (Nandy 1989; Madan 1999). Here, the politics of colonisers to restrict the 'aggressive', 'fanatic' character of Mappila Muslims and the anthropological exercise that reaffirms the colonial view cannot be seen in isolation. Talal Asad asserted that anthropological studies were largely influenced by the colonial notion about 'other' societies. Here, for colonisers, religion was always a threat to the power and they constantly try to relegate it to the private sphere in all possible ways. The anthropological construction of Mappila Muslims justifies this colonial notion.

Nationalist Discourse and Public Sphere

The participation of particular communities in the public sphere during nationalist movement is discussed in the first chapter. The nationalist movement and the discourse it produced itself formed a particular public. The participation and representation of particular groups in that domain is the matter of discussion. M.S.S Pandian (2002) discusses the exclusion of marginalised social groups in the so called national culture and the discourse it produced in the colonial public sphere. After the rebellion, Mappila Muslims were marginalised from the public sphere which was dominated by nationalist elites. As discussed above the nationalist leaders including Gandhi reaffirmed the colonial notion about Mappila Muslims (Ansari 2005; Panikkar 1989).It was reflected in the speeches, writings and activities of local and national leaders also. During the time of *Khilafat* issue large number of Muslims participated in nationalist struggle. When it ended in 1924, the participation of Mappila Muslims became passive (Miller1976).

There has always been a conflicting relationship between a section of Muslims and Indian National Congress. Many Muslims felt that Indian National Congress will not protect their interests (Sharafudden 2003).There was no attempt from the part of the Congress to

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address the grievances of Muslims as they had their political motives in keeping Muslims away. There was a rupture in Hindu- Muslim relations after the rebellion. The regional congress leaders failed to gain the confidence of the nationalist Muslims as well as the feelings of Hindu and Muslim masses after the rebellion. This was a period of crisis among Muslims. On the one hand they wanted to organise and agitate for their social, political and economic needs, on the other they feared to assert in the public sphere because they were already branded as criminals and seen as a threat to the social order. The formation of Muslims league in Kerala was a remarkable turn in the engagements of Muslim community in the public sphere. It was on 21st May 1937, All India Muslim League was formally organised in Malabar.

The Political Sphere and Muslim League

The growth of Muslim league in India as the representative of the vast majority of Indian Muslims reflected in Kerala as Muslim leaders began to quit congress and turn to the Muslim league. It led to the separate mobilisation of Muslims in the political sphere of Kerala. The formation of Muslim league among Mappilas was initially a reaction to the Muslim league at the national level. The establishment of newspapers and magazines under Muslim league represented the interests of Muslims in the public sphere. In electoral politics, the nationalist Muslims and the supporters of Muslim league fought each other and the Muslim league won the seats reserved for Muslims. Muslim leaders began to desert Congress and turned to the Muslim League and gradually Muslim League consolidated its grip over Mappilas (Gangadharan 2004). It is through the Muslim league that they argued for their demands and engaged in debates in public.

The leaders who emerged during that time played a major role in strengthening the political consciousness of Muslims. They consciously projected the separate Muslim identity in terms of religion, culture and economic condition. The leader of the Muslim League Seethi Sahib once said that "Mappilas are very very unfortunate community" and "they have not made an inch of progress in any walk of life" (Miller, 1976).The founder of Muslim league in Kerala Abdul Sattar Sait defeated Nationalist Muslim leader Muhammad Abdurrahiman in 1934. Muslim league played an important role in formation of political identity of Muslims.

The activities of Muslim league in Kerala were very different from the league at national level. It represented the socio- cultural aspirations of the Malayali Muslims in the public sphere of Kerala. The conflicting interests within the community were more or less negotiated under the leadership of Muslims league. The Malabar branch of Muslim league fully supported the demand for partition made by the national leadership. Interestingly, the logic behind the Pakistan ideal led the Mappilas to make a similar demand for the creation of *Mophlastan*, a separate province for the Malayali Muslims. The idea of *Mophlastan* was ultimately rejected. But, it had an impact on Mappilas, the proposal being raised was considered as a proof of disloyalty to Indian nation.

On the other hand there were many leaders who tried to mobilise the community for nationalist interests also. Leaders like Vakkam Abdul Khader, Muhammad Abdurahman, E. Moidu Moulavi etc were nationalist Muslims. It is important to note that, in the Travancore state area, Muslims participated more in the nationalist movement. The regional differences made significant variations in the trajectories of Muslim community. There was always conflict within the community concern to the question of participation in the nationalist movement. The inner public of Mappila Muslims was very vibrant all the time. The leaders of the league and the nationalist Muslims engaged in debates and tried to negotiate with each other. Recently, Sachar Committee talked about the crisis of contemporary Muslims. In colonial period Mappila Muslims faced similar problems that they had to show their loyalty to the nation on the hand and simultaneously had to protect their own community interests. This problem was acute in the case of the Mappila Muslims since they were already marginalised from the public sphere after the rebellion.

Muslim Majilis; The 'Paracommunity'

There was a growing consciousness among many of the Muslims leaders on the need to concentrate more on material prosperity and solidarity of the community. As a result of this, there emerged a group called Muslim Majlis, it resembles the feature of a 'paracommunty' of Muslims in Kerala. The aim of the organisation was to integrate community and to pressurise government for educational and political achievement and to protect the rights and freedoms of Muslims. The position of extreme nationalists within the

Muslim community like Muhammad Abdul Rahiman opposed the ideology of Muslim Majlis. Muslim Majlis failed to gain popularity. There was a conflict between Muslim Majlis and Muslim league also. Muslim Majlis also supported the patriotic feeling, promoted Hindu-Muslim unity, and cooperated with nationalist movement to an extent.

