POLITICS OF ACCOMMODATION: SOCIAL COALITIONS AND MODES OF POWER-SHARING IN KERALA (1980-2016)

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Declaration

I, Shahul Hameed MM, hereby do declare that the thesis titled "Politics of Accommodation: Social Coalitions and Modes of Power-Sharing in Kerala (1980-2016)" submitted by me at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled "Politics of Accommodation: Social Coalitions and Modes of Power-Sharing in Kerala (1980-2016)" submitted by **SHAHUL HAMEED MM** at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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Dedicated to Parents

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

List of Acronyms

AIDMK: All India Dravida Munnetta Kazhakam

AIML: All India Muslim League

AKCC: All Kerala Catholic Congress

AV: Average Voting

BDJS: Bharatiya Dharma Jana Sena

BJD: Biju Janata Dal

BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party

CBI: Central Bureau of Investigation

CDS: Centre for Development Studies

CMP: Communist Marxist Party

CPI: Communist Party of India

CPIM/CPM: Communist Party of India (Marxist)

CRL: Civil Rights League

CSDS: Centre for the Study of the Developing Societies

CSP: Congress Socialist Party

DMK: Dravida Munnetta Kazhakam

DPSP: Directive Principles of the State and Policy

ECI: Election Commission of India

ED: Enforcement Directorate

ESZ: Ecologically Sensitive Zone

FLP: Fiji Labour Party

FPTP: First Past the Post

ICS: Congress Socialist

INC: Indian National Congress

INL: Indian National League

ISS: Islamic Service Sangham

IUML: Indian Union Muslim League

JDS: Janata Dal (Secular)

JPC: Joint Political Congress

JPSS: Janathipathya Samrakshana Samithi

JSS

KCB: Kerala Congress (Balakrishna Pillai)

KCJ: Kerala Congress (Joseph)

KCM: Kerala Congress (Mani)

KPCC: Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee

KSDC for CC & RC: Kerala State Development Corporation for Christian Converts and the Recommended Communities

KSU: Kerala Student Union

KSWCFC: Kerala State Welfare Corporation for Forward Communities Ltd

KTP: Karshaka Thozhilali Party

KSP: Kerala Socialist Party

LDF: Left Democratic Front

LJD: Loktantric Janata Dal

MLA: Member of Legislative Assembly

MP: Madhya Pradesh

MP: Member of Parliament

MSF: Muslim Student Federation

NCP: Nationalist Congress Party

NCM: Non-Cooperation Movement

NDA: National Democratic Alliance

NDF: National Democratic Front

NDP: National Democratic Party

NSS: Nair Service Society

OBC: Other Backward Communities

PDP: People Democratic Party

PFI: Popular Front of India

PR: Proportional Representation

PSP: Praja Socialist Party

RSP: Revolutionary Socialist Party

PWD: Public Work Department

RSS: RASHTRIYA SWAYAM SEVAK SANGH

SC: Scheduled Caste

SDPI: Social Democratic Party of India

SIMI: Student Islamic Movement of India

SIO: Student Islamic Organization

SNDP: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam

SRP: Socialist Republic Party

SSP: Sanghata Socialist Party

ST: Scheduled Tribe

STV: Single Transferable Votes

SVT: Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei

TSC: Travancore State Congress

UCC: Uniform Civil Code

UDF: United Democratic Front

UP: Uttar Pradesh

WPI: Welfare Party of India

Chapter I

Introduction

> Idiosyncrasy, then, played a major role in the formation of both the Malaysia and Kerala coalitions. It is not surprising that few other accommodative institutions of these kinds can be found in severely divided societies.
>
> -Donald L. Horowitz.[1]

The unique capacity of Kerala's political system to manage social diversity is a point of attraction for political science students. An extremely fragmented society providing stable governments with the participation of people from all significant sections of the people is a rare phenomenon in the world. The unusual political stability that Kerala has acquired since 1982, after three long decades of short-lived governments and intermittent presidential rules, denotes a political transformation in the history of Kerala. The political quagmire before 1982 was partly due to the spill-over effect of social cleavages. The willingness of political parties to develop a political platform sharing power among different stakeholders remarkably changed the political direction of Kerala. The outcome: the formation of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Communist Party-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), the two all-encompassing political coalitions with multi-community compositions. They drew an essential lesson from Kerala's history: only joint players can control the state's political apparatus. The political coalitions followed the logic of cooperating with many parties and groups to gain strength over the opponent in the fiercely competed bipolar election, leaving a larger room for accommodation and negotiations. The mastery of the political actors in designing and running the bipolar competition structure with two multi-community political alliances regularly alternating on power amid deep social and political divisions should attract the research community. Kerala's trajectory in social coalitions and political accommodations can provide enormous lessons to power-sharing theories in divided societies.

[1] Donald L. Horowitz, "The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict: Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 4 (1993): 34. dio: https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1993.0054.

Research Question

The central concern of this thesis is to explore the development and practice of power-sharing and political accommodation in Kerala. Kerala's subnational existence within Indian federalism necessitates a reference to the character of democratic institutional structure at the national level. India's formal mechanisms are majoritarian, with the spirit of integrating social groups into the mainstream and a relatively lesser emphasis on social accommodation.[2] At the centre of Indian democracy is the Westminster system in tune with the British parliamentary practices and the Anglo-American electoral rule, first past the post (FPTP), which does not have many takers in the accommodation tradition. From electoral rules to the cabinet system, from bureaucracy to the army, the nation-state in India confirms the philosophy of integration by not giving recognition to social identity in public. The political safeguards to social and religious minorities in the form of reservation and cultural rights do not explicate the requirement to recognise the particular interest of any group but rather confirm the necessity of an interim measure for the effective integration of people in the long run.[3] Scholarships before have identified the lacuna of the Indian system in recognising group identity in public.

It should be borne in mind that a subnational unit within the Indian federal structure has a limited say over the formal institutional arrangement, which takes shape on the provisions of the country's constitution. As India has a single constitution for the centre and states, the country's constituent assembly created a second set of executives for states, which models the central executive in significant ways apart from the appointment of the Governor by the President of India.[4] The Governor's office has emerged to play the veto role at the state level as a person appointed by the president on the instruction of the central cabinet without accountability to any legislator in the state or the centre.[5] In other words, the states in India also have majoritarian or integrationist democratic institutions. Although India follows the

[2] Katharina Adeney, "Constitutional Centring: Nation Formation and Consociational Federalism in India and Pakistan," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 40, no. 3 (2002): 8–33, dio: https://doi.org/10.1080/713999598; and Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Representing India: Ethnic Diversity and the Governance of Public Institutions, Ethnicity, Inequality, and Public Sector Governance,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[3] Niraja Gopal Jayal, "The Limits of Representative Democracy," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009): 327.

[4] Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 117.

[5] Subrata K. Mitra, and Make Pehl, "Federalism," in *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, ed. Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 49.

principle of asymmetric federalism, the institutional features in states seldom vary. Against this backdrop, the current study needs to depart from the general practice in power-sharing studies, which focuses on the formal institutional mechanism and its impact on democratic governance. Instead, the study focuses on the evolution and practice of power-sharing approaches outside the constitutionally mandated institutional settings.

In the absence of a constitutionally mandated power-sharing institutional system in Kerala, the research inquiry turns to mechanisms that evolved outside constitutional formality. Since 1980, Kerala's electoral pendulum has revolved around a bipolar competition between the two political alliances, the UDF and LDF, which regularly alternated on power. The combined vote share of the two fronts, which is at 86.5 per cent average between 1980 and 2016, hints at their ability to induct most of the people in the state into the mainstream political process.[6] The approaches of the two alliances in dealing with social divisions have drawn similarities: a practical method of accommodating maximum groups to the system to strengthen the alliance against the opposition. A remarkable aspect of the inclusion of Kerala politics is that all governments in the state since its formation in 1956 have included people belonging to the five relevant social groups. Thus, at the heart of the political analysis of power-sharing in Kerala shall be the coalition institutions that masterminded the political process in the state in the last four decades. Broadly speaking, there are three categories of approaches in Kerala in dealing with diversity: two distinct approaches by the political alliances under the patronage of two significant parties and a third category outside the mainstream party system to shatter the existing coalition. First, the LDF's orientation to political ideologies of socialism and Marxism indicates an integrationist attitude to social questions. The class politics of the left parties seldom recognises ethnic or communal identities, arguably inimical to the proper development of class consciousness in the people. Second, the UDF has a Congress tradition that is open to questions of community participation in politics. The Congress-led platforms in Kerala have given open recognition to community identities, reflecting an accommodationist approach to social diversity. The third category concerns those sections that could not seep into the mainstream party system because their strategies did not fit with the central principles of coalition politics in Kerala that revolve around moderation and communal coexistence. Thus, the inquiry of how Kerala deals with power-sharing would be about how the three approaches engage with politics and

[6] The data is based on the author's calculation using the information provided by the Election Commission of India website (https://eci.gov.in/).

communities. The necessity to ask questions about the power-sharing practice of Kerala is not merely because it has received scant scholarly attention. Instead, it would guide us to an underexplored but paramount important aspect of the power-sharing arrangements in divided places, the role of institutions and practices beyond constitutionally enshrined mechanisms or informal practices among the stakeholders.

Three questions inform the investigation. First, it makes a historical inquiry into the socio-political processes in Kerala that contributed to the evolution of power-sharing practices and political accommodation. Scholars have identified an inclusive political culture in Kerala based on preliminary evidence. Thus the present exercise is to dissect the state's social and political history to see if the power-sharing truly existed and in what manner. Secondly, it deals with a sociological question of how the two political alliances which controlled Kerala's politics in the last four decades managed the question of social identities. As the alliances represent the political journey of the two political traditions in Kerala with the participation of most political parties, the second question is about the two dominant approaches to diversity in the state. The politics of Kerala from 1980 to 2016 is the history and the track record of the LDF and UDF. Lastly, socio-political forces outside the bipolar competition structure of the state have been trying to enter the race, questioning the strategies of the mainstream parties in dealing with communities. The study thus asks about the new political formats that can reconfigure the current political equations. Answering the question will help understand the prospects of the coalitions in the future politics of Kerala.

Thus, the study asks:

1. How did power-sharing and political accommodation practices develop in the state of Kerala?
2. How did the two stable alliances practice power-sharing and accommodation under extreme societal fragmentation, and how are their approaches different?
3. What are the emerging political formats that can upset the accommodative institutions of the state?

Research Method

This work represents a mixed research study that has used qualitative and quantitative tools to understand the power-sharing process in Kerala. Focusing on a single case with particular political culture would facilitate a more detailed and in-depth analysis of the social

processes that would help to excavate the critical role played by different political and social actors. A single case study tells us why the hypothesis holds, while the large-n method says whether it holds.[7] The advantage of a single case study research is that it enables a proper engagement with the question. Conversely, the drawback of the method is the limitations in drawing general theory that has implications beyond the case. Although this work focuses on a single case in detail, it identifies three approaches to the power-sharing question within the case enabling a comparative analysis. The three approaches are these: the Communist Party-led LDF, the Congress-led UDF, and other parties outside the coalitions as representing a third approach to shackle the existing coalition system. The comparative analysis of three approaches to power-sharing within the same socio-political context partly irons out the problem of limitations of the single case study method. This research exercise does not select a case to provide a theoretical exploration but interprets a case with a theory.

The research conducted for this study has extensively used primary and secondary resources. The initial stage of the research comprised an effort to understand the character of the Indian political system in dealing with matters related to social diversity. The focus was on how the constitution of India addressed the question of citizenship and demand for a particular treatment. Then it shifted to the two schools of power-sharing, consociationalism and centripetalism. Consociationalism and centripetalism are about the plethora of literature produced by two erudite scholars, Arend Lijphart and Donald L. Horowitz. That part involved thoroughly reading power-sharing literature, primarily the heated debates between the two scholars in the last decades. Then it traced the practice of social coalition and power-sharing in Kerala's historical context. To capture the nature of groups' involvement in the political processes, it selected some of the vital socio-political movements in Travancore, the history of which has set the political frame of Kerala, as sample cases. It finds that social mobilisations of Kerala in the early twentieth century, when people preferred their community organisations for public activism, were the joint activities or social coalitions of community collectives. The intrinsic connection of Travancore's twentieth-century social reform movement with the emergence of political parties of Kerala provides a connection between the state's past and present socio-political processes. Then the study chased the elements of power-sharing in the political development of Kerala, mainly focusing on the evolution of the two significant parties in the state, the Communist Party and the Congress

[7] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 57.

Party. The method adopted to track the power-sharing development is a strategy of 'process tracing,' wherein the cause of phenomena is singled out among multiple variables. The process tracing method enables us to identify the intervening causal process and mechanism between the independent and dependent variables and to consider the possibility of one or more potential causal paths evident in a single case study.[8]

This thesis has supplemented the qualitative analysis with the quantitative exercise. The research on power-sharing questions is incomplete without using some quantitative works, mainly to analyse the defining aspect of representation and inclusion. This study quantified the caste and religious profile of the Kerala legislative assembly and cabinet from 1982 to 2016. The electoral data provided by the official website of the Election Commission of India (ECI) has come in handy in preparing the list of members of the legislative assembly. It has used the Kerala Legislative Assembly's official website to prepare the list of cabinet members. Identification of the social profiles of assemblies and cabinets has been a complex task of this study because no official document mentions the caste and religion of Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and ministers. Although names and surnames are helpful identifiers of social backgrounds in India, many names are still unidentifiable. It has used the expertise of some political leaders and government officials in identifying some members' caste/religious profiles. For quantitative works, it tabulated the collected data on the socio-religious profile of cabinets and assemblies and used various statistical methods for analysis. In the cabinet membership, the day in office was the unit of calculation; thus, it could mitigate the problem of irregular changes of ministers due to resignation and deaths. The chapter descriptions have complemented the quantitative analysis with the qualitative explanations. The primary resources have been used extensively in this stage: the proceedings of the legislative assembly, writings of political leaders, reports in magazines and newspapers, and party committee proceedings.

Limiting the search period is a crucial aspect of the research. This study has confined the research to thirty-six years between 1980 and 2016. The choice of 1980 is because it marked the official beginning of Kerala's two political alliances, which remarkably changed the state's politics. The statistical observation of the study is from the year 1982 because it denoted the year the state acquired political stability; henceforth, all assemblies completed the term without significant troubles. An exception to this was the 1987-1991 assembly

[8] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Science*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 111, 172.

which had nine months short of the full term because the E. K. Nayanar Government decided to seek a fresh mandate before the expiry of the term. During the period, Kerala had seven Assemblies and nine governments; only two governments were formed in the middle of the assembly term because of the changes in the chief ministers. It should be borne in mind that political analysis of a particular period cannot be completely ruptured from the adjacent periods, and thus this work has placed the study within the larger Kerala political history. Examination of the social composition before 1980 is a complex exercise because of the frequent changes in the governments coupled with the instability in the party structure. The other ending cap of the period is 2016 because it marked the last year of completion of an assembly before this study started.

This study has used interviews with stakeholders in Kerala politics to minimise the limitations of document analysis and secondary resource research in unearthing the strategies and negotiations behind the curtain. A significant part of political dealings in coalition politics happens without proper documentation, and the people involved in it or who witnessed the same are the better source to decipher that information. The internal discussions about community participation and political adjustments are generally out of the public purview in Kerala because the explicit use of caste or religion in politics is often taboo, liable to attract disciplinary action from the Election Commission.[9] With the established coalition structure, the fronts in Kerala follow unwritten rules which are only sometimes voiced in public.[10] This study adopted a semi-structured interview model with three categories of people- political leaders, community figureheads, and journalists. Interviewing is essential if one wants to know what a set of people have done or planned to do.[11] The interviews and narratives available online have also come in great use for the work.

In adopting a single-case method, this work follows Lijphart, Horowitz, and other power-sharing scholars who also have studied single cases in depth to unearth essential

[9] Paul R. Brass, *Caste, Faction, and Party in Indian Politics: Faction and Party* (Volume two), (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1985), 208.

[10] Robin Jeffrey, "Coalitions and Consequences: Historical, Economic, Social and Political Considerations from India," in *The Indian Economy Sixty Years after Independence,* ed. Raghbendra Jha (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2008), 10; K. K. Kailash, "Dhritarashtra's Embrace: Big and Small Parties in Kerala and Tamil Nadu," *Contemporary South Asia* 27, no. 1 (2019): 81.

[11] Aberbach D Joel and Bert A Rockman, "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews," *Political Science & Politics* 35, no. 4 (2002): 673.

reflections on the power-sharing theory.[12] Although power-sharing studies have generally been on inter-country comparisons, some of the critical studies in the field have relied on single case studies to comprehensively analyse how the process happens in a controlled environment. The single cases face the limitation of making a generalised statement and conforming or substantively refuting an existing theory. However, this study tries to overcome that limitation by comparing three approaches to power-sharing within a case.

Definitions and Assumptions

This thesis relies on three primary assumptions, which scholars generally accept in power-sharing literature. First, institutions are at the centre of democracy, and their role in mitigating the problems of social divisions is widely recognised. The definition of an institution can be: 'an enduring group with a distinct identity and with boundaries that mark it out from its environment;' or ‘a pattern of activities that are recurrent, legitimate, and meaningful.'[13] Alternatively, 'institutions are a socially constructed set of arrangements routinely exercised and accepted.' The focus of this thesis is democratic institutions that are relevant for power-sharing. Democratic institutions facilitate political competition, governmental accountability, and popular legitimacy through free and fair elections that decide representatives to the legislature and executive.[14] Theories of power-sharing emerged to emphasise the importance of specific institutions in sustaining democracy in divided societies. Against all their apparent differences, consociational and centripetal scholars converge on the idea that institutions are an essential element in determining the fate of democracy in such societies. In societies where social groups have segregated structures, political institutions are the prominent channels of interaction among people of different groups. The danger of excluding some sections from accessing political institutions is cancelling possibilities to solve tensions through negotiations.

Second, the case of this thesis is a subnational unit within a federal system, while the focal point of power-sharing scholarships has been the institutional design at the national

[12] For instance, see Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa?: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

[13] André Béteille, “The Institutions of Democracy,” in *Democracy and its Institutions*, ed. André Béteille (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11.

[14] Robin Luckham, Anne Marie Goetz, and Mary Kaldor, “Democratic Institutions and Democratic Politics,” in *Can Democracy Be Designed? The Politics of Institutional Choice in Conflict Torn Societies*, ed. Sunil Bastian and Robin Luckham (London: Zed Books, 2003), 18.

level. The subject matter of power-sharing literature has been political concerns of sovereign states or states with separate existence, not units under them. The later scholarships in the field have dealt with cases of 'imposed power-sharing,' under which an external body like the international agency or foreign government acts as the third-party arbitrator among two or more conflicting parties in a country to fix the political turmoil.[15] The structural limitation of a subnational unit in determining the institutional framework and independently handling domestic affairs is a significant reason why power-sharing literature gave lesser attention to subnational cases. Scholarships in consociational and centripetal schools have focussed on country cases or inter-country comparisons and have rarely explained within-country comparisons or cases. However, the focus study of this thesis is about something other than the constitutionally encrypted institutions but about the socially evolved political practices that facilitated the growth of power-sharing.

Kerala is one of the twenty-eight state units in India that more or less follow the same institutional design with less variation. The fundamental limitation of the state unit in India is that its political authority has no say over the design of institutions and the central mechanisms have many ways to control the state bodies. The seventh schedule of the constitution provides a clear division of power between the central and state governments: the centre controls the Union List, subjects of national importance like foreign affairs, inter-state relations, and national security; the State List, containing matters of regional importance, is under the jurisdiction of the state; and subjects of overlapping interests are in the Concurrent List, in which both units have power, in case of conflict the centre prevails.[16] Although the residuary power is with the centre, the state in Indian federalism is not a subordinate body under the Union but powerful in its fields. The design followed at both levels is the same: there are popular governments with a similar form of parliamentary institutions. A slew of constitutional provisions give authority to the central government over the state: the nominal executive of the state, called the Governor, is a nominee of the central government with much situational power in hand; the state has a massive dependency on the budget allocation of the central government, though there is an independent source of income; central institutions like the ECI, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) have jurisdiction over the states. At the same time, the states have gained power over time: the

[15] Michael Kerr, *Imposing Power-Sharing: Conflict and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon*, (Irish Academic Press Ltd, 2005).

[16] Mitra, and Pehl, "Federalism," 46.

Supreme Court has curtailed the centre's power in unduly using article 352 to declare presidential rule in the state. The autonomy of state units has been reflected in the variation of their performances in several social, economic and political indicators. While some states are among the outstanding performers akin to a middle-income country, some are poor performers like poor-income countries. There has been a considerable variation in caste representation, social composition, participation of disadvantaged groups, and political stability.[17] The variations in the performance of states despite similar institutional frameworks encourage scholars to work on the states individually and comparatively.

Third, this thesis makes a basic assumption that social identities matter. It does not mean primordialism, a perspective that ethnic communities have fixed boundaries and existed from time immemorial, albeit community members subscribe to such beliefs. Alternatively, the constructionist view of ethnicity posits the argument that human beings have a multitude of identities, which are socially constructed and the salience of which is fluid.[18] Ethnic identities are empirical realities of the socio-political life of many democracies in the world and are evident in political mobilisations and voting patterns. In many societies, the temptations of several identities like region, religion, and class to compete with ethnic identity to get political salience moderate the influence of ethnicity in politics.[19] This work is not primarily about whether ethnic identities are primordial, instrumental, or colonial constructs. Electoral analysis and opinion surveys have shown the salience of social identities in the political processes of democracies. Regardless of whether they are being constructed or not, ethnic or communal identities are not easy to destroy or deconstruct. The constitutional engineering suggested by power-sharing literature for divided societies does not target the destruction of ethnic identities but structures institutions to manage divisions.[20] Kerala's politically salient social identities are caste and religion, as evident in electoral studies and sample surveys of reputed agencies. As explained in the subsequent chapters, the caste/religious equations have played a significant role in political competition in Kerala in

[17] Christophe Jaffrelot, and Sanjay Kumar, *Rise of the Plebeians? The Changing Face of Indian Legislative Assemblies,* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009).

[18] Pippa Norris, *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 109.

[19] Horowitz, "The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict," 20.

[20] Donald L. Horowitz, "Constitutional Design: Proposals Versus Processes: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy," in *The Architecture of Democracy*, ed. Andrew Reynolds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 19.

past decades. Parties with ideological mooring to class or non-sectarian ideologies also have acknowledged the political importance of community identities in the state's politics. Thus this work treats community identity evident in Kerala politics as one significant component among several such, not the sole, determinant of the political competition structure.

The reference of power-sharing literature is to 'divided society,' a term used by scholars to connote a unique political situation where ethnic identities impede the smooth functioning of democratic institutions. Defining a divided society is one of the crucial exercises of this part. Some scholars have directly presented their arguments without clarifying what they mean by divided society, presuming that the readers are familiar with the term, while many have invested extensively in defining the term. In his seminal work, '*Democracy in Plural Societies*, the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart differentiated two societies: homogenous societies, which are independent of significant social cleavages, and plural societies which have a deep segmental structure.[21] Lijphart's early writings considered all diverse societies as divided and problematic. The inherent problem of conflating diversity with division is that homogenous societies without internal differences of ethnicity, race, region, and religion are practically impossible in the present-day world. The globalisation drive has accelerated the diversification of societies, and citizens of democracies worldwide are more diverse today than before. One study shows less than twenty United Nations member countries have cultural minorities below five per cent.[22] Scholars have closely followed the trends and have come up with a more nuanced definition of a divided society.

American political scientist Donald L. Horowitz classified democratic societies into fluid societies and divided societies as two edges of a continuum, most of which fell between the two extremes. Fluid societies have absorbed outsiders and group identities into the native culture, peacefully like in the United States and France, or using violence like in the United Kingdom. Social identities have rarely percolated into political structures in those societies. On the other end, divided societies reflect the social cleavages in political structure without any factors moderating the influence of ethnicity in politics, like in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka. There is a slew of societies like Canada, Switzerland, and Belgium between the two categories, where multiple cleavages have structurally moderated the impact of ethnic

[21] Arend Lijpart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration,* (Bombay: Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1977), 71-4.
[22] Ephraim Nimni, "Stateless Nations in a World of Nation-States," in *Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff (London: Routledge, 2011), 55.

divisions in politics.[23] Most cases fall in the last category, where the democratic process faces challenges of ethnic divisions, not at the same pace as in highly divided societies.

Thus the divided societies are those societies that are diverse and 'where ethnicity is a politically salient cleavage around which interests are organised for political purposes, such as elections.'[24] As per the definition, all diverse societies are not necessarily divided. Divided societies have a particular political situation wherein routine policy debates or partisan politics are prone to be a question of recognition and inclusion. Political developments quickly retract to an ethnic line.[25] The interplay between society and politics leads to this: political cleavages hardly differ from social cleavages, and the party system becomes the replica of social divisions. Meanwhile, the heterogeneous character of society in all diverse societies does not cause ethnicisation of politics. The thick boundaries between communities in divided societies make ethnic membership less malleable.[26] The extreme cases are the absence of a mutually agreed value system and shared understanding of the foundational principle of society necessary for building a democratic society. Contradictory perspectives on fundamental values impede the peaceful process of adopting a constitution. The division can also be non-ethnic, like the contradiction between the secular Jews and right-wing Jews in Israel and moderate Hindus and the Hindu nationalists in India.[27] The conflict over bounding principles may continue to hit after the adoption of the constitution because of ambiguity and multiple interpretations of clauses in the book. The debate on such controversial subjects may be the ground of violent conflict between communities. Such clauses in the Indian constitution include minority rights, Uniform Civil Code (UCC), secularism, the ban on cow slaughtering, and special status to states.

There is an agreement among scholars that democratic institutions cannot easily sail through societies riven by divisions of ethnicity. Anglo-American democratic models based on majority party rule without considering the possibility of domination by particular groups may lead to permanent inclusion and exclusion of communities, hitting a fatal blow to democratic projects. The power-seeking political elites in divided societies generally have a

[23] Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 4 (1993): 20.
[24] Benjamin Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.
[25] Sujit Choudhry, "Bridging Comparative Politics and Comparative Constitutional law: Constitutional Design in Divided Societies," in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?,* ed. Sujit Choudhry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.
[26] Ian Lustick, "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism versus Control," *World Politics* 31, no. 3, (1979): 325.
[27] Hanna Lerner, *Making Constitutions in Deeply Divided Societies,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29-31.

temptation to use ethnic outbidding to win over the opponent at the cost of dividing society communally.[28] Power-sharing scholarship has filled the gap between the demand of divided societies for a democratic theory fitting to their social structure and the inefficiency of Anglo American democratic model to settle the question. Consociational schools prescribed a system not based on intense electoral competition between parties but on cooperation, facilitating a share for influential groups to take part in power. Centripetalism designs a model that restructures majoritarian democratic institutions to reward moderation and penalise extremism.

On Terminologies

Ambiguous terminologies are often a significant bottleneck to comprehending literature in social science.[29] Although not peculiar to social science scholarships, multiple meanings and different understandings among scholars have augmented the complexity of terminologies. A brief-up on what this thesis intends with specific terms is inevitable to pre-empt the possibility of confusion and make readers comfortable. Power-sharing is a quintessential term that requires some clarification. Power-sharing is a mutually agreed political contract or a consensus among political stakeholders in divided societies to share the control over the state bodies, like the executive, legislature, and bureaucracy, among different sections of the society. Initially, power-sharing was synonymous with consociational democracy, and scholars like Lijphart used both terms interchangeably.[30] In later phases, the term connoted any political arrangement that included clauses of sharing the power over state institutions among different groups, whether they followed consociationalism, centripetalism, or any other method. Elements of power-sharing in different schools differ. Consociationalism is a power-sharing method with institutions like grand coalitions in executive bodies and proportional representation in legislative houses. Centripetalism gives implicit reference to sharing power like federal government and group autonomy with emphasis on building inter-community cooperation. The underlying point is that all power-

[28] Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies,* 4.
[29] Arend Lijphart accepts that the difficulty of defining and measuring concepts is a valid criticism against the consociational theory (Arend Lijphart, "The Wave of Power-Sharing Democracy," in *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*, ed. Andrew Reynolds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 46).
[30] Matthijs Bogaards, "The Uneasy Relationship between Empirical and Normative Types in Consociational Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, no. 4 (2000): 416; and Arend Lijphart, "Definitions, Evidence, and Policy: A Response to Matthijs Bogaards' Critique," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, n. 4 (2000): 427, doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/0951692800012004003.

sharing worldwide cannot go under either consociationalism or centripetalism; instead, many have blended the best practices of different democracies in their arrangements. Thus, power-sharing includes consociationalism, centripetalism, or any approach that considers the involvement of different sections in the running of the state.

The primary consideration in filtering power-sharing democracies from others is a litmus test that checks whether the system provides adequate means for the participation of different groups in the governance of the polity. To illustrate a formal power-sharing, Fiji has a unique mechanism under which any political party with ten or more per cent of the vote share in the general election has an entitlement to get a cabinet berth, which can accept or decline the offer on will. In 1999, the dominant party in the country, Fiji Labour Party (FLP) under Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudary, extended a cabinet berth to a minority party called Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT), which had secured a vote share above ten per cent. The court upheld the constitutionality of the decision by the FLP to reject the bundle of terms and conditions proposed by the SVT to join the cabinet as akin to declining the offer.[31] Unlike majoritarian democracies, power-sharing allows minorities to take a share of the executive power and legislative assembly.[32] This thesis considers a political system as involving power-sharing if various social groups have enjoyed a stint in power and commanded a decent share of membership in representative bodies for a considerable period. It can be due to a formal agreement, political convention, or an informal understanding among stakeholders in the polity. The yardstick used in this thesis to probe whether groups had a stake in the power structure of the polity is the examination of the social composition of the cabinet, which is the most powerful institution in the parliamentary system. It also detects the social profile of the legislative assembly in a couple of decades to see if groups had secured memberships in representative bodies.

Proportionality is a broad term with multiple connotations, including political, social, economic, and cultural. Power-sharing scholarships have often taken a broader meaning of proportionality to analyse its dimensions in executives, legislature, judiciary, media, bureaucracy, army, police, public office, and private business establishments. This thesis focuses on proportionality in the legislative assembly, the central representative institution of states in Indian parliamentary democracy. As this study is about a subnational unit, checking proportionality in other fields has structural limitations. Even though there is a consensus that

[31] Yash Ghai and Jill Cottrell, "A Tale of Three Constitutions: Ethnicity and Politics in Fiji," in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation*, ed. Sujit Choudhry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 307-8.
[32] Choudhry, "Bridging Comparative Politics," 25.

proportionality has a significant role in sustaining democracy in divided societies, consociational scholars consider it an inevitable element. Consociational scholars prioritize proportionality over other goals of electoral rules, like political accountability and the relationship between the representative and the people. Proportionality used in this thesis does not mean 'polarised pluralism,' a term coined by Giovanni Sartori. Sartori differentiated between two forms of pluralism: moderate pluralism, which produces bipolar centripetal forces, and polarising pluralism, which creates multipolar centrifugal forces.[33] Party-list PR electoral system with a low winning threshold may fragment the party system as small parties with insignificant vote bases seep into the house. The structural incentive for political elites to cater to small groups has the potential threat of disintegrating society and replicating social divisions in the party system. Under a fragmented party system, governmental stability, pivotal to democracy in divided societies, is a herculean task.[34] Conversely, proportionality can coexist with other qualities of democracy where the proportional representation of social groups in the house does not essentially challenge the country's social fabric and governmental stability. A multipolar competition between political parties reinforces political stability by involving all significant socio-political forces in governance.

Accommodation used in this thesis is one of the two available strategies for democratic societies to deal with diversity, the other being integration. Accommodation minimally requires openly recognising more than one identity, which can be linguistic, ethnic, regional, or religious, and facilitating coexistence among them.[35] Political accommodation means the conciliation of political interests of different communities in the polity to find an amicable settlement to social tension. It is about recognising the interest of others without necessarily compromising on own interests. It helps find a conciliatory interest acceptable to people of different interests and thus provides an easy route to governance. The idea of accommodation furnishes a space for all sections, including minorities, to articulate their interests. The significant departure of accommodation from integration is the recognition of group identities in the private and public realms. The proponents of

[33] Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party SystE. M. S.: a Framework for Analysis,* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2005), 19.
[34] Donald L. Horowitz, "Electoral SystE. M. S.: A Primer for Decision Makers," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 4 (2003): 121.
[35] Choudhry, "Bridging Comparative Politics," 27.

accommodation acknowledge the particular interest of communities other than the general national interest.[36]

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis advances the argument that Kerala has a power-sharing system as part of two political alliances with different approaches to social accommodation and community involvement in politics. There are seven chapters to explicate this argument. The first chapter introduces the thesis by setting out the research question, explaining the methodology used, and elaborating on the guiding assumptions. It clarifies some terminologies important in comprehending the argument made in work. The second chapter is a theoretical intervention to connect political accommodation in Kerala with the larger literature on power-sharing in societies riven by deep divisions of ethnicity, language, religion, and caste. It engages shortly with the two democratic approaches to diversity, accommodation, and integration, which are poles apart from assimilation. The power-sharing literature falls in the accommodation category, which recognises ethnic identities in the public and private realms. India, which operates with the Westminster parliamentary system based on the simple plurality electoral rule, lacks the formal institutional design to qualify as a power-sharing democracy. The scholarly attempts to interpret India as a case of power-sharing or consociation have received more criticism than the appraisal. It establishes that in the absence of formal institutional arrangements to fit with an accommodationist state at the national level, the existence of a power-sharing and political accommodation in Kerala is possible in the form of informal understanding or mechanism between different stakeholders of the state politics.

Chapter three tracks the development of coalition practices in Kerala and examines whether the state had power-sharing from 1980 to 2016. Kerala is one of the most diverse states in India but operates with a majoritarian parliamentary system followed across the country. Previous studies have argued that the state has an incredible track record of political accommodation, communal coexistence, and social inclusion. The chapter examines the status of Kerala as a power-sharing democracy and chases the evolution of social coalitions and accommodation concerning two dimensions, religion, and caste. It analyses the impact of informal power-sharing mechanisms on social representation, community participation, and

[36] John McGarry, Brendan O'Leary, and Richard Simeon, "Integration or Accommodation? The Enduring Debate in Conflict Regulation," in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation,* ed. Sujit Choudhry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69.

recognition of group identities. Doing so introduces the research context and tests whether Kerala qualifies as a power-sharing democracy.

Chapter four surveys how the left front, particularly the Communist Party, contributed to the development of power-sharing in Kerala. In a highly fragmented social landscape, the left invented a mechanism to deal with the social divisions that recognised the role of community identity without completely surrendering to shrewd communal politics. That cleared out a unique model of dealing with ethnic issues in a divided society. The chapter focuses on three aspects: the social base of the left in Kerala, how the left maneuvered its expansion strategy to cultivate an all-encompassing political coalition called the LDF, and how it addressed the questions of social representation and community identities in politics. It establishes that the left solution to deep social division is a blend of accommodation and integration with more emphasis on the latter.

Chapter five concerns the political accommodation methods adopted by Congress-led alliances in the past decades. The academic discourse on power-sharing in India, primarily based on the inclusive politics of the Congress Party, could not provide a consistent explanation. The chapter analyses the Congress-led coalition's approach to the question of social identities in Kerala's political processes. It tracks the evolution of the Congress Party and its approaches to three pivotal questions: community involvement in politics, social representation, and recognition of group identities. Mainly it checks how the UDF mechanism dealt with the four principles of consociationalism: grand coalition, mutual veto, proportionality, and segmental autonomy. The UDF approach to diversity in Kerala has features of accommodation and integration, considerably titled towards the former. Chapter six covers political parties outside the dominant coalitions, mainly focusing on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and partly on radical Muslim parties. It addresses why the right-wing parties in Kerala fail to translate their organisational strength into electoral dividends by taking the case of right wing movements. Contrary to the general perception, the rights in Kerala are significant forces regarding their social strength or political presence. It assesses the electoral performance of the BJP between 1980 and 2016 within Kerala's political competition structure, which revolves around two all-encompassing coalitions. In unpacking the social and political strategies of the right, this work argues that the BJP, like other right wings, in Kerala, misses a key skill to adapt to the state's political frame. The final chapter discusses the implications derived from the thesis on Kerala politics. It also provides hints for future studies.

Chapter II

Political Accommodation and Power-Sharing: Theoretical Discussion

The inquiry of this research is about a unique political phenomenon in the state of Kerala, wherein a 'fragmented politics of fragmented society,'[1] provides an idiosyncratic model with governmental stability and political inclusion, ensuring the representation of major social groups.[2] As pointed out in the previous studies, all governments formed in the state consisted of members from the five significant social groups-Nairs, Ezhavas, Muslims, Christians, and Schedules Communities- with the backing of social and political establishments representing these particular interests.[3] At the centre of this model are the two political coalitions, the Indian National Congress (INC)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM or CPIM)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), who have relished stints in power almost alternatively with similar social compositions and policy continuity.[4] In order to give a rational existence to the study, it is imperative to connect the particular phenomenon with the larger literature on power-sharing in societies riven by deep divisions of ethnicity, language, religion, and caste. In doing so, the theoretical explanation below majorly deals with these: the distinction between integration and accommodation; the way the two significant schools in the domain of 'democracy in divided societies' explain political inclusion, representation, and communal autonomy; what is the status of India in power-sharing literature; and how Kerala politics responded to them.

Political Accommodation and India

Democratic societies generally deal with diversity in two forms: integration or accommodation. The debate between integration and accommodation is on a perception

[1] CP John, Communist Marxist Party (CMP) leader and an eminent political strategist of the UDF, coined this in an online interview (CP John, "Annu Njan: Rashtreeyapravarthakan CP John Manassu Thurakkunnu" (Me then: the Political Activist CP John Opens Mind), filmed February 4, 2018, News 18, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe5t2cmyXRI).

[2] The work does not use the yardstick to judge how substantial the representation is and whether the gap between who represents and what represents has been narrowed.

[3] James Chiriyankandath, "'Unity in Diversity'? Coalition Politics in India (with Special Reference to Kerala)," *Democratization* 4, no. 4 (1997): 16-39; Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies", *Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 4 (1993): 18-13; G. Gopa Kumar, "Changing Dimension of Coalition Politics in Kerala," in *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues at the Centre and the States*, ed. E. Sridharan (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2014), 317-389; and Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[4] The UDF and LDF ruled Kerala between 1982 and 2016, alternating on power every five years.

difference: the former relies on a normative view based on a long-term vision believing that the public recognition of social identities has the risk of solidification of ethnic identities posing challenges to the state in the long run. In contrast, the latter has a pragmatic take that it is inevitable to acknowledge the ethnic identities in diverse societies to ensure a sustainable democratic environment.[5] Integrationists fervently admire the principle of single citizenship and 'equality before the law' precisely because their approach seeks to establish a society without discrimination and violence.[6] With the sole exception of national identity, they do not support any form of institutions that recognise the existence of group identity in public but accept and sometimes celebrate the diversity in the private realm. Their perception is that a uniform society is pivotal to a progressive society, unity of people, integrity of the nation-state, and transcendence of particularism. Integrationism firmly stands for establishing a common identity despite several ethnic groups in the polity and rejects any possibility of a situation where the political system reflects ethnic differences.[7]

On the other hand, accommodation promotes dual or multiple identities in public, rather than a single monolithic one, and stands for equal institutional support for different social groups. While integration promotes institutions that overcome diversity and reduce differences, accommodation institutionalises differences by giving equal opportunity to each of them to showcase its identity and protects communities from the domination of the majority and encroachment of the state apparatus. Nevertheless, the academic defenders of accommodation are not necessarily the supporters of primordialism, a strand of thought which subscribes to the view that ethnic identities are permanent features of human society and have existed here for thousands of years.[8] Accommodationism leaves a more prominent public space for ethnic communities to express their culture and identity and extends state protection against majoritarian interventions. Two points are worthy of mention regarding the two approaches. First, these two categories are poles apart from assimilation, which means the erosion of all forms of differences in public and private spaces to absorb all into a single

[5] Richard H. Pildes, "Ethnic Identity and Democratic Institutions: a Dynamic Perspective," *in Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation*, ed. Sujit Choudhry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 175.

[6] John McGarry et al., "Integration or Accommodation?: The Enduring Debate in Conflict Regulation," in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation,* ed. Sujit Choudhary (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 41.

[7] McGarry et al.,"Integration or Accommodation?, 27.
[8] McGarry et al., "Integration or Accommodation?," 52.

dominant identity.[9] Assimilation can generally occur in two forms: fusion of two cultures to produce a new culture; acculturation, wherein one culture completely subsumes under a dominant culture.[10] The assimilation purports participation of minorities in the system only through majoritarian terms: 'Join us, and you can be part of us and cease to be a structural minority.'[11] Second, the opposite end of accommodation is not integration but exclusion and discrimination. The following part turns to the question-Where do India and the state of Kerala fall among the categories mentioned above?

Kerala is one of the twenty-eight subnational units in the Indian federal system, and it does not have independent political existence without referring to the national identity. Thus a study on Kerala cannot escape reference to India and its political structure, which determines the formal institutional arrangement of the country part. Thus this section deals in detail with how the nation-state in India addresses the question of citizenship, ethnic identity, and representation. To begin with, modern India is arguably the creation of the anti-colonial movement that united hitherto fragmented groups under a common banner against British colonialism.[12] The constitutional design of the new republic was fundamentally owed to the vision of nationalist leadership, which navigated the country toward modern democracy with equality and fraternity of the people. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, among the most influential figures in the nationalist movement, accepted a notion of Indian identity while rejecting the dual or multiple identities propounded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the British Government.[13] He visualised that the caste, religious and regional identities would fade away as modernisation set in with economic prosperity. According to Nehru, "Those who professed a religion of non-Indian origin or, coming to India, settled down there, became distinctively Indian in the course of a few generations, such as Christians, Jews, Parsees, Moslems."[14] The

[9] McGarry et al., "Integration or Accommodation?," 41-2.
[10] Katharine Adeney, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict Regulation in India and Pakistan*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 87.
[11] Brendan O'Leary, "Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Places: an Advocate's Introduction," in *Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Places*, ed. Joanne McEvoy, and Brendan O'Leary (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2013), 15.
[12] What brought democracy to India is a debate: primarily, the dispute is whether it was by the British colonial government or Indian nationalism. Although there is some truth on both sides, the anti-colonial leadership has the credit for building a democratic state in India.
[13] Adeney, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, 92.

The Muslim League and the Raj viewed India as constituting multiple nationalities (Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16; and Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India: Ideologies of the Raj* (Vol. 111), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 113-59.

[14] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 62.

liberal individualists and Hindu traditionalists, the two camps representing divergent visions in the constituent assembly, converged on denying the recognition of religious identities for different reasons: the former is for the ideology of individualism, and the latter is to see India with Hindu culture.[15] The nationalist leaders who ran the country in the immediate years of independence feared outbreak of violence if any room left for politicising ethnic identities. The nationalist politicians figured out their role as to emphasise common aspects in culture eschewing reference to any differences.[16]

The new India adopted universal citizenship, a crucial principle of nation-building in which all citizens deserved equal treatment without discrimination. Meanwhile, it recognised the rights of minorities and depressed classes as protection or compensation for historical disadvantages instead of treating them as special interests requiring distinct political representation.[17] The reservation policy for social minorities was not a departure from universal citizenship but rather a move to ensure substance to equality to avoid exclusions and discrimination.[18] The cultural protection of minorities through constitutional guarantees enshrined in articles between twenty-five and thirty, which included freedom of religion and protection of cultural rights, was justifiable as a precaution against possible majority domination against minorities. In addition, there is also a set of rights that consider groups instead of individuals as the bearers of rights, like the separate personal law for a different religious group.[19] Nonetheless, the provisions of minority rights like personal law and positive discrimination as a quota system were interim measures that would disappear, as per the original plan, after the accomplishment of secularisation and social equality.[20] The

[15] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Composite Culture is not Multi-Culturalism: a Study of the Indian Constitution Assembly Debates," in *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner*, ed. Ashutosh Varshney (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), 145.

[16] Paul R. Brass, *Caste, Faction, and Party in Indian Politics: Faction and Party* (Volume two), (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1985), 208-209.

[17] Niraja Gopal Jayal, "The Limits of Representative Democracy," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32, no. 3, (2009): 327.

[18] Rochana Bajpai argues that India is integrationist/assimilationist in matters related to the political safeguarding of minorities; and is multicultural in safeguarding lower castes (Rochana Bajpai, *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49).

[19] There is a debate on it: one argument is that cultural right is the extension of the group right, and another argues that the cultural right is conditional on the individual right (Neera Chandhoke, "Individual and Group Rights: A View from India," in *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies*, ed. Zoya Hasan et al. (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002)).

[20] Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Representing India: Ethnic Diversity and the Governance of Public Institutions, Ethnicity, Inequality, and Public Sector Governance*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 5.

framers of the constitution were apprehensive about possible balkanisation in the wake of partition. Thus, they were categorical to subject any provision for minority rights or exemptions to the test of national unity and integrity.[21] Independent India retreated from the early Congress Party's position on the linguistic reorganisation of states and substantive minority rights after independence. Therefore, one can safely say that the Indian nation-state encourages integration as a nation-building project while recognising particular interests as an interim measure. Thus it is not surprising that a diverse country like India adopted a majoritarian democratic institutional model: the Westminster Parliamentary democracy, with a single member simple plurality (or first past the post (FPTP)) electoral system.[22] The constituent assembly rejected proposals on executive types, including a special mechanism for minority involvement in the cabinet and the proportional representation (PR) electoral system for general elections.[23] The departure from the integration policy, like quota for social minorities in the lower houses and public offices, is minimal. The takeaway from the hitherto discussion is that India's formal institutional structure hardly qualifies to be an accommodative democracy, particularly regarding the representation and political inclusion of religious minorities. It will deal later with whether India has any informal mechanism of addressing political inclusion after detailing different approaches to accommodation.

Power-Sharing Debates

Power-sharing is a subset of the accommodation method. The two significant schools of thought in the power-sharing literature are consociationalism and centripetalism, which have contributed many scholarships on dealing with diversity. Before going into details of the approaches, the rationalisation used by scholars for navigating divided societies to a different path away from the Anglo-American democratic model is helpful, mainly to contextualise the study in Indian society. According to the British model of majoritarian democracy, the fundamental assumption of democratic competition is the shifting majority from issue to

[21] Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 36; and Ashok Acharya, "Constitutionalising Difference: The Indian Experiment," in *Understanding Contemporary India: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Rajeev Bhargav and Achin Vanaik (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2010), 49-87.

[22] There is near unanimity among scholars on the non-viability of the FPTP in a plural society. Many of them have quoted Arthur Lewis, who said, 'the surest way to kill the idea of democracy in a plural society is to adopt the Anglo-American system of first-past-the-post' (Quoted in Andrew Reynolds, *Electoral SystE. M. S. and Democratization in South Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93).