Anyhow, this was a period when the Muslim community began to emerge as a political community in the public sphere. Organisations like the Muslim league and Muslim Majilis played a major role in this. It gave a strong foundation for the political identity of the community. These organisations which developed in the colonial period played a major role in strengthening the identity of the Mappilas. The tendency of forming organisation for community interest started in the second half of 19th century itself. *Himayathul Islam Sabha* formed in Calicut in 1891 was such an organisation. This organisation persisted for a long time and involved in all kind of community matters. The meetings and activities of this organisation replicate the kind of organisational activities prevailed in other communities at the time. *Parappil Muslim Association, Young Men Association* etc are the other small organisations formed in Malabar region.

Language in the Public Sphere: Marginality and Counter Publics

It is already discussed in the second chapter how the standardisation of Malyalam helped each community intervene in the public sphere. Now I will explain the trajectories that the Muslim community had undergone in association with development of language and public sphere. As G. Aruninma (2006) pointed out, it is true in the case of Muslims that the development of standardised Malayalam helped to produce a variety of writings. Most of those writings dealt with the religious issues. There was a conscious attempt to show the superiority of Islam. It was a response to the writings of Christian missionaries. One of the agendas of Christian missionaries in the early phase of their intervention in Kerala was to attack other religious beliefs and practices especially Islam. Then, the scholars among Muslims tried to resist this in public. The resistance were made through books, articles, pamphlets etc which defended Islam and attacked Christianity. Some times it turned against Hinduism also. The texts like *Mushammad Charitam*, (History of Muhammad), *Mushammado Isanabiyo Aru Valiyavan*, (Muhammad Jesus Compared) are examples of such

types of writings. These texts had a modern prose style, and a defining of community boundary self (ibid). There was an attempt to make counter public through parallel discourses of community in the public sphere through constant debates and arguments. It challenged the hegemonic religious discourse in the public.

In these endeavours Makthi Thangal, a reformer and an intellectual is the pioneering champion. The genealogy of counter resistance goes back to the writings and speeches of Makthi Thangal. He was a profound intellectual who had a scholarship in all religious texts. He countered the arguments of Christian and Hindu scholars at that time. For example, in his book '*Parkaleetha porkalam*' he wrote, "I challenge the Christian scholars to prove with sufficient evidence that Islam is a religion with contradictory arguments in text and it promotes evil practices in society" (Abdulkareem1981:109)). The language he used was purely standardised. Overall there was a constant encounter between religious groups in the public sphere. Muslims were trying to resist the hegemonic publics of Christian Missionaries supported by colonisers. The activities of Christian missionaries cannot be separated from the project of colonialism which wanted to privatise the religion of Mappilas at that time.

Marginalisation of Arabic Malayalam:

The Sanskrit language gave way to standardised Malayalam and it created a space for each community to engage in the public to an extent. But at the same time, Mappilas faced a crisis of language. Arabic Malayalam (Arabi Malayalam) was the language of education for general Muslims. It is a specific kind of language written in Arabic script with Malayalam vocabulary. In colonial time, Muslims developed their own educational system called *Othupallis,* based on Arabic Malayalam. There were newspapers, dictionaries etc which were published in Arabic Malayalam. And print presses were established in places like Ponnani, Tirurangadi etc in the Malabar region (Muhammadali 1968). Precisely, Arabic Malayalam was the language of mass Muslims. On the one hand they internalised and recognised Malyalam as their language but mixed with Arabic as a part of their identity. It is a good example to suggest that on the hand Muslims in Kerala shared the *Malayaliness,* but simultaneously retained their distinctive identity.

When Malyalam language standardised and English became the medium of education it created dilemma among Muslims. Arabic Malayalam was a safe language for Muslims in the sense that it mediated between their own particular cultural realm and broader *Malayali* society. Neither Malayalam nor English was a comfortable language for Muslims. When the new educational system was imposed, the larger section of the community felt excluded and marginalised. They failed to cope up with the modern educational system. Only an elite section of the community benefited out of it. The British did not want to spread education among masses.

Reformism and the Muslim Public

The reformist tendency in Muslim community in Kerala started in the early 20th century. The period after 1920 accentuated the reformist tendency in Kerala. How can we understand the reformism in the case of Kerala Muslims and its implications in public sphere? Earlier I discussed the problems in the existing studies on Muslim community. So, we need to have a careful look at the reformism among Muslim community in Kerala. Islamic reforms in Kerala emerged within a particular social, political and historical context and it also has a Pan- Islamic or translational context (Osellas 2007).The whole reformist tendency was produced in a ground where the Muslims constantly interacted and engaged in dialogues. It was the time in Kerala that every community began to reform themselves as part of the influence of modernity. Muslim community also reformed, but in its own way. In Kerala the progressive movements that started among Christians and various Hindu caste groups in the late 19th century have much in common with the processes took place amongst Kerala Muslims. They responded and reflected upon similar historical contingencies (ibid). It reshaped the religious ethos and practices of Muslims in Kerala. It crated inner tensions and conflicts rather than the conflicts with the outsiders. So, the debates over reform in inner public of Muslims are as significant as its impact in the outer public.

The Inner Public:

Basically all Muslims in Kerala belonged to the category called ᶜ⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻¹⁷ ᵂᵘ⁻⁻ reform activities strengthened, a split occurred and it later became two major polarised

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[17] In Kerala, all Muslims were belongs to this category, but later when it split after reform, the orthodox groups themselves called as *Sunnis*.

groups called *Sunnis* and *Mujahids*[18](Miller1976; Samad1998). Kerala's Islamic religious sphere witnessed the influence of religious reformism from the second decade of the twentieth century. Since then a number of reformist/revivalist organizations are functioning among Kerala Muslims with the sole aim of 'true Islam'. The general features of Pan-Islamic reformism especially the *Wahhabi*[19] tradition which upheld themes like the need to abide by *Quran* [20]and *Sunna*[21], return to origins, revival of *Itjihad*[22]and *Hadith*[23] studies, rejection of innovation and imitation (taqlid) in matters of law and rejection of excesses of Sufism etc began to reflect in the reformist movements in Kerala. The insistence of the *Quran* and the *Hadiths* also seriously challenged a number of theological explanations given by other *Ulemas* and traditional clergy. It created resentment among traditional Muslims. It prohibited many of the practices of traditional Muslims by calling those practices as *Shirk*. This include 'defining shirk as inclusive of supplicating pious living or dead people, seeking their intersession, making vows to them, offering sacrifice and praying at their tombs, and attributing to the dead among them the power to harm or give benefit. Shirk also includes the belief in practice, teaching of magic, astrology and divination, the use of amulets and talismans, giving shelter to innovators and befriending unbelievers, treating clergy and monks as lords by offering them unquestionable obedience and worshipping God through intermediaries' (Dallal 1993). But, most of these reforms took place at a later stage when the organization called Mujahid was established in the second half of the century.

Sunnis who represent popular Mappila religious belief and practice belong to orthodox theology and allegiance called *Shafi* law. They defended the prevailing practices of Muslims and can hence be called traditionalists or conservatives. It represents certain ways of looking

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[18] Those who advocated pan Islamic reform are called themselves as *Mujahid* in Kerala.

[19] It is generally believe that the reformism was inaugurated by a person called Abdul Wahab in Soudi Arabia, the followers were called as *Wahaabis*.

[20] The holy text of Muslims.

[21] The words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad.

[22] Constant interpretation of Islamic text in accordance with the circumstances.

[23] The codified and collected works of words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad after his death.

at things, events, and problems on the past experiences or on the basis of traditionally transmitted literature, the basic feature of which is uncriticality towards religious or cultural tradition (Faisal, 2005). The major concern of this way of thinking was how to conserve the transmitted tradition from the former generation and to transmit it to the next generation without much change (ibid). The majority of the Muslims was attached to this because it defended most of the practices of Muslims mass.

The Outer Public

The above discussed factors are the issues addressed within the purely religious domain. The reformist tendency in Kerala discussed above justifies Robinson's view of reform in terms of textual interpretations earlier discussed. Those who talk about syncretism and communal harmony in terms of shared cultural practice may counter this argument by showing the example of persistence of worship and rituals of Muslims despite the penetration of textual Islam. It is also understood in terms of modernity- tradition dichotomy. But, this reformist/orthodox or modernist/ traditionalist paradigm is not sufficient to understand reform fully and its implication in the public sphere of Kerala. The social context in which reform emerged is highly significant. It will be good to analyze the nature of the activities of the reformists at that time to understand these processes sociologically. The activities associated with the reform contained a larger emancipatory element and quest for social development. In other words it is not merely a matter of theological reform or question of culture.

As I indicated elsewhere Makthi Thangal was the first reformer who tried to enlighten the community by attacking superstitious practices, promoting education and spreading Islamic principles. He urged the Muslims to learn Malayalam to acquire education. He believed that it is impossible to progress unless Muslims internalise the language and law of the land (Samad, 1998). There is ample evidence to say that the early reformist attempts helped to strengthen the *Malayaliness* of the Muslims. Earlier Muslims were reluctant to accept government jobs, but he urged to utilise such opportunities. He wrote many books, started a press and established small organizations to accentuate the reform.

Introduction of Arabic in educational system, education for girls, organising for economic and social prosperity, welfare arrangements for weaker sections, etc are some of the agendas of early reforms among Muslims. There were many other personalities who actively worked for the reform in the earlier periods. Vakkam Abdual Khader Moulavi was the one of major reformers in 20th century. His activities were more based in Travancore. He was influenced by the movement initiated by Sri Narayana Guru. For example he started an organisation called Islamic Dharma Paripalana Sangham. He started a journal titled *Swadeshabhimani* and a journal called Deepika. *Swadeshabhimani* was the first newspaper in Kerala to establish a link with *Reuter* to get international coverage. Instead of restricting activities within the community it acted as the voice of general public. It raised voice for the protection of the popular rights, condemned discrimination in the appointment to the government services, promoted cultural resurgence and social awakening of each and every community. For example while reporting a conference of the Nair community it urged them to ban child marriage and encourage widow remarriage (ibid). In order to attract the Muslims to secular schools it forcefully demanded the introduction of Arabic in schools. To promote education in the state, it put forth several suggestions like compulsory education to all students, fee concession for the poor, and special coaching for the highly intelligent. He started a journal called *Muslims*. He was using *Quranic* interpretation to allow women to enter educational arena. While making the Muslims aware of their problems, the *Muslims* magazine was exerting pressure on the government to adapt policies for the upliftment of the conditions of the Muslims.

The foundation of the *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sanghom* at Kodungalur in 1922 was the attempt to accentuate the reform. It organised conferences every year to decide their agendas. At one level it defended the community at the outer level in the public sphere, but at another level it strongly opposed some orthodox practices and customs within the community like, *Kodikuthu, Chandanakkudam,* etc. They initiated programs like women education, extending relief to the victims of rebellion, establishment of Arabic college etc.

These reformist tendencies had its own implications in the public sphere. It was a response to the wider the social transformation in colonial Kerala. Every community tried to

reform themselves to cope up with the new social and institutional values. The transformation of Muslim community cannot be isolated from this larger trend by reducing it merely to Pan-Islamism. The implication of reform was complex in the public sphere. The 'modernization' implied in the reform was an attempt to cope up with the new public sphere. Moreover, it also urged the Muslims to become a proper *Malayali* of modern Kerala. Simultaneously it did not preclude religion of Mappila Muslim from the public sphere; instead religion co- existed with the new interpretations over life. But, many times, the larger Muslim population continued to choose their traditional realm and strongly reacted against the reformist attempt. In a sense reformist attempts were not completely successful in protecting the aspiration of the whole community. Some times the reformist attempts reduced to an elitist enterprise. It is the experience everywhere that the reformist project failed to realize the mass public sentiment. By referring to the case in Pakistan, Khalid Masud (2006) says that reformism kept large segments of the population out of the public sphere and could not try to build consensus within the community.