[23] Austin, Granville, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 118.

issue and competition between parties for median voters to maximise their ballot. In a situation of no permanent majority and minority, the losers hardly hesitate to accept the verdict and wait for another turn to grab power. Conversely, in divided societies, where social identities dictate political cleavages, exclusions and inclusions tend to be permanent, leaving little hope for the losing party.[24] The characteristic feature of those societies is that social differences like ethnicity, religion, race, language, and region are politically salient and organised, albeit in different variations.[25] The consequence is the birth of ethnic parties where individuals vote for their own ethnic man, and as Horowitz famously said, 'this is not an election at all, but a census.'[26] Against this background, scholars prescribe a special mechanism for divided societies called power-sharing.[27] As argued by many scholars recently, India is a confirming case of an ethnic democracy where Hindu nationalism dominates politics and governments.[28]

Lijphart initially used the term power-sharing as a synonym for consociationalism to make it convenient for the practitioners to understand.[29] Later, scholars questioned the use of consociationalism exclusively for a particular approach because there are power-sharing methods other than consociationalism.[30] Following eminent scholars in the field, including

[24] Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," 18; Arend Lijphart, "Majority Rule Versus Democracy in Deeply Divided Societies," *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 4, no. 2 (1977):115; Arend, Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, (Michigan: Yale University Press, 1999), 32; and Benjamin Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies: Consociationalism, Centripetalism and Communalism Compared," *European Political Science* 11, no. 2 (2011): 261.

[25] Matthijs Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace in Divided Societies: Exploring Consociational Parties*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3; and Benjamin Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.

[26] It is quoted from Sujit Choudhry, "Bridging Comparative Politics and Comparative Constitutional Law: Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation,* ed. Sujit Choudhry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17.

In India, there is an equivalent phrase, 'people do not cast their vote, they vote their caste' (Christophe Jaffrelot, "Caste and Political Parties in India: Do Indians Vote their Caste—while Casting their Vote?," in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*, ed. Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh (New York: Routledge, 2013), 107-118).

[27] Lijphart argues that consociational democracy is more democratic than the British model of majority democracy (Arend Lijphart, "The Pros and Cons – But Mainly Pros – of Consensus Democracy," *Acta Politica* 36, no. 2 (2001): 133).

[28] We will deal with the current status of India later in the chapter.

[29] Arend Lijphart, *Thinking About Democracy: Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.

[30] Matthijs Bogaards, "The Uneasy Relationship Between Empirical and Normative Types in Consociational Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, no. 4 (2000): 395–423; Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace*; and Brendan O'Leary, "Debating Consociational Politics: Normative and Explanatory Arguments," in *From*

Lijphart and Horowitz, this work considers power-sharing as a broader concept to refer to any non-majoritarian democracies which achieve accommodation. The following part deals with the two approaches to diversity- consociationalism and centripetalism.[31]

Consociationalism

Consociationalism is a theoretical intervention by the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart as a response to the overtly pessimistic attitude of scholars and policymakers on the viability of democracy in societies with deep divisions.[32] From his observations of the native Netherlands and a few western European countries, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland, Lijphart corroborated four fundamental principles of consociationalism: a grand coalition government consisting of members from all significant ethnic/political groups; proportionality in representative bodies, civil services, army and distribution of resources; segmental autonomy either in geographical areas or in in the cultural realm; and minority veto enabling groups to block legislative and executive moves contravening their particular interests.[33] In the power-sharing scholarship, consociationalism is the most popular approach.[34] Originally, consociationalism is a theory inductively developed from the experience of a few European countries, which were in the category of 'Scandinavian Low Countries' in Almond's typology of western democracies[35] and later extensively used as a descriptive tool to understand very many societies,[36] including Kerala. In the second phase,

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Power Sharing to Democracy: Post-Conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies, ed. Sid Noel (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2005), 37.

[31] Lijphart does not consider the centripetal mechanism of vote-pooling as power-sharing because it only makes the moderates in the majority rulers (Arend Lijphart, "Definitions, Evidence, and Policy: A Response to Matthijs Bogaards' Critique," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, no. 4 (2000): 427).

[32] Consociationalism is originally about scholarships developed by Lijphart. Eminent political scientist Stein Rokkan called Lijphart Mr. Consociation (Arend Lijphart, "The Wave of Power-Sharing Democracy," in *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*, ed. Andrew Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 37).

[33] According to Lijphart, practitioners and constitution writers had designed and applied power-sharing long before political scientists invented the same in the 1960s. Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociational Democracy," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1, (2000): 509-536; Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21, no. 2, (1969): 207-225; Lijphart, "Majority Rule Versus Democracy," 113-126; and Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (2004): 96-109.

[34] Benjamin Reilly, "Electoral SystE. M. S. for Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2, (2002): 15)

[35] Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," 207.

[36] For cases where scholars used consociational theories as a descriptive tool, see Rudy B. Andeweg, *Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience*, Swiss Political Science Review 25, no. 4 (2019): 408–425; Michaelina Jakala, D. Kuzu and M. Qvortrup, *Consociationalism and Power-Sharing in Europe: Arend Lijphart's Theory of Political Accommodation*, (London: Routledge, 2018); and Allison McCulloch, and J. McGarry, *Power Sharing: Empirical and Normative Critiques*, (London: Routledge, 2017).

Lijphart and others constructively advocated the same theory to many divided societies as an institutional prescription to settle the problems of social and ethnic divisions.[37] In the second phase, the focus of discussion shifted to institutions and constitutional models as tools of political engineering to facilitate democracy in divided societies. The underlying factor favourable to the working of a consociational model is an overarching understanding among elites of the society to counteract ethnic polarisation and divisions through cooperation.

Consociational theory fundamentally relies on the idea that the political elites in the divided society have a tremendous role in maintaining the order of the system. Lijphart identifies four primary conditions to run a consociational system successfully. First, the political leaders in divided societies shall be able to recognise the dangers inherent in the polity. Foreseeing potential threats is crucial, mainly in the early stage of consociationalism when the new system is still embryonic. A candid approach of considering stability as grated in any stage of consociationalism's development may lead to the system's destruction. Thus, consistent vigilance is inevitable for sustaining peace and stability in divided societies. Second, consociational democracy demands the committed participation of all stakeholders who collectively developed the system. Under the fragile social atmosphere, the new system considerably depends on the people's degree of sincerity. Third, consociationalism heavily relies on elites' ability to transcend the subcultural cleavages at the top level. A society intrigued with limited inter-community interactions, the divided society depends on elites who have the responsibility to act as the bridge between different communities. Fourth, society shall be prepared to meet any unforeseen troubles because the resurrection of tensions in fragile societies is part and parcel.[38] Only a proper arrangement to face problems can show the panacea for tensions. A significant criticism of consociationalism- the system is designed and executed by the elites with little role for the demos- holds. However, it is scarcely possible to build a democratic system without the involvement of the people from below.

Consociationalism is not a 'one size fits all' prescription: the theory has a larger discretionary space for the practitioners to apply the principles and conditions according to the socio-political structure of the society in practice. That being the case: the configuration

[37] For cases where consociationalism is applied, see Matthijs Bogaards, "Consociationalism and Centripetalism: Friends or Foes?," *Swiss Political Science Review* 25, no. 4 (2019): 519-537; Omar Dahbour, "Self-Determination and Power-Sharing in Israel/Palestine," *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 4 (2016): 393–407; and Emer Groarke, "Mission Impossible: Exploring the Viability of Power-Sharing as a Conflict Resolution Tool in Syria," *International Journal of Conflict Management* 27, no. 1 (2016): 2–24.

[38] Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," 222-223.

of the grand coalition can take different shapes like inducting the people of different groups into governments of different times to ensure the permanent absence or exclusion from the system; the proportionality rule holds not necessarily with the proportional representation (PR) electoral system but with other models which can assure the involvement of all groups; segmental autonomy taking shapes of territorial or functional autonomy; minority veto through formal or informal ways.[39] In other words, consociationalism is a political system with at least two social groups collaborating to work as a coalition, with self-government and shared government, having representation of social groups in the decision-making bodies according to the population share.[40] Lijphart's declassification of the four characteristics of consociation into two groups further liberalised the theory: the grand coalition and segmental autonomy as primary characteristics, and the proportionality and minority veto as part of the secondary characteristics. According to him, there is a broad agreement among scholars that the two inevitable instruments for divided societies are the involvement of influential groups in the executive power of the government, and an assurance that the groups have the authority to control their internal matters, particularly cultural and educational.[41] The other two ingredients, which Lijphart calls secondary attributes, can strengthen the primary characteristics.[42]

Determination of group identity is a bone of contention in debates on democracy in divided societies that led many to blame consociationalism as a branch of primordialism. After the criticism that consociationalism promotes ethnicisation of politics, Lijphart refined the theory to propose two alternatives for any society to choose from self-determination, in which the people manifest their choices to determine the categories, and pre-determination, where the framers of the constitution fix the group identity in advance without leaving it into the people's discretion.[43] Although pre-determination dominates consociational cases across the globe, Lijphart is categorical about the desirability of the self-determination model for several advantages it accrues to the system: it avoids the possible discrimination of inclusion

[39] Matthijs Bogaards, "Consociationalism," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory* ed. Bryan S. Turner (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2017): 1-2.
[40] Brendan O'Leary, "Consociation: What We Know or Think We Know," paper presented at the conference organised by the National and Ethnic Conflict Group (London: University of Western Ontario, November 8-10, 2002), 2.
[41] Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," 97.
[42] Lijphart, "The Wave of Power-Sharing Democracy," 39.

[43] Arend Lijphart, "Self-Determination versus Pre-Determination of Ethnic Minorities in Power-Sharing SystE. M. S.," in *Thinking About Democracy*, ed. Arend Lijphart (New York: Routledge, 2008), 66.

and exclusion in advance and labelling of individuals to particular groups; it gives voice to not only ethnic groups but also to those who reject such categorisations; it precludes the system from the tendency of fixing the share of power and representation permanently.[44] McGarry and O'Leary made a similar classification of consociationalism into liberal and corporal, connoting precisely the same meaning, pre-empting the general criticism that the theory is anti-liberal and pro-parochial. Liberal consociationalism leaves matters related to fixing group identities to the people rather than the system dictating identities in advance. In contrast, corporate consociationalism frames the system with pre-determined segments.[45] The corporate model may lead to an unstable polity in the long run because the structure would not suffice to accommodate the demographic changes in the polity.[46] The interest of consociational theory is not in deliberating on how and when the identity is formed; instead, it addresses the perplexing task of finding an amicable settlement to the problem on the ground.

The institutional prescriptions and the conditions suggested by scholars have raised a serious question of whether any consociation has ever existed in history with all the formalities. It is seldom possible to have a democratic system where all segments of society substantively involve in the governmental process with no community feeling disillusioned and excluded. The practical world generally does not spot in the extremes of a continuum. Against this backdrop, O'Leary differentiated three consociations: complete, concurrent, and weak forms of consociations.[47] A complete consociation facilitates the participation of all salient ethnic groups in the system. To illustrate, if there are two ethnic groups in the polity, called the A and B, they each split their votes between two different political parties, the A1 and A2, and B1 and B2. A complete consociation would represent all four parties, A1, A2, B1, and B2, with no exclusion. This particular combination corresponds with the ideal version of Lijphart's grand coalition. Nevertheless, there are other possible combinations of consociational grand coalitions with less participation.

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[44] Lijphart, "Self-Determination versus Pre-Determination," 72-73.
[45] John McGarry, and Brendan O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal Consociation as Political Prescription," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 5, no. 4 (2007): 675; and Allison McCulloch, "Consociational Settlements in Deeply Divided Societies: The Liberal-Corporate Distinction," *Democratization* 21, no. 3 (2014): 501-518.

[46] John McGarry, "Liberal Consociation and Conflict Management," in *Iraq: Preventing a New Generation of Conflict*, ed. Markus E. Bouillon et al. (Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 2007), 179.
[47] Brendan O'Leary, *A Treatise on Northern Ireland, Volume III: Consociation and Confederation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 10.

In a concurrent consociation, each significant group has representation in the body of executives, and each executive in the body has the majority support of the respective group. In this model, in contrast with the previous one, the party representing the group has the majority support, not the absolute, from fellow members. Following the previous example, the A1 and B1 parties representing the A and B communities, respectively, command a majority from each group and constitute the coalition government. In a weak consociation, each significant group has elected executives in the body, but at least one among them has only a plurality of support from the community s/he represents. In this model, one or more political executives have bare plurality support from the community, while all others are elected with the majority or absolute support from their communities.[48]

Lijphart himself responded to the criticism- a power-sharing with cent per cent perfection is impractical in the real world- with the statement that the grand coalition or executive power-sharing is 'the participation of representatives of all significant groups in political decision-making.'[49] It implies that a democratic consociation can work with a coalition of political leaders who command a plurality of support from their respective segments and not always the people's absolute support. The state of Kerala, the case point of this study, appears to fall between the concurrent and complete categories of consociationalism. The two political alliances, which together absorbed a vote share between eighty-five and ninety per cent from 1980 to 2016, have formed governments with a combination of all significant groups in the state. The Hindu Ezhavas, Hindu Nairs, Christians, Muslims, and scheduled communities had representations in all the ministries after the formation of the state, albeit with different proportions. Although the community configurations of governments changed according to the changes between the alliances, all governments formed in Kerala for their peculiar community compositions qualify as a classic case of consociational grand coalitions. As Bogaards argued, in many societies, consociationalism worked as a mechanism within parties or alliances rather than as an inter-party arrangement.[50]

The basic idea is that consociationalism can exist if there is cross-sectional support for the government, not the co-option of minor groups into the system. The system shall have

[48] O'Leary, "Debating Consociational Politics," 12-13.

[49] Arend Lijphart, "The Wave of Power-Sharing Democracy," 42.

[50] Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace*.

representatives from each significant group in the polity with at least a plurality of support from the respective community. 'What it must have is meaningful cross-community executive power-sharing in which each significant segment is represented in the government with at least plurality levels of support within its segment.'[51] The flexibility in the composition of the grand coalition pre-empts consociationalism from a significant criticism that it does not allow opposition, which is considered one of the core ingredients of democracy. There are apparent chances for opposition if there is concurrent or weak consociation, as mentioned in the previous parts.

Centripetalism

The second significant school in the power-sharing scholarship, centripetalism, rose initially as a critic of consociationalism and later developed its form of institutional prescriptions and conditions for dealing with problems of divided societies. Centripetal scholarships pithily cover all significant criticisms of consociationalism, and thus the discussion kills two birds with one stone. The modus operandi of the two schools diverges from the point of focus. Consociational democracies propose to find a way out of ethnic confrontation by models which guarantee a proportional role for all significant communities and ensure them the power to veto any move contravening their interest. The consociation system replaces the rule of parties representing the majority interest with a consensual model wherein all groups, irrespective of numerical strength, enjoy stints in power. In contrast, centripetalism ameliorates the inter-community scuffles by inventing democratic models that can incentivise the participation of moderate elements in society and make extremism structurally less attractive.[52] The term centripetalism connotes the fundamental philosophy of the school that it strives to engineer a centripetal spin stimulating moderation and the tendency of parties to come to the centre in divided societies.[53] Such a system can also form inter-ethnic governments but is arguably more stable and practical than consociational grand coalitions. The underlying difference between the two schools is in a logical derivation: consociationalism resolves the ethnic tension relying on pillarisation wherein ethnic groups fight elections as segments and later cooperate in coalitions; the centripetalism resort to moderation, encouraging parties to line up in a unified platform.

[51] O'Leary, "Debating Consociational Politics," 13.
[52] Donald L. Horowitz, "Ethnic Power Sharing: Three Big ProblE. M. S.," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 2 (2014): 5.
[53] Timothy D Sisk, *Democratization in South Africa: The Elusive Social Contract*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 19.

Whereas consociationalism has developed a well-specified kit of institutional prescriptions and conditions, the centripetal model follows a fundamental principle that any combination of institutions, presidential or parliamentary, can hold, provided it produces incentives for moderating the behaviour of the stakeholders.[54] Centripetalists blame consociationalism as explicitly replicating the social cleavages to the political landscape, causing the penetration of societal divisions into politics. On the other hand, centripetalism strives to depoliticise the ethnic element in politics by encouraging cross-community voting and cooperation of rival groups.[55] They argue that the vote-pooling system, a mechanism of promoting vote transfer between ethnic groups, can deemphasise the importance of ethnicity in politics by promoting cooperative attitudes.[56] Reilly listed three essential conditions for the successful running of a centripetal system that primarily looks to shift the electoral competition to the moderate middle from the extreme fringe.[57] They are listed below.

1) Introduction of a slew of *electoral incentives* for political entrepreneurs to seek votes from a range of ethnic groups beyond their own, forcing them to take a middle path and to drift away from divisive political campaigns and policy choices.

2) Availability of *multi-ethnic arenas of bargaining* that act as a platform for the political leaders to sit and negotiate on demands, discuss policy directions, and cut deals on votes and support, facilitating a space for ice breakers.

3) Developing political parties, coalitions, fronts, or alliances based on multi-community support would introduce promises acceptable for people across ethnic groups and loyalties.

Institutional prescriptions of Centripetalism make a clear departure from the prevailing scholarly orthodoxy. Perhaps the most striking difference is in the designs of the electoral system, which many find the most effective political engineering tool in establishing

[54] Donald L. Horowitz, "Making Moderation Pay: The Comparative Politics of Ethnic Conflict Management," in *Conflict and Peace-Making in Multi-ethnic Societies*, ed. Joseph Montville, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1990), 451– 75; and Donald L. Horowitz, "Conciliatory Institutions and Constitutional Processes in Post-Conflict States," *William & Mary Law Review* no. 49 (2007): 1219.

[55] Donald L. Horowitz, "Where Have All the Parties Gone? Fraenkel and Grofman on the Alternative Vote–Yet Again," *Public Choice* 133, no. ½ (2007): 13–23; Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies"; and Benjamin Reilly, "Centripetalism," in *Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Cordell, Karl, and Stefan Wolff (London: Routledge, 2011), 8.

[56] Horowitz, Donald, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1985), 597-600; and Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies."

[57] Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies," 263.

democracy in divided societies. Centripetalism's core point of argument with the PR empathisers is that there is a difference between representation and power. A fair deal of representation for a group in the house through affirmative action or as an effect of the electoral system can neither guarantee substantial involvement in the government nor ensure protection from majority domination. In addition, a PR electoral system tends to produce a fragmented party system; it allows narrow sectarian agendas to dominate electoral campaigns, destabilising the entire political system and social fabrication.[58] Therefore, centripetal scholars advocate electoral systems and rules that can stimulate political parties to look for a middle ground and encourage moderation in a polarised situation rather than ensuring linear proportionality. The working logic of centripetal institutions is that the power-seeking elites under pressure to maximise votes in competitive elections tend to respond to institutional inducement to attract votes beyond core supports and moderate their political view acceptable to a maximum number of people.

A centripetal system thus strives to design a political atmosphere under which political parties seeking the middle ground maximise the vote share compared to those relying on extremism and fringe political tones. If the votes gained by the appeal to the middle outweigh the support lost to the political party for being moderate, then the system has the structural incentives for leaders to be in the middle ground. The political leaders would have temptations to design policy choices and electoral appeals acceptable across the groups to attract votes beyond one community. The power-seeking leaders will be incentivised to draw a policy line inclusive of all and acceptable to people cutting across communities if there are middle sections beyond their group or a group at the margin.[59] In these cases, political leaders depend on voters beyond the narrow fellow members of their community, and there is a force to seek votes from others to ensure the governmental power in their hands. The result: the political centre becomes the most sellable product in the electoral market than extremism or a narrow agenda.

There are majorly three ways to encourage moderate behaviour in divided societies. First, electoral rules condition the winning candidate to gain votes from different geographical regions of the polity can contain narrow appeals to regionalism or parochial interests. Second, design the electoral system so that a candidate shall be bound to seek the

[58] Horowitz, "Conciliatory Institutions and Constitutional," 1221.
[59] Benjamin Reilly, "Centripetalism and Electoral Moderation in Established Democracies," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 24, no. 2 (2018): 203.

second preference votes of the opposing candidates, compelling her to go beyond again on narrow appeals.[60] Third, make the political party the potential platform for multi-community gatherings by conditioning the party to have organisational arrangements in different regions or heterogeneous candidate lists.[61] These are a slew of democratic cases where centripetal models repaired the system to reduce the direct effect of ethnic divisions in politics and ensure some inter-ethnic engagements and cooperation.[62] An example of how the rules of moderation apply: Nigeria adopted a system under which the winning presidential candidate is required to garner the majority vote share overall and at least one-third of the vote share in each region. In Indonesia, the presidential candidate has to win fifty per cent or more of the national votes and twenty per cent or more in at least half of the provinces.[63] There are many cases where moderation and vote-pooling between communities happen with a majoritarian electoral system when a single community is not in a position to dominate.

The other centripetal intervention in electoral politics is adopting electoral systems such as the Average Voting (AV) or Single Transferable Votes (STV), which enable the voters to mark not only the first preference but also the subsequent preferences as well. Under the AV, if no candidate crosses the majority margin, it will count the preferences other than the first until one candidate gains the majority mark.[64] The STV, a variant of the PR model, also uses a similar formula, though it is based on a specified threshold, not a majority margin like the AV. Australia is arguably the most concrete and long-lasting example of centripetalism globally, where the preferential electoral systems, with the ranking of orders, like the STV, SV, and AV, have developed and evolved and became an export idea to other parts of the world like Papua New Guinea.[65] The noted point is that the increase in preferential electoral systems has coincided with the decline in the use of ethnicity in politics. The political antipathy between the English-origin Protestants and Irish-origin Catholics,

[60] Donald L. Horowitz, "Encouraging Electoral Accommodation in Divided Societies," in *Electoral SystE. M. S. in Divided Societies: The Fiji Constitution Review*, ed. Brij V. Lal and Peter Larmour (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, 1997), 21–38.
[61] Reilly, "Centripetalism," 290.

[62] Donald L. Horowitz, "Constitutional Design: An Oxymoron?" in *Designing Democratic Institutions*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Stephen Macedo (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 259.
[63] Reilly, "Centripetalism," 292.
[64] McCulloch, Allison, "The Track Record of Centripetalism in Deeply Divided Places," in *Power-Sharing in Deeply Divided Places*, ed. Joanne McEvoy and Brendan O'Leary (Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 94.

[65] Reilly, "Centripetalism and Electoral Moderation," 207; and Benjamin Reilly, "The Alternative Vote and Ethnic Accommodation: New Evidence from Papua New Guinea," *Electoral Studies* 16, no. 1 (1997): 1-11.

which was part of Australian society and politics, has been abated.[66] The centripetal model's ultimate goal is to remove ethnicity's influence from government and politics.

The 'vote pooling' process of the AV can hold only under two conditions: a multi-party system; and heterogeneity of constitutions. AV cannot produce the desired outcome of vote pooling in countries with lesser political parties and pockets of ethnic concentrations. If that is the case, most African countries cannot think of electoral systems beyond proportional models. Bogaards recommends constituency pooling in place of vote pooling for such countries to adopt the AV but without any complications mentioned above.[67] According to him, constituency pooling is a system in which the vote pooling takes place across constituencies, and the winning candidate has to gather votes from different constituent units. The system can work in homogenous and heterogeneous constituencies. Lastly, centripetal models sometimes attempt to shape the political parties and party system in such a way that can produce inter-ethnic cooperation. That happens by promoting large aggregate parties instead of letting minor groups form parties and fragment the entire system. One of the best examples is Indonesia, a populous state that follows centripetal institutions. In Indonesia, a political party to contest at the national level has to have organisational networks in two-thirds of the provinces in the archipelago and two third of the municipalities in each of those provinces. Such rules can keep smaller secessionist parties and fringe groups out of the electoral spectrum.

India and Power-Sharing

India was not on the list of power-sharing countries until 1996, when Lijphart made a remarkable attempt to interpret the Indian case as full-fledged consociationalism. Paul R Brass stated in 1991, "For some reason, consociationalists and the theorists of the plural society consistently ignore the experience of India, the largest, most culturally diverse society in the world."[68] Despite being a country with deep social divisions based on religion, caste, ethnicity, and language, India seldom has remarkable formal institutional features in consonance with power-sharing theories. After independence from Britain, the new constitution adopted institutions and practices from various sources, including the

[66] Reilly, "Centripetalism and Electoral Moderation," 210.
[67] Matthijs Bogaards, "Electoral Choices for Divided Societies: Multi-Ethnic Parties and Constituency Pooling in Africa," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 41, no. 3 (2003): 64.

[68] Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison,* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 342.

Government of India Act 1935 and the constitutions of North America, Britain, Germany, France, South Africa, Canada, and Australia. It follows the Westminster form of government headed by a Prime Minister, who is in turn formally appointed by the President, the nominal executive. The lower houses at the centre and states have members elected by a 'winner-takes-all' electoral system FPTP from geographic constituencies. The second chamber is relatively weak and is indirectly elected by the state assemblies, with a preferential electoral system- the STV. Proportional representation electoral systems are not in use in any direct elections. There is a constitutionally bounded reservation for the scheduled communities, roughly in proportion to their population size, at the legislature and public offices, revisable every ten years as and when the house feels so.[69] India adopted a federal form of government, and significant linguistic groups were given separate statehood and autonomy in their administration. States in India are, however, weakly placed: there is no separate constitution for each; the union government has absolute power to form a new state, change their boundaries, and merge or split them; and the centre has an extended hand over the working of the state government and the legislature. The central government sends the governor to states with much power in hand, which include recommending the dissolution of the state assembly and sending bills passed by the assemblies for the approval of the President. As stated rightly, India is an 'indestructible union of destructible states.' Indian constitution clearly states that it is a Union, and the word federalism is mentioned nowhere in the constitution. Notably, the formal institutional structure of the country hardly matches any of the institutional prescriptions of the significant power-sharing schools.

Having established the absence of a substantial institutional structure to qualify a formal power-sharing democracy at the national level, its possibility in a state in India is in the form of an informal process, which has gotten inadequate attention in the literature.[70] It demands a short description of informal institutions in a democracy. Studies on informal institutions have majorly dealt with two related areas: the impact of informal institutions on the working and the performance of regimes; and the interaction between formal and informal institutions. Just as formal institutions are integral players in a democracy, informal institutions influence the system and often determine how formal institutions work. Informal institutions are "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and

[69] Pradeep K. Chhibber, and Rahul Verma, *Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party SystE. M. S. of India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 32.

[70] Scholars who have interpreted India as a consociational or power-sharing state have thus resorted to how informal practices have contributed to it.

enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels."[71] In contrast, formal institutions have a sanctioned official route to work. Formal institutions include the constitution, legislative framework, administrative procedures, legal statutes, constitutional conventions, and codes of conduct, sanctioned by law and enforceable by judicial courts.[72] These formal arrangements are open to changes and reforms through legislative actions, judicial interpretations and interventions, administrative policies, administrative decisions, and the like.

Institutions do not work in a vacuum and cannot create the same outcome in different societies. Appraising the social and political atmosphere under which institutions work is pivotal. Lijphart referred to consociationalism as a set of behavioural qualities of political elites to manage the political affairs of a society.[73] Switzerland, say, has grand coalition models which are part of political consensus among stakeholders and not prescribed in the constitution.[74] According to Lijphart, though there are specified institutional requirements for working consociational models, it largely relies on the informal practices within the society.[75] Institutions like minority veto often work as informal understanding among the leaders that when there is any threat to the autonomy of a minority group, the community can effectively block the move in its interest.[76]

Lijphart, who studied various societies worldwide, did not initially count India as consociational: in early works, he treated India as non-consociational and semi-consociational.[77] In 1996, Lijphart changed the position to call India consociational and argued that India has always been a proven consociational case, particularly during the initial twenty years between 1947 and 1967, and continued from 1967, albeit with some lesser forms. Consociationalism in India, like any counterparts in the world, has not been

[71] Gretchen Helmke, and Steven Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004): 725.
[72] Pippa Norris, *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 43.

[73] Rudy B Andeweg, "Consociational Democracy," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2000): 509–536.
[74] Nils-Christian Bormann et al., "Power Sharing: Institutions, Behaviour, and Peace," *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 1 (2019): 85.

[75] Lijphart, *Thinking About Democracy,* 8; Arend Lijphart, "Consociation and Federation: Conceptual and Empirical Links," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 12, no. 3 (1979): 513.

[76] Lijphart, *Thinking About Democracy*, 49.
[77] Arend Lijphart, "Non-Majoritarian Democracy: A Comparison of Federal and Consociational Theories," *Publius: the Journal of Federalism* 15, no. 2 (1985): 6.

established after any formal agreement or deliberate discussion but developed in a slow step-by-step fashion taking years. Lijphart contends that all four ingredients of consociationalism developed in India with some differences. First, the INC, which combined domination and inclusiveness, maintained the notion of the grand coalition, giving representation to all significant caste, religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups in its governments. Second, cultural autonomy practices took three primary forms: linguistic reorganisation of states gave autonomy to language groups; the constitution bestowed religious and linguistic minorities with the right to establish and administer educational institutions, often with support from the public exchequer; and religious groups with the right to maintain their own separate personal laws. Third, despite following a majoritarian single-member plurality electoral system, the Congress Party, which had a unique status as the 'party of consensus,' protected smaller minority groups, ensuring their representation in cabinets and the houses. Concomitantly, the constitution of independent India included reservations for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC and ST) communities in proportion to their population as a compensatory measure for their historical disadvantage. Lastly, there is an informal practice of veto, though not formally agreed upon, and has been used in several cases, like in the 1965 formal language raw by linguistic minorities and in the Shah Bano Case of 1985 by Muslim communities.[78] According to this interpretation, India has followed consociational principles informally, though no such formal institutions were present.

Lijphart's work received more criticism than appreciation.[79] First, to establish the Congress cabinets in post-independence as grand coalitions, Lijphart allegedly ignored these facts: the ruling party's vote share in general elections never crossed the fifty per cent margin, and the inclusion of social sections in the cabinet was tokenism, not representation, as minority groups got memberships below their population share occupying only marginal portfolios.[80] The grand coalition in Congress time was not as grand as Lijphart explained. The Muslim minority members in those ministries were given insignificant departments and kept away from the centre of power. From 1947 to 1964, say, no Muslim was included in the four

[78] Lijphart, *Thinking About Democracy*, 45-9.
[79] Katharine Adeney, "Constitutional Centring: Nation Formation and Consociational Federalism in India and Pakistan," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 40, no. 3 (2002): 8–33; and Katharine Adeney, and Wilfried Swenden, "Power-Sharing in the World's Largest Democracy: Informal Consociationalism in India (and its Decline?)," *Swiss Political Science Review* 25, no. 4 (2019): 450–475; Ian S Lustick, "Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationalism," *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 88–117; Steven I. Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory, and Ethnic Violence," *Asian Survey* 40, no. 5 (2000): 767–791.

[80] Lustick, "Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationalism," 115; and Adeney, "Constitutional Centring," 28.

best cabinet berths in the central government. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a known Muslim figure in the Congress Party and a freedom fighter, was the home minister in Uttar Pradesh for a short period of 1946-7 and was forced to resign when Hindu politicians in the state felt that giving a Home brief in the hand of a Muslim is a security threat.[81] Second, scholars refuted the proportionality claim made by Lijphart. After independence, the central government did away with the separate electorate, which assured proportionality for Muslims and other religious minorities in legislatures and public offices;[82] and the state government, one after the other, did the same much before the centre. The sole exception was the preferential treatment of the Scheduled communities, quotas in jobs, and the lower house based on their population shares. Nevertheless, there was a wide disparity between the promises and the deliveries to the scheduled communities. In 1964, when Nehru died, the SC and ST constituted only 1.54% of the senior Class 1 positions of the central government.[83]

Third, scholars rejected Lijphart's argument that independent India respected groups' cultural autonomy and citation of states' linguistic reorganisation during Nehru's tenure.[84] Although states were formed based on language granting political autonomy to linguistic groups, representation in the second chamber, in which the logic of seat allocation to states was on population strength, negated the power of linguistic minorities against the populous Hindi-speaking states.[85] Independent India practically removed all privileges to the Urdu language, which Muslims predominantly speak, and adopted Hindi with the Devanagari script as the official language of the Union. Linguistic reorganisation, albeit an ideological position of the Congress Party in anti-colonial struggles, was fiercely opposed by stalwarts like Nehru, who later conceded to it only after the outbreak of violent agitations from Andhra.[86] Furthermore, Lijphart rejected the requirement of a minority veto in India, as he contends that there is no majority in the country as the Hindu community has sharp divisions preventing any standard identity formation.[87] The constitution of the Congress Party and the Lucknow Pact, a deal between the Congress and Muslim League, contained a minority veto clause: bills and laws concerning a minority group cannot proceed if three-fourths of the

[81] Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory," 779.
[82] James Chiriyankandath, "'Creating a Secular State in a Religious Country': the Debate in the Indian Constituent Assembly," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38, no. 2 (2000): 13.

[83] Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory," 777.
[84] Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory"; Adeney, "Constitutional Centring."
[85] Adeney, "Constitutional Centring," 26.
[86] Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory," 767–777.
[87] Lustick, "Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationalism," 116.

community's representatives oppose.[88] Lijphart's argument contradicts that Muslims and other minorities lost the special considerations available in colonial times, in government and anti-colonial platforms, after the independence, where the new constitution removed all special considerations except provisions that did not directly negate the principle of universal citizenship.

A recent study by Katharine Adeney and Wilfried Swenden joined the previous scholars in refuting the claim of Lijphart on India.[89] They found these points: minorities and lower castes have not been given adequate representations in the cabinets to call the Congress governments as a grand coalition; the inclusion of minority members was tokenism, not representation, which did not follow the disbursement of real power into their hand; the underrepresentation of minorities and lower castes are acute in political, administrative, and judicial offices, and the gap between the promise and delivery to scheduled groups are evident. The number of Muslims in Lok Sabha, which has been far below the proportionality ever since the formation of the Indian republic, further dipped after the Hindu nationalist wave in the country after the 2014 general election.[90] The second Modi Government has made a significant knot on the two significant accommodationist features of the Indian democracy. First, it abrogated the special status given to Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state unit. The Indian government divided the state to make two union territories under the direct control of the central government with no popularly elected government, doing away with the constitutional guarantees stuck between Indian leaders and J&K leaders in the 1950s.[91] Secondly, the BJP Government significantly interfered in the Muslim Personal Law, which had protection during the Congress period, by making the triple Talaq (a Muslim divorce system) a criminal offense against the community's interest. The discussion informs us that the present political situation of India hardly follows consociational or any other power-sharing principles. India, after 2014 has power

[88] Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 40.

[89] Adeney, and Swenden, "Power-Sharing in the World's Largest Democracy," 450-475.
[90] "Elections 2014: Lowest Number of Muslim MPs since 1952," *Times of India*, May 17, 2014, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/elections-2014-lowest-number-of-muslim-mps-since-1952/articleshow/35247091.cms.

[91] Brendan O'Leary, "Consociation in the Present," *Swiss Political Science Review* 25, no. 4 (2019), 562; and Sumit Ganguly, "An Illiberal India?," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2020): 198.

consolidation in single hands, not power-sharing among groups.[92] However, it is to be borne in mind that India is a republic of one billion plus population with a total geographic area of 3,287,263 square kilometres, consisting of twenty-eight states and union territories in sizes no less than many western democracies. There is considerable variation in the level of representation and political culture among different state units within the Indian Union. Kerala has been a conspicuous exception to national trends in many indicators.

Kerala, a Power-Sharing Case

After placing the study in the larger theoretical framework, it directs the discussion to why this work enquires about Kerala's political accommodation and coalition formations. Located between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, Kerala is an Indian state at the South-Western tip of the subcontinent spread over a geographic area of 38864 square kilometres. The state's population is roughly thirty-five million, more than that of all four original consociational democracies mentioned in Lijphart's early works. The state was formed in 1956 after merging the princely states of Travancore and Cochin with the Malabar province, which was under direct British rule in the Madras Presidency. Kerala has an idiosyncratic tradition of coexistence among the world's three largest religions, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, with peace and tranquillity.[93] In the ELF Index for religion, the most divisive identity in the subcontinent, the state secured the highest score among Indian states.[94] The Hindus have a further division based on castes and sub-castes. The caste structure in Kerala is significantly deviant from the general Indian system: among the four Varna categories, 'Kshatriyas were rare and Vaisyas non-existent.' After the Namboodiris (the Brahmin community) in the caste hierarchy, the Nairs occupied the second position filling the vacuum of the Kshatriyas. As Srinivas argued, while there is a consensus on who constitute the Brahmins and the untouchables across the country, such agreement is missing in

[92] Yamini Aiyar, "Modi Consolidates Power: Leveraging Welfare Politics," *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 4 (2019): 78-88; and Ashutosh Varshney, "Modi Consolidates Power: Electoral Vibrancy, Mounting Liberal Deficits," *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 4 (2019): 63-77.

[93] Liam Anderson, *Federal Solutions to Ethnic ProblE. M. S.: Accommodating Diversity*, (New York: Routledge, 2012); Horowitz, 'Democracy in Divided Societies', 18-13; Karl E. Meyer, and Shareen Blair Brysac, "India: Kerala: Multiple Improbabilities," *World Policy Journal* 28, no. 4 (2011): 60-69; M. G. S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972); and Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory."

[94] Steven I. Wilkinson, "Which Group Identities Lead to the Most Violence? Evidence from India," in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, ed. I. Shapiro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 284.

determining Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.[95] The Ezhavas are below the Nairs, and slave castes are at the bottom of all. Muslims and Christians have filled the role of the business and trade communities. The caste structure in Kerala was one of the most oppressive social systems in the world. In addition to untouchability, it practiced un-approachability, a notion of pollution by distance or sight.[96] Kerala has been attractive to students of development studies for a peculiar reason: a high degree of social development comparable to middle-income countries, way ahead of the other parts of India, against the backdrop of high population density and sluggish economic growth.[97]

Kerala has produced two equally powerful socio-political streams: one, the left-liberal political tradition with secular ideologies, and the other, the community-centric confessional line. Communities have been parallel to political parties in Kerala's socio-political processes, and both have played significant roles. After two and half decades of political instability in the initial years between 1957 and 1982, the state gained stable governments under two multi-community coalitions, the Congress-led-UDF and the CPM-led-LDF. The scholarly observations have repeatedly identified the existence of political inclusion and 'near-proportionality' among significant communities in the state;[98] however, this work would be the first to provide a detailed account of the politics of accommodation and how the two coalitions, the greenrooms of politics in the state, manage power-sharing and inclusion.

Having established the absence of any adequate formal institutional arrangement to qualify an accommodationist state at the national level, the existence of a power-sharing and political accommodation in Kerala is possible in the form of informal understanding or mechanism working between different stakeholders of state politics. Political alliances have been the central players in Kerala politics, managing the bargaining of various social and political groups in and outside the government. The electoral fortune of a coalition depends

[95] M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), 9.

[96] K S Pradeep Kumar, "Plurality in Practice: Challenges and Prospects," *Artha Journal of Social Sciences* 19, no. 2 (2020): 22-27; and Prema Kurien, "Colonialism and Ethnogenesis: A study of Kerala, India," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 3 (1994): 392.

[97] Patrick Heller, "Degrees of democracy: Some Comparative Lessons from India," *World Politics* 52, no. 4 (2000): 484-519; MA. Oomen, "Interpreting the Development Trajectory of Kerala: Raising Issues and Working towards a Policy Perspective," *Kerala Economic Conference First Annual Conference,* 2015; Richard Sandbrook et al., *Social Democracy in the Global Periphery: Origins, Challenges, Prospects,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 68-73; and Prerna Singh, "We-ness and Welfare: A Longitudinal Analysis of Social Development in Kerala, India," *World Development* 39, no. 2 (2011): 282-293.
[98] Chiriyankandath, "'Unity in diversity'?"; and Kumar, "Changing Dimension of Coalition."

mainly on its ability to attract the maximum number of political parties and community organisations representing different social groups. The noteworthy point is that since 1982, when the electoral spectrum of the state solidified into an apparent bipolar competition, the two alliances together accounted for a vote share between eighty-five and ninety, implying their ability to absorb the maximum number of people and groups into the mainstream competition structure.

Chapter III

Development of Power-sharing process in Kerala

This chapter outlines Kerala politics, its development, and its current status as a political system that accommodates various social groups. It explains the state's transition from an unstable polity with short-lived governments to one with outstanding governmental stability and predictability. The basic narrative is that communalism has a different connotation in the state compared with other places in the subcontinent and has defined the course of politics since colonial times. Politics in the state has roots in the twentieth-century social reform movements organised by the caste/community organisations, and the current parties cannot work autonomously from the established community interests. Meanwhile, violent extremism has been on the margin with insignificant influence over society and politics. The state's socio-demographic features force parties to seek an inter-community solution to the fragmented political system. The work uses power-sharing theories to explain the unique coexistence of communities in politics with the support of data and analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to lay a foundation for the rest of the thesis, where it explains how the two political alliances in the state deal with community accommodation and power-sharing. In doing so, it reviews the socio-political development in modern Kerala and then provides data analysis on political accommodation and power-sharing.

Communalism in Kerala

An appropriate standpoint to begin the discussion about power-sharing in Kerala is communalism, a term frequently used in the state's politics to connote the involvement of religion or caste in politics. The complexity of the term in the Kerala context is this: even a party that explicitly uses religious or caste symbols for the political end does not prefer to get the label of communal as it bears a damaging connotation. Meanwhile, the mainstream parties are not outside the vicious circle of communal politics. The anomaly to Kerala politics is its evolution from a caste/community-based social order to a secular polity wherein mobilisation of group identities was the catalyst for the development of the modern political system.[1] Community consciousness, generally perceived as the attribute of a regressive

[1] George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala,* (New Delhi: Concept Pub, 1989).

society, coexists with secular political formations based on radical ideologies. This paradox leads us to unpack the unique form of communalism working in Kerala.

Before ushering into the discussion on what communalism implies in Kerala politics, it is imperative to note what it means in the Indian subcontinent. Communalism in India is a typical reference to using caste/religious sentiments for political purposes. The communal ideology originated in colonial times as an idea poised against mainstream nationalist politics that wove the people of different social identities against the common enemy, the colonial government. Communalism, an explicit identification with narrow community interests, became a political abuse in Congress Party's jargon. It was antithetical to the inclusive nationalist framework and cosmopolitan values preached by Gandhi and Nehru.[2] The general understanding of communal is "any party or organisation which works for the interest of a caste or religious community as opposed to the general welfare."[3] Bipan Chandra, who has extensively worked on the history of modern India, argues that communalism purports a false consciousness in people's minds about the common socio-political and economic interests of people who believe in a particular religion. A religious community to have shared material interest beyond religious belief is seldom possible, and what is portrayed as community interest is protecting the concerns of a few powerful.[4] Communal politics is a toolkit of people at the top of the power structure to exploit the social majority poor under the smokescreen of the general community interest.[5] Scholars in South Asia, across the schools, share this common belief: communalism has been the proximate cause of the partition of the subcontinent and the subsequent communal riots, which took thousands of innocent lives. Thus the word communalism connotes a harmful ideology that damaged the social fabric of the subcontinent.

The connotation of communalism in Kerala differs from the mainstream in many respects. Significantly, socio-political mobilisations of caste/community groups around resources and within a more or less democratic arrangement have been a catalyst for a better distribution of common resources among social groups and the prevention of violent

[2] Lloyd I. Rudolph, and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 38.

[3] Myron Weiner, *Party Politics in India: The Development of a Multi-Party System*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 164.

[4] Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publication Pvt Ltd, 1984), 13.

[5] Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, 31.

communal outbreaks in Kerala.[6] First, caste discrimination within the Hindu religion rather than the communal animosity between Hindus and Muslims dominated the state's political narrative, and "Caste was more central to the ascriptive hierarchy in Kerala than was religion."[7] Amid deep internal divisions within the Hindu religion, the ethnic politics in Kerala appropriated a multi-community character wherein the Muslims and Christians were immersed in political competition not as beleaguered minorities but as equal partners among several groups. Second, an influential section of scholars has argued that the political mobilisation of communities in Kerala is markedly different from how it happened in other parts of India.[8] They argue that communalism does exist in Kerala, not as a violent articulation of religious identity against the other religion and hatred for people belonging to the other side, but as care for one's community. Kerala's version of communalism is practically closer to North American, and not Indian, understanding of the term.[9] Mutual recognition of political interests enables communities to establish social and political organisations and share resources and democratic spaces without compromising their interests. Nationalist politics headed by Gandhi recognised the formation of confessional parties and their role in internal community reforms and harmonious relationships between people of different communities.[10]

Following this, communalism in Kerala has two different nomenclatures. As stated above, the first class of communalism follows the basic idea that people belonging to the same caste or religious community have the same secular interests but do not deliberately attempt to arouse violent communal emotions against other communities. It has been called 'communalism sans violence,'[11] which was an integral part of the socio-political trends in the state in the pre and post-colonial phases. Communal collectives did not essentially cause

[6] Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women, and Wellbeing: How Kerala Became a 'Model,'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992); E.J. Thomas, *Coalition Game Politics in Kerala,* (New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1985); and James Chiriyankandath, "Communities at the Polls: Electoral Politics and the Mobilisation of Communal Groups in Travancore," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 3 (1993): 643–665.
[7] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 122.
[8] James Chiriyankandath, "'Unity in Diversity'? Coalition Politics in India (with Special Reference to Kerala)," *Democratization* 4, no. 4 (1997): 16-39; J. Devika and V. J. Varghese, "To Survive or to Flourish? Minority Rights and Syrian Christian Community Assertions in Twentieth-Century Travancore/Kerala," *History and Sociology of South Asia* 5, no. 2 (2011): 103-128; Nissim Mannathukkaren, "Communalism Sans Violence: A Keralan Exceptionalism?," *Sikh Formations* 12, no. 2-3 (2017): 223-242; and Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life.*

[9] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life,* 125.
[10] Rudolph and Rudolph, *In pursuit of Lakshmi,* 39.

[11] The phrase is used by Mannathukkaran (Mannathukkaren, "Communalism Sans Violence") for peculiar communal politics where inter-community competition, not violence, predominates.

violent outbreaks but often deactivated the communal spark that could evolve as full-bore communal violence. The second strand of communalism represents a current that stimulates confrontation and antagonism between castes or religious groups. The extreme communal outfits have been trying to seep into Kerala's socio-political space. The violent extremism gained marginal ground in Kerala politics in the 1980s as a ramification of communal confrontations in the rest of India concerning the Ram Temple/Babri Masjid controversy. The rise of a Muslim radical group in the 1990s to counter the threat of violent Hindu nationalism caused communal violence in some parts of the state. Although not on the same margin as the killings in other parts of India, Kerala also reported a few fatalities of Hindu-Muslim violence.[12] However, the extreme groups could not break into Kerala's mainstream space, and their electoral presence was marginal and limited to certain pockets of the state. The two meaning of communalism in Kerala has two terms in the local Malayalam language: *Saamudaayikatha*, 'a softer and acceptable form of consolidation of communal identities of caste and religion for political bargaining'; and *Vargeeyath*, 'extremely unacceptable and violent behaviour and mentality based on a religious identity for political purposes.'[13] Thus, this work considers the first class of organisations, *saamudaayikatha*, that played a significant role in the state's political development when referring to communal groups and community organisations. The sixth chapter of this thesis deals with how the extreme form of communalism manoeuvre strategies to enter the mainstream and the causes of their failure.

In the power-sharing literature, communalism appears as one of the approaches to managing the social cleavages in democracies. It explicitly recognises social identities as the building block of the institution by measures like allocating seats on a communal basis. Britain and other imperialist powers used it in their Asian, African, and Latin American colonies as a political system that officially recognised the ethnic and religious categories representing the people's interests. The best example of such a system is Lebanon, where the legislative seats are divided among Muslims and Christians, again among different sects of these two religions, and the top political posts are also allocated on religious criteria. Even in established democracies, some practices attributed to communalism are still in practice, like India's reservation policies for the Scheduled communities and the allocation of some seats to

[12] James Chiriyankandath, "Changing Muslim Politics in Kerala: Identity, Interests and Political Strategies," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 16, no. 2 (1996): 264.

[13] B. L. Biju, "Bipolar Coalition System in Kerala: Carriers and Gatekeepers of Communal Forces in Politics" in *Religion and Modernity in India*, ed. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, and Aloka Parasher Sen (New Delhi: Oxford University Publication, 2016), 218.

indigenous people in New Zealand and Taiwan.[14] However, communalism prevalent in independent India is different: proximate to self-determined consociationalism. In this situation, group identity evolves from the electoral choice made by the people rather than fixed in advance by the system.[15] Whereas scholars and practitioners have almost abandoned communalism as an approach to solving communal problems, it persists as a political ideology.

Communal Groupings in Colonial Travancore

This part provides a short analysis of colonial-time social collaboration in Travancore politics, which set the frame of post-independent Kerala politics. The formation of caste/community improvement associations close to the first decade of the twentieth century, catering exclusively to community members, is perhaps the earliest spark of modern political awakening in Travancore.[16] In a society where most people, except for the upper caste Tamil Brahmins, faced discrimination of various degrees according to their position on the social ladder, it was no surprise that the people preferred to organise on what was hurting them, community identity. The preponderance of Brahmins in education and new government employment had caused backward caste mobilisations across the peninsular India.[17] In the wake of rapid changes in the relation of production due to the introduction of a new mode of production by British imperialism, people chose their social identities as the vehicle to claim their pie in the new system, and, subsequently, a slew of caste/religion-based organisations spurred. Community organisations targeted the immediate impediment to their social progress: lower castes paid attention to the abolition of marks of social distance between different castes; higher castes laid stress on reforming the family relations, particularly the distribution of inheritance; and non-Hindus like the Muslims and Christians focussed on

[14] Benjamin Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies: Consociationalism, Centripetalism and Communalism Compared," *European Political Science* 11, no. 2 (2011): 267.

[15] Arend Lijphart, *Thinking About Democracy: Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 66.

[16] The caste organisations had taken shape by the last quarter of the twentieth century, like Ezhava Maha Jana Sabha (1886). But the mass based caste/community organisations were by the early twentieth century (P. K. Michael Tharakan, "Socio-Religious Reform Movements, the Process of Democratization and Human Development: The Case of Kerala, South-West India," in *Democratization in the Third World: Concrete Cases in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*, ed. Lars Rudebeck et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 153.

[17] M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), 91–92.

claiming their rights over government offices.[18] They shared a commonality- organising the community identity to demand social rights.

Two preliminary features of the social movements in Kerala in the early twentieth century are noteworthy. First, the organising spirit of those movements came from the caste/religious associations in the absence of class or secular parties. If the ground of discrimination is the communal identity, in that case, the people tend to organise on a communal line, mainly when other ideological tools are missing.[19] Second, the social movements of Travancore followed a common mobilisation strategy based on formulating a collective of communities to give the impression that a large number of people endorse the cause. Indeed, the propensity to form a federation of communities developed in Travancore as an understanding among elites of different social segments in the form of a 'cartel of elites,' as Lijphart phrases it in consociational literature,[20] or interethnic conciliation, as Horowitz calls it.[21] The discussion below shows how the social mobilisations of communities helped form community coalitions and collaborations for secular purposes, laying the foundation for the political coalitions which became the norm in the state's politics. In doing so, it establishes that the social coalitions and community collaborations are rooted in the social history of Kerala.

By the early twentieth century, caste/religious groups in Travancore started forming exclusive organisations to fight for their interests. For the Ezhava community, the path-breaking moment was the meeting between Dr. Palpu, a medical doctor by profession who was denied opportunities in Travancore due to the handicap of his social identity, and Sree Narayana Guru, the spiritual leader of the community and a significant renaissance leader of South India. In 1903, they formed the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), a voluntary organisation of the Ezhavas for claiming their rights by invoking caste and religious identities.[22] In a similar form, Mannathu Padnabha Pillai (henceforth Mannam), who quit the law profession to dedicate his life to the welfare of the Nairs, formed the Nair Service

[18] Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemercinier, "Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production" (Part I), Social Scientist 6, no. 11 (1978): 5.

[19] Mathew, *Communal Road*, 48.

[20] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21, no. 2, (1969): 213.

[21] Donald L. Horowitz, "Electoral systE. M. S.: A Primer for Decision Makers," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 4 (2003): 118.

[22] TP Sankarankutty Nair, "Dr. Palpu—the Pioneer Ezhava Social Reformer of Kerala (1863-1950)," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 40 (Indian History Congress, 1979), 841-848.

Society (NSS) with the support of prominent people from the community. Before Mannam ascended to the leadership, Sree Chattampi Swamikal had learned the Hindu religious texts and provided a spiritual path to non-Brahmin castes, particularly the Nairs, to lead the fight against Brahmanism.[23] The Nair collective laid stress primarily on three things: first, it championed the abolition of Brahmin dominance; second, it focussed on reforming the community's ancient social practices, which hindered social progress, like rules related to inheritance; and third, it realised the importance of education and economic mobility for the overall wellbeing of the community.[24] Christians and Muslims had the advantage of well-structured faith-based networks under churches and mosques. They also formed community organisations like the All Kerala Catholic Congress (AKCC) and Muslim Sabha. In a nutshell, all major caste and religious groups formed community organisations to champion their secular interests.[25] The following part covers some of the mobilisations organised by community collectives in different parts of Travancore to illustrate how the state's political culture of community cooperation evolved.

The early community organisations, which worked exclusively for the welfare of their fellow community members, made a strategic choice to align with other communities as and when the opportunity structure so commanded. The first such communal collective that cultivated large-scale community collaboration for a secular demand was the Malayali Memorial, a signature campaign for the right of non-Brahmin groups in Travancore to government appointments. The youth of Travancore, belonging to non-Tamil Brahmin communities, was disgruntled with the policy of the Travancore administration to appoint Tamil Brahmins in higher civil service posts, denying the same to all other communities.[26] The agitating youth deployed an extensive campaign against the authority's discriminatory policy through newspaper articles and pamphlets, which harshly criticised the failure of the

[23] Dilip M. Menon, "Writing History in Colonial Times: Polemic and the Recovery of Self in Late Nineteenth-Century South India," *History and Theory* 54, no. 4 (2015): 64–83.

[24] Mathew, *Communal Road,* 56-7.

[25] Although almost all communities formed community organisations in the early twentieth century, there were variations in their timeline. For instance, upper castes Namboodiris were late entrants into the community fray (Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemercinier, "Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production" (Part II), *Social Scientist* 12, no. 6 (1978): 26).

For details on the community movement among Dalit communities, see Tomy Joseph, "Empowerment of Dalits and Role of Dalit Movements in Kerala: A Study of Kottayam District," (PhD Thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2010), 78.

[26] A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithram* (History of Kerala), (Kottayam, Kerala: DC Books, 2009).

state to consider the people of the land for essential public services. The protestors submitted the petition to the authority as Malayali Memorial, a document with signatures of over 10,000 people who identified themselves as the Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians, and Namboodiris, belonging to Travancore.[27] It extended the criticism to the Malabar Brahmins, who found political asylum in Travancore after Tipu Sultan's march to northern Kerala.[28] The Memorial was a significant movement in Kerala's civil rights activism that advocated opening public offices to everyone, irrespective of caste, class, and religion. The recalcitrant Travancore administration ruthlessly faced the protest with penal action against people who organised the Memorial, which included the government's intervention in asking the Maharajas College, a prestigious college in the state, in expelling three protesting students for writing articles against the government's discriminatory recruitment policy. The Ezhavas drafted a separate Ezhava Memorial to address the specific questions of the community, claiming that their questions were not adequately taken care of in the Malayali Memorial. Dr. Palpu, the mastermind of the Ezhava Memorial, was a victim of the caste card that denied him the profession of a medical officer in the native Travancore, forcing him to work in the distant Mysore.[29] The Memorial collected the signatures of 13675 people from the Ezhava community and Nairs, Christians, and Muslims.[30]

Strategic-wise, both memorials followed the same logic- galvanising public opinion in favour of community interest by manufacturing consensus among a group of communities: in the first, an issue between the dominant Tamil Brahmins and the near-dominant Nairs, who wanted to claim their pie in the administration; in the second, a cause of Ezhava community who have faced caste discrimination in government policies. Both memorials weaved a coalition of communities rather than trying for a single community initiative. The Nair elites broadened the theme to make it an issue of all people of Travancore against one exploiting community, Tamil-Brahmins,[31] and the Ezhavas convinced people of other communities to extend support to their demands as a matter of community justice. The coalition of many had more strength than a single community agitation.

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[27] Robin Jeffrey, "A Note on the Malayali Origins of Anti-Brahminism in South India," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 14, no. 2 (1977): 260-3.

[28] Houtart and Lemercinier, "Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala," 10.
[29] Joseph, *Empowerment of Dalits*, 66.
[30] Nair, "Dr. Palpu—the Pioneer," 844.

[31] The Memorial used the statistics of the different community share in population to show the advantaged position of social minority Brahmins (Robin Jaffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908,* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, INC, 1976), 169).

A village in Travancore called Vaikom became the spot for a historic anti-caste movement in which Hindu caste associations stitched alliances against the orthodox sections who interpreted the text to exclude non-caste Hindus from Temple and its premises.[32] The lower caste people, who had made tremendous gains in education and wealth, could not shackle the religious orthodoxy that prevented their access to temples, government offices, and public roads. Poor lower castes in villages were much more vulnerable and intersected two forms of deprivations: economic backwardness and social marginalisation. The central objective of the Vaikom struggle was a fight against untouchability and unapproachability. The orthodox Hindu practices restricted the Ezhavas and lower castes from accessing the temple roads. No such rules applied to people outside the Hindu caste fold, like the Muslims, Christians, and Jews.[33] The leading figure in the struggle, T. K. Madhavan, who was the patron of the Ezhava-SNDP, succeeded in grabbing the Congress Party*'s approval for the Satyagraha*. Madhavan got solid support from the Nair supremo-Mannam and other eminent community leaders who shared a rational approach to social questions. On March 30, 1924, the first band of volunteers, Govinda Panicker (a Nair), Banuleyan (an Ezhava), and Kunjapy (a Pulaya), marched to the prohibited area to violate the rule and register arrest.[34] Other leaders followed the same. The struggle was essentially a Hindu-led movement peopled by the Hindus on the ground, albeit a few Christians and Muslims joined in sympathising with the cause. When George Joseph, an eminent Christian Congress leader, stepped in to lead the struggle as leaders of the movement were arrested, Gandhi wrote, "As to Vykom, I think that you should let the Hindus do the work. It is they who have to purify themselves."[35] Overall, the movement drew two significant tangible outcomes: the lower castes got access to public roads; it laid the foundation for the temple entry movements of the 1930s.

The Syrian Christians also mobilised against the Travancore administration for denying them government employment for a technical reason. The Devaswom Board, a body that looked after Hindu temples and religious affairs, restricted the offices to the Hindu upper castes denying the same to non-Hindus and lower-caste Hindus. The revenue administration followed the same logic tied up with the Devaswom Board to restrict the offices to Hindu upper castes. It infuriated the educated Christian community. In 1918, a group of Syrian Christians formed the Civil Rights League (CRL), claiming the representation of twenty-five

[32] Robin Jeffrey, "Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940," *Social Scientist* 4, no. 8 (1976): 16.

[33] Mary Elizabeth King, *Gandhian Nonviolent Struggle and Untouchability in South India*: *The 1924–25 Vykom Satyagraha and Mechanisms of Change*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 93.
[34] King, *Gandhian Nonviolent Struggle*, 99.
[35] King, *Gandhian Nonviolent Struggle,* 118.

lakh people from the Christians, Muslims, and low-caste Hindus, to demand the opening of public offices to all, irrespective of caste and religion. The league held massive campaigns and public meetings to arouse public sentiments toward the cause in different parts of the state. As a victory signal for the campaign, in 1922, the Travancore administration delinked the two bodies to extend the revenue department offices to non-caste Hindus.[36] This time, two segments of the society- Muslims and lower caste Ezhavas- supported the cause of the other segment-Syrian Christians. The young Syrian Christians were the front runners of the campaign.

Two movements of Travancore in the last part of colonial India were significant breakthroughs in developing social acceptance of the practice of power-sharing and community proportionality in Kerala's politics. The grand coalition and proportionality, two devices of consociational democracy, resonate in these movements. First, a cartel of organisations representing the Christians, Ezhavas, and Muslims, formed the Joint Political Congress (JPC), also known as the 'abstention movement,' in 1918 to demand the division of public offices, including the membership of the legislative assembly, among communities according to the population share. The Nair community's monopoly over the Government services and legislative bodies gave ground for the three other groups to form the JPC demanding the fundamental right to representation. Although a recent law increased the seats in the assembly, it systemically privileged the landed Nairs, excluding others by making a high bar of land tax as the eligibility for voting. In the end, the authority succumbed to the joint pressure of the JPC to make adequate changes in the law to enable all those paying taxes above one rupee as eligible to vote and reserve seats for the Ezhavas, Muslims, and Latin Christians.[37] The Governor General of India, who visited Travancore in 1933, observed the political situation in the state, "Travancore, like many administrations not only in India but throughout of the world is feeling the reaction caused by the impact of modern democratic ideas upon an old culture and the old order of things, Communities which have hitherto taken

[36] Robin Jeffrey, "Religious Symbolisation of the Transition from Caste to Class: The Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940," *Social Compass* 28, no. 2-3 (1981): 278-279; and P.K.K Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala* (Vol II), (Trivandrum: Govt. of Kerala, 1970), 288.

[37] P.M. Mammen, *Communalism vs. Communism: a Study of the Socio-Religious Communities and Political Parties in Kerala, 1892-1970,* (Culcutta: Minerva, 1981), 57; G. Mohanadasan Pillai, "The 'Abstention Movement' for a Responsible Government," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 50 (Indian History Congress, 1989), 438-443.

small part in public affairs, however contentedly they may have lived, are now aspiring to a greater share in the administrative and social activities."[38]

The second noteworthy development was the formation of the Travancore State Congress (TSC) in 1938 as a platform for all people to fight for responsible government, adult franchise, and minority protection. The TSC was uniquely a multi-community confederation with participation from all significant groups. Some prominent leaders behind the TSC's formation were Pattom Thanu Pillai, M. R. Madhavan Warrier, V. Achutha Menon, R. Gopalan Pillai, and Paravoor T. K. Narayanan Pillai from the Nayar community; K. T. Thomas, A. J. John, T. M. Varghese, and E. John Philipose from the Christian community, and C. Kesavan and V. K. Velayudhan from the Ezhava community.[39] As a general platform giving access to community interest groups and political leaders, the TSC had features of a Grand Coalition that acted as an elite cartel.[40] The TSC was later merged with the Indian National Congress, connecting the colonial-era social coalition process with the post-colonial political coalitions.

Political Parties and Communalism in Kerala

The emergence of two major political currents in Kerala, the nationalist Congress movement and left politics, was closely related to the abovementioned account. Compared to other Indian states, the anti-colonial movement got a lukewarm response from the people in Kerala, perhaps because caste/religious issues dominated the politics, and a significant part of the state was under the indirect rule of the British Government. The people's reluctance towards the national movement is evident from the fact that the first state-wide organisational attempt of the Congress happened as late as 1921 in Calicut, a city in Malabar, with significantly lesser popular participation.[41] The other two regions of Kerala, Travancore and Cochin, did not have a full-fledged Congress organisational system till when the party

[38] Roy Varghese, "Secularism and the Politics of Religious Minorities in Kerala with Special Reference to the Christian Community," (PhD Thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2008), 280.
[39] Mammen, *Communalism vs. Communism*, 60.
[40] P. T. Haridas, "Genesis of the Travancore State Congress," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 38 (Indian History Congress, 1977), 398–404.

In the last part of colonial rule, Mannam and Shankar joined the TSC and turned against Diwan. Henceforth, the communal groups in the Congress Party ruled the Travancore-Cochin till 1954.

[41] Manali Desai, "The Relative Autonomy of Party Practices: a Counterfactual Analysis of Left Party Ascendancy in Kerala, India, 1934–1940," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 3 (2002): 635.

resolved at the national level to take up the issues of princely states.[42] Indeed, the Congress in Kerala had a genesis different from its parental body at the national level. The party traced its origin to the Malayali Memorial of the 1890s, when non-Brahmin communities united to fight for the cause of the people of Travancore against the dominant foreign community, the Tamil Brahmins. Henceforth, the civil right activism pioneered by different communities pursued social coalitions to fight for community causes. The tradition of collaborations by community organisations eventually resulted in the Travancore State Congress (TSC), which later merged with the Indian National Congress after independence. The Congress was a common platform for people of all communities that acted as a vehicle for organisations and public-minded individuals for political activities. The organisation of the Congress Party prevented the domination of any single community in leadership positions for an extended period, with a few exceptions.[43] The Congress's multi-community composition in the state confirms Boggard's classification of the party at all India levels as a consociational party.[44]

The second significant development in the political history of Kerala was the rising popularity of radical ideologies since the 1930s, when many youths across communities were attracted to communism and socialism as political ideologies to address the general public causes. Notwithstanding the class polarisation resulting from the introduction of the capitalist mode of production by the mighty British colonialism, the caste remained at the centre of social ideology. The burgeoning agrarian and trade union struggles based on class ideology did not obscure the caste conflicts, which remained as relevant as before.[45] There are different explanations for how social reform movements spearheaded by community organisations in the twentieth century and the colonial administration's changes in the mode of production caused the emergence of vibrant communist activism in Kerala with extraordinary popularity. Robin Jaffrey explains how the early twentieth-century social reform movements gave way to the left politics in the state: a social disintegration in Kerala, unparalleled in any other Indian

[42] The Congress Party abstained from the princely state politics after Gandhi's insistence (Suhail-ul-Rehman Lone, "The Princely States and the National Movement: The Case of Kashmir (1931–39)," *Studies in People's History* 4, no. 2 (2017): 184-185).

[43] Thomas, *Coalition Game Politics in Kerala,* 17–19.

[44] Matthijs Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace in Divided Societies: Exploring Consociational Parties*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 42-63.

[45] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development," *Social Scientist* 6, no. 4 (1977): 18.

state, was the catalyst to direct many Malayalis to Marxist ideology.[46] According to him, Marxism replaced an ideological vacuum created by two concomitant phenomena: first, the matrilineal system controlling the caste Hindu family system was gradually dwindling; and acceptance of the ideological base of the caste system also declined among lower caste Hindus. It is worth underlining that the two aforesaid political currents encapsulated the politics of post-independence Kerala, that all mainstream parties follow either of these traditions. Kerala has exceptional party stability, contra other states, and new party formations resulted from splits in the existing parties.[47]

A long-lasting legacy of Travancore politics in Kerala is a unique community competition with minimal calamity on social cohesiveness and harmony. The established communities, which actively guided the social movements in colonial times, found new impetus in the post-independence phase after the introduction of the adult franchise and the resultant competitive party system. The rise of secular parties as decisive powers did not fundamentally challenge community organisations and ideologies. The parties and community organisations developed a synergy that grew into a quid pro quo relationship based on the exchange of votes for governmental resources, narrowing the line of separation between religion and politics. The relationship grew to such a level that significant parties like the Congress and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM, henceforth CPM) sheltered confessional parties, spearheaded by the established community interests, to maximise votes in the fiercely competed politics in the state. It is noteworthy that Kerala has a unique pathology among Indian states that, for socio-political reasons, caste/community organisations preceded the secular political formations, which were formed much later.[48] Given their role as kingmakers in the early phases, it is not surprising that community organisations continue to influence on politics.

The introduction of electoral democracy to the Kerala society reinforced the caste/religious consciousness of the people, and the existing community equations were reproduced in the body politic. The merging of the Malabar region, where the Muslims had a sizeable population, with the other two provinces, Travancore and Cochin, to form the state

[46] Robin Jeffrey, "Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth of the Communist Party in Kerala, 1930–1940," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978): 77-98.

[47] Balu Sunilraj and Oliver Heath, "The Historical Legacy of Party System Stability in Kerala," *Studies in Indian Politics* 5, no. 2 (2017): 193-204.

[48] Namboodiripad, "Castes, Classes, and Parties."

of Kerala in 1956 only accelerated the communal competition: it transformed the existing triangular communal fights into a rectangular competition among the Ezhava, Nair, Christian, and Muslim communities.[49] However, the exhaustive communal feuds for material goods did not degenerate into open violence. The socio-political structure of the state provided common platforms for negotiations between different groups, which breaded healthy inter-community communication amid competition reducing the magnitude of mutual frictions. The legacy of Travancore politics, cooperation between different groups for secular purposes, lives in post-independence political processes. A few factors helped the development of systemic cooperation between various stakeholders in politics. First, the party system of the state is exceptionally fragmented, perhaps reflecting the fragmentation of the society: 'a fragmented party system of a fragmented society.' Second, the complex nature of Kerala's class and caste combinations weakened the two biggest parties from winning elections on their strength, mainly after they went through splits in the 1960s. It provided minor parties, including communally centred, a niche in state politics as the major parties needed help to finish the majority mark with their vote base. Against this backdrop, the parties in Kerala invented two all-encompassing coalitions, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Left Democratic Front (LDF), to find a way out of the political quagmire of fragmentation and community spill-over to politics. The mainstream parties themselves are not insulated from the caste-community structure. As a scholar rightly notes, all communities in the state have a political party, and all political parties have a community base.[50] In other words, no political party could escape the influence of caste/religious communities, just as no community organisation could ignore the existence of political parties.

The mainstream parties have followed the tradition of recognising social groups and legitimising political parties floated by community establishments. The Communist Party and Congress have drawn flak for compromising secular ideology in dealing with community organisations.[51] A considerable section of scholars believes that the first communist government in the state, which got the tag of the second-only elected communist government

[49] Mannathukkaren, "Communalism Sans Violence," 228.

Beyond the three regions, a part of the South Canara district in present-day Karnataka is also now part of Kerala. Furthermore, a portion of southern Travancore is now part of Tamil Nadu.

[50] G. Gopa Kumar, "Changing Dimension of Coalition Politics in Kerala," in *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues at the Centre and the States*, ed. E. Sridharan (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2014).

[51] John Oommen, "Politics of Communalism in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 11 (1995): 547.

on the planet, is the attribute of how the party mobilised communities.[52] A much more serious allegation, supported by observers and a section of intellectuals, is how left leaders used their old community organisation link for the electoral purpose of the party. On the other head, the Congress Party was a federation of communities in which the community leaders had a say over the organisation and government formations. The government formation with the support of the Muslim League (formally Indian Union Muslim League or IUML) in 1960 was perhaps the first brazen compromise of the Congress Party in independent India to a communal outfit. The two major allies of the Congress in the UDF- the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress- are explicitly communal parties with a base over a single religious group.

The Muslim League is a party formed by former leaguers who decided to stay back in India when their veterans, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, crossed the border to Pakistan after the partition.[53] In independent India, although it did not survive in Muslim-majority pockets where it thrived before, its Kerala unit demonstrated an excellent track record with a good number of elected members to the Lok Sabha and assembly and participation in ministries at the centre and state. Although the Muslim League kept an open approach to serving the religious minorities in independent India, its accomplishment in Kerala marked a transition from its early colonial communal overtone to moderate political behaviour aligning with parties representing various social interests. Remarkably, it played an unwavering role in minimising the communal sparks through negotiations and compromises, albeit without scrapping its religious tag. Over time, it survived numerous frictions, including one because of its moderate political stand on the demolition of the Masjid at Ayodhya in 1991. Notably, the Indian National League (INL), a breakaway faction of the League, has been collaborating with the LDF since 1994, with a presence over a few constituencies in Malabar.[54]

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[52] Victor M. Fic, *Kerala, Yenan of India: The Rise of Communist Power, 1937-1969*, (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1970); R. Ramakrishnan Nair *How Communists Came to Power in Kerala*, (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Academy of Political Science, 1965); and Mammen, *Communalism vs. Communism*.

[53] M.C Vadakara, *Muslim League Swathandraindiayil* (Muslim League in Independent India), (Kozhikode: Indian Union Muslim League Kerala State Committee, 2015), 31–33; Theodore P Wright, "The Muslim League in South India since Independence: A Study in Minority Group Political Strategies," *American Political Science Review* 60, no. 3 (1966): 579–599.

[54] M. Rahim, "Political Space of Muslim Community in Kerala," *Journal of Polity and Society* 10, no. 1&2 (2018): 96-97

The political experiment of aligning with extreme communal outfits occasionally proved fatal for mainstream parties. One such instance was the Co-Lea-B (denoting the Congress, Muslim League, and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)) alliance tested by the UDF with the BJP in 1991 when the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections were held simultaneously. The 1991 assembly election created a peculiar situation in Kerala politics that the LDF Government (1987-91) dissolved the assembly before completing the term to declare the state election early, drawing confidence from its governmental performance and the recent show in the local body election. The beleaguered UDF made a secret alliance with the BJP to support joint candidates in two seats-Vadakara Lok Sabha constituency and the Bepore assembly constituency- both campaigned separately for the same person. See how the LDF candidate in Bepore T. K. Hamsa explains, "Madhavan Kutty, the former principal of the Kozhikode Medical College and an RSS sympathiser, was the candidate. In his campaigns, Congress leader K. Karunakaran and the League leader Panakkad Sayyid Shihab Thangal participated in speaking for the RSS candidate. One Muslim League leader Adv. Alikkoya, a famous lawyer, had given the nomination in the constituency; but withdrew it to support the RSS candidate."[55] Co-Lea-B was a unique communal experiment in which the Hindu nationalist BJP and the Muslim confessional League joined the secular Congress to defeat the common enemy, communism. The experiment failed abruptly, and the UDF candidate lost to the CPM in both constituencies even as the front won decisively in the general election to capture power in the state.

The left also had unsuccessfully experimented with such unholy political alliances. In the 2009 Lok Sabha election, the CPM decided to comply with the demand of the People Democratic Party (PDP), a radical Muslim party by a controversial cleric Abdul Nasar Madani, to field an independent common candidate against the Muslim League in the Ponnani constituency. Against all opposition from the front partners and secular sympathisers, the CPM decided to field the independent candidate with the explicit support of Madani, who commanded a few thousand followers in the constituency. At odds with the party convention, the CPM-state secretary shared the campaign platform with the controversial clergy drawing massive criticism from the secular section. The insider observation of the Communist Party was that the decision to align with the communal group to defeat a lesser communal party was fatal to the party's credibility as a defender of

[55] T. K. Hamsa, "T K Hamsa 15 | Charithram Enniloode 1359," filmed January 16, 2019, Safari TV, 23.51, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7kdrXyOrDY.

secularism. The CPM central committee issued a statement regretting the decision to share the stage with Madani and PDP. It said,

> "The UDF and the media were successful in creating some confusion among a section of the secular minded people that the CPI(M) is also resorting to an opportunistic stand in the matter of getting the support of Madani's PDP to the LDF candidates. It may be necessary during elections to get support from different parties, groups and sections of people in elections, but at the same time, we should be careful to ensure that our secular identity does not get blurred by any such maneouvres. We should have avoided having a joint platform with the PDP during the election campaign."[56]

The electoral backlash meted out to the UDF and LDF on embracing extreme groups reflects the political equation in Kerala. The brazen communal games do not fit the state's social and demographic frame based on the coexistence of multiple groups. Many people propound secularism with a strong aversion to political parties' outright engagement with communal elements. Demographically, except for a few, constituencies in the state are heterogeneous, which structurally prevents communal consolidation by any group. The viable strategic option is to make an inter-community coalition or understanding among different sections to face election. In a fragmented society like Kerala, pandering to a single community is more likely to end up in the counter-consolidation of other communities and the secular section of the same group.

Coalition politics is the practical solution invented by political actors for perennial governmental instability in the state. In the early years of independent India, Kerala gained the bad reputation of being the most unstable polity, with no government surviving beyond two years and the presidential rules becoming frequent subsistence. The extreme party fragmentation partly caused by the spill-over effect of communalism to politics and resultant internal feuds prevented any party from maintaining power. The first two decades of Kerala provided a vital lesson to the stakeholders in the state polity that one-party rule is seldom possible in the social landscape of the state, where geography, ethnicity, religion, and denominations are marks of divisions. By the 1970s, the state's political elites realised that the fragmented natures of politics demanded a unique political design that recognised the

[56] Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Review of the 15th Lok Sabha Elections (Adopted by the Central Committee)*, New Delhi: 2009, https://CPM.org/sites/default/files/documents/2009-15-ls-election-review%20%281%29.pdf (accessed on July 11, 2022).

interest of different sections.[57] The formation of the UDF and LDF, pre-electoral coalitions led by the two opposing parties, in 1980 followed the principle of communal moderation and political accommodation. Remarkably, both had similar social composition and policy orientation, with minimum variation. The character of twenty-one political parties that participated in governments during the period is noteworthy: eight communists/socialists, fiv Congress types, and eight confessional community types. Of the 188 ministers during the time, fifty-five represented parties directly affiliated with caste/community parties. The political repairing was effective that the state politics after 1982 acquired a status of stability wherein all houses completed the term, no presidential rule, and there was little confusion over the formation of government by the majority party after elections. The question begs to be asked, how does such a fragmented society with a fragmented party system provide stable governments even with the active participation of community parties? The following part answers the question by using power-sharing theories.

Kerala as a Power-Sharing Democracy

Power-sharing democracies demonstrate exceptional stability of governments despite extreme social divisions on religion, ethnicity, language, and caste.[58] Two opinions emerged on whether India is a case of power-sharing among different ethnic groups: one argues India is a confirming case of power-sharing; the others criticise that position with data and analysis. After a decade-long stamping of India as a non-consociation, Arend Lijphart, the doyen of the school, reversed the stand to argue that the Indian political system has demonstrated all four essential conditions of consociationalism, impressively confirming the power-sharing theory.[59] The other side lists the reasons why India cannot be a power-sharing democracy: huge disparity in representation between communities; lack of substantive involvement of minorities in cabinets; very loose structure of cultural and group rights; and widespread communal violence against religious and social minorities, to name just a few.[60] The current

[57] Robin Jeffrey, "Coalitions and Consequences: Historical, Economic, Social and Political Considerations from India," in *The Indian Economy Sixty Years after Independence,* ed. Raghbendra Jha (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2008), 10.

[58] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: a Comparative Exploration*, (Bombay: Popular Prakasham, 1989).

[59] Arend Lijphart, "The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: a Consociational Interpretation," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (1996): 259.

[60] Katharine Adeney, "Constitutional Centring: Nation Formation and Consociational Federalism in India and Pakistan," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 40, no. 3 (2002): 8–33; Katharine Adeney, and Wilfried Swenden, "Power-Sharing in the World's Largest Democracy: Informal Consociationalism in India (and its

wind is against conflating India with power-sharing democracy after the Hindu right-wing party occupied New Delhi in 2014, which marked a rupture from the country's secular past. However, a macro observation of India at the national level needs to uncover the processes in state units, which display enormous variations in the performance of institutions, communal relations, economic development, and social indicators. Kerala's exceptional ability to nurture a political culture of accommodating social groups into the system with less spill-over of communal violence hints at the existence of a power-sharing mechanism.

Coalition governments that have ruled Kerala since 1960 have drawn scholarly interest for their unique capability of providing access to all relevant groups in the state. The coalition formations handily manage the quadruple community competition between the Ezhavas, Nairs, Muslims, and Christians by facilitating common platforms of bargaining and negotiations.[61] Governments formed in Kerala since 1957 have demonstrated a key feature of consociationalism, grand coalition, a system of including all significant segments in the cabinet. All governments in Kerala have consisted of members from the five relevant social groups, though in varying proportions. Kerala's coalition differs from consociational theory in one respect: the grand coalition conceptualised by Lijphart gives access to all groups in the cabinet according to a pre-determined principle. In contrast, Kerala's coalitions are the outcome of bipolar competition between two equally powerful alliances which regularly circulate between power and opposition. Horowitz finds a few structural advantages to the Kerala coalitions: the existence of a competitive bipolar system enables all groups to enjoy a stint in power at some point in time; the disillusioned parties have options of switching from one alliance to the other according to the convictions; heterogeneous constituencies clear the way for vote-pooling between communities, incentivising communal moderation; bipolarity encourages intra-community cleavages enabling people of the same group preferring different political choices.[62] Two multi-community alliances competing for median voters in a severely fragmented society is a unique feature of Kerala politics.

Decline?)," *Swiss Political Science Review* 25, no. 4 (2019): 450-475; Ian S Lustick, "Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationalism," *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 88–117; Steven I. Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory, and Ethnic Violence," *Asian Survey* 40, no. 5 (2000): 767–791.

[61] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (London: University of California Press, 1985).
[62] Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 4 (1993): 18–13.

Scholars have applied consociational theory to interpret the unique political situation in Kerala.[63] They argue that the state's politics bears significant consociational features, albeit in a different form. First, there is a variant of the grand coalition concept in the state that, as previously pointed out, all governments, except the first communist government and The Shankar Government (1962-64), were coalitions of more than one party, including at least one member from the Ezhava, Nair, Christian, Muslim and the scheduled communities. In addition, all the coalitions except for the Nayanar Government (1987-91) consisted of parties articulating the particular interest of community groups.[64] Second, the operation of the 'mutual veto' has been apparent in the working of the UDF and LDF governments. The significant communities and their parties persuaded their demand within the coalition governments. The alliances left ample space for negotiating policies of community interests and accommodated special demands. Two noteworthy examples are how coalitions tolerated the community demands of confessional parties: the Kerala Congress's efforts to protect the Christian educational management and plantation sector; and the Muslim League's care to uplift Muslims educationally. Third, coalitions have delicately followed the principle of proportionality between communities in the legislative assembly and cabinet positions. The proportional distribution of offices has been more evident in the UDF composition compared to the LDF. Lastly, the governments in Kerala have taken care of a partial application of segmental autonomy, like the creation of districts in the Muslim-majority Malappuram and the Christian stronghold Kottayam and Pathanamthitta. A significant application of the autonomy principle is the working style of community-run educational institutions, which receive regular government grants.[65] Although the forgone accounts provided a critical analysis of Kerala politics using the power-sharing framework, they have yet to systematically deal with the representation of various groups, their data, and analysis. The following part makes an original and rigorous analysis of Kerala's politics using the data between 1982 and 2016.

The Social Composition of Cabinets

The cabinet is the most powerful political institution in a subnational unit of Indian federalism. In the Indian parliamentary system, the party with the majority of seats in the

[63] Chiriyankandath, "'Unity in Diversity'?"; and Kumar, "Changing Dimension of Coalition," 317-389.

[64] Although Congress ruled the state between 1962 and '64 without the participation of other parties in the government, the party itself was the explicit platform of significant communities. The fact mentioned here has been more accurate since 1980.

[65] Chiriyankandath, "'Unity in Diversity'?," 29-33.

lower house forms the government in the state, and the chief minister, the leader of the largest party, heads the cabinet. The Governor, appointed by the President for the central government, appoints the ministers in consultation with the CM. As a constituent unit of India, Kerala does not have a constitutionally enshrined formal grand coalition. There is no mandatory constitutional provision to ensure representations to any social group in the cabinet. The current exercise examines the existence of a grand coalition or the status of community representations in cabinets in the absence of a formal quota system. It checks first the social break-up of the cabinets from 1982 to 2016 and second the portfolios handled by people belonging to different groups. The following part tracks both separately.

Conventionally, Kerala has three forms of cabinet memberships: the Chief Minister (CM), Deputy CM, and Cabinet Minister. This study has not considered other forms like the Speaker of the house, Chief Whip of the ruling alliance, or person with cabinet ranks without membership in the ministry. Using the original data set of this research, it has tabulated the social break-ups of the cabinet between 1982 and 2016 on two dimensions, religion and caste. This study has followed the general practice of considering caste groups within Hindus as distinct communities. Although caste has been prevalent in all socio-religious groups in Kerala, caste-based mobilisations among minorities are yet to gain political salience.[66] The consideration here is only about the background of members based on their family details and not on whether they substantially represent the identity they come from or keep the traditional beliefs. The complexity of analysing the caste composition is the lack of accurate data on India's population share of castes. Following the general practice of using approximate information provided by credible agencies, this study takes the caste population from a report prepared by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram.[67]

Figure 3.1 recapitulates the general characterisation of Kerala politics as a game between four significant communities, the Christians, Ezhavas, Muslims, and Nairs.[68] If the

[66] For details on stratification among Kerala Muslims, P.R.G. Mathur, "Social Stratification among Muslims of Kerala," in *Frontiers of Embedded Muslim Communities in India*, ed. Vinod K. Jairath (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011), and P.C. Saidalavi, "Muslim Social Organisation and Cultural Islamisation in Malabar," *South Asian Research* 37, no. 1 (2017): 19-36. For caste and denominational stratification among Christians in Kerala, K.C. Zachariah, *Religious Denominations of Kerala* (Working Paper No. 468), Center for Developemnt Studies ,2016. For caste stratification within Hindus, see R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Social Structure and Political Development in Kerala*, (Trivandrum: The Kerala Academy of Political Science, 1976).
[67] Zachariah, *Religious Denominations of Kerala*,
[68] Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," 33; Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 71.

scheduled communities are added to the quartet, ninety-five per cent of Kerala cabinet ministers between 1982 and 2016 belong to five numerically more significant social groups, which constitute roughly eighty-eight per cent of the population. The diagram implies four significant points about the social composition of Kerala's executive body. First, the Christians and Ezhavas have successfully grabbed cabinet positions in proportion to their share of the population.[69] Second, Muslims grabbed a twenty per cent share, marginally below their population strength. Third, unlike the reservations in the assembly, the lack of reservation of the scheduled communities in the cabinet has some implications for their numbers. The scheduled communities' share in the cabinet was 6.2 per cent, short of their population share of 9.6 per cent. The alliances, except the UDF Government (2011-16), followed the practice of allocating only one minister from the scheduled communities. The invisibility of the scheduled groups in Kerala's society and politics due to their backwardness partly resonates in their cabinet share. Fourth, the Nairs are numerically the smallest of the four significant communities in Kerala but grabbed the maximum of the minister posts, implying no decline of traditional Nair dominance after the introduction of the adult franchise. Fifth, the share of numerically insignificant castes from the forward and backward castes has been negligible, implying that Kerala also suffers from the classical consociational dilemma of exclusion amid inclusion.[70] Nadars, a backward caste community in Southern Kerala, have been an exception for their ability to secure good numbers in cabinets, despite being demographically a smaller group. The Nair domination in cabinets is at the cost of the representation of smaller groups. Lastly, the religious majority Hindus have secured fifty-nine per cent of the cabinet berths in proportion to their share in the population, implying that Kerala diverged from the national trend of Hindu domination.

The pattern of social representation in two alliances, which alternated on power five years after five years, has been consistent, reflecting their social base and the character of party components. Changes in the alliance in power have impacted the representation of different groups. When the UDF was in power, minority groups had a proportionately higher number of cabinet berths, in addition to the general over-representation of the Nairs. The presence of the Muslim League and a major Kerala Congress Party in the UDF meant a considerable representation of Muslims and Christians. The significant social base of the

[69] Between 1980 and 2016, the social demography of Kerala has shown slight changes. The number of Muslims has increased, while Hindus and Christians have decreased.
[70] Andreas Juon, "Minorities Overlooked: Group-based Power-Sharing and the Exclusion-Amid-Inclusion Dilemma," *International Political Science Review* 41, no. 1 (2020): 89-107.

Congress Party has been upper-caste Nairs and Christians, which reveals why the UDF cabinets over-represent these groups. The LDF was socially less proportional in that the Hindus dominated its ministries with crude seventy-two per cent, contemplating the Hindu domination in the rank and file of the Communist Party.[71] The Muslims and Christians in the LDF cabinets are below their population strength, constituting eleven and seventeen per cent, respectively. The demographically small caste Hindus held a proportionately higher share of the left ministries, reflecting the unabated overrepresentation of upper castes in the Communist Party. Significantly, the criticism that the left has upper caste leadership and lower caste followers does not hold as the backward castes occupied the largest share of the left cabinets during the period. The Ezhavas, the backbone of the left in Kerala, have contributed the largest share of ministers among the four relevant communities. The cost of domination of Hindu castes in the LDF has hit the Muslims and scheduled communities' representation. Because multiple groups of Kerala Congresses spread in both alliances, the Christians got a fair deal from both fronts, proportionately more from the UDF.

Muslim's relative under-representation can be attributed to the following reasons. First, the Muslims, concentrated in the British-ruled Malabar, were the late entrants to the state's communal politics, which was a follow-up to the politics of Travancore, where they were minimal players. Second, there has been a significant shift in the demography of Muslims, whose share increased from seventeen per cent in 1957 to 26.5 per cent in 2011.[72] Although there was a considerable increase in the representation of Muslims, it was not at the same pace as the increase in the population share. Third, the Muslim League, considerably the sole spokesman of Muslims in the state[73] with a majority of the community's ministers and representatives, stuck with the UDF causing a sharp decline in the community's presence in the LDF. In addition, the LDF did not have any significant Muslim party to fill its historical weakness in the community. Nonetheless, the community has been showing signals of convergence with the other two religious groups.

If the meaning of consociational democracy is about giving more representation to smaller groups to make their voice heard in the system, in that case, the UDF follows this

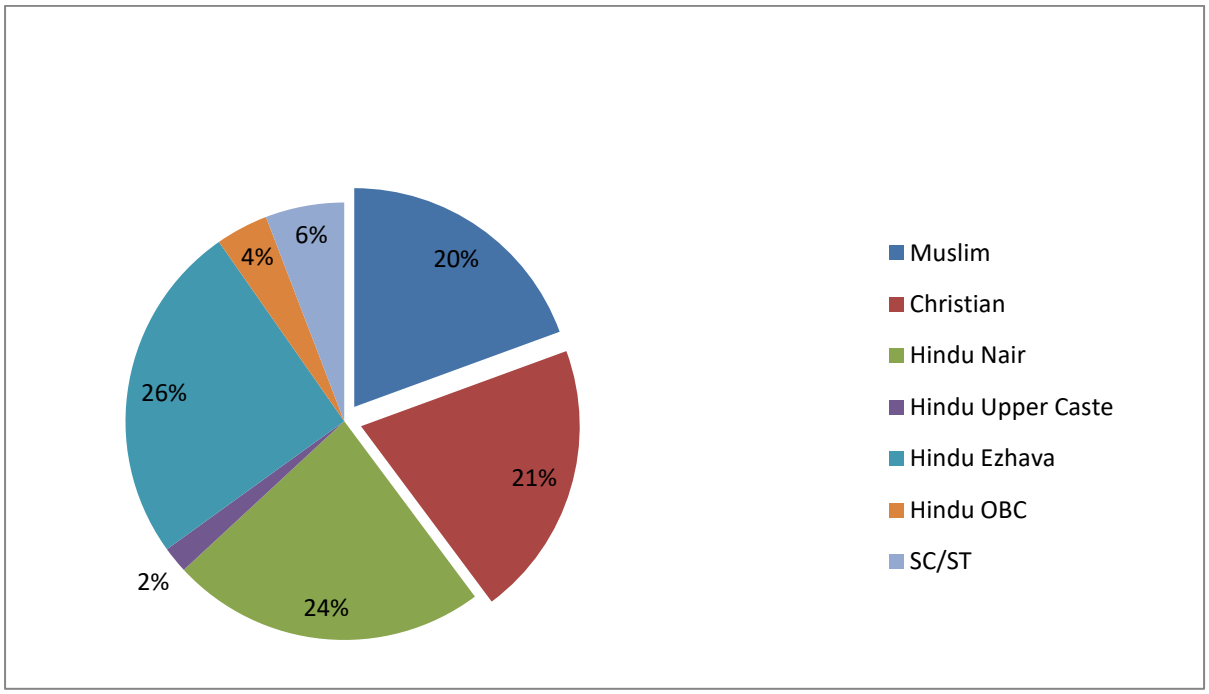
[71] Praful Bidwai, *The Phoenix Moment: Challenges Confronting The Indian Left*, (Noida: Harper Collins, 2015), 254.

[72] Zachariah, *Religious Denominations of Kerala.*

[73] LRS Lakshmi, *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2012), 166.

principle by giving seven per cent berths above the population share to the two minority groups. The LDF and UDF combined show near proportionality among the three religious groups, though Muslims are relatively below the mark.

Figure 3 1: Social Profile of Kerala Cabinets (1982-2016)



Source 1: author's calculation based on the information compiled from Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data.

Groups and Cabinet Profiles

Information about the portfolios held by ministers is a better method of assessing the influence. Numbers cannot always reveal the substantial aspect of the representation. A prime criticism of the consociational interpretation of India was that the Congress governments inducted ministers from minority groups without allotting them important and sensitive portfolios.[74] This study analyses portfolios controlled by different socio-religious groups to overcome the limitation of quantitative analysis. From 1982 to 2016, Kerala had nine cabinets, of which two UDF and one LDF cabinet resigned before the completion of the tenure. Table 3.1 lists nine important portfolios and the number of times people of different groups have handled them. The number of chief ministers during the period was nine, of which five belonged to the Hindus, four to Christians, and none to Muslims.[75] Only the K.

[74] Wilkinson, "India, Consociational Theory," 779.

[75] Two Congress chief ministers, both Christians, assumed the power after the resignation of incumbent CMs and thus have held the post for short periods.

Karunakaran Government (1982-87) followed the practice of keeping the Deputy CM position. The two Deputy CMs during the term were from the Muslim League: K. Avukader Kutty Naha ascended the throne after the demise of his party leader C. H. Mohammed Koya.

The CMs generally retain the department of Home, the most significant portfolio in the state. Three ministries kept separate ministers for the home department, all of which went to the Hindus. When some Christians handled the home affairs in CM's capacity, no Muslim controlled it. Although Muslims did not occupy the CM post in the period, they dominated some strategic and developmental portfolios vis. seven times in Industry, five times in Education, seven times in Local Self Government, and five times in Public Work Department (PWD).[76] Christian minorities were more advanced than others in retaining some pivotal positions other than four times in the CM office: five times in revenue, four times in Finance, three times in Education, two times in the PWD, and once in the Local Self Government. All the ministers in the Health Department, except one Muslim minister for a short period of one year and 115 days, belonged to the Hindu religion; no Christian handled the department during the period. The Hindus also dominated the department of Finance and retained the department of revenue thrice. The above data demonstrate that there is no apparent discrimination in the distribution of ministerial profiles among the three religious groups in the state, except for the post of chief minister, which has not been allocated to a Muslim ever in the period. In other cases, the distribution is balanced, albeit some portfolios are vital for certain religious groups.