Elites and Public Sphere

The wealthy and educated Mappilas who constitute the elite section represented the community in the public sphere. The nationalist leaders, the leaders of Muslim League, reformers etc constituted the elite sections in the community. The elitist nature of the representation of the Mappilas in the public sphere was evident in all the matters. In the newly emerged public sphere a small, elite section of all communities shared a space from which others were excluded. It was necessary to have some ascribed status and acquired qualities to enter in such space. Sometime it leads to conflict and exclusion within the community. For example, the emerging public arena at that time was limited to the educated middle class (Muhammadali 1968).The leaders of the nationalist movement and reformist like Vakkam Moulavi shared a space in the public sphere which the elites of the other community enjoyed. The organizations like Muslims Majlis and Muslim League were dominated by the wealthy and affluent sections. The elitist nature of the reform ignored and sidelined the mass that lived in their cultural realm. But this does not mean that elites only represented their personal interests and the role of majority of the community was passive in the public sphere. In the context of the post rebellion crisis it was the elite section which

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united the community for their political interests through various platforms. It is important to note that Muslim League was a platform of all sections like the traditionalist, reformists and the educated middle class where the Mappilas united under elites for the political benefit.

The issues associated with gender have not been discussed much in Muslim public. Some of the reformist urged for women education and their participation in the public sphere. Muslim women were never allowed to enter in the public sphere and they were not part of all these processes. It leads to debate within the community and there was a strong resistance from the orthodox section. Though reformists and Muslim organizations showed some concerns over the problems of women, it did not bring any serious change in the stataus of women. The Muslim women and public sphere, however, deserve another study.

Conclusion

To conclude the Mappila Muslims in Kerala depict the features of a subaltern group in colonial Kerala. The historically subordinated position of Mappilas in the social structure of Kerala had its own implications in the newly emerged public sphere in the 20th century. The marginalization can be seen partly as a subaltern group and partly as a religious community. After the rebellion of 1921, there was a rupture in the social life of the Mappilas, the colonial projection of Mappilas as 'fanatic' and further labeling was the major difficulty to the community to engage in the dialogue in public sphere. It restricted the community to interact and involve with the public sphere emerged in the new socio- political situation. The later periods saw the emergence of identity consciousness among Mappilas especially in the political sphere. The mobilization of Mappilas in the public sphere had much in common with the caste groups like Ezhavas, Nairs and the religious group like the Christians. On the one hand Mappilas engaged in the public sphere as a religious group, but simultaneously it acted as a political community like other caste groups. At internal level there were tensions and conflicts, but at the outer level especially in the political sphere they projected the identity and argued and debated for the collective interests. Sometime they tried to create counter publics especially in the realms of literary and political sphere with counter discourses and activities along with other subordinated groups.

Chapter 5

Muslims and Public Sphere in Post Colonial Kerala

The formation of the Kerala state and the establishment of a democratic government in the region gave way to a new public sphere in Kerala. The structural and institutional changes in the region made impact on the engagement of communities in the public sphere. The period after independence witnessed the steady rise of Muslims in Kerala as a political community, it marked its presence in the public sphere with all ambiguities. Anyhow, the larger political context in post- Independent India is significant in understanding the Muslim community.

Talking in the broader context, the formation of the Indian nation state and its democratic, secular agendas significantly influenced the relationship between religion and public sphere. Social scientists started paying attention to the complex relationship between religion and politics in Independent India. The secularist agenda of Nehruvian era, the rise of majoritarian politics, protection of minority interest etc has been major concerns in academics. The secularist policy adopted by the Indian state has been subjected to criticisms in the recent past. It arises from the understanding that contemporary crisis of Indian society based on religious groups has something to do with secularism. The social condition of minority religious communities, particularly of Muslims and the increasing communal conflicts in various parts of the nation generated a keen interest among scholars to look at the dynamic relationship that has developed between religion and public sphere in the post colonial India.

As discussed in the first chapter, the critiques of secularism raised several issues regarding the uneasy relationship between religious communities and the public sphere. Nandy argued that the modern western rational-scientific secularism, which Nehru sought to impose on the Indian society, has failed either to eliminate religion from politics or to promote greater religious tolerance (Nandy1989). The Nehruvian secularist policy was highly influenced by the colonial attitudes towards religion. The Indian state continued the colonial legacy, and assumed that all 'political' issues could be accommodated within the

state's institutions and the issues related to religion, kinship, and other forms of community identity should be considered as 'apolitical' (Menon 2007, Ali 2001).But it is proved that religious groups are determinant force in institutional arenas and political sphere. There is an increasing use of religion in the social construction of ethnic and community identity which is made the basis for the articulation of common economic interests and political mobilization. The period after 1980's witnessed the rise varieties of 'new' social movements where communities became more significant category. Whether it is separatist movement in Kashmir or rise of Pan Hindutva movement or assertion of backward classes in the context of Mandal commission, the public sphere became more a realm of assertion of religious identities (Jodhka 1999). Moreover globalization and its technologies of communication have freed communities from the spatial constrains, and that helped to transcend the barriers of all sorts (Deshpande 2004).

Muslims and Public Sphere in Contemporary India

Many of the scholars pointed out the fact that the public sphere was not secular as it appeared to be. It is also viewed by scholars that the particular manner in which the public sphere evolved in India and hence the very nature that it has acquired, has made it susceptible to the recent advance of Hindutva (Ali 2007).Secularism has given the appearance of protecting the interests of the minorities but it has carefully maintained its Hindu base (Mohanty1989). In fact, the so-called secular development process has mainly served the hegemonic purposes of the state (ibid).

Questions were raised about the condition of minorities particularly of Muslims in the new public sphere which evolved after independence. It is found that the term minority itself is problematic in India. Gyanedra Pandey (1999) in his fascinating essay describes the construction of some religious groups as minority through discourses of the state. Nationalism commonly identifies the core or mainstream of the nation. In other words nations are established by constructing a core or mainstream- the essential, natural, soul of the nation, as it is claimed and then emerge notions of minorities and marginal communities. The implicit claim is that, the members of some cultures truly belong to a particular politically defined place, but those of others (minority cultures) do not, either because of

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immigrants or of aborigines for the nation (ibid). The Muslims were now the "minority" even in districts, cities, or towns where they were a numerical majority. Likewise, Muslims has to show their loyalty to the nation and the term 'Nationalist Muslim' applied to the patriotic Muslim of the nation. The contradiction lies in the fact that the 'Hindu nationalist' is not the one who is loyal to the nation. It is commonly accepted that a particular group is the majority and the core of the nation and loyal to the nation. It is found that minorities were marginalized from public sphere because the culture is endorsed and expressed by the state in national public was of the majority (Mahajan 2002). According to her, in a multicultural society like India majority community is placed at a privileged position because it enjoys a hegemonic position in the public arena. The right to national self-determination and its concomitant public sphere are invariably weighted against the minorities. The resultant public sphere is, therefore, largely defined by the cultural values and symbols of the majority. She says "In a multicultural society minorities have to work harder to compete for jobs and positions, their culture are undervalued, and they are faced with pressures to assimilate into the majority "(ibid:37).The point, however is that, Muslims as a religious minority discriminated against the public sphere despite the presence of a democratic secular state in post colonial India.

In the last two decades Muslims faced more crises in the public sphere. The communal violence in various parts of the nation has serious repercussions on community. Javed Alam writes "Common sufferings in communal riots brings Muslims together just as economic strangulation unites tribes, or the evils of untouchability unites Dalits, or gender humiliation unites women, all in common political action generating a sense of bonding"(Alam2008:12).The political issues generated a common consciousness among Muslims. The recent terrorist attacks and the further labeling of the Muslims only added the woe of Muslims in India. There is a sense of 'otherness' to Muslims, the imagined other essentialized as child breeders, dirty, violent, fundamentalist, sinister looking, poor illiterate and so on (Hasan 2008). And these prejudices are imbibed from the public sphere where media plays an important role.

Sachar Committee report says that one of the major issues around the question of identity for Indian Muslims is about being identified as 'a Muslim' in public spaces. Markers of Muslim Identity like burqa, the purdah, the beard and the topi etc have been a cause of concern for them in the public realm. These markers have very often been a target for ridiculing the community as well as of looking upon them with suspicion. The report reveals that Muslim men donning a beard and a *topi* are often picked up for interrogation from public spaces like parks, railway stations and markets. In corporate sector *hijab* wearing Muslim women were finding it increasingly difficult to find jobs. As Sachar committee report rightly pointed out, Muslims carry a double burden of being labeled as "anti-national" and as being "appeased" at the same time. They need to prove that they are not "anti-national" and "terrorists".

The Reservation Discourse and Public Sphere

The discrimination of religious groups in various job sectors and administrative wings has not been a major concern in state policies for a long time. Mandal Commission report was the first major issue that led to heat debate in the public sphere.After the Mandal Commission, the affirmative action again gained significance in the context of Sachar Committee report in 2006.The affirmative action in India are a system of quotas designed to increase opportunities in employment, education and, and legislatures for disadvantaged groups (Hasan 2007).Theses policies are targeted at specific groups identified by the government as disadvantaged. As a minority group, Muslims on the whole have not done well since Independence in the area such as education, government service and formal sector jobs. Earlier the reservation was only in favor of scheduled castes and tribes. Later, it was extended to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) in education and employment in 1994 in the light of Mandal Commission recommendations. The reservation issue always led to contests and conflicts in the public sphere. The reservation policies generated disagreements and conflicts occurred between caste and religious groups on the one hand and social classes on the other. It was born out of the complexity of multifaceted aspects of class, caste and religion which official policies fail to capture. The state policies towards the reservation for Muslims always led to debates in the public sphere. The claims and counter claims for

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reservations for Muslims and the response of the government to these contending claims have larger implications in all parts of the nation.

There are two opinions among Muslims on reservation. An influential section within the community argued for the reservation of Muslims as whole. It was the position of the elite Muslims to enjoy the benefits of reservation. They were not in favor of inclusion of Muslims in the OBC category as it would exclude them. And thus they wanted to declare the entire community as backward. But, the lower section of the Muslims opposed this and urged to include Muslims in the category of other backward classes. They claim that Muslim elites have monopolized the benefits of representation in the government jobs. All political parties protected the interest of 'upper caste' Muslims at the expense of lower caste Muslims even though the later form 80 per cent of Muslim population (ibid). At the same time the oppressed Muslims organized and have sought alliance with parties which showed sympathy to them.

Sachar Committee report submitted in 2006 led to serious discussion in the public sphere. The media, academicians, political parties and policy makers and various sections among Muslim community got involved in the discussions. All of them considered the report as an important document locates the Muslims in India in the discourse and practice of "development" and "participation". It is noted that the significance of the report was acknowledged by those who were earlier reluctant to talk about community based reservation particularly the secular left (Jodhka 2007). Those who looked at the religious groups in the framework of secularism and found any kind of identity assertion and argument for protection of minority interest as communal now started to talk about the representation of the communities. However, the revelation of social, political, economic and educational status of Muslims and the subsequent debates in the public sphere generated a new vigor among Muslims in Kerala.