Table 3 1: Portfolios Held by Communities (1982-2016)

Sl. No	Portfolios	Hindu	Christian	Muslim	Nair	Ezhava
1	CM	5	4		4	1
2	DCM			2		
3	Home	3			2	1

[76] Coalitions have compensated for the deficit in Muslim MLAs and ministers by allotting significant portfolios to the community members in the cabinet. For instance, in 1990, portfolios held by Muslims constituted around sixty per cent of the total budget (Steven I Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 183).

4	Finance	6	5		3	3
5	Industry	2		8		2
6	Education	1	3	6	1	
7	Health	10		1	7	3
8	Revenue	3	5	1		3
9	PWD		2	6		
10	Local Body	1	1	8		
11	Agriculture	6	3		1	5

Source 2: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data

Turning to how different caste groups within the majority Hindu religion performed in the cabinet positions, Table 3.1 provides portfolios and the number of times different caste groups possessed them. When the CM post was held by Hindus five times in the period, four went to the upper-caste Nair caste, one to the lower-caste Ezhavas, and none to other caste groups. The two dominant castes within the Hindus have monopolised the portfolios in the government. In the significant department of home affairs, two times Nairs and once Ezhava controlled the office. The Finance brief had three Nair and Ezhava ministers each. The department of Industry went outside the Muslims only twice, both to the Ezhavas. Health brief was a solid area of the Nairs, who retained it seven times against three times of the Ezhavas. The Ezhavas controlled the revenue section three times. The only Hindu education minister during the period was a Nair. The scheduled communities, though represented in all ministries in the period, have seldom controlled any of the critical posts mentioned in the table, apparently reflecting their social position. Among the ten scheduled community ministers between 1982 and 2016, only a few have held relevant portfolios other than the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (WSCST). For one year and five months between 1982 and 1983, one SC member in the K. Karunakaran Ministry occupied the transport portfolio and the Welfare for SC/ST brief. The tourism brief, which also contains a modicum of budget allocation, has been held by an SC/ST minister in the Oommen Chandy Government of 2011-16. In LDF governments, one minister of the community in the

Achuthanandan Government (2006-11) has handled the electricity department and the WSCST. Thus, the analysis of the portfolios confirms the finding of the social composition analysis of cabinets that the religious minorities and backward castes in Kerala could secure influential roles in governments. Furthermore, it reiterates the Kerala power-sharing dilemma of exclusion amid inclusion. Ministers from demographically insignificant sections have rarely occupied relevant portfolios in governments.

Proportionality in Assembly

Proportionality is allocating resources and offices among different groups according to their proportionate population share.[77] This study considers a narrow meaning of proportionality to focus on the distribution of membership in the legislative assembly among socio-religious groups. The constitution of India provides for mandatory proportionality in the form of reservation of seats in the national and state legislatures for the scheduled communities in proportion to their population share. Compared to other Indian states, Kerala has a relatively small population of scheduled communities. The quota system has undoubtedly helped improve the representation of the SC/ST groups. Presently, the Scheduled groups in the state have fourteen and two reserved seats in the 140-member Kerala Assembly, placing them slightly above their population share. The scheduled community members have won general seats only once in the period. The mainstream parties rarely field scheduled community candidates from general seats.

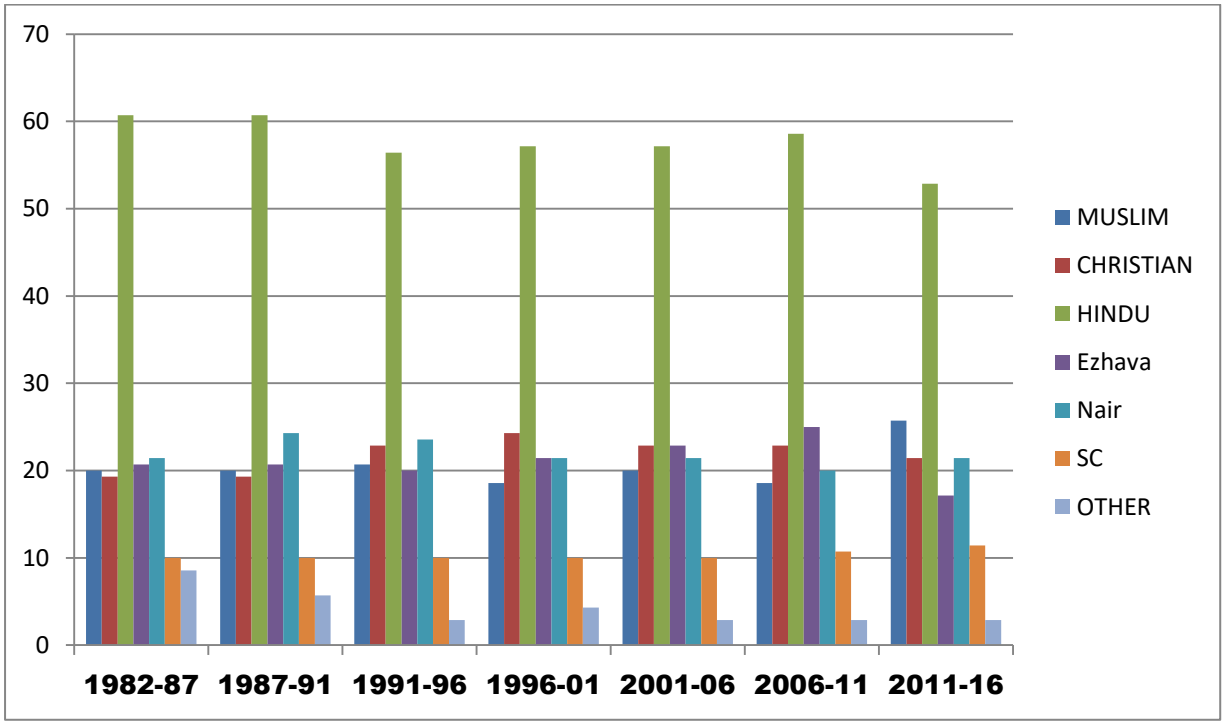
Kerala bucks the national trend of minority underrepresentation, a perennial challenge to Indian democracy after independence, as Figure 3.2 demonstrates.[78] Scrapping the quota system for minorities post-independence has significantly impacted the representation of minorities, particularly Muslims, in the Indian parliament.[79] The two religious minorities in Kerala, the Muslims, and Christians, have received representation in the house at near equivalence to their population. Although Muslim representation in the house is slightly short of their population share, the number of Muslim MLAs has increased since independence

[77] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, (Bombay: Popular Prakasham, 1989),
[78] Peter Ronald DeSouza et al., *Democratic Accommodations: Minorities in Contemporary India*, (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

[79] Omar Khalidi, Muslims in Indian Political Process: Group Goals and Alternative Strategies, *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 1–2 (1993): 43–54.
For details on the Muslim underrepresentation in India, see Iqbal Ahmad Ansari, *Political Representation of Muslims in India, 1952-2004*, (New Delhi: Manak Publications, 2006).

(Figure 3.3). The highest difference from proportionality was 5.4 percentage points in the 2006-11 Assembly. Thirty-six Muslim members in the house in the 2011-16 assembly, almost in proportion to their population, is an indication of the community's convergence with other religious groups. As stated previously, the population of Muslims has been increasing since independence, and the increase in their representation is not at the same pace as the increase in their population. The advantage of the Christian community as a decisive force in colonial Travancore politics has certainly been reflected in their numbers in the Kerala assembly. Despite being a minority group, the Christians could manage their political domination after independence. The Christian groups' ability to maintain their status quo in the house even as their population declined during the period helped them gain representation slightly above the population share. Except for a negative difference of 0.75 percentages points from proportionality in the 1982-87 assembly, the Christians endowed up to five per cent representations above their population. Remarkably, Kerala's political system refutes the theory that the first past the post (FPTP) electoral system results in a majority sweep. Kerala beats the trends in other Indian states where the religious majority Hindus dominate the representative bodies. The Hindus, who have around fifty-seven per cent of Kerala's population, had 567 MLAs out of 980, constituting fifty-eight per cent of the total representation. The Hindus in Kerala have gained representation narrowly above their population, except for the two terms, 1991-96 and 2011-16.

Figure 3 2: Share of Communities in the House (1982-2016)



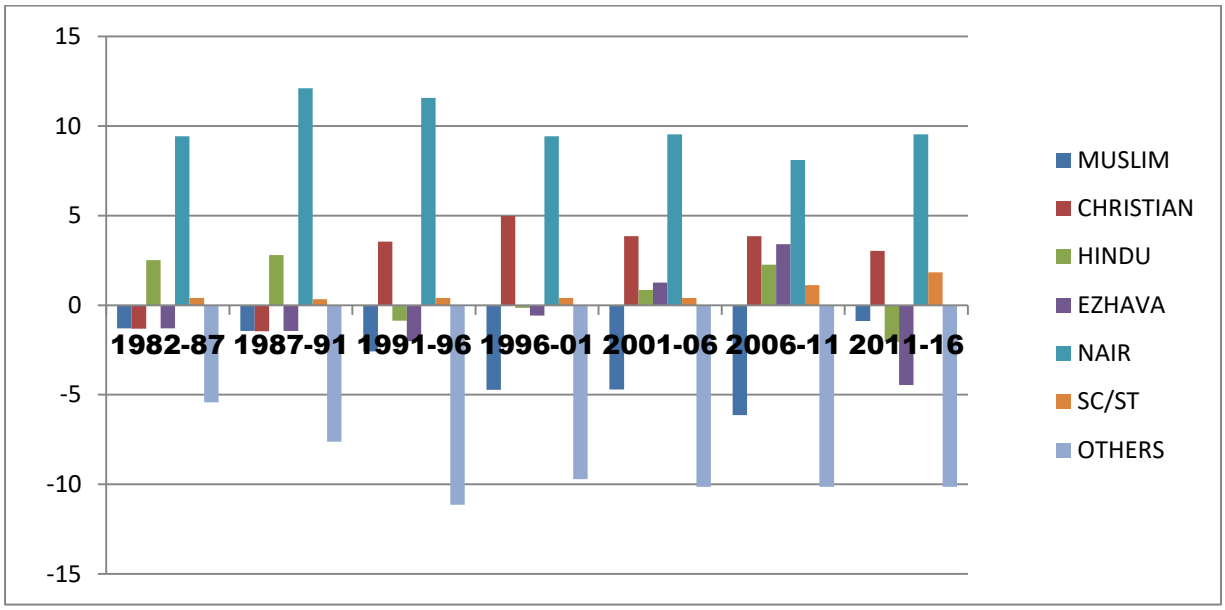
Source 3: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data

The data on the representation of caste groups provide a mixed picture. First, Kerala is a state where the Other Backward Class (OBC) communities have challenged the supremacy of the upper castes from the early years of independence.[80] In the absence of reservation benefits in the legislature, contra the scheduled category, some OBC groups have shown outstanding resistance to the upper caste domination in politics. Kerala has been responsive to the OBC communities' demands that the government in 1957 earmarked forty per cent of the seats in government offices for the OBC groups, thirty-seven years before the central government decided on the direction. The Ezhavas, the most significant Hindu backward caste in Kerala, have been influential in Kerala politics since Travancore palace politics. Like the Christian community, the Ezhava community garnered representation in near proportion to their population. Although the lower-caste upsurge has partially checked the traditional dominations in Kerala politics, the upper-caste Nairs continue to hold a proportionately

[80] G. Gopa Kumar, "Socio-Economic Background of Legislators in Kerala," in *Rise of the Plebeians? The Changing Face of Indian Legislative Assemblies*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot, Sanjay Kumar (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), 401.

higher number of seats in the house. The Nairs occupy one-fifth of the assembly seats, despite a smaller population share of twelve per cent. The share of Hindu castes, which are demographically smaller, has progressively declined (category others in figures), highlighting the dilemma of underrepresenting small players in power-sharing. The representation has seldom gone out of the clutches of the dominant communities. The overrepresentation of Hindu Nairs is at the cost of the marginalisation of smaller Hindu castes.

Figure 3 3: Difference from Proportionality



Source 4: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data

Group Autonomy

Power-sharing democracies entail the right of groups to decide on matters concerning their way of life and intra-community relationship that range from rules on inheritance to marriages. Some power-sharing societies consider the centrality of group autonomy by permitting communities to control all matters of cultural and educational activities which do not directly affect the public order. For all their apparent differences in applying the concept of autonomy, power-sharing literature agrees on providing a larger room for the cultural expressions of social groups, insulating them from state actions. Some multicultural societies support the cultural activities of communities with public financing. The measures for autonomy take different forms. A minority veto is a concept that authorises the group formally or informally to suspend any legislative or executive action that harms its interest. Segmental autonomy is a related concept that has an extended meaning than the minority veto

because it legitimises the allocation of a territorial or administrative space for groups with the power to decide on all matters within the purview.[81] In some cases, the state demarcates an autonomous geographical space for the community within the boundary of the polity.

Kerala's status as a constituent unit of the Indian Union, the provisions of the constitution, and the practices at the national level determine the majority of the formal rules related to group recognition and autonomy. At the all-India level, a slew of provisions formally allows group rights in the form of minority rights, reservations, and cultural autonomies.[82] A state unit under the Indian federal arrangement has myriad ways to mark a difference in the capacity as the formal organ with the power to handle significant subjects like the police, public order, and education. The provisions in the directive principle of state and policy and fundamental duties leave a larger space for the discretion of the state governments. The state's autonomy in applications has been reflected in the variations in the performance of states in providing autonomy to social groups.

The state governments in India have little role in determining the territorial autonomy of a region. The fifth and sixth schedules of the Indian constitution, which provide for a limited administrative autonomy to the tribal groups, do not cover any parts of Kerala. The tribal population of Kerala is hardly two per cent, making it one of the states with a minuscule tribal population. The question of linguistic minorities seldom arises in Kerala because ninety-seven per cent of the people speak the state language, Malayalam. Kerala has adopted measures to protect the interest of linguistic minorities, like establishing schools with Tamil and Kannada mediums in border districts. Closely related to this was the government policy to upgrade Arabic as the second language in schools, a language widely used by Muslim minorities in the state. The state government's promotion of the Arabic language has helped many Muslims find government employment and career opportunities in gulf countries.

Kerala fits the power-sharing models in matters related to protecting the autonomy of social groups in education and recognising the role of parties catered to particular interests. First, community establishments have had a tremendous role in the illustrious educational

[81] Arend Lijphart, "Majority Rule versus Democracy in Deeply Divided Societies," *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 4, no. 2 (1977): 118-119.
[82] Adeney, and Swenden, "Power-Sharing in the World's Largest Democracy."

development of Kerala.[83] Education in Kerala has a different connotation: it is not just about individual emancipation but mainly about the community's pride. A significant intervention of community organisations in Kerala society since the colonial period has been the running of educational institutions pressuring the government authorities for grants and allowances. Parties in government did not dare to tamper the community domination in education, apprehensive of electoral backlash. The first communist government's (1957-59) move to introduce the Education Bill, which proposed to regulate the working of educational institutions, drew the ire of community leaders who mobilised the people to dethrone the government in 1959.[84] Governments in Kerala allocate a significant chunk of their budgets to the education sector, a considerable part going as grants to privately run colleges and schools run by community organisations like the NSS, SNDP, Samastha,[85] and Churches. A significant part of schools and colleges in Kerala are in the category of the aided sector,[86] an arrangement where the private managements facilitate infrastructure and run the entity with the government allotting grants paying salary to the staff. Managements affiliated with caste-religious organisations run 6937 schools out of 7140 aided schools and 196 colleges out of 204 aided colleges.[87] Beyond that, there are hundreds of self-finance colleges under community organisations with the approval and funding of the Kerala government.[88] Second, the unwritten rules of the two coalitions have followed strategies of accommodating smaller parties based on particular interests by leaving a larger space for them. The fronts have outsourced the competition to parties of particular demands in areas of their strongholds by

[83] E. T. Mathew, "Growth of Literacy in Kerala: State Intervention, Missionary Initiatives, and Social Movements," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 39 (1999): 2811–2820; Prerna Singh, "We-ness and Welfare: a Longitudinal Analysis of Social Development in Kerala, India," *World Development* 39, no. 2 (2011): 290; and PK Michael Tharakan, "Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development: Case of Nineteenth Century Travancore," *Economic and Political Weekly* 19, no. 46 (1984): 1959.

[84] Mathew Pulickaparampil, "Some Social Determinants of Political Preference in Kerala State, India," (MA Thesis, Loyola University, 1963), 23.

[85] Samastha is the largest Muslim community organisation in Kerala.

[86] K. K. George, *Higher Education in Kerala: How Inclusive is it to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes* (Education Exclusion and Economic Growth Working Paper Series No. 4), Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), 2011, 25.

[87] Jose Sebastian, *Under Representation of Muslims in Higher Education: How and Why the Kerala Story is Somewhat Different* (Research Paper), Thiruvananthapuram: Institute for Enterprise Culture & Entrepreneurship Development, 2019, 8.

[88] A Mathew, "Balancing Social and Regional Equity: Higher Education Policy Trajectory in Kerala," *Higher Education for the Future* 6, no. 2 (2019): 208.

allowing minority parties to control their pockets of concentration.[89] The minority parties have maintained their hold over many seats by being part of coalition politics.

Kerala governments have statutory and non-statutory boards, corporations, and committees designed to meet the particular demands of religious groups in matters related to organising pilgrimages, preserving community properties, and addressing social backwardness. The authorities care to keep the religious exclusiveness in appointments to these bodies and support their activities with budgetary allocations. Devaswom boards under the Government of Kerala Devaswom Department, the recruitment of which is done by the Devaswom Recruitment Board, oversee Hindu temples and their properties. Devaswom Board employs only Hindus in the temple administration, though the government has interfered in implementing reservation policies in the recruitment procedure. Similarly, Muslims have the Wakf Board to look after the *wakf* properties and Hajj Committee to deal with the Haj pilgrimage. For Christians, Kerala State Development Corporation for Christian Converts and the Recommended Communities (KSDC for CC & RC) was created to empower the converts from lower castes to Christianity by providing them with financial and other support. Governments generally respect the autonomy of communities in the working of these bodies.

A remarkable aspect of Kerala's approach to recognising social groups is the comprehensive reservation policy adopted at the early stage of independence extending the quota benefit to nearly seventy per cent of the population. Against the Congress Party's opposition to the OBC reservation in the early decades of independence, the backward caste politics in states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala used the options of federal structure to live debates on affirmative actions and power-sharing mechanisms.[90] The reservations policy adopted in Kerala in 1952 demarcated forty per cent of seats for backward groups, including ten per cent for the scheduled communities. After the reorganisation of the state in 1956, the Kerala government enhanced the quota for backward castes from thirty to forty, bringing the total reservation to fifty per cent. A notable step in the later phase was the allocation of sub-quotas for numerically more prominent backward castes, like twelve per

[89] K. K. Kailash, "Political Outsourcing as a Coalition Strategy in Kerala," *Accommodating Diversity: Ideas and Institutional Practices* ed. Gurpreet Mahajan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 182–205.
[90] Zoya Hasan, *Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities, and Affirmative Action*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86.

cent for the Muslims.[91] Kerala and a few other states implemented reservations for backward castes years before the central government initiated the OBC reservation.

The majoritarian tendency of state governments in India has been explicit in the application of cow slaughter ban and banning religious conversion. Governments formed by the Hindu nationalist BJP in many states eagerly banned cow slaughter and religious conversions.[92] The constitution of India included the cow slaughter ban, a sensitive issue in the subcontinent since the colonial period, in the Directive Principles of the State and Policy (DPSP), which is a list of directives for the state to follow in enacting and executing laws. Seventeen out of twenty-eight Indian states have banned cow slaughter following article 48, which permits the state to prohibit the slaughter of cows.[93] Those laws directly contravene the rights of citizens for food choices and harm some religious practices of minority communities. Second, the ban on religious conversion has resulted from Hindu rights propaganda against the missionary works of religious minorities. Eight Indian states have enacted anti-conversion laws, criminalising the adoption of a new religion.[94] Kerala differed from other states' policy of in banning cow slaughter and enacting anti-conversion laws. Governments in Kerala have repeatedly taken stands against these trends, and ruling parties have criticised the policies of other state governments in cow-slaughter banning and anti-conversion laws.

Conclusion

The institutional structure of Indian democracy seldom displays features of power-sharing democracies. Independent India adopted the Westminster parliamentary model with a single-member simple plurality electoral system, which tends to promote the domination of majority groups. The framers of the Indian constitution gave weightage to national unity and

[91] V. Shefeeque, "Politics of Inclusion: Debates on Muslim OBC Reservation," *IASSI-Quarterly* 31, no. 3&4 (2012): 160.

[92] Amrita Basu, "The Changing Fortunes of the Bharatiya Janata Party," in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*, ed. Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh (New York: Routledge, 2013), 86.

[93] Ashutosh Tripathi, "States Where Cow Slaughter is Banned So Far, and States Where it isn't," *News 18*, May 26, 2017, https://www.news18.com/news/india/states-where-cow-slaughter-is-banned-so-far-and-states-where-it-isnt-1413425.html.

[94] South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, "Anti-Conversion Laws: Challenges to Secularism and Fundamental Rights," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 2 (2008), 63; Anisha Mathur, "Anti-Conversion Laws in India: How States Deal with Religious Conversion," *India Today*, December 23, 2020, https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/anti-conversion-laws-in-india-states-religious-conversion-1752402-2020-12-23.

integration over recognition of ethnic or religious groups. The accommodative political culture nurtured in the anti-colonial movement and cherished by the nationalist leadership in post-independent India gradually dwindled with the political upsurge of the Hindu right wing. Against this backdrop at the national level, this chapter checks whether a power-sharing mechanism exists at the sub-national level in Kerala, which has informed many scholarships on democratic deepening and political accommodation amid deep political and social fragmentations. Kerala's unique approach to diversity has been evident in three significant ways: the inclusiveness of political institutions in accommodating various communities, a collaboration between people of different social origins for the public cause, and the ability of the state machinery to contain a large-scale communal outbreak. Scholarships on Kerala politics have tried to explain the unique political trajectory of the state with the help of power-sharing literature but have yet to provide a comprehensive and detailed analysis. This chapter analysed the development of Kerala politics to identify the features of power-sharing and political accommodation, examining the development of politics and checking the social composition of the cabinet and legislative assembly. In doing so, this chapter forwards three significant findings.

First, social coalitions of caste/religious communities have been integral to the socio-political processes of Kerala since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The community organisations born in the early twentieth century as the platforms for reforming social and political systems worked out a strategy of collaboration and cooperation between different segments to mobilise a larger section of people for their causes. The social order of Travancore, with the majority of people outside the power structure, entailed the formation of a social coalition between different caste/religious groups against the ruling class, popularising themes like equality between communities and proportional representation. Values of power-sharing democracies like elite cartels forming social alliances, community autonomy, and proportionality resonated in the twentieth-century social movements of Travancore. The cooperation between community establishments was issue-based, and the structure of alignments changed from issue to issue. The absence of party politics in the princely state of Travancore provided extensive possibilities for community organisations that took over the role of political parties as the formal articulators of people's demands. The Travancore State Congress, the progenitor of the Indian National Congress (INC) in Kerala, evolved out of community-led political processes. The legacy of colonial Travancore politics

in independent Kerala is the existence of multi-community coalitions with the absence of communal violence.

Second, this study elaborates on the observation made by some scholars on the existence of power-sharing democracy in Kerala in partial form. It argues that the approach of Kerala politics to social diversity has exhibited some crucial features of power-sharing to get eligible for a full-fledged power-sharing democracy. The examination of the social profile of cabinets and assemblies formed between 1982 and 2016 reiterates the observations made by scholars that Kerala politics is a game between the four significant communities, the Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians, and Muslims. The quantitative analysis of this study highlights remarkable evidence of power-sharing in Kerala: a near-proportional distribution of offices and representative bodies between the four significant communities, which command roughly eighty per cent of the population. The fifth group, the SC/ST The fifth group, the SC/ST communities, has undoubtedly benefited from the quota system in the legislature and bagged a minimum of one minister in each ministry after the state formation, albeit proportionately below their population share. The exception to the proportionality rules is the persistence of Nair domination in politics with their ability to wield a proportionately higher share in the cabinet and assembly. The underrepresentation of demographically smaller Hindu caste groups in Kerala underlines the classical dilemma of power-sharing democracies, exclusion amid inclusion. Against the promotion of an integrationist approach to diversity by the Indian constitution, Kerala's political practices have cultivated a model of political accommodation recognising particular demands of social groups. The autonomy principle of Kerala society has been more evident in the government policies that left a larger space for the community organisations to run educational institutions independently from the state intervention. Governments proactively encouraged educational endeavour through community management providing financial and policy support. Community organisations control a significant number of schools and colleges in Kerala. An incredible step of Kerala to political accommodation is the prompt decision of the state authorities in the 1950s to extend reservation benefits to backward castes, which included Muslims and lower-caste Christians. It reflects the recognition of particular demands by social groups by the government.

The power-sharing mechanism has undoubtedly worked in Kerala. It helped ameliorate inter-ethnic violence and contain social disintegration. Kerala's political system could ensure the participation of all relevant groups in power and prevent mass-scale ethnic violence, which crippled other parts of India. Although the power distribution was not

symmetrical between different social groups, there has scarcely been a visible feeling of any community as marginalised. The two notable deficiencies of Kerala's power-sharing are the underrepresentation of numerically smaller groups and the failure to address the grievances of traditionally marginalised communities.

Chapter IV

Left Democratic Front: Managing Radical Politics and Community Equations

This chapter traces the evolution of the left from an influential group of few revolutionaries within the Congress Party to a leading role in a ruling front consisting of around a dozen parties. It mainly deals with how the radical party negotiated with the state's social structure, which was reactionary, by formulating a political front that consisted of not only the left-centric outfits but also confessional parties. Specifically, it enquires to which all sections of the society the left politics attracted and then how the left expanded the base to new segments of the people negotiating class ideology with practical politics of caste and religion. The left's expansion strategy towards new segments through preaching the idea and welding friendship with other parties covers how the left front became an overarching front consisting of people from all sections of society. In doing so, the study analyses the social profile of the left representatives to see how inclusive they are. In what follows, the chapter demonstrates that the left politics in the state has combined radical class politics with strategic, practical politics to deal with communities and social identities.

The focus of this chapter is on how the parliamentary left in Kerala coalesced with other democratic forces to capture and sustain power in the state in a democratic environment, inventing a novel approach by manufacturing an all-encompassing coalition that included different social groups. In order to put a rationale for the current exercise, it is highly imperative to link the political experiments of the left in the state with the larger literature on political accommodation and power-sharing in divided societies. The literature on power-sharing democracy outlines a fundamental character of divided societies: the social cleavage structure dictates the party system, often leading to irreconcilable political ruptures preventing political stability.[1] Notwithstanding the social impediments to democratic systems, there are instances of

[1] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (London: University of California Press, 1985); Arend Lijphart, "Majority Rule Versus Democracy in Deeply Divided Societies," *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 4, no. 2 (1977): 113-126; and Benjamin Reilly, "Centripetalism," in *Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff (London: Routledge, 2011).

divided societies which developed popular governments run with the support of significant sections. Power-sharing theories originated from those societies and later became prescriptions for places where the divisions persisted. Notably, few communist countries or parties have drawn scholarly attention for their unique way of dealing with power-sharing questions.[2] The descriptions below consist of analyses from how the left broadened the social base for winning elections to strategies the ideologically driven party used to negotiate with established communities and their representations.

In 1957, Kerala became the second democratic polity on the earth to elect a Communist Party to power after the San Marino Island of Italy; unlike other Indian states, West Bengal[3] and Tripura,[4] the power sustained here for an extended time. The extraordinary electoral success of the Communist Party and the popularity of communism attracted international scholars to study Kerala, primarily to understand the 'peaceful transition to communism' in an Indian state. They widely discussed the topics that include, but are not limited to, the influence of social reform movements, factionalism in the Congress Party and its decline, anti-caste and agrarian movements that provided a base for communism, the influence of communalism in state politics, and the electoral success of the communism.[5]

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[2] Matthijs Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace in Divided Societies: Exploring Consociational Parties*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Luigi Graziano, "The Historic Compromise and Consociational Democracy: Toward a New Democracy?," *International Political Science Review* 1, no. 3 (1980): 345-368.

For a Marxist critic of consociationalism, see Ronald A Kieve, "Pillars of Sand: a Marxist Critique of Consociational Democracy in the Netherlands," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 3 (1981): 313-337.

[3] Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya, "Left in the Lurch: the Demise of the World's Longest Elected Regime?," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 3 (2010): 51-59.

[4] V. Bijukumar, "Nuances of the Left Debacle in Tripura," *Economic and Political Weekly* 54, no. 22 (2019).

[5] Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Communism in India: Events, Processes and Ideologies*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Victor M. Fic, *Kerala, Yenan of India: Rise of Communist Power, 1937-1969*, (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1970); Richard W. Franke, and Barbara H. Chasin, *Kerala: Radical Reform as Development in an Indian State*, (California: The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994); Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being: How Kerala Became 'a Model,'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992); Robert L Hardgrave Jr, "Caste and the Kerala Elections," *Economic Weekly* no. 15 (1965): 669-672; Patrick Heller, "Degrees of Democracy: Some Comparative Lessons from India," *World Politics* 52, no. 4 (2000): 484-519; Thomas Johnson Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Mathew Pulickaparampil, "Some Social Determinants of Political Preference in Kerala State, India," (MA Thesis, Loyola University, 1963); Richard Sandbrook et al., *Social Democracy in the Global Periphery: Origins, Challenges, Prospects*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Prerna

The early literature on the rise of the Communist Party in Kerala politics gave two contradictory perspectives. First, a group of literature emphasised how a vibrant communist movement based in the lower class and agrarian struggles dismissed the moribund Congress Party in the very first election in Kerala, unimaginable in any state in India then. In subsequent years, a line of scholarships thronged up to support the argument highlighting how the left movement encouraged participatory democracy, women empowerment, and literacy movement.[6] The second strand of scholarship de-emphasised the class interpretation of the rise of communism in Kerala to highlight the congruence of caste/community sentiments and the party politics in the state.[7] The American political scientist Victor M. Fic, who is critical of the left in Kerala, ferociously termed the rise of communism in Kerala as the outcome of manipulation done by the party in the community arithmetic of the state.[8] Notably, these stands did not wholly eclipse the other: they recognise the other side of the argument even as they strenuously establish their point. For instance, TJ Nossitter, who correlated the rise of communism in Kerala with class politics, accepted the other side, the influence of the caste and community.[9] A perplexing issue for a student of Kerala politics is that class here is often manifested in the caste form, and there is much convergence between the caste and class hierarchies. It is to explicate this contradiction that this work tries.

Singh, "We-ness and Welfare: a Longitudinal Analysis of Social Development in Kerala, India," *World Development* 39, no. 2 (2011): 282-293; Michelle Williams, *The Roots of Participatory Democracy: Democratic Communists in South Africa and Kerala, India*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[6] John Harriss, and Olle Törnquist, *Comparative Notes on Indian Experiences of Social Democracy: Kerala and West Bengal* (Vol. 29), (Centre for Socio-Economic & Environmental Studies, 2015); Patrick Heller and T. M. Thomas Isaac, "The Politics and Institutional Design of Participatory Democracy: Lessons from Kerala, India," in *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London: Verso, 2005), 405-443; and P. K. Michael Tharakan, "Socio-Religious Reform Movements, the Process of Democratization and Human Development: The Case of Kerala, South-West India," in *Democratization in the Third World: Concrete Cases in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*, ed. Lars Rudebeck et al., (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 144-172.

[7] Hardgrave, "Caste and the Kerala Elections"; Victor M. Fic, *Kerala: Yenan of India* (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications Limited, 1970); and G. Gopa Kumar, *Regional Political Parties and State Politics* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1986).

[8] Fic, *Kerala, Yenan of India*, 5-7.

[9] For a similar approach, Kathleen Gough, "Village Politics in Kerala-II," *The Economic Weekly* 17, no. 9 (1965): 413-420.

The Social Base of the Left

The growth of the Communist Party from a trifling caucus of radicals within the nationalist movement to the leadership role of the left coalition governments in post-independent Kerala underscores the evolution of left politics in the state self-explanatory of class and community aspects of the left. A path-breaking development in Kerala's left history was the formation of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) close to 1980, a pre-electoral alliance of the left and democratic parties under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM or CPIM) and Communist Party of India (CPI), who reconciled after their decade-old political rivalry. The front ruled the state for fourteen years in a span period between 1982 and 2016 and played the role of active opposition as a shadow cabinet when not in power. The two communist parties were central to the running of the LDF. In contrast, other parties, including socialist offshoots, remained at the edge, only to switch between the two political alliances according to the political opportunity structure so commanded. Apart from the two communist parties, no political party has been uninterruptedly glued with the LDF since 1980. Even as the two communist parties parted to choose divergent political paths in 1964, partly due to ideological reasons and majorly for practical purposes, their ideological manoeuvring contributed to the development of left rationality to a political alliance from the 1980s when both of them decided to resume their bonhomie. Thus, this part relooks to the development of the Communist Party from the vantage point of forming the social base and negotiating with socio-ethnic identities to track the development of the left alliance.

The trajectory of the Kerala branch of the Communist Party in the colonial period was unique within the Indian left because its leadership nurtured a systemic plan to broaden the party's social base using the possible means. Realising the administrative hostility to a communist bloc in British India, the left radicals in the state formed part of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), the official unit of socialist reformers within the Indian National Congress (INC or Congress). When five radical left leaders met in 1937 at Calicut to form the Communist Party, they decided to keep their ideological identity secret to win a base inside the socialist group of the Congress Party.[10] Whereas the CSP and CPI propounded similar ideological positions

[10] K. Damodaran, "Memoir of an Indian Communist," interview with Tariq Ali, *New Left Review*, (1977).

on feudalism and capitalism, the former had the advantage of legality from the British Government as an internal organisation of the Congress Party, which has been a legal organisation in British India except for a few times. While the communist organisations outside the mainstream political party faced repression for their militant stands, the CSP had working immunity of associating with the Congress Party, with which the British Government negotiated constitutional reforms.[11] Finally, in 1939, a CSP meeting held at Malabar resolved to convert it into a unit of the Communist Party of India (CPI) as a visible organisation.[12] The strategy helped the Kerala unit of the Communist Party gain a strong base of trade unions, agrarians, and social reformers.

The mobilisations of the Communist Party since the 1930s roughly comprise three categories of activities. First, it organised the subaltern classes through trade unions and peasant movements against capitalists and landlords who had closer affinities with the ruling dispensations.[13] To a great extent, class mobilisation is a helping factor in arresting the social polarisation intensified by the activities of ethnic organisations that emphasise caste/religious exclusivity.[14] Second, the CSP leaders were proactively involved in general political movements like anti-colonial struggles and the united Kerala movement, which helped them build a large mass base for the party.[15] Under the communist-CSP leadership, social equality became an integral goal of anti-colonial movements in Kerala, unlike in other places in India. Third, propelling the reformist legacy of the social reform movements of the first half of the twentieth century, the communist leaders adopted a radical approach to social

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[11] Manali Desai, *State Formation and Radical Democracy in India*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 80.

[12] TM Thomas Isaac, "The National Movement and the Communist Party in Kerala," *Social Scientist* 14, no. 8/9 (1986): 60.

At the national level, the CSP expelled communists, most of whom joined the CPI (Valerian Rodrigues, "The Communist Parties in India," in *India's Political Parties,* ed. Peter Ronald deSouza and E. Sridharan (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2006), 207.

[13] For details on the class mobilisations of the Communist Party in Kerala, see Robin Jeffrey, "India's Working Class Revolt: Punnapra-Vayalar and the Communist "Conspiracy" of 1946," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 18, no. 2 (1981): 97-122; Michelle William, *The Roots of Participatory Democracy Democratic Communists in South Africa and Kerala, India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008), 35-62; K.K.N. Kurup, "Peasantry and the Anti-Imperialist Struggles in Kerala," *Social Scientist,* 16, no. 9 (1988): 35-45.

[14] Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociational Democracy," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2000): 509.

[15] Isaac, "The National Movement."

questions by publicly renouncing the obscurantist cultural practices and nourishing the anti-caste spirit in political activities.[16] Anti-caste morale was instrumental in the class struggle that the upper caste-dominated CSP leadership required to eradicate the caste barriers to communicate with their fellow lower caste followers.[17] When the social reform movements took a conservative turn after a saturation point, the Communist Party undertook the task of reform as part of the party program.

The social base of communism in Kerala owes much to its social origin. The social reform movements of the twentieth century provided fertile ground for radical reformers to organise the Communist Party around workers, peasants, and students into one coherent movement.[18] The left parties carried forward the progressive elements of reform movements which had degenerated into conservative communal brigades by the last parts of colonial Kerala.[19] The radical current was uneven among different religious groups: while the reform movements in Hindu caste groups challenged the social institutions of caste and religion, those trends among Muslims and Christians were relatively weak.[20] Incidentally, the Hindu caste organisations which served exclusively for their fellow brethren were the working platforms of the early communist leaders, including E. M. S. Namboodiripad, M. N. Govindan Nair, and K. R. Gouri.[21] As the radical bands of caste reform movements formed the crux of post-independent progressive politics, the Communist Party unsurprisingly became a Hindu-dominated political party with minimal presence of people from religious minorities. The Hindus constitute around ninety per cent of the party membership and

[16] Jaffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being*, 126-127.

The caste improvement associations primarily targeted the social base of the caste system and not the economic base (Heller, "Degrees of Democracy," 505).

[17] Desai, *State Formation and Radical Democracy*, 84.

[18] Harriss, and Törnquist, *Comparative Notes on Indian Experiences*, 10-12.

[19] TM Thomas Isaac, and S. Mohana Kumar, "Kerala Elections, 1991: Lessons and Non-Lessons," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 47 (1991): 2693.

[20] Isaac and Kumar, "Kerala Elections, 1991," 2695.

[21] Harriss, and Törnquist, *Comparative Notes on Indian Experiences*, 10.

Most of the communist leaders, who participated in this project's fieldwork interview, connected their parents' initial social involvement with community organisations. Binoy Viswam, the current Rajya Sabha MP and former CPI minister say that his father, a former communist MLA, joined SNDP during its initial stages (Binoy Viswam, "Binoy Viswam 1: Charithram Enniloode" (History through me), filmed June 07, 2019, Safari TV, 22.44, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Fcf7O6Yu2U). The same is true of almost all people the author has interviewed.

office bearers of different wings affiliated to it, even as minorities have a population share of around forty-five per cent of the state population.[22]

The survey of the social profile of the Communist Party in the early phases underlines two significant points: the domination of the Hindus in the party rank and outnumbering of upper castes in the party leadership. One explanation for the over-representation of Hindus in the party is the catastrophic impact of the early twentieth-century reform movements on the social institutions of the Hindu caste and religion that persuaded the upper caste and the lower caste people to embrace a radical idea like Marxism for two different reasons: the destruction of matrilineal system among upper castes and de-legitimisation of caste system among lower castes.[23] In Malabar, centuries-old caste ritualistic associations controlled by the dominant families helped develop political organisations in the region. When the Communist Party was formed, most of its members joined it.[24] The upper-caste Hindus who had the social and economic privileges to acquire modern education had the upper hand over the lower-caste comrades in providing leadership to the vanguard party, which otherwise stood for the abolition of capital and landlordism. The upper caste CSP leaders used their privileged caste/class positions to fight against the institutions of caste/class structure.[25] In addition, a slew of lower classes in higher castes was glued to the Marxist ideology as their interests were incongruent with the party program.

The lower castes- the Ezhavas and Scheduled Castes (SC)- constituted the core social base of the Communist Party since the early phases, ostensibly because this segment accounted for the significant portion of the working class in the state, placed at the receiving end of the caste and class hierarchy. The social reform organisations, particularly in lower castes, created two diametrically opposite traditions: a stream that radically interpreted the reformist values of Sree Narayana Guru and others to connect the anti-caste movement with the more extensive political mobilisation; and the other stream subscribing to a conservative interpretation to end

[22] Praful Bidwai, *The Phoenix Moment: Challenges Confronting the Indian Left*, (Noida: Harper Collins, 2015), 254.

[23] Robin Jeffrey, "Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth of the Communist Party in Kerala, 1930–1940," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978): 77-98.

[24] Kurup, "Peasantry and the Anti-Imperialist Struggles," 38.
[25] J. Devika, "Egalitarian Developmentalism, Communist Mobilisation, and the Question of Caste in Kerala State, India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (2010): 806.

up in community exclusivism.[26] Influenced by the radical stream, the Ezhava lower class, which constituted the best part of the working population, was actively involved in the anti-caste movements bridging the caste and class mobilisations.[27] Robin Jaffrey quotes the slogans of a strike in Alleppy in 1933- "Destroy the Nayar rule" and "Destroy capitalism," suggesting the complex understanding of the people about the struggle against caste and class.[28] Unlike the Communist Party branches in the rest of India, the Kerala unit vigorously mobilised the people against untouchability and caste discrimination by leading numerous campaigns and strikes in various parts of the state. Consequently, since the Communist Party contested elections, the lower caste Ezhavas and SC communities have been the party's core vote base.

The Communist Party's failure to make significant inroads among Muslims and Christians is evident. The post-poll sample surveys held by the Centre for the Study of the Developing Societies (CSDS)-New Delhi in the 2011 and 2016 assembly elections illustrate that the left alliance commanded only twenty-five to thirty-five per cent votes of both religious minorities even after forming electoral alliances with parties based on minority groups.[29] E. M. S. Namboodiripad stated in the 1990s, "Looking back, I feel one of our key failures has been in understanding issues connected with religious minorities in Kerala… Muslims and Christians are under the predominant influence of religion-based leaders, that is, of the Muslim League and the Church."[30] One explanation is that the impacts of social reform movements were relatively weak among minorities compared with the Hindu castes, in which the social reform movements generated a radical generation that was eventually associated with left politics.[31] As communities outside the Hindu four-fold of Chaturvarnya, the religious minorities had different social environments that primarily demanded an

[26] T.M Thomas Isac and P.K Michael Tharakan, *Sree Narayana Movement in Travancore 1888-1939* (Working Paper No. 214), Trivandrum: Center for Developemnt Studies, 1986.
[27] TM Thomas Isaac, "From Caste Consciousness to Class Consciousness: Alleppey Coir Workers during Inter-War Period," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 4 (1985): PE5-PE18.

[28] Jaffrey, 'Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth," 84.

[29] In 2011, the LDF grabbed vote shares of thirty-one and twenty-seven per cents of Muslim and Christian votes, which rose to thirty-five per cent each in 2016, when there was a left wave (J. Prabhash and KM Sajad Ibrahim, "Changing Voting Behaviour in Kerala Elections," *Economic and Political Weekly* 52, no. 5 (2017): 64-68).

[30] E. M. S. Namboodiripad remarked in the Presidential Address, AKG Centre for Research and Studies, International Congress on Kerala Studies (quoted from J. Prabhash, "CPI (M)'s Muslim League Dilemma," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 34 (2000): 3011).
[31] Isaac and Kumar, "Kerala Elections, 1991," 2695.

external reform to rework the relationship with the state than internal reform. In addition, both Semitic religions had the advantage of a pre-existing network of faith-based networks that helped develop a modern community. Consequently, the traditional leadership had an unwavering role over the community organisations and political decisions of the minority religious groups, and the dominant minority establishments have been antagonistic to the communist parties.

On objective accounts, the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, predominantly agricultural labourers in the colonial period, should have chosen communism or left politics.[32] The ransacked Mappilas, who organised a systemic armed rebellion against the Hindu landlords and the British state, had every reason to be part of a working-class movement but became the social base of the Muslim League, which was a party led by feudal Muslims. The left parties had made strenuous efforts to draw Mappilas to their fold, including the endorsement of Mohammed Abdur Rahiman to the Madras legislative assembly in 1937 and recognition of Mappilas as a 'backward class' further giving ten per cent reservations in government jobs.[33] The communist governments in post-independence Kerala took policy measures to protect the interest of Muslim minorities, including creating a Muslim-majority district of Malappuram amid protests from the right-wing Hindus; and establishing the Calicut University in the Malabar region. Similarly, the Communist Party supported the cause of Christian establishments on various occasions, like support to the 1930s 'abstention movement' that sought the proportional distribution of government offices; and the cause of Christian churches against Travancore Dewan's move to take over the schools.[34] The party extended support to anti-eviction movements of the Christian community against the governmental decision to evict migrant farmers in hill areas.[35] However, both minority religious groups provided flesh and blood to the United Democratic Front (UDF) against the Communist Party.

In the assembly elections of 1957 and 1960, in which the CPI contested without allying with any parties, the following patterns emerged: the party performed

[32] Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being,* 112.
[33] Jaffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being,* 112-16.
[34] Louise Ouwekerk, "No Elephants for the Maharaja: Social and Political Change in Travancore 1921-1947," ed. Dick Kooiman (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994), 233.

[35] J. Devika, and V. J. Varghese, "To Survive or To Flourish? Minority Rights and Syrian Christian Community Assertions in Twentieth-Century Travancore/Kerala', *History and Sociology of South Asia* 5, no. 2, (2011): 123.

well in Hindu majority districts; it did poorly in districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode, where the religious minorities have decisive influence; and the party got better results in places where the SC and the lower caste Ezhavas had a high presence in contrast with places of the upper caste Nair domination, where the Congress Party made prominently.[36] However, it does not lead us to conclude that there was a clear caste/community polarisation in the voting pattern. Even though more than ninety per cent of successful candidates in the CPI panel were Hindus, the party's vote share between thirty-eight and forty indicates that a considerable portion of minorities may also have voted for the party. Ground observation made by a scholar in the 1960s reveals a similar story: a section of propertyless Muslims and Christians has also joined the rank of the Communist Party, drifting away from the religious dictums.[37] Nevertheless, the Muslim and Christian psyche has been against the left politics throwing their weight behind the Congress-led alliances.

The post-1980 elections, when the communist parties fought the race in collaboration with numerous political parties, including the confessional parties based on minority groups, followed a trend similar to the forgone one. The social base of the front remained relatively the same from the early times, albeit it has made some inroads into communities that were not traditionally its support base. For instance, a post-poll sample survey held in Kerala after the 2011 assembly election, in which the LDF narrowly lost to the UDF, shows the following patterns: the lower castes, the Ezhavas, and the Hindu Other Backward Castes (OBC) constitute more than fifty per cent of the total votes polled to the LDF; Nair votes are almost equally distributed between both fronts, and more than sixty percentages of Muslims and Christians preferred the UDF over the LDF, clearly signalling the weakened position of the left among minorities.[38] However, the noteworthy point is that the recent electoral analyses shed light on the improved account of the left front among upper-caste Hindus and minorities, perhaps as a reflection of the electoral arrangement the party has made with minor political parties.

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[36] Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, 123-128.
The situation continues. The minority-dominated districts are still the UDF strongholds.
[37] Kathleen Gough, "Kerala Politics and the 1965 Elections," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1967): 55–88.

[38] Prabhash, and Ibrahim, "Changing Voting Behaviour," 64-68.

Expansion and Accommodation

The first two elections, held after the formation of united Kerala, highlighted the strength and the weakness of the Communist Party in electoral politics: in terms of strength, against all predictions, the party, with the support of a few independent candidates wrested power in 1957, marking it the first electoral setback to the grand old Congress Party in an assembly election in post-independent India; and on the weakness side, the subsequent election proved that own vote base of the party that constituted a percentage share between thirty-five and forty is not sufficient to grab majority seats to form the government, particularly after all non-communist parties and established interests wowed to dethrone the left. Two more political developments in the 1960s compounded the left vulnerability. First, the bitter enemy Congress Party, which had a credible record of keeping communal forces at bay, pacified the ideological position to make electoral understandings with two communal parties- the Muslim League and Kerala Congress. Second, the fissure in the Communist Party in 1964 over ideological questions exasperated the crisis by disintegrating the electoral base of the left, necessitating an urgent political make-over. After the split, the significant Communist Party, CPM, commanded a vote percentage below thirty,[39] suggesting a desperate need for alignment with other parties to impact elections.

The first set of expansion strategies focused on uniting all forces based on the left-liberal ideology and popularising the theme of class struggle and agrarian questions to the masses to smoothen the transition to socialism. The early Marxist ideologues conceived the communist governments in Kerala and West Bengal as instruments of struggle in the hand of the people rather than a government with the power to transform the people's material life. The CPM Central Committee observed in 1967, “Our Party's participation in such Governments is one specific form of struggle to win more and more people, and more and more allies… in the struggle for the cause of People's Democracy and at a later stage for socialism.”[40] Here analysing

[39] In the 1960 assembly election, the united Communist Party (CPI) grabbed 39.14% of the vote share, while the CPM got only 19.87% of polled votes in 1965, after the split

[40] Quoted from Robert L. Hardgrave, “The Marxist Dilemma in Kerala: Administration and/or Struggle,” *Asian Survey* 10, no. 11 (1970): 995.

The party later shifted the position to place the left governments as instruments to meet the aspiration of the people (Part II of the Political-Organisational Report of the 19th Congress of The Cpi (M), On

two internal debates within the Communist Party on allying with others is highly relevant precisely because they help us understand the gravity of the issue to the cadre-based party ideologically and tactically when constructing political friendships with other parties. These debates, incidentally, escalated to make deep ruptures within the party, causing two severe splits. First, in 1964, the party leadership polarised on a tactical line in parliamentary politics visa-a-vies the India bourgeois party-Congress, tearing the party into two camps: the official line argued for having an electoral understanding with the progressive elements of the bourgeois party against the reactionaries; while the rebel camp which constituted the majority of the party members voiced for aligning with smaller parties against the Congress. The debate resulted in the formation of the CPM as a rebel party from the CPI, taking away the majority of the party support base in party strongholds. Interestingly, the poor peasantry and agricultural labours went with the CPM while the trade union and intellectual class supported the CPI.[41]

The second primary debate on alliance formation happened in the 1980s when an influential group within the party introduced an 'alternative political line' proposing to ally with the Muslim League and Kerala Congress, two parties catering to Muslims and Christians exclusively, to defeat the Congress. M. V. Raghavan explains: "The context of the alternative political line is this: we said that the Muslim League and Kerala Congress parties need not be stamped as communal and isolated like the BJP. They are parties trying for minority rights. Therefore, they need not be isolated. We can collaborate with them to strengthen the alliance."[42] Eminent party leaders of the time, including Puthalath Narayan, Shivadasa Menon, Dakshinamoorty, Chakrapani, Vaikom Viswan, Moosankutty, and P. V. Kunhikannan, signed the document along with M. V. Raghavan, who crafted and maneuvered the idea. However, the central committee rejected the proposal leading to a split in the party again on an ideological ground to create the Communist Marxist Party (CMP), a party that later became part of the UDF.

Left-led Governments: The Experience and their Role in the Present Situation, *The Marxist*, XXIV(2), April-June 2008).

[41] Rodrigues, "The Communist Parties in India," 214.
[42] M. V. Raghavan, "Interviewing M V Raghavan: On Record by T N Gopakumar Part 1," filmed Nov 9, 2014, Asianet News, 23.04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjWEtuer3X4.

Forming the LDF close to 1980 was a pivotal step in uniting the left-leaning parties under a common political platform based on a minimum program. In 1979, the iconic communist leaders from both communist parties, the CPM and CPI, crafted a formula of reconciliation to work together against the Congress Party setting aside their years-old bitter enmity and open confrontation. They adopted a realistic political approach by uniting maximum parties with a minimum program to capture power. Matters related to admitting political parties with non-sectarian ideology only went in the direction of justifying the communist stand of accommodating maximum people and parties towards the movement for socialism. Political parties who trace their origin to the socialist block in the nationalist movement and later in the Congress Party were welcome to the left block, as they shared the common vision of establishing a socialist democracy through peaceful means. They include the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), the Congress Socialist (ICS), the Janata Dal, the Congress (Secular), and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Nonetheless, these parties never locked in the LDF but oscillated between the two alliances on political advantages.

The second expansion category was relatively tedious as it involved reaching out to sections beyond the left circle but qualifies 'democratic force' without open allegiance to anti-secular politics.[43] The left leadership gave broader meaning to the 'democratic' to include all those political parties willing to cooperate with the front on a minimum program following a basic set of disciplines. A comment by A. Vijayaraghavan, the former convenor of the LDF and a CPM Politburo member, is noteworthy,

> Communists intend to unite all forces except the extreme right. A society like ours, the uniqueness of which is those common factors controlling it, in communist language, is a bourgeois society. There the opponent will try to isolate communism. Rather than self-isolate, the left tries to prevent all forms of isolation. The left democratic front includes both the left and non-left democratic forces: a democratic aspect and a left aspect. That does not mean

[43] Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Political Resolution Adopted At the 17th Congress*, Coimbatore: 2002, https://www.CPM.org/documents/2002_17Cong_pol_resl.pdf, accessed on June 11, 2022.

> the left has no democratic value. Generally, the Left approach cooperates with all democratic forces outside the left circle against the right.[44]

The mood of the left since the 1960s has been that anyone is welcome to the front as long as agreeing to follow the basic secular principles and liberal politics. Parties of all hues, from left radicals to right communitarians, used the option to join the LDF under the pretext of joining the democratic coalition against the Congress-led 'evil alliance.' As centripetal scholars advocate, the optimal electoral strategy for parties under political uncertainties is to reach out to parties and sections of people beyond their base by moderating policies and ideologies.[45] There are, thus, two primary situational incentives for the Communist Party to weld solidarity beyond the traditional base: the ideology of class struggle and ambitions of winning power. After the formation of left alliances, particularly after 1982, one could see the moderation of left political appeals, which often drew flak as de-radicalisation of left politics.[46]

A strategic move of the left to broaden the party's base was reaching out to non-traditional supporters, which included engagement with issues pertinent to minority communities who were outside the broader left influence, which involved agrarian questions. For instance, the party interpreted the Mappila rebellion, a revolt of agrarian Muslims of Malabar against the Hindu landlords, as the Malabar rebellion and undertook campaigns to spread awareness about the same.[47] Although the rebellious Mappilas blended the agrarian question with the religious ideology, the Communist Party called it the rebellion of ransacked farmers against the exploitative duo landlord and the imperialist state.[48] Similarly, the party endorsed the community

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[44] A. Vijayaraghavan, "Nunapaksha Bheekarathaye Vimarshichukooda Ennundo…? A Vijayaraghavan," filmed February 26, 2021, Manorama News, 20.11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu9etDbF71U.

[45] Benjamin Reilly, "Centripetalism and Electoral Moderation in Established Democracies," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 24, no. 2 (2018): 201-221.

[46] C. A. Josukutty, "Nature and Dynamics of Religion-Oriented Politics in Kerala," in *Politics and Religion in India*, ed. Narender Kumar (New York: Routledge India, 2019), 129.

[47] For details on Mappila Rebellion, see Stephen Frederic Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: the Mappilas of Malabar, 1498-1922,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Roland E. Miller, "*Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*," (Bombay: Orient Logman, 1976); K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921,* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[48] Prakash Karat, "Mappila Peasant Revolts," *Social Scientist* 18, no. ½ (1990): 96-99.

assertion of the Syrian Christians in the anti-eviction struggle, a movement directed to claim the rights of migrant farmers over the illegally occupied lands of hilly areas, much of which belonged to the tribal land. The working spirit of the movement came from the Malanadu Karshaka Union, a non-political forum floated by eminent people in the Catholic Church, and later converted into a political party called the Karshaka Thozhilali Party (KTP) under the leadership of the firebrand Catholic priest Joseph Vadakkan, a person associated with the Liberation struggle.[49] The movement received massive support from the communist peasant organisations and famous left leaders like A. K. Gopalan. However, Vadakkan had to backtrack from the decision to align with the left after the Bishop ordered him to breach any relationship with communism.

The decision to extend tie-ups with the confessional parties based on minorities was strategically vital and ideologically more complex for communist parties.[50] Both the communist parties had a clear position concerning the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress, representing sectarian interests. All India Congress of the CPI held at Bombay in 1964 declared, "The Kerala Congress and the Muslim League… had always been very reactionary... That is why the Kerala state council of the party will have no truck with reactionary communal groups such as the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress."[51] The CPM's official voice repeatedly stated that these two parties represent particular interests and are thus bound to be communal.[52] From the practical point of view, electoral understanding with these political parties is the easy access to the untapped minority vote base, which constituted around forty-five per cent of the total votes. Thus the left pacified the stand on the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress later. See a statement by a CPM leader,

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[49] Devika and Varghese, "To Survive or To Flourish?," 123.

The party, however, did not attract much followership from the Christian community, and thus, it soon disappeared from Kerala politics.

[50] Confessional parties in Kerala were primarily from the two minority-religious groups. Although Nairs and Ezhavas, two Hindu castes, formed their parties in the 1970s, they did not survive long, and there was hardly a question of joining the LDF.

[51] Quoted from E. M. S. Namboodiripad, "*Selected Writings* (Vol. 2)," (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1985), 63.

[52] M. A. Baby, "Muslim League is Communal says M A Baby," filmed July 02, 2015, Nere Chovve, Manorama News, 23.56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnH-g7i6KhM; Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, "Speech on Motion of Thanks to Governor," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, April 1, 1987.

> Kerala Congress and League are community parties and not communal parties. In the Kerala Congress, the church has direct influence. The Muslim League follows secular policies in their general political activities but does not hesitate to use religious symbols for electoral purposes. We do not hesitate to ally with any of them if they are ready to change their approaches. We are not aligning with the Muslim League at this point because our country's unique political scenario is that aligning with a party with explicit reference to religion would be a weapon in the hands of the Hindu nationalists. We do not have any distance with the Kerala Congress and have aligned with them on many occasions.[53]

The relationship between the left front and the Muslim League has been ambiguous. There are two sides to the story: one, the ideologically driven Communist Party had limitations to comb friendship with an explicit communal party; and on the other side of the spectrum, the adversary politics of the state forced the party to elope with the League that command a solid support base among Muslims. In 1967, the CPM legitimised the political identity of the League, which was hitherto an untouchable communal to secular parties,[54] by allotting to it with ministerial berths in the Seven-Party Government.[55] The League exuberantly utilised the government offices to weigh its demands, like forming a Muslim majority district of Malappuram and establishing a university in Malabar, which helped it expand its clout over the Muslims beyond Malabar. The second hangout happened in 1980 when the left front blissfully welcomed the All India Muslim League (AIML), a party formed after splitting the Muslim League without fundamentally changing the ideology.[56] The bondage continued till 1985 when a severe ideological confrontation erupted between the communists and the AIML over the court rule in Shah Bano Case. After this

[53] Paloli Mohammed Kutty (former LDF convenor and a state minister), interviewed by the author, Mannarkad, April 02, 2022.

[54] As a party allegedly responsible for the partition and explicitly referencing a religious group, secular parties kept a distance from the League.

[55] Interestingly reverse legitimisation was identified during the field interview with some Muslim communists. Two communist leaders with Malabar Muslim backgrounds said that the alliance between the League and the party legitimised their association with the party. There was an acceptance of communists in families and villages after the 1967 government (A. T. Abdullakoya, interviewed by the author, Kozhikode, April 14, 2022; and V. K. C. Mammed Koya, interviewed by the author, Nallalam, April 14, 2022).

[56] E. T. Mohammed Basheer, a former League minister and a mastermind behind the AIML, said to the author that there was no specific condition from the LDF on joining the front. He felt the experience on both fronts was similar (E. T. Mohammed Basheer, interviewed by the author, New Delhi, December 29, 2022).

repercussion, the CPM proclaimed that there would be no more stop-over with communal outfits and that communalism of all hues is dangerous.

1995 further exposed the ideological imbroglio of the Communist Party when it chose to weld an off-the-front relationship with the Indian National League (INL), a breakaway faction of the League under the leadership by the former League national president Ebrahim Suleman Sait. Ironically, the INL flunked out of the League over the latter's moderate political response to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Uttar Pradesh and the continuation of its relationship with the Congress Party, which arguably abdicated the responsibility to protect the Masjid.[57] In 2000 prior to the poll negotiations of the assembly election, the party leadership further hinted at the willingness to form an electoral tie-up with the League under the smock screen of preventing potential Congress-BJP amity.[58] However, the proposal did not materialise as the League stuck with the UDF camp, and an influential section of the Communist Party vociferously opposed the move.

The association between the left and the Kerala Congress (KC) has been uncut, as one or the other form of its splinters has been shouldering the left in all elections since 1982 except in the 1987 assembly election. The Kerala Congress's exclusive access to religious heads of the Syrian Catholics and the rich Christian peasantries of central Kerala fetched a modicum of votes to the left in areas where it is traditionally weak. The left dilemma is exposed: when the party ideologues repeatedly stated the party view on the Kerala Congress as catering exclusively to the Christians, the electoral reality forced the party to ally with it.

The alliance formation of the left is an epitome of what Horowitz called the 'vote-pooling': a mechanism by which the power-seeking political elites enhance their probability of success by clustering votes across party/community lines by making adequate changes in their positions on policy issues.[59] The vote-pooling, an integral component of centripetalism prescribed by scholars to defuse the influence of ethnicity in politics, preconditions the inter-community cooperation and ideological

[57] Paloli Mohammed Kutty, the former LDF convenor, says that Sait met CPM national secretary Harkishan Singh Surjith and E. M. S. Namboodiripad before forming the INL. The duo agreed with his demand to admit the new party to the LDF. It is said that Surjeet gave the name INL (Kutty, interview).
[58] Prabhash, "CPI (M)'s Muslim League Dilemma," 3-25.
[59] Donald L. Horowitz, "Incentives and Behaviour in the Ethnic Politics of Sri Lanka and Malaysia," *Third World Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1989): 21.

moderation. The collaboration of the class-driven Communist Party and the communitarian confessional parties on a minimum program unpretentiously demands both the parties to glue to the centre of the table. The policy direction of the left governments since the 1980s marked a rupture from the early left governments: the contentious class issues championed by the left parties like land reform and the abolition of landlordism have been institutionalised,[60] whereas the left policies do not move against the interest of private managements in educations or the vested community interest.[61] On the other end, the communal parties also pacified their appeals and became open to alliances with any parties.

Dealing with Communities

The two significant schools of power-sharing consider the durability of the influence of ethnicity over politics as given and frame their theories of democracy around that realisation. Although it appears that the replacement of segmental loyalties with an overarching national identity is a permanent solution to the problems of divided societies, any effort to eradicate the primordial loyalties is unlikely to succeed and may lead to counterproductive results.[62] It is naïve to expect the dissipation of ethnic mobilisations in politics once they emerge. The political theories on democracy in divided societies followed this realism on the existence of primordial identities and their role over the people who elect the government. The left parties in Kerala were not different. They take a practical approach to dealing with communities as a reality in society, despite professing an ideological commitment to building up a classless society where there is no division of class and community.

The Communist Party reluctantly negotiated with caste/community groups as a necessary evil and considered their components of the pre-communism stage, which would disappear once true communism was realised.[63] The party document says, "In order to do away with all disabilities and to achieve relentless progress and growth,

[60] Heller, "Degrees of Democracy," 500.
[61] Balu Sunilraj and Oliver Heath, "The Historical Legacy of Party System Stability in Kerala," *Studies in Indian Politics* 5, no. 2 (2017): 3.

[62] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, (Bombay: Popular Prakasham, 1989).

[63] Conversations with the leaders show the party's apologetic approach to community groups. Party leaders' responses to the questions about the party's relationship with caste organisations underline a realisation that if they do not care about it, the party cannot survive.

the present socio-economic system has to be smashed and a classless society has to be established."[64] For the Communist Party, the continuing strength of community organisations and their hold over a large segment of people is a severe obstacle to the growth of left politics.[65] Nevertheless, there was a realisation that caste and religion were here to stay, and they would continue to play an essential role in politics, at least for some years. E. M. S. Namboodiripad, the party ideologue who cleared out a doctrinal path to the parliamentary left in India, wrote: "The party of the working class with its advanced ideology also has to take account of this factor (caste); failure to do so would weaken the struggle for uniting… forces in the struggle against the bourgeois-landlord forces."[66] Elamaram Kareem, the CPM central committee member, made a similar observation, "More than ninety per cent of the people in Kerala are believers, and if the party designs a program without considering them, it will be thrown out."[67] An ideological commitment to building a classless society naturally places the Communist Party on the opposite side of the community establishments, which work to impart religiosity and a community feel to the people. Here the electoral logic and popular pressure persuade the party to draw an ideological moderation without losing its fundamental commitment to socialism and communism. Even though the left parties in Kerala have advanced numerous radical policies that fundamentally changed the socio-economic structure of the state, discarding the opposition of community establishments, they cannot afford permanent hostility with any organised group, including caste/religious communities, for the harsh reality of the electoral arithmetic. A justifiable comment about the relationship between the party and communities is that both groups have drawn closer to the centre of the table over time; while some of the old left slogans are now well accepted by

[64] "Casteist Organisations and the Party," The Marxist, 03 October 2003, https://www.CPM.org/marxist/200304_marxist_caste.htm.

[65] Communist Party of India (Marxist), "Political Resolution Adopted At the XIX Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)," Coimbatore: 2008. https://CPM.org/documents/19%20Congress.Political.Resolution.pdf; and Isaac and Kumar, "Kerala Elections, 1991," 2695.

[66] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development," *Social Scientist* 6, no. 4 (1977): 25.

[67] Kareem, Elamaram (CPM Rajya Sabha MP from Kerala and the Central Committee member), interviewed by the author, 13D, Firoz Shah Road, New Delhi, July 13, 2022.

public interests, many such things are redundant that parties including the left do not want to revamp.[68]

The apple of discord between the left and communities emanates from their divergence in ideology and policy choices. Like in many examples elsewhere, the socio-religious groups in Kerala were sceptical of the rise of communism that questioned the existence of communities and religious beliefs. Whereas community organisations revive people's religiosity to tighten the common bond between members, communists find extreme adherence to religious beliefs prevents the proper development of class consciousness and instead develops false consciousness of primordial identity.[69] The Semitic religions further problematised the left politics with the argument that the idea of class struggle promotes violence of one class of people over the other and encroachment upon others' property and land.[70] In Islam and Christianity, no authority can take over a person's property without consent. Nevertheless, the ideological contradiction is only the tip of the iceberg, often a smoke screen to a more complex tension, and the elephant in the room is the policy of left parties, which is essentially against the established interests of community organisations.[71] For instance, the land ownership and management of educational institutions are the boilers in the left-communities relationship. Adoption of land reform policy to ensure fair distribution of land and taking over the educational institutions from private players comprised the two major policy options for the left politics; whereas protecting the interest of the landed feudal, which control communities and educational institutions under the community ownership, became the primary interest of community groups. This difference over policies often acquires

[68] The CPM has made a shift in its political appeal from struggle and protest to more peaceful developmental politics. It has led some scholars to argue that there is de-radicalisation of the left in Kerala (Gemma Cairo, "State and Society Relationships in India," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 4 (2001): 688).

[69] Some Marxist intellectuals argued that politics based on caste and ethnicity is a ploy of the upper class to prevent the development of class consciousness (E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Frontline Years: Selected Articles*, (New Delhi: Left Word Books, 2010), 131-132: and Myron Weiner, "The Struggle for Equality: Caste in Indian Politic," in *The Success of India's Democracy,* ed. Atul Kohli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 202).

[70] See how a Bishop criticises the communist ideology of class struggle promoting violence, Joseph Powathil, "Arch Bishop Joseph Powathil in Nerechowe," filmed January 28, 2017, Old Episode, Manorama News, 24.51, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4IwaYoZZqU.

the label of confrontation between the faithful community organisations and the atheist left party.

The Achuthandan Government (2006-11), which backtracked from a slew of aggressive steps after protests from the established caste/religious forces against the government's alleged interference in the culture and management of educational institutions, is a case in point to understand the contradictory relationship between the left and community pressure groups. The immediate cause of communities' disillusionment was the government's decision to introduce the controversial Kerala Professional Colleges or Institutions (Prohibition of Capitation Fee, Regulation of Admission and Fixation of Non-exploitative Fee and Other Measures to Ensure Equity and Excellence in Professional Education) Act, which puts a government control over the profiteering self-finance colleges under the control of community organisations. The act prompted the Catholic Church to protest against the government policy of interfering in church affairs.[72] Second, the education ministry under M.A. Baby faced flak from Muslim religious organisations over the alleged attempts to introduce changes in the timing of schools affecting the Madrasa system of the community. Third, the Nair Service Society (NSS) criticised the government over the proposal of handing over the power of appointing teachers to the primary schools to the authority of Panjayats, taking away the management role.[73] These policies directly led to confrontations between caste/religious groups and the left government. However, the left government made compromises in three instances by negotiating with community establishments.

In 2008, the caste/religious organisations came into loggerheads with the left government over a lesson titled 'Jeevan Who Has No Religion,' a conversation between the school principal and the father of a child born out of a relationship between a Muslim man and a Hindu women. The chapter included this part: when the principal asked about the student's religion, the father replied that his son could freely

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[71] Church leadership found the CPI more friendly than the CPM in years after the split in the Communist Party (George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala,* (New Delhi: Concept Pub, 1989), 161).

[72] R. Krishankumar, "Battle cry," *Frontline,* August 10, 2007, https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30192378.ece.

[73] M G Radhakrishnan, "Ire of the Minorities," *India Today,* January 07, 2008, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/20080107-ire-of-the-minorities-734904-2007-12-27.

choose his religion growing up. It also contained a portion from Jawaharlal Nehru's writings which implied his willingness to distance himself from the religious rituals.[74] The opposition parties and community organisations like the NSS, the Catholic Church, and the Muslim organisations led intensive public protests over the alleged attempt of the communist government to spread the ideology of godlessness and the denial of religion. The Kerala Student Union (KSU) of the Congress Party and the Muslim Student Federation (MSF) of the Muslim League held massive protests across the state against the government's move to teach the lesson in schools. The Christian churches and the Muslim mosques issued pastoral statements against the government's move, while prominent community organisations issued press notes asking the government to withdraw the textbook immediately. The government finally agreed to constitute a committee headed by K. N. Panikkar, which suggested rephrasing the text to the tune of 'Freedom of Religion.'[75] The reluctant left finally changed the textbook to pacify community pressure groups.

The confrontation between the believers and the left front sometimes emanates from the founding approach of the communist parties, which do not subscribe to providing group rights antithetical to liberal individuality. To illustrate, the party's ideological support for Uniform Civil Code (UCC) led to a confrontation between the organised communities, particularly minorities, and the party. As a party leader revealed, confrontation erupts as the left politics contravenes the community's interests. In the famous Shah Bano Case, in which the Supreme Court of India ruled against the Muslim Personal Law, the Communist Party supported the court rule only to draw severe criticism from the Muslim public, which held protests on the street against the position of the party.[76] The party followed the same policy of prioritising liberal individuality and gender equality over community rights when a similar case emerged relating to the Christian personal law in which the Supreme Court of India

[74] J. Devika, "Memory's Fatal Lure: The Left, the Congress and 'Jeevan' in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 30 (2008): 13.

[75] Sangeeta Kamat, and Biju Mathew, "Religion, Education and the Politics of Recognition: A Critique and a Counter-Proposal," *Comparative Education* 46, no. 3 (2013): 371.

[76] Sreedhar Pillai, "Indian Union Muslim League and All India Muslim League Merge in Kerala," *India Today*, August 31 1985, https://web.archive.org/web/20200613062836/https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19850831-indian-union-muslim-league-and-all-india-muslim-league-merge-in-kerala-801918-2014-01-03.

struck down the Travancore–Cochin Christian Succession Act (1916) that enshrined unequal inheritance rights between the son and the daughter, drawing criticism from the community.[77]

Theoretically, the left in India does not dispute the rights of caste/religious communities to form organisations, but how they work in democracies. The left parties have a history of proactive engagement with caste organisations. Some leaders acknowledge the roles played by community organisations in social development and keeping communal harmony. The left circle in Kerala widely shares an apprehension about the encroachment of community establishments into public domains persuading the left supporters to disconnect from the secular associations and be part of the sectarian community organisations. The Communist Party officially subscribes to the western understanding of secularism, under which the field of religious/caste associations are different from political parties and a hard wall separates both entities. The communist party is critical of the Indian invention of secularism as equal respect to religion, which they argue has shaped India as a communal state that can accept any communalism.[78] The left parties visualise secularism as completely eradicating religion from politics.[79] The intervention of the state in the internal affairs of communities to ensure the working of liberal individualism is justifiable to the party.

In practice, the Communist Party has a tactical line to actively engage with community organisations. The Communist Party in Kerala was no different from other parties in negotiating with community establishments and closing deals before elections. See how a central committee member of the Communist Party explains, "Communitarianism, caring for own community's welfare, is not harmful. The problem is with communalism, wherein one group is pitched against the other. We have a tradition of keeping a very cordial relationship with community leaders and do not hesitate to seek votes from any. If a conversation happens, both sides should be in

[77] Namboodiripad, *The Frontline Years*, 138-141.

[78] Aijaz Ahmad, "Communalisms: Changing Forms and Fortunes," *The Marxist* XXIV, no. 2 (2013): 8-9.

[79] Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Programme*, https://www.CPM.org/party-programme (accessed on July 12, 2022).

an equal position. We do not promote a hierarchical relationship like visiting their offices to receive blessings."[80]

A tainted relationship between believers and the Communist Party did not preclude the latter from keeping cordial relations with some religious/community organisations. Kanthapuram Faction of Sunnis (or AP Faction), a prominent Muslim outfit with strong popular support, particularly in the Malabar region, has been friendly with the left front since its formation in 1989. The party justifies this relationship based on its ideology of supporting the weaker sections and supporting the freedom of speech. The formation of the Kanthapuram Faction was this: Kanthapuram Aboobacker Musliyar, an influential religious leader with command over a sizeable number of Muslims in Kerala, walked out of the Samastha, the most prominent organisation of traditional Sunni Muslims in the state, alleging the intervention of the Muslim League in the internal affairs of the organisation. The faction relied on the CPM support to fight against the political clout of the Muslim League.[81] Henceforth, the AP faction and the left had a warm-hearted relationship, unlike other Muslim organisations, who generally throw their weight behind the Muslim League.

The correspondence between the Ezhavas and the left has been generally cordial, with a few occasional exceptions. The general trend in the Ezhava community is this: the better-off section associates with the Congress and its affiliates and the impoverished lower section goes with left parties.[82] In the 1960s, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) president R. Shankar, a chief minister in the Congress government, made an unsuccessful attempt to woo the Ezhava community to the Congress camp with the support of K. Kamaraj from the high command at New Delhi.[83] Similarly, the SNDP's short-lived political experiment, the Socialist Republic Party (SRP), formed in model to the National Democratic Party (NDP) of the NSS, had a stop-over with the UDF in the 1980s. In general, the interests of the left and

[80] Kareem, interview.
[81] Ibrahim Kuppalath (A Kanthapuram Faction intellectual), interviewed by the author, Kottakkal, July 16, 2022. One CPM leader said, "We suffered more than what the Kanthapuram faction did after their split" (Kutty, interview).

[82] The majority of the SNDP leaders were glued to the Congress-led formations. There are many instances of the SNDP leaders being openly part of Congress and UDF.
[83] Horst Hartmann, "Changing Political Behaviour in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 3, no. 1/2 (1968): 171.

SNDP converge as both represent the same social base. The Ezhava group supports the left-front policy of including the maximum number of lower castes in cabinet positions and politically confronting the dominant community interests in the government. The spoiler in their bond is the divergence in directing the people in two diametrically opposite directions: the SNDP's soft approach to the Hindu right-wing against the political interest of the left. In 2010, the SNDP floated the Bharatiya Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS), a Hindu right political party, to align with the National Democratic Front (NDA), drawing the left criticism. Nevertheless, the SNDP kept an independent relationship with the left even as its political outfit is with the NDA.

Most parts of independent Kerala witnessed the confrontational relationship between the Communist Party and the two dominant community organisations- the Catholic Church and the Nair NSS. In the 1960s, the Bishops and the Nair community leaders directly interfered in politics by actively participating in government formations, the party splits, and factionalism. The formation of the Kerala Congress, split from the Congress Party, was with the active intervention of the Church and the Nair leader Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai. They were sceptical about the left government primarily for two reasons: first, the left policies on land ownership and education management directly hit the dominant community interest; second, the left governments kept the community organisations one arm distant from the power, unlike the Congress. The left also realised that the dominant community organisations were against their political missions and thus had a confrontational relationship. Although the sore relationship between the Church and the party has recently relaxed, the NSS is still in confrontation with it.

On Representation

Historically, the focal point of representation was about how the constituent's interest could best be represented: whether as an agent of electors to give their view to the parliament or as an independent policy maker to rely on her judgments rather than the wish of the people.[84] The debate has turned to a different dimension. To begin with, the Anglo-American model presupposes that the candidates elected from

[84] Rudy B. Andeweg, and Jacques JA Thomassen, "Modes of Political Representation: Toward a New Typology," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2005): 507–510; and Niraja Gopal Jayal, "The Limits of Representative Democracy," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32, no. 3, (2009): 326.

geographic constituencies give voice to all electors irrespective of their social identities. The voters dissatisfied with the delegate will not be a permanent minority but can mobilise a majority of voters to displace the incumbent. Conversely, in societies where social divisions intrigue the democratic prospects relegating a group of people unrepresented indelibly for an extended period, the conventional representation model may create a permanent majority and minority. Since the minority groups cannot persuade the majority against the incumbent, the basic tenet of democracy fails there. In those societies, the discourse changes from *how* to *who* represents; therefore, scholars prescribe constitutional models that effectively arrange the political institutions so that all possible segments in the society get adequately represented. The Indian polity has a blend of the two forgone models. Universal citizenship is a foundational principle of independent India as a significant component of nation-building. At the same time, it accommodates deprived groups and minorities on the ground of protection and compensation for their historical disadvantage, not because they require particular political representation in the system.[85] In addition, secular parties follow informal practices of including representatives from many social groups, partly for their commitment to a pluralist ideology and majorly for electoral purposes.

The left broadly subscribes to the conventional notion of representation that, ideally, an individual party worker or a party nominee to an office carries the voice of the entire society without catering exclusively to any section. The socialists visualise society as composed of two classes: the working class, which encapsulates the social majority-producing class, and the bourgeoisie, which controls the means of production.[86] The left parties articulate the interest of the working class. The role of the vanguard party is to mobilise the people by instilling class consciousness against the bourgeoisie to ensure the emancipation of the working class. The left intellectuals perceive reference to identities other than the class as perforating the development of a proper class struggle. Naturally, the defining feature of the communist party in the socially divided Indian context is the opposition to the government's neoliberal policies and equally championing the cause of secularism, which is inevitable to ward

[85] Jayal, "The Limits of Representative Democracy," 327.
[86] Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Resolutions on Some Ideological Issues (Adopted at the 20th Congress of the CPM)*, (Kozhikode: 2012), https://www.CPM.org/documents/resolution-ideological-issues-20th-congress.

off the ethnic consciousness from eating into the class consciousness of the mass.[87] The Indian left parties have drawn criticism for the excessive reliance on the class interpretation of society and neglecting the caste identity.

The Kerala unit of the communist party struggled to insulate the party and workers from the influence of communal identities. The puzzle to the left in Kerala is a web of paradoxes in the state: communism, communalism, and caste organisations coexist; the Namboodiripad Government (1957-9) was only the second democratically elected communist government in the world but was unseated by a federation of communal organisations; and secular political parties like the Congress and Communist Party are well organised, whereas the caste/religious groups are highly institutionalised. In other words, the radical political current in Kerala cohabits with equally relevant reactionary social forces. Political parties after the independence, including the Communist Party, could not wholly rupture from the old caste and religious and social practices. Political activists on the ground tend to keep dual identities-political and social.[88] Against this backdrop, the stated objective of the communist party is to nurture a cadre of people not entangled in narrow sectarian interests and ready to provide selfless service to the establishment of the socialist system. The communist party bars the members from holding membership in any caste/community organisation to ensure the impartiality of the cadre. Anthropologists in the past have noted that the success of communism in Kerala is partly because its followers tend to have allegiance to the party and its programs over their caste/community interests, in contrast with other political parties.[89] The secular credibility of the left has helped alleviate the concerns of sections that did not get adequate numeric representation in party panels. For instance, religious minorities, who are underrepresented in the left panels, consider the left parties the most reliable defenders of secularism and minority rights.

What is evident from the left approach to the communal question in Kerala is a persistent effort to maintain the secular character of the left alliance even as aligning

[87] Sitaram Yechury, "Neo-Liberalism, Secularism and the Future of the Left in India," *Social Scientist* 39, no. ½ (2011): 11-19.

[88] Nitasha Kaul and Nisar Kannangara, "The Persistence of Political Power: A Communist 'Party Village's in Kerala and the Paradox of Egalitarian Hierarchies," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, (2021): 1-31.

[89] Gough, "Village politics in Kerala-II," 415.

with parties directly catering to particular communities. In 1987, after years of hide and seek with the communal parties, the left front took a bold step to distance from all parties connected with overtly communal ideologies. The front fought the assembly election without the direct assistance of any community-centric party. The left government formed after the election under E. K. Nayanar was arguably the only one after the first communist government in 1957 to hold power without the involvement of communal forces.[90] Although the left departed from the policy of principled distance with communal forces in subsequent elections, it demonstrated a distinct style of dealing with community representation. First, the left coalition mechanism better manages the negotiations of community representation within the four walls of the alliance without leaking into the public purview. Second, the left negotiations with the community establishments did not attach undue roles to pressure groups in nominating candidates and cabinet members, contra the Congress-led arrangements.[91] The confessional parties, admitted to the LDF, are bound to follow a secular approach to their political campaigns and are restricted from directly dealing with community-centric socio-political issues.[92] The left alliance draws a line to the intervention of community organisations' interference in politics by limiting their roles to community-related activities. The left circle seldom appreciates community figureheads undertaking the role of intermediaries or negotiators in power politics.

The left parties' assertion of one person representing the interest of all constituents irrespective of their social background struggles to escape the social reality. The left approach to representation stresses two intricate problems in the Indian context. First, focussing on the policy aspects of representation and closing eyes to the descriptive dimension may give rise to the reproduction of social hierarchy to the representative bodies. A caste-blind approach tends to produce a system

[90] Presenting the motion of Thanks to the Governor, the CPM leader Kodiyeri Balakrishnan stated that the E. K. Nayanar Government is the lone government without the involvement of communal parties after the first communist government (Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, "Speech on Motion of Thanks to Governor," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, April 01, 1987).

[91] Paloli says that the front has an approach that may not always be as exact as that of the party. The left front has a set of standard rules, and those who agree with them are welcome. A significant difference with the UDF is that the left does not tolerate open community bargaining (Kutty, interview).

[92] A leader of a confessional party within the LDF told the author that his party would form a dummy platform with the permission of the front to openly take up the community issue as the UDF is appropriating all the community initiatives with its open approach. Being part of the LDF, according to him, parties cannot undertake any campaign with community overtones (Interview with a party leader, November 27, 2021, Kerala House, New Delhi).

dominated by the privileged upper castes. The persistent overrepresentation of certain sections at the cost of others will jeopardise the party initiatives to end the different shades of exploitation. Scholars have raised questions about communist parties in some parts of the world being captured by particular constituencies.[93] An ideologically driven party to end all socio-economic hierarchies in society cannot vindicate a situation wherein certain sections of society are marginalised from the system. Second, the proportionate distribution of offices and posts among social groups according to the share of the population would hint that the party considers social identities, not class, as the primary cleavage. The working class party cannot condone a situation wherein a comrade represents a particular social group. The left thus chooses a middle ground between the substantive and descriptive dimensions of representation. The primary consideration for the party is to emphasise class politics while taking special care to ensure the representation of all sections in democratic bodies.

The left formations in Kerala adopt an accommodative approach wherein it includes people of different social backgrounds in the party and offices without leaving an impression that social division is the base of party policies. G. Sudhakaran, a former CPM Kerala state secretariat member and a minister, says,

> The left does not divide the seats to communities as the Congress and UDF do. We, of course, consider if all groups have representation in the list because every voice has to get representation, which is the crux of democracy. Furthermore, we often field candidates in constituencies where their community has fewer numbers, as I have contested from seats where my caste group is not in the majority. Our state has few seats where a single community has an excess majority.[94]

Paloli Mohammed Kutty, a former convenor of the LDF, shares the same view, "In the cabinet formations and candidate list, we ensure whether all sections have been included, even making significant compromises."[95] The analysis of the socio-religious profile of the left ministries since 1987 hints at a pattern that the left

[93] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict,* (London: University of California Press, 1985), 9–10.

[94] G. Sudhakaran (former CPM minister), interviewed by the author, Ambalappuzha, June 07, 2022.

[95] Kutty, interview.

followed in maintaining the balance among different groups. The three governments formed by the LDF between 1987 and 2011 follow this social pattern: one SC and not more than two ministers from the Muslims and Christians in the Communist Party panel. The Christians received more than two ministers when other constituents of the left front, like the RSP, Janata Party, and Kerala Congress, nominated Christians in their slots. It is noteworthy that the Hindus, the core social base of the communist party in Kerala, have never lost domination in the left ministries. Although the party sources deny any form of social pattern to the left governments in the state, revelations made by some prominent party leaders have signalled the manipulation that the left front makes to balance representations of different groups. T. K. Hamsa, a Muslim Communist leader who was a minister in the E. K. Nayanar Government (1987-91), reveals,

> In the 1996 election, I was the candidate from Bepore constituency. Without any major hassle, I contested and won. When I reached Thiruvananthapuram, my leader and the party central committee member Paloli Mohammed Kutty had also reached the assembly. The party believed that Paloli should have a chance in the ministry. In those days, the backward groups (Muslims) used to have only one post. In that Paloli became the minister and I the chief whip.[96]

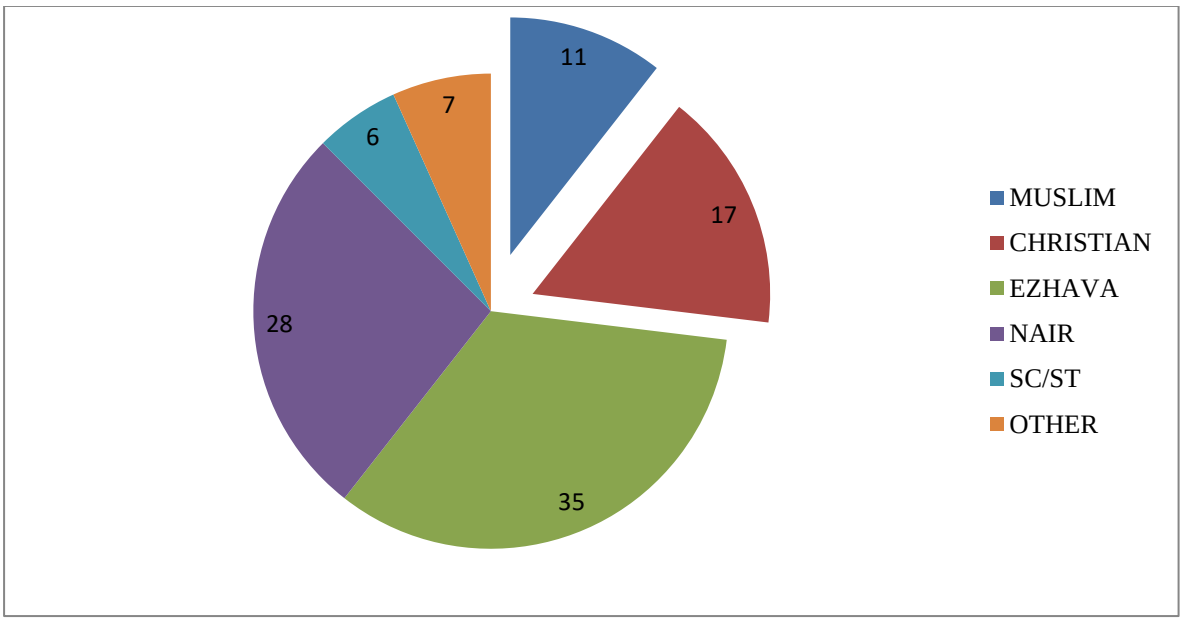
Given that the majority of the rank and file of the left hail from Hindu families, the left front manages to give proportionately higher berths to the Hindus.

The extreme reliance on class interpretation of society has significantly impacted the social composition of the left formations in Kerala. Even though all relevant communities have received representations on the left, certain social groups traditionally dominated the social institutions have gained a proportionately higher share in the left panels. Many left intellectuals in Kerala believe that building a fair political system requires erasing all references to caste and religion and looking beyond the narrow sectarian thoughts. Therefore the caste Hindus, who had had the opportunity to form the communist leadership because of their socio-economic condition, got the privilege of advancing to the left party leadership. In the left leadership's social composition, the Hindu upper caste had apparent domination in the

[96] T. K. Hamsa, "T K Hamsa 16 | Charithram Enniloode 1360," filmed January 17, 2019, Safari TV, 22.55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mLZITuHXwo&t=834s (accessed June 17, 2022).

early years, reflecting the social hierarchy. Out of the five communist leaders who founded the party in 1939, four belonged to the upper echelons, while one to the lower caste Ezhava. The irony of lower caste followers and higher caste leadership is evident in an observation made by TJ Nossiter on the dilemma of the Communist Party in the government formation of 1957: "In terms of the communal composition of the senior party leaders, one might have expected a preponderantly high-caste Hindu ministry; in terms of the mass base of the party one might have expected a preponderantly low-caste ministry."[97]

Figure 4 1: Social Profile of LDF Cabinets (1982-2016)



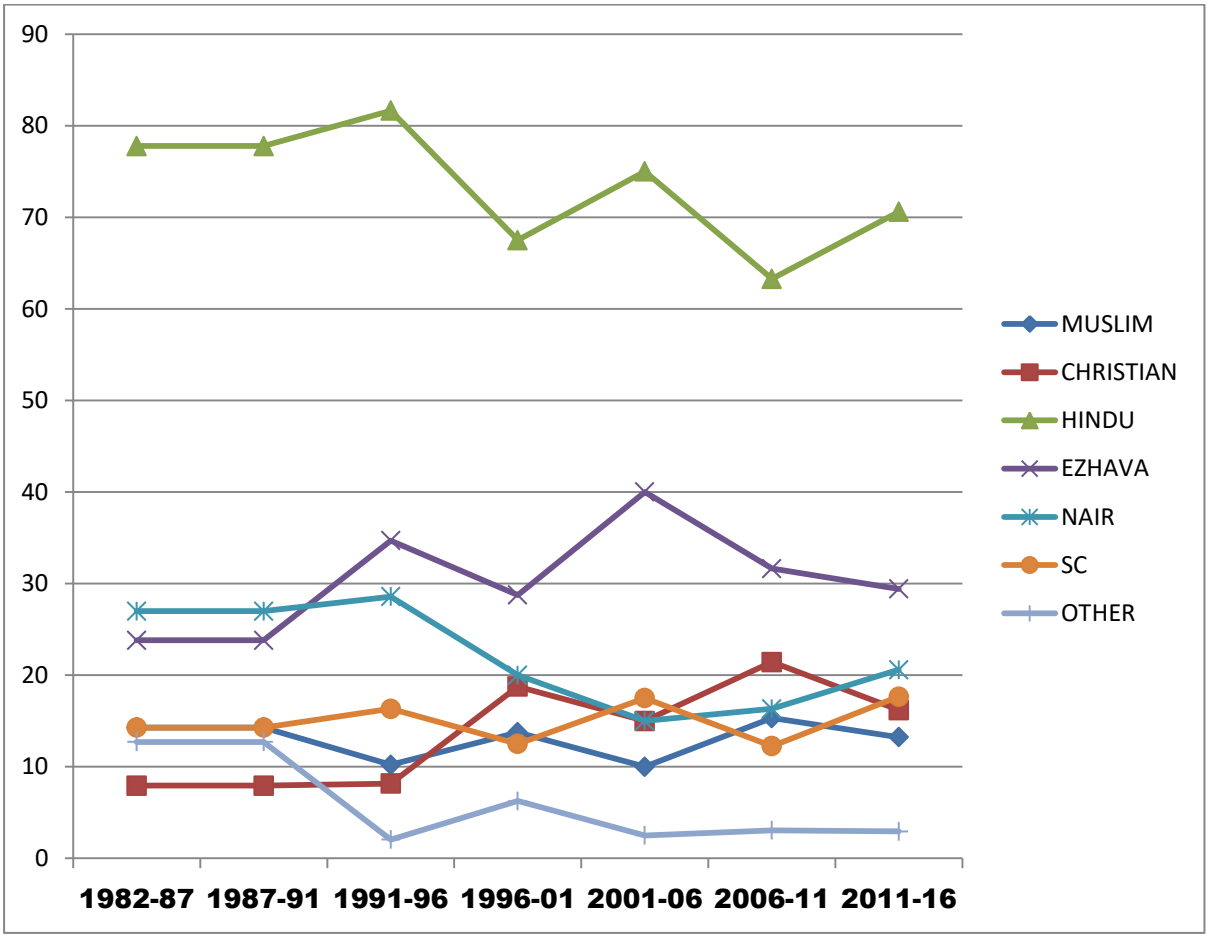
Source 5: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data.

The social profile survey of the LDF governments and memberships in the legislative assemblies between 1982 and 2016 provides some important signals about the social configuration of the front. First, as Figure 4.1 demonstrates, the Hindu domination in the left ministries continues unabated, reflecting the uninterrupted core of the party. Unlike the UDF, the Hindus in the LDF have composed seventy two per cent of ministers, well above their population share. The communist party continues the pattern of allotting two cabinet berths each to people belonging to minority communities. In some cases, the parties in the front other than the Communist Party

[97] Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, 148.

also had minority ministers. Second, the single largest social category within the LDF Government is the Ezhavas, who have been the backbone of the left politics in the state since colonial times. The Ezhava community occupied thirty-five per cent of the left ministers, confirming that the left is the backward caste front. The Nairs have secured twenty-eight per cent of the cabinet, sixteen percentage points above their population share. Although the Ezhavas are the most significant contributors to the left ministry, the privileged Nairs, who traditionally took a significant share of the left leadership, continue to maintain their domination. Third, the social profile of the assembly members (Figure 4.2) indicates that the Ezhavas have overcome the Nairs as the largest caste group in the left Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA). The criticism of lower-caste followers and upper-caste leadership do not hold now in the LDF. Nevertheless, the overrepresentation of the Nairs continues. Fourth, the left has made significant inroads into the minority communities, indicating the success of the expansionary strategies adopted by the Communist Party and the front. Christians have benefitted more from the left's minority accommodation than the Muslims. The front had experimented with independent candidates with public acceptance in minority pockets in the 2006 and 2011 assembly elections. Lastly, the left failed to give adequate space to Hindu caste groups beyond the two dominant castes. The left's failure to uplift the socially marginalised Hindu castes is glaring in the portfolio distributions of the LDF governments, which have stuck to allot insignificant departments to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) communities.