Muslims in Post Colonial Kerala

If this the larger picture in the post colonial India, it is interesting to look at the developments in Kerala, the ways in which Muslim community engaged with the new socio-

political situations. It is found that the structural changes in the early post colonial Kerala reduced the role of traditional caste and religious groups unlike the colonial period. The other forms of civil collectives like workers, traders, students, peasants etc dominated the public sphere. But communities once again become relevant in the public sphere when the political parties realized it as a major vote bank. Moreover, they successfully mobilized for economic and political interest without compromising the spirit of a peaceful democratic situation prevailed in the state. Christians and Muslims did not face any difficulty to coup up with the Kerala society while its counterparts elsewhere in the nation faced a crisis as a minority group.

The participation of Muslims in the democratic processes and the public sphere in Kerala is completely different from the rest of the parts of the country. And there are several factors that make the situation of Kerala different. The presence of Muslim League as a party political organization, the communist movement, the roughly divided population of Christians, Muslims and Hindus, the rivalry and competition between other caste and religious groups, peculiar economic development of the region etc are some important factors.

The Partition Dilemma:

The period after partition was a stage of dilemma and ambiguity for the Muslims of Kerala. The leaders of Muslim League and many of the Mappilas strongly believed that it is impossible to survive in India as they have separate believes, religion, culture and ideology. This dilemma led to the demand for 'Mappilastan'. Later, Mappilas had to accept their position as a minority group in a democratic society. Mappila Muslims were conscious about their security and protection. Anyhow the post colonial history of Mappila Muslims tells the story of the survival of a religious minority in a secular public sphere without compromising its religion and culture.

The Communist Movement:

The communist movement and the establishment of left government somehow kept the primordial forces away from politics as they were successful in appropriating marginalized social groups particularly Ezhavas and other lower caste groups. Concerned to Muslims, the

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communists were seeking to create the impression that the future welfare of Indian Muslim is intimately linked up with the success of the communist movement. This was an adaptation by communist leaders to Indian condition that not to take any overt stand against religion (Miller1976). In Kerala communists attempted to dilute the importance of religion, taking the position that it is a private affair and it has nothing to do with public policy. Communist leaders took their Legislative assembly oaths "in the name of the people" or "in the name of truth" (ibid). Miller says "Communism in turn made unexpectedly rapid inroads on the Mappila community, aided by its own contribution to that community's uplift, producing secularizing tendencies and setting loose force of change" (ibid:203).

Communities in Democratic Kerala:

Though it is said that the success of communism in Kerala resulted in the decline of caste and religious groups in the public sphere, the mobilization of groups on these lines is evident all the time. In the early phase it is found that Ezhavas and Nayars largely supported communists while the Christians stood with the Congress. Mathew says "Although the political wings of communal groupings have been mildly clipped and the appeal to the primordial loyalties to win votes has ceased to be a major factor, the 'Nairness', 'Ezhavaness', or 'Christianess' has not disappeared. Communities continued to remain as a factor in Kerala's social life. Even militant parties like the communist parties had to take into account the communal factor, one ways or other" (Mathew 1989:170).The competition between caste and religious group for social mobility and political power could not end despite the structural and institutional changes in the region. Instead, communities became a quintessential part in all democratic process and institutional patterns. The liberation movement (*Vimochana Samaram*) against communist regime was a platform for the resurgence of some communities that had lost their grip over fellow members after the state formation. It was a united movement led by Congress against the left government.

Muslim League and the New Political Sphere:

The stimuli of the new political situation, and the emerging democracy in Kerala had a major impact on the Mappila community. There is a growing realization that gaining political power is important for the development of the community. The Muslim League decided to

stay as a party political organization to represent the interests of Muslims. After the integration of the three regions, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar the Muslim league merged into one organization. In the 1957 Kerala state assembly election, the League tried to enter into an electoral alliance with Praja Socialist Party and the Congress. The Muslim league's preoccupation with power politics and its tactical approach had serious repercussions in the Mappila community. It gave the community a sense of power which helped to overcome the insecurity stemming from the previous weakening positions and produced a sense of pride and confidence (Miller1976).The Muslim League played the role of Paracommunity and pressurized both the Communist and Congress to protect the interest of the Muslims. They shared power with both parties in various occasions. When the economic reservation was proposed by Communist ministry, League demanded reservation on social and economic backwardness. The League demanded for Malappuram district, the Muslim dominated region since 1960. There was always pressure from the League against the discrimination against the community in all spheres. In 1969 E.M.S ministry was forced to grant 10% reservation exclusively for Muslims. The appointments of Arabic teachers in school, introduction of Mappila schools etc are some of the achievement of Muslims league in their political history.

Islamic Reforms Post- 1950:

The reformist activities gained an organized form after the establishment of KNM (Kerala Naduvatul Mujahideen).The later periods were of severe tensions and conflicts between reformists (Mujahid) and the orthodox groups (Sunni) in the public sphere. They are part of wider discussions occurring in the public sphere in mosques, madrasas, media, and public meetings. Some of the reformist activities led to the heated debates within the community. When reformist tried to translate Quran into Malayalam, the Sunni group opposed it with tooth and nail. When Mujahid group declared dowry as un-Islamic, there was a severe opposition, but a few years later Sunnis also began to say it as un-Islamic. Reforms even brought changes in the attitudes and practices of Sunnis.

Reformist activities were strengthened by the strong presence of urban, educated middle class. The religious sphere of Muslims in Kerala became more vibrant after 1980's. Apart from Mujahid, Jamaat- e- Islami entered into the picture, which was more oriented

towards the ideology of 'political Islam'. The reformist organizations and the traditional Sunnis have their own mosques and Madrasas in most of the localities in which worship and religious teachings happen according to their respective ideology. All these organizations have their own students and youth organizations, a group of eminent religious scholars who specializes in campaigning for their own theological positions and countering others arguments and accusations. Publication wings of these organizations are so active that there have separate magazines for children, youth, women, besides a series of polemical booklets published and distributed across Kerala highlighting the 'truth' of their respective theological positions and condemning others as 'un-Islamic.' The reformist attempts to bring about a more 'scriptural and true Islam' has influenced the community to a greater extent.