Figure 4 2: Social Break-up of the LDF MLAs (1982-2016)



Source 6: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data

Conclusion

Power-sharing scholarships deal with finding an amicable settlement to the ethnic questions in politics and ameliorating the impact of the ethnic divisions in democratic institutions. With all their apparent differences in diagnosing the problems and prescribing the type of institutions, these theories agree on moderating the influence of ethnicity in politics. They suggest measures to design the institutions to persuade the political parties to seek cooperation with other parties and segments beyond their social base. In this respect, this chapter surveyed how the left front, particularly the Communist Party, contributed to the settlement of community questions in Kerala.

Paradoxically, India's most successful left political experiment happened in a state where the established communities influenced politics by institutionalised

pressure groups and confessional political parties. In a highly fragmented social landscape, the left invented a mechanism to deal with the social divisions that recognised the role of community identity without completely surrendering to shrewd communal politics. The left drew a line between two equally important dimensions: the ideological band demanding class politics to prepare the society for a transition to socialism; and the practical side dictating a political tactic to maximise votes in elections to defeat the bourgeois parties. Community consciousness is perhaps the major hindrance to a full-blown class mobilisation in the state. The people's loyalty to a narrow sectarian identity limits the possibility of mobilising the social majority lower classes against the landlord and capital. Community organisations that weigh considerable political power with the capacity to determine the electoral outcome can override the project of the vanguard party. Against this backdrop, the party designed a political strategy to meet the peculiar situation prioritising the ideological yardstick while giving a larger room for practical politics and adjustments. That cleared out a unique model of dealing with ethnic issues in a divided society. In following that, this chapter essentially makes four conclusions.

First, the social division in Kerala society has reflected in the social base of the left like other parties, despite propounding a class ideology. The left politics received uneven support from various social groups: proportionately higher from the majority Hindus than the minority Muslims and Christians. The core social base of the left in Kerala has been the lower caste Ezhavas and SC/ST communities, who are at the bottom of both caste and class hierarchy. Second, notwithstanding the social base over a particular segment, the left party expanded the support base by reaching out to new sections like religious minorities and stitching alliances with other political parties. Primarily, there are two persuasions for the left party to reach other sections: ideologically, the drive to socialism needs popular support; and practically, the parliamentary left needs pooling votes across sections to win elections. The expansion strategy blended the ideological commitment to establish a classless society with the harsh reality of practical politics. Third, the relationship between the left and the established communities was not always cordial primarily because of the inherent contradiction between the existences of both: the imaginary classless society of the left has no space for communal identities, and the greatest hindrance to the interest of the communities is the class politics. The contradictions have sprouted massive

confrontations between the vanguard party and the community organisations, particularly those representing the privileged segments. However, the party has tried cultivating a better relationship with established communities compromising a few vital policy positions.

Lastly, the left solution to deep social division is a blend of accommodation and integration with more emphasis on the latter. It is not consociationalism, which considers ethnic conflicts as the primary cleavage in the society and sets institutions accordingly. The left idealises a situation where the people find community as one identity among many others and give it only limited space in political decision-making. Notwithstanding the left strategy of manipulating the social composition to include all sections of the society, it aimed to develop a political culture above the narrow sectarian interest. For that, it imagined the party leaders and representatives as representing the entire spectrum of the society than a particular section.

Chapter V

United Democratic Front (UDF): Open Community Bargaining

> Until the 1970s, the Congress Party concerted and led the mediated mobilisation of voters and the representation of interests. It was in tension with rather than in control of or subordinate to public opinion and organised social groups, classes, interests, and local notabilities. In the context of policy choice and resource allocation, it led by creating political formulas that conciliated social groups and made bargains possible. But mediation meant more than skill in creating political formulas, consensual policy agendas, and aggregated interests.
>
> – Rudolph and Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi, 1987.

This chapter unravels the political processes concerning the evolution of the Congress Party in Kerala. Tracking of the political transformation of the Congress Party in independent Kerala covers how the United Democratic Front (UDF) developed a mechanism for dealing with community questions and social accommodation. It specifically undertakes four significant tasks: first, it looks at which all sections attracted to the Congress fold; second, how the party manoeuvred the strategy of expansion beyond the original base; third, how the Congress-led front approached the communities; and lastly, how the party addressed the representation question of communities. Doing so unearths the UDF's mechanism of dealing with community organisations and their social interests.

Social Base of Congress

The Indian National Congress (INC) (alternatively the Congress) dominated public and political space in the nascent decades of independent India, as the disunited opposition could not pose any significant challenge to its towering leadership, which commanded solid support across the society.[1] The period marked the 'Congress System,' well-oiled organisational machinery that controlled the central and state governments with meagre political opposition. A party with the legacy of leading the broad-based anti-colonial movement, the Congress commanded the support of people from all sections of society,

[1] Stanley A Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India: The Dynamics of a One-Party Democracy*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968); Christopher Candland, "Congress Decline and Party Pluralism in India," *Journal of International Affairs* 51, no. 1 (1997): 19–35; Rajni Kothari, "The Congress' System' in India," *Asian Survey* 4, no. 12 (1964): 1161–1173; and Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

comparable to a consociational party that internally manages the segmental differences.[2] Paradoxically, the Congress organisational system conglomerated multiple socio-political interests amid deep social divisions and acquired the shape of an umbrella party that represents all sections preventing the replication of social cleavages to the party system. A pan-India party with lofty national leadership, the Congress Party, was primarily a club of regional elites with many followers. The state power was central to Congress politics, wherein its survival heavily relied on the involvement of governments at the national and state levels. Myron Weiner quoted from his field as stated by a Congress member, "there is no Congress Party organisation in India. Congress has identified itself completely with the government machinery. When the government is lost, Congress will disappear... they only meet when some minister comes."[3] Congress bore the boon and bane of transforming an all-encompassing movement into an umbrella political party.

The political trajectory of the Congress Party in Kerala diverged from other state units mainly in two respects: a social origin unconnected with the history of the Congress at the national level; and a relatively weak organisational position in the early phases. The social origin of the Congress Party in Kerala owes more to the twentieth-century reform movements in the princely state of Travancore than to the anti-colonial struggles.[4] The first modern political mobilisation in Kerala, the Malayali Memorial- a protest movement of all non-Brahmin communities for equal treatment in government appointments in 1891, is considered the earliest signal of developing a political entity in the state. The subsequent civil rights movements appropriated a structure of a common political platform wherein the people of various caste-religious groups cooperated for their segmental interests. In this respect, the formation of the Joint Political Congress (JPC) in 1931 as a unity of the three communities, the Christians, Ezhavas, and Muslims, against the domination of Nairs in the legislative bodies,[5] was remarkable because it laid the foundation of the Travancore State Congress

[2] Matthijs Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace in Divided Societies: Exploring Consociational Parties*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, "The United Colours of Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 34/35 (1999): 2518-2528.

[3] Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress*, (Cambridge: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 176.

[4] E. J. Thomas, *Coalition Game Politics in Kerala*, (New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1985), 17.
[5] George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala,* (New Delhi: Concept Pub, 1989), 92.

(TSC), the real progenitor of the Congress Party in Kerala.[6] The second divergence of the Congress in Kerala from the national Congress was the relatively weak organisational structure and popularity in the early phase.[7] The first known organisational attempt of the Congress in Kerala is a humble beginning of a district committee in 1903 in Calicut by a coterie of landlords and wealthy men. In 1916, a team under the leadership of the freedom fighter K. P. Kesava Menon formed a unit of the Home Rule League in Calicut. The establishment of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) as the official organisation of the Congress for Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore was in 1921, a delayed process in comparison with other regions.[8] The early activities of the KPCC were majorly confined to Malabar.

Malabar was the centre of Congress activism in colonial Kerala for its special status as the only region under the direct control of the British Government, unlike the princely states of Cochin and Travancore. The first known exposure of Malabar to national politics was the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM), in which the Congress and Khilafat Committee hand-gloved against the common enemy, Britain. The agrarian Mappilas, who joined Congress enthusiastically to organise a struggle against the colonial government and the exploitative landlords, popularised the nationalist movement in the state.[9] A crowd of 20,000 people received Mahatma Gandhi and the Ali Brothers at Calicut in 1920, marking the Hindu-Muslim unity. The first All Kerala Provincial Conference of Congress, held at Ottappalam on April 23-24 1921, was remarkable with the involvement of people: around 4000 delegates from different parts of the state participated; the Mappila Khilafat volunteers from Valluvanad and Eranad marched to the conference location in large numbers.[10] However, the violent outbreak of the Muslim protestors against the Hindu landlords eclipsed the movement to persuade leading nationalists like Gandhi to withdraw their support of the movement. The subsequent communal riots put a tragic closure to mass mobilisations in the

[6] Horst Hartmann, "Changing Political Behaviour in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 3, no. 1/2 (1968): 165.
[7] Hartmann, "Changing Political Behaviour," 171; George Woodcock, *Kerala: A Portrait of the Malabar Coast*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 233.

[8] G. Gopa Kumar, *The Congress Party and State Politics: Emergence of New Style Politics,* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication, 1984), 31.

[9] The Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement in Malabar was a culmination of a century-long rebellion between Mappila peasants and the Hindu landlords, who received the help of the British Government.
[10] O. P. Salahudheen, "Political Ferment in Malabar on the Eve of the Mappila Rebellion," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 67 (Indian History Congress, 2006), 480–3.

area for an extended time; henceforth, no significant anti-colonial movement is heard from the region. The aftermath: in the polarised social environment, the agrarian Mappilas deserted the Congress to join the Muslim League later.[11] The civil disobedience movement of the 1930s skipped the riot-hit Malabar area to bypass the Mappilas. Subsequently, the impoverished Congress's support base in Malabar further attenuated to a few upper-caste Nairs.

The track record of Congress in Travancore, which essentially set the organisational frame of the party post-independence, was marked by three interrelated trends. First, the anti-colonial movements received a lukewarm response from the people, ostensibly because the inter-community competitions ruled the political milieu.[12] The mainstream movements in Travancore cared not to antagonise the mighty British Government.[13] The Ezhava caste organisation-SNDP had a norm of pledging allegiance to the colonial authority before the official meeting. The community organisations exhorted their volunteers to distance themselves from anti-British movements. Second, the Gandhi-led Congress leaders' decision to keep aloof from the politics of princely states created a political vacuum in Travancore, filled by community establishments.[14] The absence of a secular or all-encompassing political formation in Travancore facilitated the community establishments to become the natural reliance of public-minded individuals. When the INC formed a party unit in Travancore in the 1930s, after the national-level decision to open branches in princely states, the political machinery had gone under the control of community figureheads. The TSC, which represented the collective interest of community groups, captured the popular legitimacy in colonial Travancore, while the official unit of the INC was marginal in the political frame. Third, in the shadow of community-centric Travancore society, the early phase of the Congress politics in Kerala was a manifestation of politics in a divided society wherein the individual participants in the party carried their caste affiliations intact giving an impression

[11] A similar case of Muslims deserting Congress after the latter colluded with Hindu landlord was in Bengal (Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Politics of Accommodation and Confrontation: The Second Partition of Bengal*, (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2003), 1-2).

[12] Notably, Kerala has not contributed an eminent national leader like Rajagopalachari from Madras or GP Pant from UP, like its contribution to other fields had been (Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Communism in Indian Politics*, (New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1978), 170-171).

[13] Vivekodayam, the official mouthpiece of the SNDP, wrote on the British Government, "the peace and freedom that we enjoy now are not experienced us under any other dispensation" (quoted from, A Shaji, *Politicisation of Caste Relations in a Princely State*, (New Delhi: Zorba Books, 2017), 48).

[14] P. T. Haridas, "Genesis of the Travancore State Congress," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 38, (Indian History Congress, 1977), 402.

that the group, not the individual, is the basic unit of representation. The Congress's practice in the early years was to let community leaders decide candidates for their communities.[15] Such a political atmosphere provided ample space for community organisations to guide the direction of the Congress Party. Community establishments acted as satellite organisations to the Congress, actively participating in its electoral and governmental affairs.

Organisationally, the major setback to the Congress in Kerala was the left faction's decision to walk out of the party to get part of the Communist Party, chalking out a significant portion of party members who had an affinity with radical ideas. The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in Kerala, a ginger party of socialists within the Congress, merged itself with the Communist Party in 1940,[16] giving a fatal blow to the Congress organisational structure in the state, particularly in areas like the North Malabar, Palakkad, and Alappuzha, which later became the fiefdoms of communism. The weakened position of the Congress was evident that, unlike in other Indian states, the party seldom had a cakewalk in the electoral history of Kerala, wherein it could seize power only with the support of a handful of minor parties and social organisations. The party's Kerala unit failed to prevent a non-Congress Party from forming the government in the state in 1957, the first of its kind in an Indian state post-independent India. The Congress's vulnerable status in Kerala forced the high command at New Delhi to compromise its ideological position to permit the state unit to go for alliances with communal parties, including the Muslim League, which Nehru had once called 'the dead horse' with no potential in post-partitioned India.[17] It is noteworthy that the Congress in Kerala had to wait till 1987 to complete a full term in the treasury bench.

The national outlook of the Congress as a catch-all party representing the heterogeneity of the country with the representation of a multitude of social groups is misleading in the sense that it hides the social character of the Congress Party at sub-national levels. Chibber and Petrocik argue that the Congress Party is not an exception to the social cleavages theory of the party system -political parties reflect the social divisions- and the dynamics are invisible at the national level precisely because Congress is a coalition of state

[15] Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala,* 121.

[16] Valerian Rodrigues, "The Communist Parties in India," in *India's Political Parties,* ed. Peter Ronald deSouza and E. Sridharan (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2006), 207.

[17] Although the alliance with the Muslim League in 1960 was the first such experiment of the Congress with overtly a communal party, the party's state units had already bonded with caste/community groups at state levels against the dictum of the central leadership.

party units where the theory of cleavages applies.[18] Accordingly, the Congress Party is not an exception to the cleavages theory that the domination of certain social groups has persisted in the state units. Against this backdrop, it needs to underline two points about the social base of the Congress in Kerala. First, the social configuration of the party in Kerala is an explicit confirmation of the social cleavage theory. In Malabar, which had a tainted history of Hindu-Muslim confrontation in the colonial period, the Hindu Nairs continued to dominate the Congress leadership. In contrast, the Christians and Nairs had apparent domination in Travancore-Cochin. A short period of Ezhava's command over the Congress Party did not last long because of the political clout of the other two communities- the Nairs and Christians. Second, despite the domination of the Nairs and Christians, Congress attracted people of all groups without social consideration. The Congress managed to induct people of different social identities into the party leadership and government positions.

The tenure of R. Shankar as the chief minister between 1962 and '64 marked a short-lived Ezhava domination in the Congress Party. Shankar, a former president of the Ezhava-SNDP, attempted to reconfigure the social profile of the Congress by appealing to the lower castes with the tacit support of Kamraj Nadar from the centre. The 1965 election marked a fight between the Communist Party and Congress to capture the Ezhavas, who constituted around twenty-five per cent of the populace.[19] The experiment was disastrous to the Congress: the party miserably failed to distract the Ezhavas from the Communist Party, which traditionally voiced for the lower class interest, and the furious Nairs and Christians deserted the Congress to formulate a new party called the Kerala Congress, giving a permanent blow to the party in Northern Travancore.[20] The new party drew a large block of the Congress's Christian supporters, who traditionally constituted the core of the party, particularly from pockets of Christian domination. A reconciliation attempt by Congress after the 1965 assembly election helped it reconnect with the Nairs and Christians who re-joined

[18] Pradeep K. Chhibber, and John R. Petrocik, "The Puzzle of Indian Politics: Social Cleavages and the Indian Party System," *British Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 2 (1989): 191–210.

[19] Hartmann, "Changing Political Behaviour in Kerala," 171.

[20] In the short term, the engagement with the Ezhavas helped Congress to establish that the party could run without the support of the two dominant groups, Nairs, and Christians. Without the support of the two community figureheads, Congress was able to secure a vote share above in the 1965 election (Bashiruddin Ahmed, "Communist and Congress Prospects in Kerala," *Asian Survey* 6, no. 7 (1966): 396).

the party to strengthen the anti-communist alliance.[21] The Kerala Congress later gelled with the Congress with the blessings of Bishops and shared power in governments.

The Congress Party's project of attracting lower caste Ezhavas to the party fold did not show any tangible result partly because the social majority poor within the community considered the class politics of the Communist Party as their choice. The gulf between the community elites and their common brethren was sometimes extreme.[22] The divergence in political preferences of different classes in the Ezhava community has been glaring: an upper stratum of the community supports the Congress-led political alliance against the interest of their lower-class brethren, who generally throw their weight behind the Communist Party. The 1950s and '60s exposed the class cleavage within the Ezhava community: the SNDP leadership, which represented the propertied interest, joined with other community organisations in the Liberation Struggle, a protest movement by community organisations against the first communist government's radical policies on land and education, against the communist government and aligned with the Congress Party in subsequent elections; conversely, the lower-class Ezhavas unequivocally supported the Communist Party.[23] In the 1965 assembly election, a fight between the Congress and the Communist Party for the Ezhava votes, the SNDP supremo R. Shankar miserably failed against a left candidate from an Ezhava-dominated constituency of Thiruvananthapuram district. When the SNDP formed the political party called the Socialist Republic Party (SRP) in 1976, it chose to ally with Congress, not the left. However, the proportion of Ezhavas in the Congress leadership and panels had a secular decline during the period, reflecting the lesser acceptance of the party in the community.

The Congress Party failed to garner adequate support from the Muslims and the SC/ST communities for different reasons. The Congress's failure to attract Mappila Muslims, who constitute roughly seventy per cent of the Muslims in Kerala, is attributed to the mistrust between the party and the community in the aftermath of the Mappila rebellion. The revolt,

[21] In the 1967 assembly election, Congress retreated from the pro-Ezhava approach. The Ezhava leader Shankar failed to get a seat in the assembly constituency, instead shifted to the parliament constituency; and Mannam and Bishops returned to the Congress fold by declaring their support to the party (Hartmann, "Changing Political Behaviour," 168).

[22] David Arnold, Robin Jeffrey, and James Manor, "Caste Associations in South India: A Comparative Analysis," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 13, no. 3 (1976): 372.

[23] G Rajendran, *The Ezhava Community and Kerala Politics*, (Trivandrum: Kerala Academy of Political Science, 1974), 51.

which started as agrarian unrest against the exploitative landlord, had a communal consequence that polarised the region on religion and landed the Muslims in the Muslim League against the Congress Party, which allegedly supported the Hindus. The League, which lost ground in Indian politics after independence, survived in Malabar with the support of the Mappilas.[24] Nevertheless, Congress garnered the support of the Muslims in other regions of the state, perhaps more than the Communist Party did. On the other, Congress attracted only a smaller section of the SC/ST communities for two primary reasons: first, the party's politics of protecting the established interests were against the lower caste interests; second, few confessional parties were catering to the SC/ST. In the lead roles of the Congress Party, the Ezhavas, Muslims, and SC/ST communities come only after the Nairs and Christians.

The Congress Party traditionally drew a higher portion of support from people of status quo regarding caste and class. When the radical left CSP camp broke out from the party to merge with the Communist Party in the 1940s, the left-over conservatives composed the Congress's core. The party's decision to provide political leadership to the Liberation Struggle signalled the ideological direction of the Congress, a social conservative. The political agitations led by the Congress Party in the 1970s against the private college managements, which were majorly under the control of the community organisations, gave an impression that the party had taken a new turn in the changed political atmosphere.[25] A Congress faction under A.K. Antony continuously opposed the party's truce with communal parties, like the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress, and supported progressive policies in education. However, the Antony faction eventually emulated the official line of the Congress in the 1990s to form the government with the support of community parties. Antony could unseat his party chief minister K. Karunakaran in 1995 only after snatching the League and Kerala Congress from the latter's hold.[26] In general, the people who preferred the

[24] M. Gangadharan, "Emergence of the Muslim League in Kerala: An Historical Enquiry'," in *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective,* ed. Asghar Ali Engineer (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1995).

[25] Some scholars in the 1960s were under the impression that the Congress was taking a new route by befriending the Ezhavas and side-lining the Nairs and Christians (Bashiruddin Ahmed "Communist and Congress prospects in Kerala," *Asian Survey* 6, no. 7 (1966): 389-399).

The Kerala University Act 1974 was brought by the government under the pressure of Congress, particularly from the youth, to cut down the role of the management in teachers' appointments and release teachers from the clutches of the management (Kumar, *The Congress Party and State Politics,* 63).

[26] In 1995, when A. K. Antony replaced K. Karunakaran as the chief minister, the former was not a house member. He chose the Thirurangadi Constituency of the Muslim League to contest in a by-lection.

status quo against change and landed interests comprise the most prominent support base of the Congress in the state.

Expansion and Accommodation

The victory of the Communist Party in the 1957 assembly election rattled the Congress camp precisely because it was the first major electoral jolt to the Party from a state.[27] It exposed the inability of Congress to contain the political upsurge of communism and demanded manoeuvring a unique political strategy to deal with the Kerala conundrum. Unlike in another Indian state, the fate of the Congress in Kerala became contingent upon making bondage with other political parties to fight against the common enemy, communism. The political chaos in 1959 after the communist government introduced two radical legislations- the land reform and the education bill- was a windfall opportunity for Congress to unite the anti-communist forces. The Congress provided the political face to the anti-government protest, called the Liberation Struggle, which received the active participation of all major caste/religious establishments.[28] In a pretext to end the unrest and political turmoil, the central cabinet under Jawaharlal Nehru advised the President of India to use Article 356 of the Constitution to declare President's Rule, formally terminating the much-celebrated communist government.[29] The Congress's participation in the struggle helped it build an organic partnership with the established caste/religious groups against the Communist Party, which ideologically strived to establish a society bereft of communal influences. The relationship grew into an anti-communist Congress-led coalition in the 1960 assembly election that comprised the Muslim League, Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and Praja Socialist Party (PSP) with the active support of the Nair Service Society (NSS), SNDP, and the Church. Although the electoral ties helped dethrone the Communist Party, the internal fission in Congress and other allies rebounded to implode the newly-formed anti-communist government quickly. The period 1960-70 marked the sheer display of communal interference in Congress politics wherein community leaders openly interfered in the working of the government, brokered the deals, mediated factions, and participated in electoral campaigns.

[27] In years after independence, Kerala was the only Indian state where Congress failed to become the dominant political party.
[28] Other than the Congress, parties on the opposition side, like the Muslim League, PSP, and RSP, supported the Liberation Struggle as it provided an opportunity to unseat the government.
[29] Robin Jeffrey, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Smoking Gun: Who Pulled the Trigger on Kerala's Communist Government in 1959?," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 29, no. 1 (1991): 72-85, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/14662049108447602.

The 1967 assembly election was eye-opening to the party: only nine Congressmen reached the house, and the left had captured power, successfully forming a coalition of seven parties of different colours. The Congress won no seat in Northern Kerala, reflecting the party's weakened position in the region.[30] The political scenario in the late 1960s marked two dramatic changes in Kerala politics that had larger implications for Congress. First, the internal feuds and party split weakened the parties' positions, causing extreme party fragmentation. No party commanded organisational strength to face elections alone and form a stable government. An observation by M. N. Govindan Nair, a CPI veteran who presented the Motion of thanks to the Governor's address in 1970, succinctly captures the political mood of Kerala in 1970: "What is evolved from this election is a political environment that, whichever the party is and whatever its strength is, only some form of united fronts can anymore face elections in Kerala and India."[31] Notably, the mainstream parties in the state hardly had the guts to face elections without forming a pre-electoral alliance consisting of at least three players.[32] Second, community influence in politics acquired a new format that transformed from direct interference to symbolic involvement of community representatives in governments and party positions. Two incidents legitimised the community in Kerala politics: the Congress's decision to informally engage with the Muslim League in the Pattom Thanu Pillai Government (1960-62); and the communist-led Seven-Party Government formation in 1967 with the involvement of the League and the church-sponsored Karshaka Thozhilali Party (KTP). Against this backdrop, the battered Congress with only nine seats nurtured a political strategy that eventually shaped the UDF in 1980.

In 1969, soon after the fall of the Seven-Party Government headed by E. M. S. Namboodiripad, the Congress assembly leader K. Karunakaran and the KPCC president K. K. Viswanathan arranged a meeting with three Muslim League leaders, Sayed Abdurahman Bafaqi, C. H. Mohammed Koya, and Sayed Umer Bafaqi to discuss the possibility of a political alliance. The meeting was the first known consultation to discuss the idea of the Congress-League alliance that transformed politics in Kerala.[33] K. Muraleedharan, a former

[30] The Congress's performance in the north was ignominious in the 1967 assembly election. In the three constituencies, Kannur, Kozhikode, and Palakkad, the party failed to get any seats, and the margin of failure was very high. In all seats, the margin was above 5000.
[31] M. N. Govindan Nair, "Motion of Thanks to Governor's Address," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, October 27, 1970.

[32] This was more evident after 1980 when the two political alliances, the UDF and LDF, were formed.
[33] The immediate effect of the meeting was the formation of the mini-front between Congress, the CPI, and the League. However, the meeting laid the foundation for the future UDF.

KPCC president who witnessed the meeting, explains, “The CPM made the first formal alliance with the League in 1967. The Congress-League relation in 1960 was not a formal alliance; it was only an off-the-door electoral understanding. After the Communist Party's truce with the League, Congress realised there was no purpose in remaining with the political idealism, as even the CPM had changed its mind. Then Karunakaran planned the alliance with the League.”[34]

The Congress quickly responded to the coalition politics opened by the Communist Party by forming alliances with smaller parties.[35] The new political strategy of the Congress Party marked a fundamental logic: openly recognise the caste/community identity in politics and welcome any political party ready to come fore to wrest power and defeat the opponent on a minimum program with fewer restrictions on ideology. Alignment with the Muslim League denoted an ideological trade-off of the Congress, which had fiercely opposed the idea that a religious identity owes a separate representation. In the 1960 assembly election, when the anti-communist brigades led by the Congress swept the pol, the party initially hung back from sharing government positions with the League, leading to a political deadlock. Eventually, the parties reached a settlement wherein the League would satisfy the Speaker of the House post.[36] The post-1970 Congress-League alliance typified a rupture from the past that involved a significant ideological departure in tune with the changed political atmosphere. The major impediment in the Congress's relationship with the League was an irreconcilable contradiction: the League wanted the partners to recognise it as the sole agency of Muslim political demands, and the central Congress leadership did not want to dilute its secular credential by aligning with a religion-based political party.[37] The nationalist Muslims in Kerala who were with the Congress were hell-bent on maintaining a one-arm distance from the League, which was arguably the sole responsible for the partition. However, the doctrinal rigidity of the Congress towards the League melted away under pressure to build a team of like-minded parties to fight against the bigger enemy, communism. The League henceforth

[34] K. Muraleedharan (Congress MP from Vadakara, Kerala, and former KPCC President), interviewed by the author, New Delhi, July 29, 2022.

[35] G. Gopa Kumar, “Defensive Left and Divided Congress,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 19 (2001): 1582.

[36] R. Radhakrishnan, “Muslims and Changing Political Trends in Kerala,” (PhD Thesis, University of Kerala, 2004), 95.

[37] Theodore P Wright, “The Muslim League in South India since Independence: A Study in Minority Group Political Strategies,” *American Political Science Review* 60, no. 3 (1966): 586.

had a long-lasting relationship with the Congress Party except for a short period between 1963 and '69, during which it had a two-year alliance with the Communist Party in the seven-party coalition.

The League commanded a solid base among the Muslims, particularly of the Malabar region, with an excellent hold of over two dozen assembly seats and a good base in another two dozen. The League's entry into the E. M. S. Namboodiripad Government (1967-69) made a tectonic shift in its political trajectory. First, alignment with the Communist Party in Government legitimised its political existence by obliterating the 'political leprosy' tag of being a party catering to a sectarian interest;[38] Second, the party's ministerial intervention helped galvanise a large audience beyond Malabar and develop a new support base in other areas.[39] From 1967, the party uninterruptedly stayed in power till 1987 in different governments. The League stalwart C.H. Mohammed Koya once claimed, "We (the League) will decide who—the Congress or the Communists—should rule the State."[40]

When the Congress Party formulated the UDF as a platform of parties against the Communist Party, the League became a natural partner by holding the position next to the leading Congress. Henceforth, the Congress-League camaraderie is perhaps the longest-serving party friendship in the history of democratic India that survived phases of ebbs and flows. The darkest moment of the relationship was in 1991, in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition at Ayodhya of Uttar Pradesh. The Muslim mass had a strong resentment against the Congress Government at the centre, which allegedly abdicated the responsibility to protect the minority interest by giving a free hand to the Hindu nationalists on the ground. Echoing the Muslim national psyche, the League national president and a member of parliament Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait, who commanded a huge fan following across the country, walked out of the party, alleging its unwillingness to part with the ruling Congress, which deserted the Muslims in a critical moment.[41] Although the League temporarily distanced from

[38] The seven-party coalition in 1967 allotted the Kazhakkoottam assembly constituency, a Hindu majority in the Thiruvananthapuram district, to the Muslim League. The move implied that the League was no longer a sectarian party (Hartmann, "Changing Political Behaviour in Kerala," 171).
[39] Robert L. Hardgrave, "The Marxist Dilemma in Kerala: Administration and/or Struggle," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 11 (1970): 997.

[40] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Frontline Years: Selected Articles*, (New Delhi: Left Word Books, 2010), 116.

[41] "Madhyamam Writer, Sulaiman Sait Illatha Pathinanj Varsham" (Fifteen Years without Sulaiman Sait), Madhyamam, April 26, 2020, https://www.madhyamam.com/opinion/articles/15-years-ebrahim-sulaiman-sait-article/676751.

the UDF as an immediate response, it returned to the fold shortly. The relationship was a win-win deal that helped both parties to get a grip on the uncertain Kerala political terrain. The alliance with the League benefited the Congress primarily in two ways: first, it fetched the majority of Muslim votes into the UDF camp, virtually giving a significant balance to the Congress-led camp over the communist-led group; and second, the League's strength provided a shot in the arm of the Congress Party against the left in Malabar where it was traditionally weak.[42] Notably, the Congress-League combine drew approximately two-thirds of the total Muslim vote, which now constitute a quarter of the total.

Conversely, the UDF contributed a significant portion of Muslim representatives, proportionately above the community's population, rewarding the vast support. Remarkably, the Congress-League bonhomie put a formal end to the distrust between the Muslim mass and the Congress Party produced in the aftermath of the Malabar rebellion that had polarised the Malabar religiously. Despite explicitly referring to Muslim identity, the League manifested moderate politics that mainstream parties found acceptable in the state's secular politics. See the league leader P. M. Aboobacker's comment in the house on the League in post-independent Kerala,

> What is communalism? You kindly define it… we understand one sect or a community trying to establish dominance over another community or to oppress the other. How does that definition apply to the Muslim League? ... There are three fundamental objectives (to the League). The first is to sustain and protect our nation's integrity and sovereignty. The second is facilitating an environment wherein different religions/communities live together with harmony, friendship, and tranquillity. The third is to work legally and constitutionally to protect the legitimate interest of Muslims and minority groups.[43]

The identification with the Muslim community burdened the League to explicate its secular credibility time and again. Nevertheless, there is a consensus, shared by mainstream parties, including the Hindu right ideologues, that the League is not a sectarian extremist but a community party with a secular language of politics.

[42] The Congress's performance was patchy in the two assembly elections in the 1960s before allying with the Muslim League. In 1965, the party won one seat each from Kannur and Palakkad, and in 1967, it had no seats from the three districts of the north, Kannur, Kozhikode, and Palakkad.
[43] P.M. Aboobacker, "Speech on Motion of Thanks to Governor," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, April 02, 1987.

The Kerala Congress (KC) has been the third-largest partner of the UDF camp, representing the Syrian Christians and partly the Nairs of Travancore. The birth of the KC in 1964 resulted from communal factionalism within the Congress Party over leadership and organisational preferences. The Nair and Christian brigades within the Congress could not digest the leadership of chief minister R. Shankar, an Ezhava by himself who succeeded a Nair CM Pattom Thanu Pillai and, on another occasion, accepted the resignation of a prominent Christian minister, P. T. Chacko. The communal overtone of the friction was evident in the statement given by Chacko after the resignation: 'between me and my faith, no party, no Shankar, and no state can meddle.' The KC particularly represents the landed interest of the Syrian Christians with the church's support. Like the Muslim League, the KC has also tried to rid the tag of communal. See how Eeppan Varghese, a Kerala Congress leader, explains the ideology of his Party in the assembly,

> What is the criterion to call the Kerala Congress communal? Don't we need to understand? Based on certain fundamental principles, the Kerala Congress launched a slogan in 1964. To benefit the people in Kerala, there should be a democratic alliance based on religious beliefs, as the Kerala Congress wished. The KC is going ahead with that plan… The Kerala Congress wishes that the peasants, who are the bone of a country, should be prioritised in the policies. The Party believes such a policy can also promote the industrial sector.[44]

After a few years of electoral confrontation, the KC cultivated a cordial relationship with Congress, becoming an integral component of the UDF. Although the Congress Party had direct access to the Syrian Christians before and after the formation of the KC, the bondage with the latter tightened the relationship by confirming them as an essential part of the UDF camp. A KC splinter, the Kerala Congress (B), named after its leader R. Balakrishna Pillai, a Nair leader from the Kollam district who simultaneously held the positions in the party and the Nair-NSS, consolidated the UDF tie with the Nair vote base. While the KC went through multiple splits and mergers, at least a major KC splinter has been part of the UDF politics since 1980.[45] At a time, four KC parties have been part of the UDF. The alignment of the KC with the UDF significantly helped the latter ensure around two-thirds of

[44] Eeppan Varghese, "Speech on Motion of Thanks to Governor," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, April 02, 1987.

[45] The Kerala Congress has split multiple times after its formation in 1964. There is a famous saying in the state on the KC, 'a party that splits as it grows, and grows as it splits.'

total Christian votes, like Muslims. Consequently, the share of Christians in the UDF ministries and legislative membership has been higher than their population share.

When the two political alliances acquired concrete shapes in the 1980s, the UDF camp became a space for identity-based political parties in contrast with the Left Democratic Front (LDF), which was more or less left-centric. Admittedly, the UDF of the 1980s included all significant caste/community-centric political parties formed to protect exclusive community interests. The success of the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress in transforming a community pressure group into a political party exclusively serving the interest of their brethren encouraged the two dominant Hindu castes groups-the Nairs and Ezhavas- to contemplate forming their political parties. In the 1977 election, the NSS floated a political outfit, the National Democratic Party (NDP), to protect the Nair interest in Kerala politics in line with the League and KC. The SNDP followed suit to form the Socialist Republican Party (SRP) to advance the Ezhava interest in state politics.[46] The UDF welcomed the new parties into the alliance by honouring them with a few seats in assembly elections. The initial enthusiasm of the new-born caste parties in maintaining internal cohesion and popularity did not last as the factional politics soon crunched them.[47] The NDP did not make any difference in the voting pattern of the Nairs, who traditionally voted for the UDF, while the association of the SNDP-SRP with the UDF could not divert the electoral preference of the social majority Ezhavas, who constituted the vote base of the LDF. Nevertheless, the role of the NSS and SNDP as community pressure groups continued unabated even after the disastrous failure of the political formations they sponsored.

The party origin of Kerala politics advantaged the Congress over its bête noire Communist Party that all mainstream political outfits in the state some way or the other trace to the Congress tradition, providing an ideological anecdote to the former to align with any party. For instance, the Communist Party in Kerala was a faction within the Congress and initially preferred the identity of the CSP, the socialist faction within the Congress. The Congress socialist coterie, who were dissatisfied with the choice of Communism, separated from the party to form a distinct socialist party which split multiple times to produce outfits

[46] N in NDP and S in SRP had alternative connotations: the N meant National and Nair, while the S meant Socialist and Sree Narayana, the spiritual figure of the Ezhavas (B. L. Biju, "Bipolar Coalition System in Kerala: Carriers and Gatekeepers of Communal Forces in Politics" in *Religion and Modernity in India*, ed. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Aloka Parasher Sen, (New Delhi: Oxford University Publication, 2016).

[47] C. A. Josukutty, "Nature and Dynamics of Religion-Oriented Politics in Kerala," in *Politics and Religion in India*, ed. Narender Kumar (New York: Routledge India, 2019), 128

like the Janata Dal (S), and Loktantric Janata Dal (LJD).[48] The Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) was a party of Congress-Marxists who did not prefer the strategy of the Communist Party in wartime to support the colonial government. Similarly, the Kerala Congresses, Congress (S), and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) were early Congressmen who parted with the mother organisation for ideological and personal differences. The Muslim League, which has a very different genesis at the national level, cannot be completely ruptured from the legacy of the Congress Party, as many early leaguers were associated with the Congress Party in Kerala.[49] Thus, the coalition formation of the Congress and UDF was primarily about dividend maximisation and less about ideological unity.

The UDF follows a liberal approach of party accommodation essentially based on two agendas: first, to maximise the votes to the front against the bête noire, LDF, and second, to keep a tolerant approach to caste/community questions which gives space for any group to assert its right without infringing the rights of others. Unlike the LDF, there is hardly any limitation on UDF parties in articulating their community demands or indulging in social/religious practices.[50] In addition, there is hardly any obstacle to a left-leaning political party joining the UDF, and a slew of splinter communist and left parties used the opportunity after their differences with the left front. The Communist Marxist Party (CMP) of M. V. Raghavan, a former central committee member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-(CPM or CPIM), Janathipathya Samrakshana Samithi (JPSS) of K. R. Gouri, a founding member of the CPM and minister in all CPM-led governments from 1957 to 1991, and the RSP are some of the left parties preferred to join the UDF, despite their revolutionary Marxist ideologies. It should be borne in mind that in the fiercely competed bipolar competition, minor parties have oscillated between fronts on the opportunity structure.

Dealing with Communities

The Congress's approach to communities after independence in Kerala denoted a practice of open engagement recognising their roles in the democratic process. While the 'progressive' leadership at the national level clamoured for a stand against "casteism, communalism, and provincialism," the party units in the states indeed reconciled with

[48] Taylor C. Sherman, "'A New Type of Revolution': Socialist Thought in India, the 1940s–1960s," *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 4 (2018): 485–504.

[49] When Mahatma Gandhi visited Kerala in 1922, it was Seethi Saheb, the founding leader of the League and then the Congress member, who translated his speech into Malayalam.

[50] The president of the Muslim League, a constituent of the UDF, simultaneously holds many spiritual positions like Quali (formally the chief jurist) of thousands of mosques in Kerala and outside.

parochial interests.[51] The pre-independence phase of Congress acted as a federation of communities demarcating a larger space for community establishments to intervene in the day-to-day working of the party. It was not uncommon among Congress members to keep the dual membership of the party and their respective community organisations.[52] For instance, Mannam and Shankar, the figureheads of the NSS and SNDP in the 1940s, were part of the Congress Party, holding crucial organisational roles. A letter by A. K. Gopalan, the then CPI leader and a Member of Parliament, to Jawaharlal Nehru in 1954 concisely expresses the depth of the tie-up between the Congress and community organisations. He wrote to Nehru, "Almost all churches in Travancore-Cochin have been turned into election offices for the Congress Party."[53] The bondage between the Congress and communities was at an all-time high in the Liberation Struggle, in which the former provided a political phase to the protest of community establishments to topple the first communist government in 1959. Support for the anti-government protest, which was fundamentally an organised movement of communities to establish domination over communism, underscored the relationship between Congress and communities. By upholding the movement, Congress virtually agreed with the idea of community domination in politics. In the 1960 assembly election, held just after the fall of the communist ministry, all significant caste organisations proactively canvassed for the Congress Party. Kerala politics in the 1960s demonstrated what communities meant to Congress. The community leaders freehandedly directed the party's course by interfering in government formation, intra-party factionalism, electoral campaigns, portfolio allocations, and party splits.

The established groups and the Congress shared a symbiotic relationship of mutualism, each offering the other something required. A caste/community association is a formally organised entity with an elaborated organisational infrastructure, proper means of internal communication, headquarters and subordinate offices, and a hierarchical leadership structure in the form of a cadre party.[54] They control an extensive structure of institutions like

[51] Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 8-9.

[52] Maha Sabha leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Pandit Malaviya were presidents of the Congress in the early years (Myron Weiner, *Party Politics in India: the Development of a Multi-Party System,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 167).

[53] Quoted in Robert L Hardgrave Jr, "Caste and the Kerala Elections," *Economic and Political Weekly* 17, no. 16 (1965): 670.

[54] Lloyd I. Rudolph, and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs* 33, no. 1 (1960): 8–9.

schools, colleges, hospitals, charities, orphanages, care homes, business entities, and banks. The structure of community organisations demands heavy dependence on parties in power in matters related to government offices, police, vigilance, tax, land, and environmental clearance, to name a few. On the other head, the organisational mechanism of the Congress is not in the form of a bottom-up cadre party system with proper internal communication. Unlike the communist parties, the Congress's party machinery is insufficient to counter propaganda or conduct a high-volt electoral campaign. It develops into a two-way transaction of demand and supply: 'politicians can work with religious leaders to mobilise electoral support, and religious leaders can use politicians to access state resources.'[55] It is a classic case of a quid pro quo relationship. Congress provides a more accessible deal mechanism to communities than the left parties. The Congress Party has been attractive to community organisations precisely because the party has a flexible ideological mooring, unlike the communists, Hindu nationalists, and socialists.[56] Particularly the dominant community organisations find dealing with Congress more convenient than the Communist Party. The Congress Party's leader-centric structure, with heavy reliance on clientelistic relationships with people, leaves a larger space for an external organisation to influence the party programme. Rank and file of the Congress, mainly conservative and faithful, have a higher tendency to maintain equal affinity with the party and caste/community establishments. Linkages with community establishments often provide an added qualification to leaders in the party to lay claim over seats and organisational positions. It is common for Congress leaders to use recommendations of community leaders to leverage their claims for seats in elections. One former KPCC president explains the space for community organisations in the Congress Party's candidate list preparation process:

> In the Congress Party, any person can give candidate proposals, including self-candidacy. It goes through multiple stages of scrutiny, and the High Power Committee, composed of a few party top leaders, makes the final decision. There is no harm if a community organisation proposes a candidate. We only consider whether the candidate has better terms with the party, following among party workers, and winning probability. Merely because of nomination by any community organisation or not belonging to any community is not a qualification or disqualification. Community

[55] Pradeep K. Chhibber, and Rahul Verma, *Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party SystE. M. S. of India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 25.

[56] Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity*, 63.

> organisations are also part of our society; we cannot put any bar on their work, including suggesting candidates.[57]

It is common for community organisations to share a wish list before the election with the Congress Party that contains, but is not limited to, candidacy recommendations, cabinet portfolios for community favourites, and claims over positions in government corporations and boards. Clandestine understandings between community leaders and the Congress leadership have often leaked to the public. In 2012, the NSS General Secretary G. Sukumaran Nair revealed the stealth agreement he closed with the Congress high command at New Delhi before the 2011 assembly election that comprised a list of promises if the party elected to power. In a public meeting held at the NSS headquarter at Chenganassery, participated by state Congress leaders, the NSS supremo asked the Oommen Chandy Government to place his confidante Ramesh Chennithala, the KPCC president and a Nair community member, in a crucial cabinet position. He threatened to unseat the government, which survived on a wafer-thin majority if it failed to meet the majority community's demand. The Congress sources did not deny the deal, instead implicitly confirmed it: a prominent minister replied that the NSS has all right to correct him. The beleaguered Congress soon reshuffled the government to admit Chennithala as the Minister of Home Affairs, placed second only to the chief minister. Understanding between caste/community organisations and the Congress Party is not unusual in Kerala politics.

The Congress invests heavily in keeping a tight bond relationship with the NSS, which commands exceptional power over the insider politics of the party. Notwithstanding the stated position of the NSS, the equidistance with all parties, the outfit favours Congress and UDF in elections. The representative of a dominant community, the NSS, generally prefers oppositions to the left, which voices the lower-class interest. Two instances help us understand how important the NSS is to the Congress Party. First, the Congress Government at the centre honoured the NSS supremo Mannathu Pathmanabhan in 1966 with Padma Bhushan as a goodwill gesture to repair the tainted relationship between Congress and the organisation. The Congress had paid a high price for its decision in the mid-sixties to favour the Ezhava R. Shankar against the Nairs and Christians, which eventually led to the split in the party in 1964, giving a fatal blow to the grand old party. Mannam participated in dinner parties organised by Congress leaders in Delhi. The Delhi visit transformed Mannam from

[57] Muraleedharan, interview.

the commander of anti-Congress to the prophet of peace between factions of the party.[58] Second, the Indira Gandhi Government chose Kedangoor Gopalakrishna Pillai, the NSS General Secretary, as the Indian High Commissioner to Singapore.[59] The background of the Congress's decision was the NSS pressure on the Karunakaran Government (1982-87) to act on a few controversial demands. The matter was this: in 1983, the Nairs from different parts of the state gathered in Thiruvananthapuram in a Nair Sammelan, demanding the implementation of reservations for economically backward classes in forward communities and withdrawal of the urban land ceiling act, which were in the direct interest of the Nair community. In a show of strength, the organisers held a massive rally with the participation of three lakh people in the capital. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi arrived in the city to attend the merger program of Congress (I) and Congress (A), she spent maximum time with Kendangoor Gopalakrishnan Pillai to cool the furious Nairs. Similarly, in 1995, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao reached out to the NSS leader Narayana Panicker to initiate talks between the state Congress leaders and the organisation as both butt the head over some issues. The Congress leaders have kept the tradition of visiting the NSS headquarters at Chenganasserry of Kottayam and taking wishes from the Nair community leaders in elections.

The Christian churches have been influential pressure groups within the Congress and UDF. When the two dominant Hindu caste organisations, the NSS and SNDP, formed the Hindu Maha Mandalam in 1949 as a platform for the Hindus, the primary allegation against Congress was its Christian favouritism. R. Shankar, the then SNDP general secretary, advocated that 'the Christian Congress' be buried in six feet deep grave.[60] The Congress's prompt decision to oppose the Education Bill 1958, introduced by the Namboodiripad Government to reduce the control of management in education, is glaring evidence of the tight relationship between the party and the Christian community. The NSS and SNDP were initially enthusiastic about supporting the bill under the pretext that the move would contain the power of the Christians on education. Mannam asked to resist the Christian community's move to sabotage the communist government and spread unrest in the region. The Malabar

[58] Cheriyan Philip, *Kāl Noottāndu* (A Quarter Century), (Kottayam: DC Books, 2021), 121.

[59] Sreedhar Pillai, "National Democratic Party suffers major split on eve of crucial by-polls in Kerala," *India Today*, May 15, 1984, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19840515-national-democratic-party-suffers-major-split-on-eve-of-crucial-by-polls-in-kerala-803579-1984-05-14.

[60] Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala*, 126.

unit of the Congress, which the Nairs dominated, also supported the government legislation.[61] The church had a sore relationship with Congress for a couple of years in the first part of the 1960s; they reconciled to strengthen the anti-communist camp in elections. The formation of the Kerala Congress as the voice of the Christians in Kerala politics did not extinguish the community's bondage with the Congress.[62] Indeed, the catholic churches used the Kerala Congress to lobby political processes in the state, particularly inside the UDF. It is not uncommon that the church interferes in settling factional disputes in the KC. For instance, the church hosted a meeting in 2010 to make a plan to merge the two significant Kerala Congress Parties, the Kerala Congress (M) under K. M. Mani and Kerala Congress (J) under PJ Joseph, which had separated each other 23 years ago.

The Congress has relatively weak connections with the community organisations of the Muslims and Ezhavas. Significant Muslim organisations use the Muslim League to route to the UDF arrangements leaving little space for Congress to intervene. Some Congress leaders have tried to maintain a better relationship with Muslim organisations outside the control of the League, like the AP faction of the Samastha, who are generally supporters of the LDF. The Ezhava SNDP had a stopover with the UDF, against the interest of the majority of the community members. The UDF worked out a strategy in the 1996 assembly election to gain the support of the Ezhavas to compensate for the tainted relationship with the Nairs. First, the UDF admitted the Janadhipathya Samrakshana Samithi (JPSS), led by the communist Ezhava leader K. R. Gouri, who alleged discrimination against her community in the Communist Party after her expulsion from the CPM. Second, the UDF inducted a couple of SNDP leaders in the candidate list, including P Priyadrshan (Vice President, the SNDP) at Varkala, Dr. K. K. Rahulan (President, the SNDP) at Nattika; and Mohan Shankar at Kottayam.[63] Nevertheless, the experiment did not find any substantial result, and the UDF faced backlash in the election, while all SNDP-related candidates failed.

The UDF gives enormous space for community organisations to influence its policy, unlike the LDF, which is, in principle, against the established interests. The UDF manifestos

[61] Stany Thomas, "The Politics of Higher Education in Kerala: a Study of the Policies of Reform1957-1987," (PhD Thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, 1993), 296.

[62] Fearing the return of the Communist Party to power, Bishops canvassed for the Congress Party in elections after 1965 (KV. Varughese, *United Front Government in Kerala, 1967-69,* (Madras: Christ Literature Society, 1978), 21).

[63] Mootheril Raghavan Biju, *Politics of Democracy and Decentralisation in India: a Case Study of Kerala*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1997), 18.

and legislative measures reflect the interest of its social base- the privileged class and the established communities. The first Congress-supported government in 1960, which succeeded the 1957-9 communist government, reversed much of the radical policies adopted by the previous government. The Congress in power adopted educational policies to protect the commercial interest of the established communities, which possessed a significant number of schools and colleges. Ruling alliances, in general, and the Congress-led governments, in particular, helped the community-sponsored private management with sanctions for new colleges and increased seats.[64] In a similar move to protect the dominant group interest, before the 1987 assembly election, the UDF promised a fifteen per cent reservation of government jobs for economically backward sections irrespective of the community as a ploy to temper the discontented Nairs amid intense opposition from the Muslim League and backward castes. The UDF Manifesto for the 1996 assembly election offered a reservation of ten per cent of government jobs to economically weaker sections in forward communities and to establish a corporation for the welfare of the progress of economically weaker sections of forward groups.[65] In 2012, the UDF Government honoured the promise to establish the Kerala State Welfare Corporation for Forward Communities Ltd (KSWCFC), Samunnathi. On the reservation policy, the Congress stand has been vague regarding the conflict of interest between the forward and backward groups. Likewise, the Catholic Church and the Congress Party came to a loggerhead in 2013 over the recommendations of the K Kasturirangan Report on the conservation of the Western Ghats, which allegedly harmed the interest of farmers, predominantly the Christians. The church tacitly supported the ever-time foe LDF, which held a state-wide *hartal* against the report's proposal to classify 123 villages in the hilly districts of the state as Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ), effectively preventing major developmental activities. Eventually, the church arm-twisted the central government to reverse the decision even after the Ministry of Environmental Affairs published the report on the website.[66]

The openness of the UDF to the community question often ends up in an ugly demonstration of collective bargaining. The Oommen Chandy Government (2011-16), which survived with the thin majority of a four-seat difference with the opposition, witnessed the

[64] A Mathew, "Balancing Social and Regional Equity: Higher Education Policy Trajectory in Kerala," *Higher Education for the Future* 6, no. 2 (2019): 207-225.
[65] Biju, *Politics of Democracy and Decentralisation,* 15.
[66] VR Jayaraj, "To Appease Church, Ally in Kerala, Cong Lobbies with Centre," *the pioneer,* March 24, 2014, https://www.dailypioneer.com/2014/india/to-appease-church-ally-in-kerala-cong-lobbies-with-centre.html.

expressions of brazen communalism. For instance, the ally Muslim League demanded the fifth minister to maintain the balance of power between communities. The controversy erupted as the twenty-member ministry already had eleven minority ministers constituting fifty-five per cent, and adding one would further damage the communal equation, relegating the majority Hindu to below fifty per cent. On the other end, the League claimed its spiritual cum political head Panakkad Thangal had declared the name of the fifth minister after the approval from the front, and thus there cannot be any backtracking from the demand. The weak UDF leadership finally succumbed to the League pressure by admitting the League member Manjalamkuzhi Ali to the government. The knee-jerking policy of the Congress before communal pressure boils few Congress leaders as one spokesperson of the Congress said, 'when the community leaders ask you to sit, the Congress leaders scroll.'[67] See how one Congress leader, an MP in the Lok Sabha, criticizes his party's approach to communities:

> I respect what the left does (dealing with community organisations). Although they also engage with the caste organisations, the left never falls into the pressure politics and does not let the community leaders dictate them. See the difference between the left government and the last Congress Government. Caste organisations are not visible now, as the left would not entertain their threatening comments. Meanwhile, the left knows better how to use caste organisations to win elections effectively.[68]

The lucid approach of the Congress Party to community demands sometimes works against the party, while the left way of dealing enables the latter to put the communities in their control.

On Representation

A remark by a former KPCC president captures the two strands of thoughts in Congress in the 1970s on the representation of communities in politics:

> Karunakaran vs. Antony was an ideological battle within the party on the direction the party had to take. Karunakaran was a realist, and Antony was an idealist, but both ultimately wanted the success of the Congress Party. Oddly, the A group under Antony eventually embraced the Karunakaran style to take control of the party in the 1990s. The Oommen Chandy Government was the explicit manifestation of the shift. Antony wanted to direct the party, keeping a distance from the community groups,

[67] Interview with a Congress MP, New Delhi, January 31, 2022.
[68] Interview with a Congress MP, New Delhi,

while Karunakaran worked to keep cordial and equidistant relationships with all community organisations.[69]

The Congress traditionally is a party of consensus with multiple factions, which ensures a competitive mechanism of the party system.[70] Since the 1970s, the Kerala unit of the Congress has worked in a factional structure, the leaders and members are polarised into two groups under the two prominent leaders, A. K. Antony and K. Karunakaran. Rather than an internal scuffle for power, the bone of contention between the two factions was a perception difference over the direction the party had to take in the changed political scenario. Grown in the Liberation Struggle against the Communist Party in the late 1950s, the group of Young Turks under the leadership of A. K. Antony categorically opposed the official Congress line of explicit recognition to community groups and favoured a radical viewpoint against all established interests. The group had different nicknames- the KSU bloc, 'communist gang.'[71] The youth Congress of the 1960s was the Communist Party of the 1930s in terms of a radical approach to socio-political questions. Against the Congress Party's official position of respecting the community interests, the Youth Congress under Antony held massive protests against the commercialisation of education and exploitation of private management. Antony wrote in an article after a successful fight against the established interests in education in 1972: "We are indebted to the protestors for giving us a chance to prove that the Congress Party has metamorphosed to a revolutionary force not subordinate to community elite."[72] The ascendance of the thirty-three-year-old Antony in 1973 to the presidentship of the KPCC, the apex body of the party in the state, gave a major impetus to the young brigades. The reckless Antony, who became chief minister of Kerala in 1978 after the resignation of K. Karunakaran, deserted the position in protest against Indira Gandhi's decision to contest from Chikmangalore, Karnataka.[73] A statement by Antony in 2003, while the chief minister, on the influence of minority groups in Kerala politics made minorities red-

[69] Muraleedharan, interview.
[70] Rajni Kothari, "The Congress' System' in India," 1163.
[71] Vayalar Ravi said, "I went to meet Sanjay Gandhi … when Kamal Nath introduced me to him as a good party worker, He said, but he is a communist (Vayalar Ravi, "Vayalar Ravi 05/ Charithram Enniloode/ Safari TV," filmed February 09, 2021, Safari TV, 23.04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rdTaaesvbY)."

[72] Philip, *Kāl Noottāndu*, 197.

[73] Minhaz Merchant, "AK Antony Resigns as Chief Minister of Kerala," *India Today*, November 30, 1978, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19781130-ak-antony-Congress-janata-party-indira-gandhi-823410-2014-04-07.

faced. He stated: “Minorities in Kerala are powerfully organised... they have secured more privileges and benefits from-Government through collective bargaining. Unlike the rest of India, minority communities dominate the state's political and administrative echelons.”[74] The remark landed Antony in a tight spot, eventually forcing him to relinquish the chief minister position.

Against the Youth wing revolt, the stalwart of the Congress, K. Karunakaran, whom the followers reverently called 'the leader' because of the unqualified influence he had over the people, guided the party with a pragmatic approach to the community question. He stated in an interview, “Communalism exists in Kerala because Kerala is inhabited by human beings.”[75] He had a unique style of balancing a cordial relationship with all prominent community establishments in Kerala. The UDF in the 1980s under Karunakaran followed a consociational model of accommodation wherein all significant caste/religious groups got representations in the ruling coalition. The Karunakaran Government (1982-87) was a *Grand Coalition* of political parties representing different social groups: the Muslim League for Muslims, Kerala Congresses for Christians, Socialist Republic Party (SRP) for Ezhavas, and National Democratic Party (NDP) for Nairs. Beyond that, the Congress itself parted the positions within the party on the community line dividing among leaders of different sections.[76] Karunakaran’s consociationalism extended to the marginalised scheduled community: against the convention, he undertook the portfolio of Welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST), accommodated two SC ministers with a better portfolio like transport, and allotted a Rajya Sabha seat to an SC member. A remark by Thachady Prabhakaran, the Congress leader, pithily covers the thought process of the UDF in his Thanks to the Governor's Address. He told the house, “In Kerala, ninety per cent of the people in Nair, Ezhava, and Muslim communities are poor. When communities of poor stand together, the primary job of those community parties is to protect the interest of the social

[74] M G Radhakrishnan, “Kerala CM AK Antony Anti-Minority Barb Draws Flack and Praises,” *India Today*, June 18, 2012, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/20030728-kerala-cm-antony-anti-minority-barb-draws-flack-and-praises-792189-2003-07-27.

[75] Muraleedharan, interview.

[76] Significant to the power-sharing principle, the CM in the UDF Government (1982-87) retained insignificant portfolios after distributing major departments among allies and factions within the Congress. The Congress has continued the tradition of power distribution, and the CMs were just the first among the equals, unlike the practice in some parliamentary cabinets.
The Karunakaran ministry parted the cabinet among the four significant groups in near proportion to the population: Christians 21%; Muslims 21%; Ezhavas 27%, and Nairs 17%.

majority poor. Being believers in democracy, the primary task of the united front is to unite all democratic forces against communism which is detrimental to the country."[77]

The initial mark of difference between the UDF and LDF was the character of their constituents: the community-affiliated confessional parties preferring the UDF and non-confessional left ideology parties joining the LDF. Although parties of all hues have mixed up between the fronts in later phases, the UDF has maintained its distinctiveness- an open approach with community representation. The UDF mechanism has fewer official bars on constituents exclusively catering to particular interests and using caste/ethnic symbols for political purposes. Some UDF partners are overtly community parties, considered a political face to the community organisations they cater to. The Muslim League boldly states that its objective is to protect the interests of Muslim minorities in independent India. The Kerala Congress parties are the representative organs of the Syrian Christian community. As Weiner termed, 'a party may conceal its caste loyalties with ideological trimmings,'[78] the KC parties disguise their social identity with the ideological cover-up of serving the peasants in central Kerala. Bishops directly act when there is an issue in the KC parties, and many times they have mediated between different KC parties to settle their disputes and manage frictions. The UDF encouraged the political ambitions of the two Hindu caste organisations, the NSS and SNDP, who formed political parties in the 1970s. The UDF facilitated the Hindu caste parties' entry into the front, giving them respectable positions. Any political party was welcome to the UDF with the basic idea of uniting against the left politics.

There are a few significant points about how the UDF follows the principle of cultural autonomy and mutual veto, the two vital components of consociational democracy. Mutual veto enables communities to overrule matters of vital interest to specific groups. Segmental autonomy permits autonomous activities of groups in areas of their exclusive domains, like education, religious beliefs, and culture. First, the UDF has an informal rule of communal autonomy in exclusive domains like culture, religious beliefs, and education.[79] For instance,

[77] Thachady Prabhakaran, "Speech on Motion of Thanks to Governor," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, June 28, 1982.

G. Karthikeyan, a Congress MLA, stated a similar view on the caste question in the assembly (G. Karthikeyan, "Speech on Motion of Thanks to Governor," in Kerala Legislative Assembly, March 29, 1982).

[78] Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity*, 51.

[79] The UDF Government introduced the Travancore-Cochin Hindu religious institutions (Amendment) Bill in 1986 to restrict non-believers from taking part in the temple administration (K. Karunakaran, "Speech in the Kerala Legislative Assembly," November 27, 1986).

the Muslim League holds government corporations and boards for the welfare or governance of Muslim affairs, like the Wakf Board, Haj Committee, and minority affairs. The mutual veto principle, the authority of segments to decide on legislation and governance of affairs in their exclusive domain, is an informal understanding within the UDF. Second, the UDF has a policy of facilitating communities to engage in education and welfare activities with the support of the public exchequer. The UDF policy generally favours the commercialisation of education and the provision of self-finance educational institutions, the two areas where the community groups are the hegemon.[80] The UDF has extensively supported the colonial-time Mappila Schools, which work on the Islamic calendar following Arabic as the first language, Ramadan month holiday, and Friday as a week off instead of Saturday. These measures made the UDF as enabling the principle of segmental autonomy in practice.

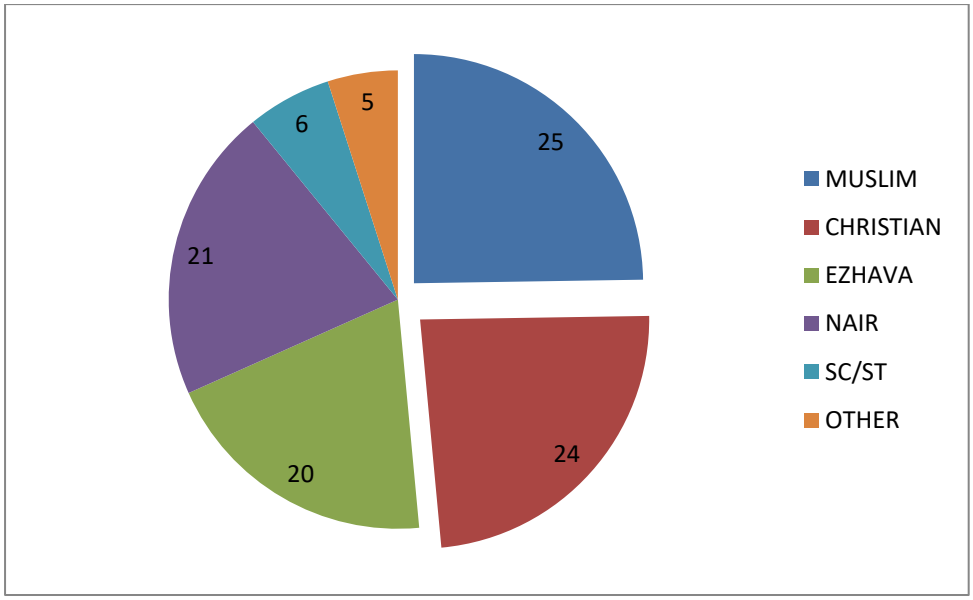
It is noteworthy that Congress has cultivated a strand of leaders acceptable to all sections, transgressing the narrow segmental interests. The political design of Kerala, emanated from the extreme social fragmentation, demanded leadership above segments. K. Karunakaran, who headed the parliamentary organ of the party from 1967 to 1994 till his resignation from the post of chief minister, is a classic case. A pious Hindu and a devotee of the Lord Ayyappa at Guruvayoor, Karunakaran catered to people across the society. His relationship with different categories of people enabled him to revamp the Congress Party from a penurious status of nine seats in 1967 to capture power with formidable seats. Meanwhile, another class of leaders drew an image of being communally unbiased by relinquishing linkages with religious/caste affiliations. Their uncompromising attitude toward religious organisations gained them the reputation of impartial politicians within the Congress Party who did not bias the Congress politics for petty sectarian gains. One Congress MP says,

> I did not know which religion I belonged to and which caste I represented because I grew up in such a background. When I grew up to join the KSU, the Congress student wing, I received classes on secularism and the training to raise above all narrow sectarian interests. In our student struggles, we proudly shouted, "Not the Hindu blood, neither the Muslim blood nor the Christian blood, we retain the human blood." Moreover, when I grew up to contest the election, Ekandapuram constituency, where my party asked me to contest, never had people of my community in large numbers to influence the result, and the majority of voters from the community supported my opponent. I have Geetha, Bible, and Quran in my home; I go to the temple, pray in

[80] Mathew, "Balancing Social and Regional Equity."

churches and fast during Ramadhan. Thus when I contested the election, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians all felt I was their representative. Without that, I would not have won the elections.[81]

Figure 5 1: Social Profile of UDF Cabinet (1982-2016)



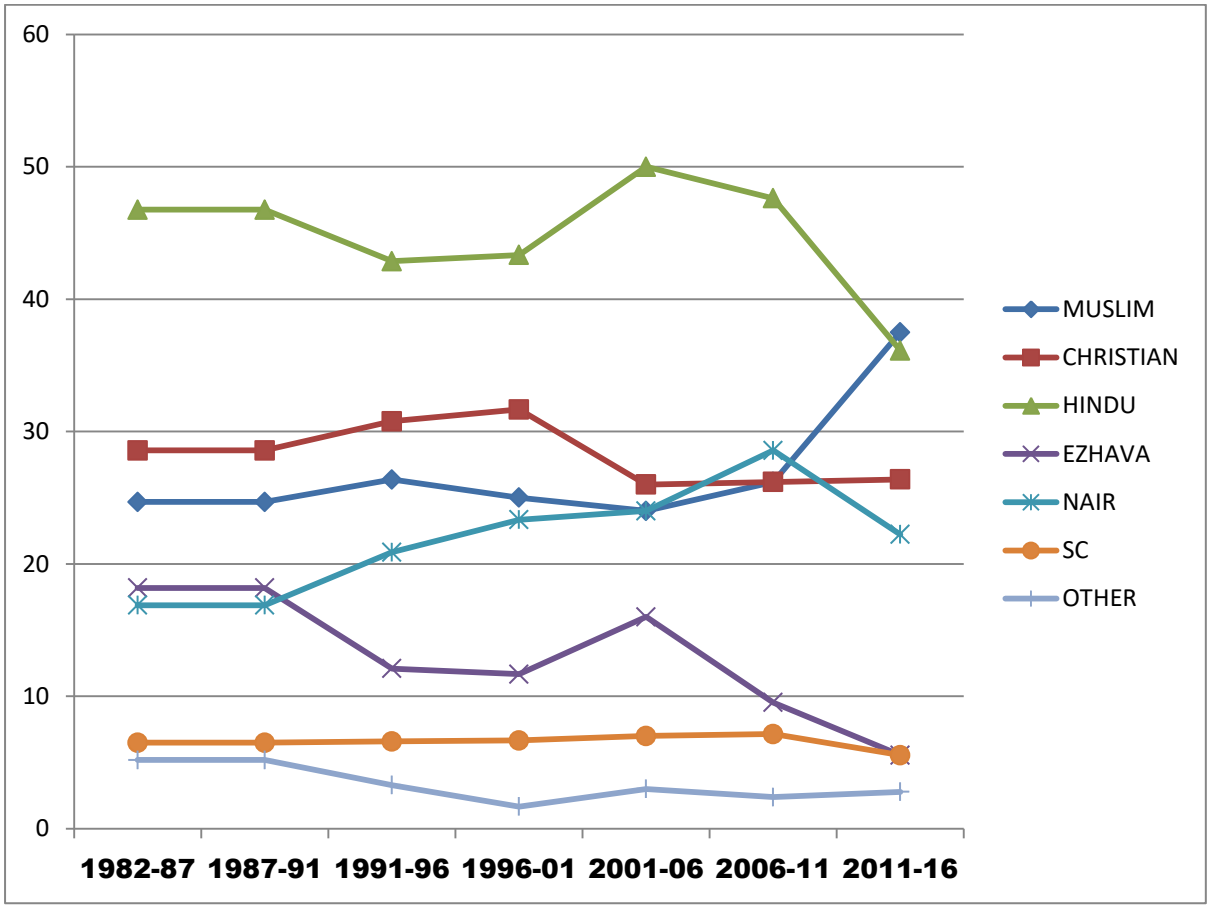
Source 7: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data

Confirming the statement of the Congress leaders regarding their strategy of social engineering to include all groups in the panels, the caste-religious profile of the Congress Party demonstrates a balance of caste and community (Figure 5.1 and 5.2). The open approach of the UDF to community representation has been reflected in the social composition of the front's government and the legislative assembly membership. The two religious minorities have been given more representations than their population share, reflecting the social base of the front in those two communities. Although the Hindus have been below their population share in the UDF panels, they were also in prominent posts of the front and its governments. The UDF has followed a balanced distribution of ministries among the four significant groups: Hindu Nairs: twenty-one per cent; Hindu Ezhavas: twenty; Muslims: twenty-five; and Christians: twenty-four. The Nairs and Christians have taken a proportionately higher share of the pie, implying their unabated domination in the Congress Party formations since the colonial time. Among the Hindus, the two dominant caste groups

[81] Interview with a Congress MP, New Delhi, December 12, 2021.

have garnered the maximum of ministries and representative positions at the cost of demographically insignificant communities. A serious note to the UDF camp is that the share of the most prominent Hindu community, Ezhavas, has been declining at an alarming rate. The front had a comparatively lesser number of reserved SC/ST legislators. Nevertheless, the UDF camp gave the community some significant portfolios compared to the left. The general configuration of the UDF is balancing the dominant sections and accommodating the groups that are not the core of the front.

Figure 5 2: Social Break-up of the UDF MLAs (1982-2016)



Source 8: author's calculation based on information provided by Kerala Legislative Assembly Website and field data

Conclusion

The academic discourse on power-sharing in India, primarily based on the inclusive politics of the Congress Party, could not provide a consistent explanation. They received more criticism than appraisals. This chapter provided an original analysis of how the Congress-led UDF coalition in Kerala has addressed social identities in political processes. It did so by dissecting the evolutionary process of Congress and the UDF with a particular

focus on four aspects: the social base, expansion approaches, dealings with communities, and viewpoint on community representation. It also checked the social composition of the Congress-led cabinets and assembly members to decipher the impact of the party's qualitative approach to the issue of numbers. The political trajectory of Congress in Kerala diverged from other states precisely because the party seldom had a stage of hegemonic position in Kerala's public space. The rise of the Communist Party to power in 1957 was symptomatic of a more profound crisis in the Congress Party: it was riddled with the community in fights and group factionalism. This inquiry advances three significant findings to understand Congress politics in Kerala better.

First, the characteristic feature of Congress as a federation of communities in colonial Travancore continued to define the party's activities in post-colonial Kerala, where it confronted the Communist Party-led left front. By supporting the Liberation Struggle, organised by community establishments, Congress virtually agreed with community domination in politics. The weakened organisational structure and the legacy of the TSC made the Kerala unit of Congress a common platform of communities. A party equally accessed by all social groups, Congress in Kerala has significant attributes of a consociational party. The organisational mechanism of the party is in fashion with settling conflicts of interest between different social groups. After the formation of the Mini Front Government in 1970, Congress marked a transition from open community confrontation to a systemic community coalition that ended up in the formation of the UDF in 1979. The all-encompassing UDF coalition institutionalised community politics, openly recognising the demands of distinct groups and their representation. Henceforth, Congress approached the question of diversity through its party mechanism and the coalition system. Second, the UDF had an open approach to caste/community questions in Kerala; its policies recognised social identities and legitimised political parties floated by community organisations. The UDF mechanism informally followed a variant of consociationalism with all four principles: grand coalition, mutual veto, proportionality, and segmental autonomy. An arrangement tacitly recognising segmental interests, the UDF coalitions were Grand Coalitions in a blueprint, albeit there were relative variations in the representation of communities.

Third, the Congress-led regimes structurally favoured the interest of its social base, forward castes, and religious minorities regarding seat distributions and policy options. The policy preference was apparent in education, wherein the UDF Government supported the commercialisation of education to protect the interest of community-led management. Lastly,

the UDF approach to diversity in Kerala has features of accommodation and integration, considerably titled towards the former.

Chapter VI

Parties outside Bipolarity: The Failure of Third Alternatives

This chapter lays out the picture outside the bipolar competition structure, forces trying to replace the existing political alliances. The political coalitions explained in the previous chapters absorb eighty-five to ninety per cent of the votes, reflecting their capacity to accommodate the best part of the people.[1] The forces outside the coalitions are insignificant to pressurise the structure or do not subscribe to the basic tenets of the state's mainstream politics. This chapter deals with political forces that endorse exclusive political ideology or an assimilationist view on diversity. In doing so, it enquires why the Hindu nationalism and radical Muslim parties, who challenge the political methods of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and United Democratic Front (UDF), fail to impact electorally in the state. The mainstream academic discourses have treated the electoral failure of the right in Kerala as a contingency of the presence of well-organised secular parties who constructively engage with right-wing politics and, consequently, failed to unearth the real obstacle of the right in the state's politics.[2] The complexity of the question augments the fact that the right has been socially very active in Kerala in day-to-day welfare and religious activities, and its failure has been in translating its organisational muscle into electoral outcome. In unpacking the puzzle, this paper raises a few questions about the rise of the Hindu right and radical Muslim parties and their electoral strategies in the past decades. It argues that the fundamental failure of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Muslim radicals in Kerala is their inability to gate-crash the vital institutions of coalition politics maneuvered by the political parties in the state. In doing so, this chapter first engages with a few Hindu rights mobilisations in the last decades, then explains how it fails to fit into Kerala's political frame, and then details the trajectory of the radical Muslim parties.

[1] Between 1980 and 2016, the average combined vote of the LDF and the UDF was 86.5 per cent (the data is based on the calculation done by the author using the information provided by the Election Commission of India website). The recent trend shows that the BJP is gradually eating into the votes of the two alliances.

[2] There is a long list of reasons the commentators and academics give about the cause of BJP's failure, including Kerala's educational progress, the vibrant communist movement, minority presence, awareness about right-wing politics, and strategic voting (PK Yasser Arafath, "Hindutva's onward March in Kerala," *The Hindu*, July 4, 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/hindutvas-onward-march-in-kerala/article28275344.ece; and Anoop Sadanandan, "Why the BJP's Hindutva Experiment Failed in Kerala," *The Wire*, May 27, 2019, https://thewire.in/politics/elections-2019-results-kerala-bjp-hindutva).

The Hindu Right in Kerala

The Hindu rights ideology had resonated in Kerala's social landscape in its early phase. The first organisational attempt of the right in the state was the establishment of the Kerala Hindu Mahasabha (1925), followed by subsequent efforts to open its branches across the state. The formal entry of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to Kerala was in 1942,[3] with the establishment of a unit in Malabar soon after the outfit resolved to take the project beyond Maharashtra.[4] The right found three significant advantages in Malabar over the other two provinces in Kerala, Cochin, and Travancore. First, a tainted memory of the Malabar Rebellion can effectively sensitise the Hindus of the region to a possible Muslim threat, unlike the Hindus of Travancore and Cochin, where no such mass Hindu-Muslim violence happened under the Hindu princely rulers.[5] Second, being part of British India, Malabar was more connected with the mainstream than Cochin and Travancore, which were locked in region-specific issues.[6] Third, the Hindu right could pitch the rationale of Hindu insecurity in the presence of a sizeable Muslim population[7] and the Muslim League, which was part of the Pakistan movement allegedly demanding a Mappila homeland, Mappilistan, in colonial times.[8] For an extended period after the independence, the RSS and its political formations focussed on Malabar for the same reasons. In the formation years, the Hindu right favoured the Congress in Malabar as it was against the Communist Party and the Muslim League.[9]

The stated focus of the RSS activity has been to sensitise Hindu issues and then build up a community collective against Muslims, Christians, and Communists, three of whom

[3] Krishna Menon, "Politics in Kerala," *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no. 2/3 (1995): 18.

[4] As per Hedgewar's plan, the RSS expansion to the south was in a later stage (Douglas C Smyth, "The Social Basis of Militant Hindu Nationalism," *The Journal of Developing Areas* 6, no. 3 (1972): 335).

[5] Malabar rebellion has been an essential topic of the RSS campaign. Savarkar wrote a novel on the rebellion in Marathi titled *Mala Kai Tyache* (How do I Care?) under the pseudonym Babarao (Vaibhav Purandare, *Savarkar: The True Story of the Father of Hindutva*, (New Delhi: Juggernaut, 2019).

[6] After the fall of Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan, Malabar came under the direct rule of the British Government as part of the Madras Presidency.

[7] Smyth, "The Social Basis of Militant Hindu Nationalism," 325.

[8] M. Gangadharan, "Emergence of the Muslim League in Kerala: An Historical Enquiry'," in *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective* ed. Asghar Ali Engineer (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1995), 212.

[9] Koushiki Dasgupta, *Electoral Politics and Hindu Nationalism in India: The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1951–1971*, (New York: Routledge, 2020).

have a solid presence in Kerala.[10] Temple protection has provided an easy anecdote to the RSS campaigns[11] to emotionally connect with ordinary Hindus, instigate sparks of communal friction, and mobilise people against state governments, which purportedly work to appease minority groups. The primary target of the RSS was to produce a narrative that the religious minorities who command organised social and political establishments lay undue pressure on the two mainstream political parties in the state and the Hindu interests are under threat in the process. Thali temple controversy, tension over a hitherto unknown temple in a tiny village called Angadippuram in the present-day Malappuram district, is a case in point.[12] In 1968, the Malabar Temple Protection Council, a body under the leadership of Gandhian K Kelappan to look after the temples in the region, undertook a project to renovate Thali Temple, which was on government-owned land. The background of the issue was the government's decision to reject the council's request to grant it ownership of the temple for renovation purposes.[13] The council put out a massive state-wide protest against the government with the active support of the RSS and Jana Sangh, who launched a high-powered national campaign on how "atheists and Muslims" collude to destroy Hinduism in Kerala.[14] The opposition of a few local Muslims to the worship in the temple fanned the tension creating an atmosphere of a Hindu-Muslim confrontation in the region. The Jana Sangh president Atal Bihari Vajpayee issued a statement in New Delhi warning the state government about the consequences if it did not settle the matter quickly. Later in 1974, the council succeeded in starting the renovation work with the support of a court order.

The active presence of the Muslim League in Kerala politics as a partner to the two mainstream parties provided a convenient tool for Hindu rights politics. In 1968, the E. M. S.

[10] Golwalkar describes Kerala as the hotbed of all three enemies-Muslims, Christians, and Communists (M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, (Bangalore: Vikrama Prakashan, 1968), 166-194).

[11] OB Roopesh, "Educating 'Temple Cultures' Heterogeneous Worship and Hindutva Politics in Kerala," *Sociological Bulletin* 70, no. 4 (2021): 485-501, doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/00380229211051042.

[12] There have been numerous cases related to disputes on temples. Although the Shabarima protest (O. B. Roopesh, "Sabarimala Protest," *Economic and Political Weekly* 53, no. 49 (2018)), after the court decision allowing women to enter the temple premise is also an example, this work considered the Thali issue as it involved the temple, Muslims, and government.

Angadippuram was part of the Palakkad district and later became part of Malappuram after the formation of the district.

[13] NM Kadambad Namboodirippad, "Kelappajiyum Thalikshethrasamaravum (Kelappa G and Thali Protest)," *Kesari*, November 19, 2021, https://kesariweekly.com/24797.

[14] P.M. Mammen, *Communalism vs. Communism: a Study of the Socio-Religious Communities and Political Parties in Kerala, 1892-1970*, (Culcutta: Minerva, 1981), 159.

Namboodipipad Government, in which the Muslim League was a significant partner, proposed to create a new district called Malappuram, a de facto Muslim majority district in the stronghold of the League, drawing criticism from many sides. The seven-party government headed by E. M. S. Namboodiripad was the first government in independent India to give a cabinet berth to the Muslim League, which was part of the Pakistan movement. The opposition parties, including the Congress, Kerala Congress, Jana Sangh, and Swatantra, asked the government to withhold the decision.[15] The protestors formed the Anti-Malappuram District Action Committee, with the leadership of Kutti Shankaran Nair and K Kelappan. The committee alleged the conspiracy of the League leaders to create a Mappilistan to be merged with Pakistan. The committee planned massive campaigns against the move with the support of the RSS and Jana Sangh, who took the issue to the national level and held a signature campaign to canvass people's opinions across the country.[16] Although the campaign did not help backtrack the government from the decision, it helped the Hindu right organisationally. First, the movement provided the RSS and Jana Sangh a platform to directly interact with the public and prove their capacity to take up a state-wide protest with active popular participation. Second, the RSS tried to send a message to Hindus in Muslim majority pockets that the RSS is here to protect their interest, for which mobilising Hindu identity is necessary. In similar forms, the RSS used anti-Muslim rhetoric on various occasions to arouse Hindu sentiments against the influence of Muslims in Kerala politics. The list of such campaigns includes protests against the government's decision to pension 1921-Khilafat warriors in 1986 and the decision of the Babri Action Committee, in which the ruling ally Muslim League was a member, to boycott Republic day. In these instances, the primary target of the RSS was the ruling political party which bore the brunt of the alliance with the Muslim League.[17]

[15] The proposals' opponents included the Marxist extremist KPR Gopalan and the Congress Party. The Congress Kozhikode District Committee found the move a revival of the old Mappilistan demand by the League (R. Radhakrishnan, “Muslims and Changing Political Trends in Kerala,” (PhD Thesis, University of Kerala, 2004), 122)

[16] K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism: Inroads in a Leftist Stronghold,* (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1991), 189.

[17] The Muslim League was not always the direct target of the Sangh campaigns. The League and the Sangh had a cordial relationship in some cases: the League leaders have campaigned for the Jana Sangh candidate K.G. Marar in the Peringalam constituency (Kunhikannan, K, *K G Marar Manushyapattinte Paryayam* (KG Marara: the Symbol of Humanity), (Calicut: India Books, 2021), 145. O. Rajagopal of BJP was an invitee to League chief minister C.H. Mohammed Koya's sworn-in ceremony (O. Rajagopal, *Jeevithamrtham: O. Rajagopalinte Athmakatha* (Precious Life: Autobiography of O. Rajagopal), (Kottayam: DC Books, 2009).

The political campaign of the RSS drew to the Christian minority just as with the Muslims. The right alleged that governments in Kerala heel to the pressure clout of Christian establishments who navigate the wheels of the political alliances, particularly of the UDF. A controversy over the proposal of constructing a church at Nilakkal, remote forest land in the present-day Pathanamthitta district, illustrates the RSS approach towards the Christian minority in Kerala. The apple of discord was this: the Christian organisations proposed to construct a church at Nilakkal, which was believed as one of the seven sites where St. Thomas established churches in Kerala in the first century;[18] on the other, the RSS and a few Hindus ferociously opposed the move as the spot was in front of a temple called Mahadeva Temple within the vicinity of the holy Garden of Sabarimala. Although previous governments had allotted forest lands for the church's construction, the divided church council could not start the work of failing to create a consensus within the body. The immediate urge to start the construction was the claim of a farmer to have discovered an old cross from the place.[19] Under the initiative of the RSS, twenty-three Hindu organisations formed the Nilakkal Action Committee, which planned a state-wide protest against the move of the government to provide land for the church in the area and to observe April 30 as the "Nilakkal Day."[20] The RSS passed a resolution stating, "The A.B.K.M. hereby wishes to caution the Christian brothers and the Kerala Government that if a just and amicable solution is not found without further delay, Hindus all over the country may feel seriously agitated."[21] The protest's primary target was the 'appeasement policy' by the state government, which included two Christian confessional parties, the Kerala Congress (Mani) and Kerala Congress (Joseph). A protest rally by a group of Sanyasis from Kannur in the north to Kanyakumari in the south shouting sensitive slogans galvanised a large audience beyond Pathanamthitta. The protesters stopped chief minister K. Karunakaran from entering the Guruvayur Temple, a prestigious Hindu pilgrimage temple in the Trissur district. Amid intense protests, the government announced granting one hectare of forest land for the church's construction, inviting the right wing's ire. Nevertheless, the timely decision of the council of Christian

[18] Sreedhar Pillai, "Nilakkal in Kerala Set for a Hindu-Christian Confrontation," *India Today,* June 15, 1983, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19830615-nilakkal-in-kerala-set-for-a-hindu-christian-confrontation-770727-2013-07-19.

[19] George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala,* (New Delhi: Concept Publication, 1989), 211.

[20] Jitheesh P.M, "Appropriation of Ayyappa Cult: The History and Hinduisation of Sabarimala Temple," *The Wire*, October 12, 2018, https://thewire.in/history/appropriation-of-ayyappa-cult-the-history-and-hinduisation-of-sabarimala-temple.

[21] From A.B.K.M. resolution, 1983: Violation of Hindu Sanctity in Kerala

churches fended off the confrontation: it withdrew from the early plan of church construction at the site to choose a different location, granted by the government, away from the controversial point. The Nilakkal incident gave the RSS a symbolic victory over the Christians and a boost to take up protests against the government and the alleged Christian influences.[22] The RSS has a long history of confronting Christian establishments, which allegedly engage with humanitarian assistance programs for proselytising Hindus.[23] On several occasions, the right organisations opposed the Christian influences in Kerala politics. In 1986, the Hindu rights organisations strongly opposed the state government's spending to welcome Pope John Paul II to Kerala. The RSS argued that the state could not spend the tax money on the visit of a religious head, and there is no convention for the state to receive even a country head.

A significant factor that helped the RSS gain the clout of visibility in Kerala was the violent confrontation with the Communist Party and the campaigns of claiming victimhood in the conflict. In the Kannur district, which has been the hotbed of political killing in Kerala, the police records indicate ninety-one political murders between 1983 and September 2009, of which thirty-one belong to the RSS-BJP, thirty-three to the Communist Party, and fourteen to the Congress.[24] Although there are local specific political causes for the killings, the ideological and partisan differences between the RSS and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM or CPIM) dominate. Notwithstanding the differences of opinion about the cause and origin of the violence,[25] both sides seem responsible for protecting the murderers by providing them with legal and financial assistance. The two sides have their accounts of the violence: the RSS argues that the ideology of communism purports a class antagonism theory where one class of people engage in war with the other to annihilate the opponent; the Communist Party argues that the violence emanates from the RSS's hatred ideology that posits communists along with minority communities as permanent enemies. In 1981, the RSS

[22] C. A. Josukutty, "Nature and Dynamics of Religion-Oriented Politics in Kerala," in *Politics and Religion in India*, ed. Narender Kumar, 124–138 (New York: Routledge India, 2019), 130.
[23] Golwalkar wrote in detail about the threat of Christianity in his famous work (Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, 179-186).
RSS passed a resolution against foreign-funded Christian missionary activities in 1987 and other times.
[24] Ruchi Chaturvedi, "Understanding the majoritarian violence and politics of Kerala's Kannur," *The Wire*, March 7, 2017, https://thewire.in/politics/majoritarian-violence-politics-kerala-kannur.

[25] Ruchi Chaturvedi, "Political Violence, Community and its Limits in Kannur, Kerala," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 49, no. 2 (2015): 162-187; Nitasha Kaul and Nisar Kannangara, "The Persistence of Political Power: A Communist 'Party Village' in Kerala and the Paradox of Egalitarian Hierarchies," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (2021): 1-31; and NP Ullekh, *Kannur: Inside India's Bloodiest Revenge Politics*, (New Delhi: Penguin Random House India Private Limited, 2018).

held a massive demonstration in the state capital against the government, headed by the Communist Party, for failing to stop violence against its workers. In the same period, a BJP delegation to study the political killing in Kerala, headed by Ram Jethmalani, Bhai Mahavir, and Jana Krishnamurthi, visited different spots of violence and alleged that the LDF Government failed to ensure the law and order situation in the state. Later, the right-wing organisation took the matter to the national level to campaign against the Communist Party on how violent communism kills patriotic Hindus in Kerala.[26] Although the campaign served a political purpose in other states, it did not make any difference in Kerala because an equal number of people were killed on both sides.

Regarding the geographical spread, the two edges of the state, north, and south, have been strongholds of the RSS since the early phases, ostensibly because of cultural differences between the interior parts and the borderlands. In the northern tip, Kasargod was historically part of the South Canara district, the majority of which is now part of Karnataka; large chunks of its people are Tulu, Kannada, Kongan, and Marathi speakers. Culturally, Kasargod has more affinity with Mangalore and Karnataka than with Kerala: the popular celebration here is Dessara, one of the few festivals officially celebrated by the RSS nationally, and not Onam, which other places in Kerala celebrate. For many years even after the formation of Kerala, the RSS branches in Kasargod were under the Karnataka provincial committee in the RSS organisational structure. The BJP candidates finished runner-up in recent assembly elections in two northern constituencies of Kasargod district, the Kasargod and Manjeshwaram, reflecting the neighbourhood effect with Karnataka, the only south Indian state where the BJP held power. In the southern end, Thiruvananthapuram has a peculiar political atmosphere caused by the interplay of two obvious factors helping RSS's growth: first, as the capital of a Hindu kingdom for many years, there is high Hindu religious consciousness among the people; and second, the high caste Hindus who were the benefactors of early government employments and respected the old Hindu dynasties.[27] The BJP has been performing well in a few assembly seats in the district and finished runner-up in the Lok Sabha constituency, Thiruvananthapuram.

[26] The RSS made a massive campaign called Redtrocity (red plus atrocity) (Ullekh, *Kannur: Inside India's Bloodiest Revenge Politics)*.
[27] James Chiriyankandath, "Hindu Nationalism and Regional Political Culture in India: a Study of Kerala," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 2, no. 1 (1996): 59, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537119608428458.

Against the initial reluctance, the RSS spread beyond Malabar to attract people to other places and social groups. The recent electoral performance of the BJP shows that the party has been gaining ground in southern Kerala as well. In its early phases, the social base of the RSS was upper caste Nairs and Brahmins, with very few others in the rank and file.[28] Although the RSS's founding principles advocate downplaying caste identities, the members in Kerala continued to be associated with their caste organisations. The RSS later made an inroad into a section of lower caste Ezhavas, the core social base of the Communist Party.[29] The social welfare activities of the Sangh family organisations have helped the RSS dive into the tribal groups, fishermen communities, and Dalits in some parts of the state. Nevertheless, the RSS's headway to the lower castes has not significantly damaged the left's hold over the lower castes, and the scheduled caste organisations like the Kerala Pulaya Maha Sabha (KPMS) keep a close relationship with the Communist Party and Congress, not BJP.[30] The RSS is still identified with the Hindu majority, and only a tiny section of religious minorities have eloped with the organisation.

The Political Phase of the Hindu Right

Since the state's formation in 1956, the right has been puzzled to reckon Kerala's bipolar electoral pendulum that revolved around the two mainstream parties, the Congress and the Communist Party, with other parties lined up behind. In the early phases, the political formations sponsored by the RSS remained at the margin of the electoral structure, failing to protect even their deposits in constituencies they contested.[31] Whereas the Hindu rights parties gradually improved their positions in other parts of India, their progress in Kerala was ignominious, failing to win the general election. The victory of the BJP leader O. Rajagopal in the 2016 assembly election from the Nemom constituency of the Thiruvananthapuram district, the party's opening in Kerala politics, was the only time the party secured a seat in the general election. The performance of the BJP and its predecessor Jana Sangh in the last elections are these: a few candidates could finish runner-ups; few of them succeeded in

[28] O. Rajagopal wrote in his biography that the Sangh had limited influence among lower castes for long years (O. Rajagopal, *Jeevithamrtham: O. Rajagopalinte Athmakatha* (Precious Life: Autobiography of O. Rajagopal), (Kottayam: DC Books, 2009).

[29] Yasser P K Arafath, "Southern Hindutva: Rhetoric, Parivar Kinship and Performative Politics in Kerala, 1925–2015," *Economic and Political Weekly* 56, no. 2 (2021): 56.

[30] Tariq Thachil, *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 214.

[31] The Jana Sangh vote had been below one per cent in all elections till 1977.

saving their deposits, while the majority failed to do so; in some constituencies, the presence of Hindu nationalist candidates changed the balance of power between the UDF and LDF; and in local bodies, they found success in few pockets in triangular competition with the two dominant alliances. The following part examines how the right executed its political strategies in Kerala.

The first category of political experiments based on Hindu identity was by the two dominant caste organisations, the Nair Service Society (NSS) and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), which tried to float a united Hindu party against the pressure politics of minorities, with the explicit support of the RSS/Jana Sangh/BJP. Alleging the Congress Party's bias toward Christians, the NSS supremo Mannathu Padmanabhan and the SNDP leader R. Shankar formulated the Hindu Maha Mandalam on February 24, 1950, as an organisation for all Hindus in Travancore-Cochin. The immediate motive for waving the new fraternity was the Congress Party's move to introduce the Devaswom Bill in the assembly against the opposition of Hindu organisations.[32] The NSS and SNDP agreed to dissolve their organisations and gradually hand over the ownership of their properties to the new organisation. The organisation sporadically expanded by opening branches across the state, taking pledges to remove caste differences among Hindus. The response of the Congress Party was provocative that it took disciplinary actions against fourteen members, including Mannam and Shankar, for anti-party activities. The Mandalam made a political entry by forming the Democratic Congress, which aligned with the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) to fight against Congress. The national Sangh leaders extended support to the unification of Hindus and Syama Prasad Mukherjee[33] and M.S Golwalkar visited Mandalam leaders in Travancore. However, the Mnadalam was a short-lived unity as it could not stand the internal difference between caste groups, particularly the Devaswom administration. The Congress soon readmitted the Mandalam leaders, and political hostility between Hindu-caste groups in the party resumed after the short break. Mannam later conspired with Bishops to topple the government headed by Shankar in 1964 by splitting the Congress to form a Christian-Nair party called the Kerala Congress.