Reformism tried to generate a new Islamic identity among Mappila Muslims. This trend is visible in a number of fronts ranging from the mosque architecture to the dressing pattern of women. Earlier Mappila women used to have the traditional dress and they used to cover their head with a scarf. They also wear *Sari* just like Hindu women do and also use the tip of Sari to cover their head. But from the past ten to fifteen years, there is a remarkable shift in favor of Purdah. Purdah shops mushroomed in Kerala. Reformists demanded Muslim women to appear in the public sphere in a particular way. There are contradictory positions among reformists concerning the freedom of women and their participations in the public sphere. On the one hand reformism played an important role in the education of Muslim women and their exposure to the public domain, at the other it imposed new restrictions in dress patterns, occupational choices etc.

The Post-1990 Period:

The numerical growth of the Mappilas increased significantly. In the decade of 1971-91 the Muslim population of Kerala increased by 30 per cent. Mappila population increased from 19.5 per cent to 21.5 per cent. They were educationally progressed and managed to overcome the backwardness to an extent. Muslim Education Society (MES) played a major role in spreading modern education among the Muslims. This was also a period of economic mobility mainly due to the Gulf migration. The overall development reflected in the public

sphere as they marked their presence in the socio-political and economic realms in the region.

The socio- political changes after 1990s had tremendous impact on the Mappila Muslims in Kerala. The increasing communal polarization and violence that India witnessed had its influence on Kerala Muslims too. A number of national and international events and incidents including demolition of the Babri Masjid, Gujarat violence in 2001, Iraq invasion etc evoked strong response from many Muslim organizations and the Muslim public in general in Kerala. A heightened understanding and identification with global Islamic condition and trends are apparently evident. International events having bearing on Islam is immediately discussed and debated in the public sphere of Kerala. The recent communal clashes and violence has made the impression that Muslims in Kerala are also as vulnerable as their counterparts in the rest of the country. This increasing consciousness as a part of a larger Islamic community is very much evident in the present day socio-political discourses of Mapplia Muslims. The emergence of party political organizations other than Muslim league like PDP (Peoples Democratic Party), NDF (National Democratic Front now known as Popular Front) influenced the public opinion of Muslims. There are lots of newspapers, magazines and journals of different organizations which try to manipulate the public opinion.

The Reservation Issues in Kerala:

Kerala is the state where the Muslims were included in the backward classes much early. In Kerala 12% of government jobs are currently reserved for the Muslims. This benefit is available to those who come from families earning less than 2.50 lacks annually. But despite this the Sachar Committee found that in Kerala the Muslim representation in government jobs is 10.4 per cent, a figure that is short of half of their population. The Narendran Commission report published in 2001 led to the debate in the public sphere of Kerala. The report examined the representation that backward communities have secured in four avenues of employment, namely, Government departments, public sector undertakings, universities and autonomous institutions. The Commission had concluded that the representation of most of the backward communities in the state service and related areas of

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employment was 'clearly inadequate', though the extent of inadequacy varied from community to community.

The Commission's analysis of the relevant data revealed that while Ezhavas have secured better representation in more than one category by securing posts in the merit quota over and above the reservation quota, the Muslims have not fared so well. In the Commission's perception, the main reason for this is educational backwardness. The Commission's viewed that backward classes are not yet in a position to reach adequacy of representation without continuance of reservation. The commission strongly recommended adequate reservation policy for the backward communities particularly for the Muslims.

This has led to the contesting claims between the communities. The S.N.D.P (Sreenarayana Dharama Paripalana Yogam), Muslim league, etc requested to implement the recommendations of the report. Dalits, Christians and Muslims united and formed Samvarana Samrakshana Action Council to push the government to implement the reservation for minorities. On the other hand the upper caste groups like N.S.S (Nair Service Society) opposed the report and argued that backward communities of the state overcame their backwardness and it is evident in their increasing representation the power structure. There upper caste resistance against of reservation appeared in the nation at various stages found in Kerala too in the context of Narendran Commission report.

With a growing realization that community is underrepresented in the arena of employment Muslim organizations started to pressurize the government for implementing more reservation. The Muslim media widely propagated the issue and generated discussion in the public sphere. The Narendran Commssion report mostly identified as issues associated with Muslims than any other groups partly because they were the most underrepresented and they showed a keen interest to fight for the reservation than any other groups. Unlike the other parts of the nation there was no split among Mappila Muslims for the reservation demand. One reason may be that all the Mappila Muslims belong to the category of Other Backward Classes. The national scenario shows that reservation issues gave way to the

mobilization of community as well as the split within the community. It is not to suggest that Muslims are not internally fragmented in Kerala.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

This study started with a theoretical proposition that sociological study of public sphere in stratified society will be incomplete without considering the participation and relationships of different collectivities in the public sphere. Habermas formulation of public sphere appears as inadequate for understanding the public sphere of Kerala. It was difficult to agree with the proposition that the emergence of public sphere allow individual to come and discuss their 'common concern' in modern society. Critique of Habermas lies in the presumption that public sphere is not a realm where individuation take place, instead collective interest have always been part of the public sphere whether in terms of gender, caste or religion. Likewise, it is not a space where consensuses take place all the time through discussion, debates and arguments; instead, conflict, hegemony and subordination of groups are part of the processes in the public sphere. The participation and interference of religious groups in the public sphere is particularly significant in this context.

While discussing the colonial Kerala the history of community formations/ transformations showed that consolidation of community identity took place mainly in colonial period. Colonial period witnessed major changes in the form, nature and engagement of communities in the social world. Public sphere was the realm where these changes were reflected. There was interpenetration between communities and the public sphere they engage with. The interference of power and subsequent conflict and subjugation of collective groups in the public sphere were part of the socio- political processes in colonial period. In turn, assertion of communities impacted discursive and institutional arenas of public sphere. The complex relationship between religion and politics had an added impact on the engagement of religious communities in the public sphere. The scattered and territorially bounded groups transformed as a particular form of community with the emergence of a new public sphere. Caste and religious groups mobilized themselves alike to protect their own interests. At political level they all claimed the status of a homogeneous community. The tensions and conflicts prevailed in the social structure replicated in the public sphere of

Kerala. The lower caste groups like Ezhavas and historically subordinated religious groups like Mappilas asserted their identities to get out of the prevailing social structure dominated by upper caste groups. The involvement of colonial power and administrative process played a major role in the functioning of communities. The public sphere is featured by conflicts and there were attempts to make counter publics against hegemonic public sphere. Whether it is literary public sphere, political sphere or institutional arenas, there was always been conflicts and subjugation of some groups.

Though caste and religious groups were understood as two completely different organized forms, it is found that there were some kinds of interpenetration between caste groups and religious groups in Kerala as a result of peculiar developments in the colonial time. Each caste group asserted with its own particular religious symbols and looked at its neighbor groups, whether caste or religious as a particular community. Similarly, religious groups identified themselves with caste groups in the public sphere in a particular way. The engagement of religious community in the publics sphere was largely influenced by the activities of caste groups. Both religious and caste groups became a particular form of community in the socio- political sphere and they replicated each other. It is in this context one has to locate the trajectories in the engagement of Mappila Muslims in the public sphere of Kerala.

The Mappila Muslims in Kerala depict the features of a subaltern group in colonial Kerala. The consolidation of Mappila Muslim identity has commonality with the overall community consolidation in the region; simultaneously there were particular trajectories in the history of Mappila Muslims as a religious community that shaped their distinctive identity and relationship with the public sphere. The Malabar rebellion is seen as the background for the integration of the community ideologically, culturally and politically. The establishment of religious institutions like mosques, emergence of popular festivals and songs, formation of organizations etc during and after the rebellion are some examples of the ways in which community consolidation took place. Simultaneously, the colonial discourse and institutional practices constructed an identity of Mappila Muslim. It is an example to suggest that identities are not always formed from within identities can also form when other

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constructs it through discourse and isolate groups by attaching particular characteristics. Apart from these factors, there were national issues as well that influenced the consolidation of the community.

The historically subordinated position of Mappilas in the social structure of Kerala had its own implication in the newly emerged public sphere in the 20th century. The marginalization can be seen partly as a subaltern group and partly as a religious community. After the rebellion of 1921, there was a rupture in the social life of the Mappilas, the colonial projection of Mappilas as 'fanatic' and further labeling was the major difficulty for the Mappilas to engage in the dialogues in public sphere. The later periods witnessed the mobilization of Mappilas in the public sphere especially in the political sphere. The mobilization of Mappilas in the public sphere had much in common with the caste groups like Ezhavas and the religious group like the Christians. On the one hand Mappilas engaged in the public sphere as a religious group, but simultaneously it acted as a political community like other caste groups. At internal level there were tensions and conflicts, but at the outer level especially in the political sphere they projected the identity and argued and debated for the collective interest. In the literary public sphere the representation of Mappilas were almost absent. Sometime they tried to create counter publics in literary and political sphere with counter discourses and activities along with other subordinated groups.

This is the history of caste and religious communities in colonial period. It is important to look at what happened to the communities and public sphere after the formation of the state. The larger picture of post colonial India shows that the contestation and conflict of religion in the public sphere became more intense. The failure of secularism to maintain an impartial public sphere and continuous communal conflicts deeply effected the participation of Muslims in the public sphere. The discourse on politics and development issues created contestations in outer public as well as inner publics of Muslims. In Kerala, the state formation and establishment of democracy produced structural and institutional changes. In this period, lots of changes took place in the social, political and economic scenario in the region. These processes have their own effects on communities and their engagements in the social world. The party political processes had a larger influence in the destiny of all

communities. The communist movement and the left political discourses created an atmosphere where communities tend to become less relevant in the public sphere as large number of Ezhavas and lower castes people began to engage themselves in the communist party. But, somewhere along the way, every party-political organization realized that protecting caste and religious interest are important to gain political power. The communities which laid its foundation as a political force in colonial period overwhelmingly involved in the public sphere to manipulate the fellow members in the name of their common interests.

For the Muslims it was the Muslim league that emerged as a political party and represented their interests. The Muslim league engaged in the debates and argued for the Muslims in the public sphere for their social developments. It is also true that it played a major role in the socio- economic development of the Mappilas. The gulf migration, participation in the education etc boosted the development of community after 1980s. But, the period after 1990s witnessed important shifts in the public sphere of Kerala. It was the religious issues that became more relevant in the public sphere debates. Apart from the local problems, the national and the international issues regarding the Muslim societies were embraced by the Muslims of Kerala and these got reflected in the public sphere. The formation of political organizations like NDF (National Democratic Front.), PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) and other new organizations mobilized people and made their voice heard in the public sphere about all kinds of regional, national and international issues. The transformation from a single party political organization (Muslims League) to polarized groups is a new trend in the political process within the community. The media is very active among the Muslims as they have many newspapers, several journals and magazines of different groups. Overall the Muslim community appears as a 'responding' community towards all socio- political issues in the public sphere.

Some questions are relevant in this context. How can we understand the articulation of 'Muslimness' in Kerala today? The Muslim public sphere in Kerala is very vibrant that Muslim media and organizations are articulating the Muslim identity in a new way. The discourse on terrorism and national and international political issues on Muslims led to the articulation of a new kind of 'Muslimness'. The post Sachar committee report scenario shows

the tendency to identify Mappilas themselves with the rest of Muslims in the country and elsewhere in the world. The impacts of gulf migration on Muslim identity deserve another study. Likewise it is important to study why the new political organizations are emerging among Muslims and become manipulative in the public sphere. These are serious questions and need to be looked at sociologically with careful empirical qualitative research.

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