[32] Kummanam Ravi, "Hindu Maha Mandalathinte Charithravum Sanneshavum" (History and Message of Hindu Maha Mandalam), *Kesari*, April 24, 2020, https://kesariweekly.com/10113.

[33] K Raman Pillai, former BJP president, and a Jana Sangh leader, says that Mannam and Shankar had invited Mukherjee in 1950 for a conference in Kollam, but he could not turn up. He later visited them in January 1952 (2017).

A similar political experiment based on Hindu unity happened in the early 1980s in the wake of the Nilakkal controversy. A meeting of twenty-five Hindu organisations held at Eranakulam under the patronage of the RSS resolved to form a Hindu organisation for religious purposes, not political ones. As a follow-up to the meeting, a federation of Hindu organisations called the Hindu Front contested in the 1984 Lok Sabha election aligning with the BJP, albeit with no significant impact on the general result. In 2012, the NSS and SNDP again came fore to float a platform of Hindus under the leadership of Sukumaran Nair and Vellaplli Nateshan to counter the UDF Government's alleged minority appeasement. Both leaders signed a pact at Alappuzha to work together while independently pursuing their religious, social, and political policies.[34] However, the unity again hit a dead end in 2014 as the two organisations diverged on the reservation issue in the Devaswom Board: the upper caste NSS wanted eighteen per cent reservation for economically backward sections in the forward communities against the stated position of the lower caste SNDP.[35] The task of uniting the two dominant Hindu caste groups is yet an unaccomplished project of the Sangh organisation in Kerala.

The second category of Hindu identity politics is by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and BJP, political offshoots of the RSS. The origin of the Jan Sangh was in a meeting held in New Delhi on October 21, 1951, under the headship of Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee, a former Union minister of Industry and Supply in the Nehru Cabinet. It represented traditionalist sections, disillusioned with the liberal-secular policies of the Nehru Government, particularly in connection with the minority rights and relationship with Pakistan.[36] After sorting the initial confusion over whether to associate with a political party, the RSS under Golwalkar provided volunteers for the new party.[37] The Jana Sangh had a north Indian bias in the leadership and ideology that P. H Krishna Rao from Bangalore was the lone representative from the south in the national leadership. Nevertheless, the Jana

[34] MG Radhakrishnan, Caste-Based Organisations NSS, SNDP Form Hindu Grand Alliance in Kerala, *India Today*, September 5, 2012, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/south/story/caste-based-organisations-nss-sndp-form-hindu-grand-alliance-in-kerala-115305-2012-09-05

[35] George Jacob, "NSS-SNDP Unity Falls Apart," *The Hindu*, January 31, 2014, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/nsssndp-unity-falls-apart/article5638182.ece.

[36] B. D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28.

[37] Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1971), 69; and Kanungo Pralay, *RSS' Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan,* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002), 56-57.

Sangh politics resonated in Kerala as early as 1953, when its activities had gained ground, albeit without formal organisation. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the then general secretary of the Jana Sangh, conducted an all-Kerala tour in December 1953 to spread awareness about the party's programs. The formal party system of the Jana Sangh in Kerala came into being on March 31, 1957, after the first government in the state was sworn in. Initially, the party's activities were confined to Malabar, which provided an ideal ground for a Hindu nationalist party with a sizeable Muslim population and the presence of the Muslim League. The Jana Sangh made the electoral debut in Kerala in the 1954 Travancore-Cochin Assembly by-election and then in Municipal elections in Malabar in the same year. Except for the 1957 assembly election, the Jana Sangh fielded candidates in all elections held after the state's formation until its liquidation in 1977. The election record of the Jana Sangh has been poor: it grabbed a vote share below one per cent, let alone winning any seat. Nevertheless, the party has a few achievements worthy to note: first, the membership of the party consistently increased during the period; and second, in the 1977 election, the Janata Party, of which the Jana Sangh was a vital constituent, contested as part of the CPM-led front to grab a vote share of 7.6 per cent.[38]

In 1980, there was a remarkable change in the political strategy of the RSS at the national level. The Jana Sangh leaders started a new party called the BJP, with a relatively moderate ideological approach to fit the Indian party system. The first president of the BJP, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, chose a middle path to condition the party acceptable to other parties to form alliances against Congress.[39] The centre of Hindu nationalist activism in the 1980s was the Vishwa Hindu Parishat (VHP), which undertook sensitive communal projects with the explicit support of the RSS. The convention held in New Delhi on April 4, 5, and 6, 1980 to establish the BJP deputed O. Rajagopal, the former state president of the Jana Sangh, to form a state committee of the party in Kerala. Following that, a meeting at Ernakulam of the former Jana Sangh leaders resolved to follow the Delhi convention to form the BJP unit, choosing O. Rajagopal as the president.[40] The 1982 assembly election was the electoral debut of the BJP in Kerala when it contested sixty-eight out of 140 seats, predominantly in the Malabar area where Muslims had a substantial population, against the communist-led LDF

[39] Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 20; V. B. Singh, "Rise of the BJP and Decline of the Congress: An Appraisal," *Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices*, ed. Rajendra Vora and Suhas Palshikar, (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2004), 300.

[40] Rajagopal, *Jeevithamrtham*.

and the Congress-led UDF. The party cared not to field candidates against the National Democratic Party (NDP) and Socialist Republic Party (SRP), parties floated by the Hindu caste organisations, the NSS, and SNDP, though in the absence of any formal electoral understanding. Meanwhile, the BJP fielded most candidates against the Muslim League and Kerala Congress, which explicitly represented Muslim and Christian interests. The party grabbed a vote share of 2.75 per cent, improving from Jana Sangh's performance in previous years, and became the runner-up in a couple of seats. The party's achievement was not in capturing seats but in its ability to showcase the acceptability of the right-wing ideology in state politics. Significantly, the RSS came out of the smokescreen in the election to openly campaign for the BJP using its organisational system. In the 1984 Lok Sabha election, the BJP aligned with the Hindu Front, a political offshoot of a dozen Hindu organisations under the guidance of the RSS. The joint front grabbed a vote share of 3.87 per cent, again improving. In the 1987 assembly election, the BJP increased the number of seats contesting to 121 from the last-time sixty-eight and allowed the Hindu Front candidates to use the BJP symbol. The opportunity for the BJP alliance was that the Hindu caste parties were facing severe challenges of internal factionalism, and their mother organisations were exhausted with the development. The result was a further enhancement in the vote share of the BJP-led alliance to 6.57 per cent.

The 1989 Lok Sabha election was a path breaker in the history of the BJP in national politics as its seats in the lower house skyrocketed from two to eighty-eight in one go, and the vote share from 7.74 to 11.36 per cent.[41] The energy booster for the BJP in 1989 was the Ram Temple Movement under the leadership of L. K. Advani, who later led a country-wide Ram Rath Yatra to support the agitation of the VHP to erect a temple at Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. Henceforth, the BJP consistently improved its tally in the house and captured power in 1998, 1999, and 2014 at the cost of the Congress, which gradually dwindled in Indian politics. The Kerala unit of the BJP engaged with the Baberi-Ram Temple issues very actively to arouse Hindu sentiments, and it did not pay off. The party made massive campaigns in 1986 against the Republic Day boycott call by the Baberi Action Committee, of which the ruling ally, the Muslim League, was a part. Although the League disowned the meeting's decision in the house, the RSS and BJP took the matter to the street to attack the Congress-led UDF Government. As part of the Rath Yatra of LK Advani, the BJP state president held a state-

[41] The BJP formed governments in Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh with an absolute majority and Gujarat and Rajasthan with the support of the Janata Dal (Singh, "Rise of the BJP," 305).

wide Jana Shakti procession to make Hindus aware of the Ayodhya issue. Murli Manohar Joshi's initiative to hold the second phase of Ekta Yatra, a few months after the Rath Yatra, from the Padmanabhaswamy temple at Thiruvananthapuram to Kashmir, gave a new impetus to the Sangh activism in Kerala.[42] The period witnessed a sporadic increase in the communal tension between the Hindus and Muslims in Kerala; reportedly, thirty people were killed between October 1990 and December 1993, a sharp jump from previous years. A few Muslims, under the leadership of Abdul Nasar Madani, a firebrand Muslim scholar, formed an organisation called the Islamic Service Sangham (ISS) to counter the RSS. The violent confrontation between the RSS and ISS after the demolition of the Masjid at Ayodhya claimed many lives. Nevertheless, Kerala remained an outlier to the national trend of BJP's electoral performance, wherein it rode over the Hindu sentiment to win national and state elections after the Masjid demolition. In the 1991 assembly election in Kerala, held just after the Ayodhya incident, BJP's vote share recorded a decline of 1.67 per cent. In the election, there was wide criticism of secret collusion between the BJP and the UDF against the LDF, which was optimistic about returning to power with the government's popularity. The BJP's failure to dent the Hindu majority votes even after batting for Hindu rights glared in its electoral performances.

After the Masjid-Mandir incident, the BJP consistently increased its support base in India. Its seat share in the Lok Sabha increased from two in 1984 to eighty-eight in 1989, 120 in 1991, 161 in 1996, 180 in 2001, and 282 in 2014. The party's seat share declined only in 2004 and 2009, with 140 and 126 seats, respectively.[43] In addition, the BJP captured power in the state after state from Congress and regional players by formulating coalition-making strategies with parties. Remarkably, the BJP made a tactical move in 1998 to form the National Democratic Front (NDA) as a pre-electoral coalition against the Indian National Congress (INC) comprising regional parties like Samata Party, Shiv Sena, and All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam (AIDMK). The NDA formation helped BJP wrest power in 1998 and 2014. Meantime, the BJP had an entirely different story in Kerala: its vote

[42] Chiriyankandath, "Hindu Nationalism and Regional Political Culture," 59.
[43] It needs to note that the BJP performed poorly in assembly elections held just after the Masjid demolition. The party sailed through moderate politics for a couple of years in the last part of the 1990s (Amrita Basu, "The Changing Fortunes of the Bharatiya Janata Party," in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*, ed. Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh (New York: Routledge, 2013), 81-90).

percentage in the state gradually plummeted from 6.47 in 1987 to 5.53 in 1991, 5.48 in 1996, 5.04 in 2001, and 4.75 in 2006, the lowest ever since 1982, when it received 2.76 per cent.[44]

However, the BJP's performance since 2011 shows a different track; in terms of the vote share, its performance has been impressive in two consecutive elections. In the 2011 assembly election, the BJP revamped the spirit to manage a vote share of 6.03 per cent, higher than the four previous elections and performed well in a few constituencies. In 2016, the BJP made a crucial patch-up by forming the state committee of NDA, including a few parties with which the party had made electoral understandings. The NDA included the Bharath Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS), a political offspring of the SNDP, and Janadhipathiya Rashtriya Sabha (JRS), a political outfit of a popular tribal leader C. K. Janu, along with a few minor parties. In addition, the magnificent performance of the BJP at the national level provided a great moral booster for the workers. The BJP stunned the political spectrum in Kerala in the 2016 assembly election with a splendid 14.6 per cent vote share and opening an account in the Thiruvananthapuram district. The current status of the NDA in Kerala is a capacity of ten to fifteen per cent vote share with a chance to demonstrate a fight in lesser than ten seats, provided the parties like the BDJS stick to it. The fate of the NDA excessively relies on its ability to woo new parties from the two alliances.

Why is the Hindu Right Electorally not Successful?

A perplexing puzzle to students of Kerala politics is why the right wing in Kerala cannot translate its organisational strength to electoral dividends. The general tendency is to consider the weakened position of the political right in Kerala as a natural effect of the secular and rational left politics that define the state's political milieu. The argument continues that the two mainstream political traditions, the CPM-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF, proactively engage with questions raised by the right and adopt a programmatic approach to the issue. The left circle argues that the right-wing organisations could not make it into Kerala because of active left politics that nips the Hindu extremist ideology in the bud before eating into the people's minds.[45] It claims that the left's overwhelming influence over the Hindus of the state helped it fend off the project of the right. The Congress Party, arguably equally influential as the Communist Party in Kerala, claims that the party's

[44] The sharp decline in the BJP's vote share in 2006 is partly due to internal feuds (K. Haridas, "Kerala: Elections and After," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 21 (2006): 2053-2055).

[45] V. Shivadasan (CPM Rajya Sabha MP from Kerala), interviewed by the author, Kerala House, New Delhi, September 02, 2022.

appropriate engagement with the faith communities shut out Hindu rights' entry into state politics.[46] Congress recognised the identity of caste/religious groups as real and provided their space in society and politics. Conversely, the RSS blames the nexus between the UDF and LDF as the bottleneck to its political project in Kerala.[47]

There are two significant problems with the arguments mentioned above. First, the Hindu right per se is not weak in Kerala as many have thought.[48] Reports have stated that the RSS has around 5000 daily morning Shakhas in Kerala, the highest in a Prant, an organisational classification in the RSS structure.[49] Despite working in a politically hostile environment, RSS Kerala has the highest per capita Shakhas of all other state units. In southern India, the Kerala unit of the RSS has been a well-organised unit since the 1990s, better than even some states where the BJP politically dominates. Second, regarding the vote share, the BJP is not a negligible force in Kerala because it has consistently grabbed a vote share of ten to thirteen per cent in recent elections, which is more than a quarter of the vote share of the winning coalition and half of the first and second parties.

To understand where the BJP stands in Kerala's electoral pendulum, one needs to unpack the political competition structure of the state. To track the origin of the current bipolar competition in Kerala, classifying its political history after the state formation in 1957 into two is helpful: first, between 1957 and 1982, a phase of political instability featuring short-lived governments and political uncertainty; second, between 1982 and 2022, a stage of stable governments of alternating power between the two political alliances. During the first phase, Kerala was perhaps the most unstable polity in India: twenty-five years had twelve governments and six presidential rules; fifteen parties participated in the government, and twenty parties had representation in the house. On the other, since 1982, the polity acquired

[46] Benny Behanan (Congress Lok Sabha MP from Chalakkudi, Kerala, and former UDF convenor), interviewed by the author, New Delhi, December 21, 2021.

[47] A. P. Abdullakutty (BJP National Vice President), interviewed by the author, Kozhikode, May 6, 2022; and J. Nandakumar, "How to Bridge North-South Divide? RSS Ideologue J Nandakumar Responds," filmed March 13, 2021, India Today Conclave South," India Today, 26.54, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6_qrrPsk-I&t=1190s.

[48] PK Yasser Arafath, "Hindutva's onward March in Kerala,": Michael Gillan, "Assessing the 'National' Expansion of Hindu Nationalism: The BJP in Southern and Eastern India, 1996–2001," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 25, no. 3 (2002): 29; and O B Roopesh, "Temple as a Site of Modern Contestations: Kshetra Punarudharanam in Postcolonial Kerala," *South Asian History and Culture* 11, no. 3 (2020): 300-316, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2020.1797362.

[49] RSS Strengthening Base in Kerala, Number of Shakhas Rising, February 14, 2017, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/57147070.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

near-absolute stability wherein all assemblies completed their terms with no presidential rules and little confusion over government formations by the majority party.[50] The year 1980 marked a realisation in the Kerala political circle that the fragmented political structure of the state needed a unique political design based on recognising the interests of different groups. The outcome: the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Left Democratic Front (LDF), the two multi-community pre-electoral coalitions that consist of half to one dozen parties. The LDF and UDF created a peculiar bipolar competition structure wherein they absorbed almost all social and political forces into their all-encompassing coalitions.[51] They consisted of parties and people representing all significant social groups in Kerala. Oddly, there was a regular alternation of the power between the two every five years after five years, except in 2016, when the left retained. They have been together, taking hold of a vote share of eighty-five to ninety.

It is imperative to delve into why parties prefer alliances instead of trying to swallow all benefits alone. First, Kerala has high ethnic heterogeneity. It has the highest score among Indian states on the ELF index of religion, which is the most divisive social identity in the subcontinent.[52] The caste diversity of the Hindu religion is also high.[53] Second, the diverse socio-political groups have structured modern organisational forms akin to a western cadre party system helped by five factors: land reform, which entitled everyone with at least a piece of land; literacy which endowed the people with awareness about rights and dignity; reservation which opened access to all to government offices; migration which gave a modicum of wealth; and family planning which ensured more resource per individual.[54] Eighty per cent of the social groups have almost achieved these factors, and the sections which missed any of these lagged. For instance, the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) communities who missed the migration benefit could not form influential

[50] Although two chief ministers of the UDF resigned in 1995 and 2004, the Congress soon formed governments without much change in the cabinet. The Nayanar Government dissolved the assembly in 1991 before completing the term only to encash the momentum the left created in the local body election.
[51] Besides the CPM, the LDF includes the CPI, Kerala Congress (M), Janata Dal, and others. The UDF includes, other than the INC, the Muslim League, RSP, and Kerala Congress (J), and others.
[52] Steven I. Wilkinson, "Which Group Identities Lead to Most Violence? Evidence from India," in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, ed. S. Kalyvas, I. Shapiro and T. Masoud (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[53] A Shaji, *Politicisation of Caste Relations in a Princely State*, (New Delhi: Zorba Books, 2017), 17-29. Due to the high diversity of caste and religion, Kerala has been called the microcosm of India and often of the world (W Klatt, "Caste, Class and Communism in Kerala," *Asian Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1972): 275, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/03068377208729634.).
[54] CP John, a political strategist from Kerala, shared these five points with the author (C.P. John, interviewed by the author, Mankav Green Apartment, Kozhikode, August 11, 2022).

organisations and institutions like other communities. In a fiercely competed bipolar electoral pendulum, political parties design strategies to woo maximum groups and, thus, any socially organised section acquires the capacity of bargaining visa vie parties. Second, social fragmentation has caused political fragmentation: Kerala politics is the fragmented politics of fragmented society. For instance, the status from 1982 to 2016 is this: nine governments, twenty-one parties participated in the government, and thirty parties represented the house. The number of parties in the ruling opposition alliances was around half to one dozen during the period.

An analysis of how dominant parties perform in elections before and after forming coalitions can enlighten us on their rationality of preferring the latter. To begin with, after 1957, all governments were formed by coalitions, except for the first E. M. S. Government (1957-59) and the Shankar Government (1962-64).[55] In the 1960 assembly election, the undivided Communist Party fought alone, grabbing a vote share of 39.14 per cent and twenty-nine seats. In contrast, Congress aligned with the Muslim League, Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and PSP to secure only a vote share of 34.43 per cent but sixty-three seats. After the 1964 split in the party, the dominant Communist Party-CPM has not faced any election without alliances, while the Congress fought two subsequent elections alone after its split with the Kerala Congress in 1964. In 1967, the CPM formed a seven-party coalition with the Muslim League, the CPI, RSP, Sanghata Socialist Party (SSP), Karshaka Thozhilali Party (KTP), and Kerala Socialist Party (KSP) to snatch a vote share of 23.51 per cent and fifty-two seats. In contrast, the Congress without alliance seized 35.43 per cent of votes but only nine seats. In a nutshell, the two dominant parties have a vote share of around thirty to thirty-five per cent and a seat share ranging from seven to fifteen when facing elections alone. In contrast, they could enhance their seats by aligning with other parties.[56] That explains why dominant parties choose alliances than going alone in elections.

Based on the number of seats contesting as part of pre-electoral coalitions and the share of the votes in elections, this study classifies the political parties of Kerala into three categories to see the position of the BJP in the existing frame: dominant parties, who grab a

[55] The Communist Party had fielded independent candidates with general acceptance in a few constituencies. The E. M. S. Government (1957-59) had the support of five independent MLAs, of whom three became ministers. Shankar formed a government after the PSP and Muslim League left out of the front. The Congress Party faced an election in 1960 by forming a coalition with the two parties.

[56] After 1960, the Communist Party opted for a coalition and fielding independent candidates in a few constituencies, whereas the Congress faced the 1965 and 1967 elections alone, fielding candidates in all constituencies.

vote share between twenty-five and thirty per cent; significant parties, who get a vote share of seven to ten; and minor parties who get votes below seven per cent. As per this, only the INC and CPM are dominant parties; the CPI, Muslim League, and Kerala Congress are significant parties; and all others are minor (Table 6.1). Given that the vote share of the BJP is around ten per cent, it falls in the category of significant parties along with the CPI and Muslim League. The two major parties in both alliances take the following benefits of being part of the coalition: each gets around twenty-five assembly candidacies in respective coalitions and one Rajya Sabha seat; the League gets five cabinet births while in state government and two Lok Sabha seat candidacy; the CPI gets four cabinet births in the state and four Lok Sabha candidacies. Thus, according to the minimum calculation, the opportunity cost of the BJP being outside the coalition politics in Kerala is this: twenty-four assembly candidacies; four cabinet births in the state; two Lok Sabha candidacies; and one Rajya Sabha seat. Even with a conservative calculation without compensating the voters' aversion to a third player in the bipolar competition (following Duverger's law), the BJP in Kerala is a decisive political force with a vote share of an average of ten per cent but not able put its leverage on the electoral arithmetic.

There is a need to dive into the post-1989 BJP's strategies in its weak states where it was a third-party challenger or lesser without the ability to displace or challenge the Congress Party by forming governments or grabbing majority seats. The strategy was to make an electoral coalition with the existing major party, using its leverage as the emerging third-party challenger against Congress. For instance, in Odisha, the BJP, which had only 7.6 per cent votes and nine seats in the 1995 assembly, brokered a deal with the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in 2004 and managed to get 17.1 per cent votes and thirty-two seats, displacing the Congress form the office. In Tamil Nadu, where the BJP had a vote share below ten, the party used the leverage of being a national party leading the central government to align with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam (AIADMK) and Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam (DMK) and grab a few seats. In West Bengal, the BJP won seats for the first time in the Lok Sabha after bonding with the Trinamul Congress in 1998 and 1999, though the relationship soon broke up.

Table 6 1: Classification of Parties Based on the Vote Share (2006-16)

Sl. No	Party	Average Vote	Category
1	CPM	28.38	Dominant
2	INC	24.73	
3	**CPI**	**8.31**	Major
4	**IUML**	**7.54**	
5	**BJP**	**7.1**	
6	KCM	4.1	Minor
7	NCP	1	
8	JDS	1.8	
9	RSP	1.3	

Source 9: author's calculation based on the data provided by the Election Commission of India Website.

The BJP's failure in Kerala is its inability to use its leverage of a sizeable vote share or the position as the ruling party at the centre to attract any coalition partner or gate-crash into any of the coalitions, which have acquired concrete institutional structures over the period.[57] A platform of six to ten parties representing different social and ideological shades, the fundamental spirit of the coalitions is moderation.[58] The coalition platform enables two confessional parties representing different social divisions or one left party and one confessional party to sit and negotiate political cooperation. For instance, the Kerala Congress (M), which represents the landed interest of rich Syrian Christian peasants of central Travancore, is comfortable with joining the communist-CPM or Muslim-Indian National League (INL) to plan activities of the LDF. Second, both coalitions have a massive dependence on minority communities which constitute forty-five per cent of the population, and with the organised capacity to put pressure on politics. Christians have been integral to Kerala politics since colonial times, and parties like the Kerala Congress directly catered to the community. Muslims were equally influential under the Muslim League, which commanded a huge following, particularly in Malabar. Against this backdrop, the BJP is heavy on both coalitions, and its entry may dampen the equations within, giving leverage to

[57] O. Rajagopal, the founding president of the BJP and a prominent personality in the party, says in his biography that the major impediment in Kerala is the two coalitions for the party (Rajagopal, *Jeevithamrtham*). P. Parameshwaran, in 1968, wrote that the sharp polarisation between the Congress and the Communist Party prevented Jana Sangh's entry into the electoral spectrum (P. Parameswaran, "The Democratic Alternative in Kerala," in *Jana Sangh Souvenir*, ed. S.S. Bhandari (Bombay: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1969), 140.

[58] Wilkinson, "Which Group Identities"; and Christophe Jaffrelot, "Refining the Moderation Thesis. Two Religious Parties and Indian Democracy: The Jana Sangh and the BJP between Hindutva Radicalism and Coalition Politics," *Democratization* 20, no. 5 (2013): 229, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.801256.

the opposing side. The cost of bearing the BJP would outweigh the benefit it accrues to the alliance.

The political campaigns of the Hindu right in Kerala were self-limiting and locked it from expansion. Its political rhetoric alienated the two religious minorities, who constitute forty-five per cent of the populace. The minorities perceived the BJP's presence in Kerala politics as threatening their existence. On the other head, the BJP could not command the majority support of the Hindu communities, who generally throw their lot behind secular parties like the Communist Party and the Congress. The BJP's campaign that minorities are taking undue privileges did not pay off in Kerala as the Hindu caste groups like the NSS and SNDP also played pressure group roles. In the 1950s and 60s, although Bishops interfered in Congress politics to decide the power balance between factions, the NSS leader Mannam and SNDP leader Shankar had no-less roles in Congress politics. A slew of caste leaders found an easy route into the alliances, contested elections, and occupied cabinet positions, including the chief minister.[59] Against this backdrop, it was less rational to claim that Kerala politics is minority centric. Though the Hindu caste organisations flirted with Hindu nationalism occasionally, they found that aligning with the two coalitions would only protect their educational and business interest in Kerala. Nor did the Hindu caste organisations and minor parties find the BJP attractive in Kerala politics, given its limited electoral potential. This political environment explains why the BJP could not win even a single seat in the general election despite possessing a vote share of ten per cent in Kerala. It should be borne in mind that the party has secured a handful of seats in states where it has a vote share below the vote share in Kerala.

Political Experiments of Radical Muslim Parties

This part briefs the minority political organisations antithetical to communal coexistence and moderation tenets, which define the fundamentals of Kerala politics. The political envelopment of religious extremism was peculiar to the Muslims among minorities, and radical groups in the Christian minority are yet to explore political adventures. In response to the growing popularity of the RSS and BJP at the national level, a section of Muslims had a temptation to capitulate to the idea that identity politics with solid adherence to political Islam could ensure the security of the minority community. The political

[59] R. Shankar, the chief minister between 1962 and 64, has served the SNDP as the General Secretary and SN Trust as the president. M K Raghavan, the president of the SNDP, was minister between 1978 and 1979 and later contested from the LDF panel.

formations framed on Islamist ideology in Kerala shared three fundamental features. First, they repudiated the post-independent political choice of Kerala Muslims, especially of the Muslim League and Ulema (the Muslim religious heads), emphasising the peaceful settlement of disputes and collaboration with the mainstream parties. The target of extremists was the community's relationship with the Congress Party, which was allegedly responsible for violence against, and backwardness of Indian Muslims. The new movements sought to cultivate an identity of a Muslim who is responsive to violence against the community in India and articulate the community symbols on public platforms. Second, these organisations glossed over the radical political ideology with a sophisticated language of liberalism, eschewing reference to Islam or Muslim in documents and campaigns, unlike the Muslim League and *Ulema* organisations, which explicitly refer to the identity.[60] The deployment of high volt emotive campaigns based on the insecurity of the Muslims and oppressed groups is the strategy to capture the image of the people on the ground. The Muslim extremists narrate the majoritarian violence on Muslims in other parts of India to establish that the brethren suffer before Hindus, and the time is not far when the same would soon reach Kerala. Third, these political parties invoked a puritanical Islam against the popular syncretic Islam, which imbibed the universal Islamic idea in a local Kerala culture. The Muslim radical groups in Kerala share the vision of political Islamists elsewhere to establish a modern state based on Islamic principles.

The ideological fountainhead of Muslim extremist parties in Kerala is Abul Ala Maududi, who provided a theoretical base of political Islam in South Asia. Maududi founded Jamaat-e-Islami in Lahore in 1941 as a political organisation to establish *hukumat-e-Ilahiyya* (Allah's Kingdom). He argued that the declaration of faith, 'there is no god but Allah and the prophet is the messenger of god,' made it an impediment upon all Muslims to work for the establishment of Allah's Kingdom. Maududi viewed that in the absence of an Islamic regime, colonial India under the British 'infidels' was *Dar al-Kufr*, the land of unbelievers, and the Muslims were responsible for transforming it into *Dar al Islam*, the land of Islam.[61] The partition of the subcontinent in 1947 split the Jamaat: the Maududi-led Pakistani Jamaat plunged into Pakistan politics with the enthusiasm of establishing the true Islamic state, and

[60] R. Santhosh, and M. S. Visakh, "Muslim League in Kerala: Exploring the Question of 'Being Secular,'" *Economic and Political Weekly* 55, no. 7 (2020): 52.

[61] Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India*: *The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

the leftover Jamaat volunteers in India abstained from the 'infidel secular politics' and democracy.[62] The official policy of Jamaat in India prohibited its members from taking part in government jobs and participating in electoral processes. By the 1960s, Jamaat made a significant reconfiguration in its political view to justify the engagement with the Indian polity under the pretext that adherence to secularism is the only panacea to protect the interest of the minority community in India.

The ideological transformation of Jamaat did not digest a section of its members and breaded heated intra-party debate to end up in a split between the moderates and extremists. The Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), a student organ established by the Jamaat to cater to educated youngsters on April 25, 1977,[63] gelled with the extremist group and separated from the mother organisation. The SIMI represented a hard-line interpretation of Maududi's political thought. The contributing factors to the SIMI growth in India were foreign and domestic political developments. The late 1970s denoted some significant incidents pivotal to political Islam globally: the invasion of Russia in Afghanistan and the subsequent takeover of the regime by Islamists; the Iran revolution, which marked the first overthrowing of a western-centric government by an Islamist organisation; and Zia regime's decision to impose Islam in Pakistan. In the three cases, the SIMI supported the establishment of Islamist regimes. In domestic politics, the consciousness of insecurity from the growing influence of the Hindu right-wing provided a fertile ground for SIMI's project. The Muslims in India went through their most challenging time in the 1990s with the demolition of Babri Masjid and the subsequent communal riot that engulfed the cities across the country. The rise of the BJP to power in 1998 and the Congress Party's decline traumatised many Muslim youths. Against this backdrop, the SIMI further radicalised to call for open Jihad against the Hindus and the state which supported them.[64] The SIMI provided the human resources and ideological foundation to the Islamist parties for two reasons: first, being a student organisation, the SIMI constitution mandated a retirement at the age of thirty, forcing members to seek a new organisation; and second, the government ban on the SIMI in 2001

[62] Yoginder Sikand, "Islamist Assertion in Contemporary India: The Case of the Students Islamic Movement of India," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no. 2 (2003): 338, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/1360200032000139974.

[63] Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Gazette of India Extraordinary*, Part II, Section 3(ii), New Delhi: Government of India, 2002.

[64] Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Gazette of India Extraordinary*.

set frees a large number of Islamists without any organisation.[65] Scores of old SIMI workers are now part of the Islamist parties representing the same view.

The Jamaat ideology resonated in Kerala in its early stage, establishing the state unit in 1948 under the initiative of Abdul Aziz. The organisation's transformation in Kerala was remarkable; from a band of a few educated members in the 1960s, Jamaat became an important social organisation with extensive social, political, educational, and media establishments. An organisation with limited penetration to Kerala Muslims, Jamaat influenced the Muslims and the public with its systemic engagement with the cultural and educational fields. Jammat's engagement in the media is outstanding in that it runs a popular Malayalam newspaper called Madhyamam and a news channel called MediaOne, both of which are among the prominent news agencies in the state. In 2011, Jamaat further advanced the intervention in the secular realm by introducing its political outfit called the Welfare Party of India (WPI) to voice the interest of the oppressed communities. Unlike the Jamaat, the Welfare adopted a secular make-over including a few Dalit and non-Muslim individuals in the leadership role. Despite being political formations based on political Islam, Jamaat and the Welfare avoided confrontation with the Hindu rights organisations. The electoral strategy of the Welfare has been to support political parties against the BJP in general elections; in the local bodies, it fielded candidates making local understanding with mainstream parties.[66] The Welfare Party's performance in the election is poor; its vote share has not yet crossed one per cent.

A significant development in the radical Muslim organisations in Kerala was the formation of the National Development Force (NDF) in 1993 in Kozhikode, a new platform for extremist Muslims mainly the former members of the SIMI. The primary target of the NDF was Muslim youth dissatisfied with the traditional leadership of the Muslim League and community organisations with a moderate stand against the intriguing threats of the RSS and affiliated sections. In 2007, the NDF reached out to two similar organisations, the Karnataka Forum for Dignity from Karnataka and Manitha Neethi Pasarai from Tamil Nadu, to form the

[65] There is an argument that the SIMI recruited Indian Mujahideen volunteers (C. Christine Fair, "Students Islamic Movement of India and the Indian Mujahideen: An Assessment," *Asia Policy* 9, no. 1 (2010): 101-119).

[66] Jamaat declared support for the LDF in the 1996 assembly election (M.R Biju, *Politics of Democracy and Decentralisation in India: a Case Study of Kerala*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1997), 19).

Popular Front of India (PFI).[67] The PFI was perhaps the first Muslim organisation in Kerala to gain popularity in other states of India. After the formation, the outfit expanded to other parts of India to form committees in almost all states. Unlike the Muslim League, the PFI command more members outside Kerala than inside. The PFI stream manifested the radical expression of Maududi ideology wherein it was involved in a violent confrontation with the RSS and secular political parties like the CPM and Muslim League. In 2010, the PFI came into the limelight in a blasphemy case wherein the party workers were involved in the hand-chopping off of a college teacher who allegedly used the prophet's name in an inappropriate context.[68] In 2011, the PFI introduced the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) as the political wing of the outfit and established committees in a slew of states. The SDPI in the document is a secular political party to establish a just society with the involvement of all sections of the people. The party manages the leadership composition involving people from different castes and communities. Like the WPI of Jamaat, the SDPI also utilises secular democratic jargon as a cover-up to its extreme political ideology. Although the SDPI has been enthusiastic about fielding candidates in elections, the party's performance has been poor. Barring a few victories in the local bodies, the SDPI has yet to impact the electoral politics of Kerala.

The formation of the People Democratic Party (PDP) by a controversial cleric ICS Abdul Nassar Madani, was a different experiment in radical Muslim organisations. Son of a school teacher in the Kollam district of southern Kerala, Madani got training from traditional Islamic seminaries, including the famous Jamia Nooriya Pattikkad, Malappuram. In response to the growing threat of the Hindu nationalist movements in the last part of the 1980s, Madani formulated the ISS as a counter-organisation to the RSS. Madani lambasted the moderate Muslim leaders who were silent on the growing violence by the Hindu radical organisations and the security concerns of Muslims in India. His highly emotive preaches explaining the atrocities meted out by Muslims elsewhere in India drew more significant followings among the Muslim youth, mainly from southern Kerala, where the community is a minority. After the government ban on the ISS, Madani launched the PDP as a political outfit

[67] Johnson T A, "Who are the PFI, Now Declared a Terrorist Organisation by the Govt?," *Indian Express*, September 28, 2022, https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-politics/popular-front-of-india-nia-raids-kerala-karnataka-explained-8165781/.

[68] Shaju Philip, "13 Guilty of Chopping Kerala Professor's Hand," *Indian Express*, May 01, 2015, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/13-guilty-of-chopping-kerala-professors-hand/.

with an overtly secular appeal.[69] It claimed more expansive followings from non-Muslims, and the leadership reflected the same. The PDP was a different political experiment for three primary reasons. First, the PDP was the first famous Muslim political formation beyond the Muslim League tradition. Madani's charisma attracted followers from impoverished Muslims in southern Kerala, where the community was a minority. Second, the PDP was a locally grown political idea with no link with the Islamist idea of Maududi or any ideational link with Jamaat. Nor did Madani have any affinity with Salafism. Third, the PDP was the first Muslim political party to impose any serious electoral challenge on the Muslim League.

The PDP's electoral strategies can be a case study for the radical Muslim parties in Kerala. The politically ambitious PDP tried two forms of strategies: to form a third front against the two coalitions or to grab an entry to the existing alliances. The PDP's debut into Kerala's electoral fray was outstanding: in the first election it fought, the Guruvayoor assembly constituency by-election in 1995, the PDP candidate grabbed 14383 votes, two-by-fifth of the votes scored by the winning candidate.[70] It repeated the result in the subsequent 1995 Thirurangady assembly constituency by-election by securing 15613 votes.[71] In the 1995 local body election, the PDP performed better: it secured 33,000 votes in Kollam, 45,000 in Malappuram, and 20,000 in Palakkad, posing a grave challenge to the Muslim League.[72] Gaining better performance in the by-pols and the local body elections, the PDP attempted to form a third front collaborating with the JSS, a political party floated by the ousted Communist Party veteran K. R. Gouri Amma. The third front, the Social Justice Front, consisted of the SRP, Indian Labour Party (ILP), Backward Classes Christian Federation, and Scheduled Classes Minority Front. The partners in the front shared a common understanding of reservations and issues related to the backward communities. Gouri Amma made the first plank to the plan with her unilateral decision to enter the UDF, leaving the front aside. The relentless Madani went ahead with the third alternative project to develop a new platform

[69] James Chiriyankandath, "Changing Muslim Politics in Kerala: Identity, Interests and Political Strategies," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 16, no. 2 (1996): 265. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/13602009608716342.

[70] The context of the by-election was the resignation of a Muslim League MLA who flunked out of the party in protest against the party's moderate approach with the Congress after the Babri Masjid demolition. Although the PDP did not win the election, it helped defeat the league candidate.

[71] "Babri Masjid Thakarthath Upatherenjeduppinu Karanamaya Guruvayoor: Iru Munnanikalodum Poruthiya Madani" (Guruvayoor, By-election Caused by Babri Masjid Demolition: Madani, Fighting with Both Alliances), *DoolNews*, March 02, 2021, https://www.doolnews.com/1994-guruvayur-bypoll-p-t-kunju-muhammed-and-abdussamad-samadani-contested-123.html.

[72] Biju, *Politics of Democracy and Decentralisation*, 252.

called the People Liberation Front with the participation of thirteen parties- the SRP, PDP, KDP, Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP), ILC, Forward Block, Indira Congress (Podippara), Janata (G), and Christian National Congress. The front chose AS Prathap Singh, the former SNDP General Secretary and an SRP leader, as the convenor. The PDP fielded candidates in fifty constituencies and grabbed a total of 0.72 per cent of votes.

The arrest of the PDP leader Madani in connection with a bomb blast in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, in 1996 put a tragic block to the electoral passage of the party. In subsequent elections, the PDP had only marginal visibility in the absence of the supreme leader. After the release of Madani in 2007, the PDP revamped the PDP with the charisma of Madani and engaged with electoral politics. The PDP tried to forge political alliances as it realised that without the help of the alliances, it was hardly possible to do anything in Kerala politics. Against this backdrop, the CPM made an open understanding with the PDP in the 2009 Lok Sabha election and agreed to field a joint candidate from the Ponnani Constituency, where the PDP had secured around 45000 votes in the previous election. The experiment was disastrous because the LDF independent candidate failed miserably, and the political reverberation hit the left in other constituencies.[73] The CPM's strategy made other partners in the LDF, the CPI, and the Janata Dal furry over collaborating with a communal party. The experiment proved that a party like the PDP is heavy for the LDF or any multi-community alliance.

The electoral trajectory of the PDP, the only radical Muslim party with a sophisticated plan of electoral ambitions, confirms the theory of the failure of the BJP in Kerala. First, the PDP's attempt to gate-crash the established political alliances failed for its controversial involvement in radical Islamic activities. The relationship with the PDP proved a fatal decision for the mainstream parties, resulting in counterbalancing against the decision. Second, the PDP's attempts to float a third front to challenge the existing bipolar competition also failed, as it could not get any significant political party into its fold.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed why the political right in Kerala fails to translate its organisational strength into electoral dividends. Contrary to the general perception, the right in Kerala is not weak regarding its social strength or political presence. The RSS's organisational mechanism in Kerala is more advanced than the majority of Indian state units,

[73] K. Haridas, "The Left Debacle in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 22 (2009): 16.

and the BJP's vote share in the state is no less significant than the majority of parties in the state. Although not comparable to the strength of the Hindu right, the radical Islamic parties in Kerala have a rooted base in the state with extensive education, media, and healthcare institutions. However, the performance of the BJP and Islamist parties in Kerala is ignominious in national and state elections. In unpacking this unique phenomenon, this work argues that the right in Kerala misses a key skill to adapt to the state's political frame, which revolves around the two all-encompassing political coalitions. While mainstream academic discourses highlight the role of political parties in Kerala in containing the rise of the right, this work has advanced how parties effectively execute the program by contour bundling the state politics from an extreme political project. The failure of the BJP is thus in designing a political strategy in tune with the political frame of Kerala, which is based on moderation and collective creation. Parties who can comprehend and seize the possibilities take advantage of coalition politics, while those who fail to decode the situation are marginalised.[74] The radical Islamic parties have been invisible in electoral politics, and their efforts to align with the mainstream parties or to challenge their presence have miserably failed. In recent years, the BJP has moderated the rhetoric against Christians and shown a willingness to admit Christian-centric parties while accelerating the targets against Muslims. The Christian establishments have also moderated their anti-BJP stands while colluding with anti-Muslim propaganda. Thus, it is yet to see how the recent changes would reflect in the electoral fate of the BJP in Kerala.

[74] Balveer Arora, "Negotiating Differences: Federal Coalitions and National Cohesion," in *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, ed. Francine R. Frankel et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 177.

Chapter VII
Conclusion

The study on political accommodation in Kerala is not a matter of interest confined to academics, but scores of people, from politicians to ordinary citizens, are curious to know what sustains the communal equilibrium in the state's politics. A large section would like to get what prevents right-wing parties from making inroads into Kerala's political landscape. It puzzles many why secular parties like the Congress and Communist Party shoulder confessional parties like the Muslim League and Kerala Congress. Keeping all the concerns in mind, this thesis adopted a novel approach to studying Kerala's politics: analysing politics from the viewpoint of dealing with communities in diverse societies. The motive for choosing the power-sharing prism to comprehend Kerala politics was the paradoxes in the state: collective works of parties amid extreme fragmentation; active secular politics with communal forces in the same vigour. This study has raised questions about the persistence of unique social coexistence and political collaborations between multiple stakeholders in Kerala, which produces political stability. The inquiry has led us to the practice of political accommodation and power-sharing among social groups, which evolved in the state over a century or beyond. The thesis has argued that Kerala has a power-sharing mechanism developed as a socio-political practice, not constitutionally engineered, by the interaction of democratic institutions with the state's social structure. It figured out two power-sharing approaches within Kerala polity, which are almost identical but differ in emphasis. In doing so, it makes the following observations.

Kerala as an Indian Power-Sharing

The central intervention of this study was to see whether Kerala's political landscape confirms theories of power-sharing and political accommodation. Scholarly works have referred to Kerala society as inclusive and accommodative of caste/religious communities but seldom substantiated the claim with the support of data and analysis. Two explicit features of Kerala's politics are hints for many to presume the existence of a power-sharing and political accommodation in the state. First, the ruling parties in Kerala, since the beginning, have followed a tradition of government formation with the participation of people belonging to the five significant social groups, who constitute roughly ninety per cent of the populace.

Second, Kerala's track record in containing communal violence, which crippled the Indian subcontinent in the last decades, has been outstanding. The state has reported no large-scale violence against religious minorities after the independence. The religious minorities, who are at the receiving end of ethnic violence and institutionalised discrimination in India, are not in a tight spot in Kerala but are somewhat equal partners in socio-political processes with an adequate share in the social, economic, and political structure. The social minority lower castes, who are victims of everyday social discrimination in India, are apparently in a better position in Kerala with the rarity of brazen caste discrimination and violence.[1] These preliminary pieces of evidence lead commentators to claim the existence of political accommodation in Kerala. The contribution of this work is to provide an original and rigorous analysis of this claim.

What contributes to the institutionalisation of social cleavages is a perennial question. This thesis finds that the organisation of caste/religious communities on modern associational forms considerably adds to the crystallisation of social identities in Kerala. The efforts of community establishments to give an organisational envelopment to social identities virtually accelerated the segmentation of society. The legacy of community organisations in Kerala traces to colonial Travancore, where they acted as the articulators of the social and political interests of the people in the absence of political parties. Unsurprisingly, the public activists in the immediate decades of Kerala's formation were trained in community organisations which catered exclusively to communities. What then contributed to the success of community organisations leads us to two primary factors. First, the ability of community establishments to develop cadre-based modern community organizations with the proper internal communication channel and discipline gave them leverage over other organisations, including political parties. Second, the solid base of community organisations was the support of a political economy based on projects in education, health care, banking, and private welfare activities, which interconnect the government, economy, and community. Community organisations have gained the capacity over time to meet the members' social, spiritual, political, and business demands. For many people, their caste/community organisations are employment providers, mediators with the government, business networks, and seat providers in educational institutions. The birth of political parties did not overshadow the clout of community outfits.

[1] Patrick Heller, "Kerala in Comparative Perspective: Movements, Politics, and Democracy," in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*, ed. Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 272.

Fragmentation in politics is also severe in Kerala, just as it is in the social milieu. A statistic reveals the intensity of the political fragmentation: between 1982 and 2016, twenty-four parties sent representatives to the assembly, nineteen of which participated in governments. The general temptation in academic discourses is to consider political fragmentation in Kerala as reflecting social fragmentation.[2] This thesis considers that division in society has been one of several reasons for the political fragmentation in Kerala. Three factors significantly contributed to the extreme fragmentation of parties in the state. First, ideological differences were a strong component in the multiplication of parties, particularly in the left spectrum. The early sympathisers of socialism in the Congress formulated a ginger platform within the party and later walked out to join the Communist Party. The left parties with ideological mooring to socialism and Marxism split multiple times for differences over the interpretation of ideology in the Indian context. Second, communal differences acted as a gas pedal for party fragmentation throughout time. The division of society on caste and religion and its institutionalisation through the formation of community organisations have created thick boundaries between caste/religious groups. The involvement of community organisations in party politics is a responsible factor for the communal divisions in Kerala politics. In the first two decades of the independence, communal factionalism plagued the Congress Party leading to the fall of governments and splits in the party. The ground of the formation of the Kerala Congress was the aftereffect of communal factionalism within the Congress in the 1960s. Third, the personal feuds between the power-seeking political leaders, regardless of the ideological orientation, constituted the most determining force of party splits in Kerala. Each strand of views, whether communal or ideological, has more than one political face, further complicating the party system. For instance, the people adhering to the particular interest of the Syrian Christians have formed more than six parties, choosing multiple fronts on opportunity structure. Similarly, half a dozen parties are bandwagons of Marxist left politics with the ideological commitment to establish a socialist state. The confrontation between the bipolar alliances has provided a market for small parties who freely flow between alliances on convenience.

A highlight of the history of Kerala in the last hundred years is the centrality of coalitions in society and politics. The fragmented nature of society persuaded the activists to

[2] James Chiriyankandath, "'Unity in Diversity'? Coalition Politics in India (with Special Reference to Kerala)," *Democratization* 4, no. 4 (1997): 25, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510349708403534; and Nissim Mannathukkaren, "Communalism Sans Violence: A Keralan Exceptionalism?," *Sikh Formations* 12, no. 2-3 (2017): 223, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2017.1289680.

formulate public platforms with access to all sections in the form of social alliances and political coalitions. The principal strategy of the early twentieth-century social reform movements was the cultivation of collaborations between multiple groups to fight for common objectives. In the extreme social fragmentation, where no community commanded a popular majority, canvassing as many communities constituted the success of the movements. The history of political coalition starts with the introduction of modern elections in Travancore. The working style of the Congress resembled more a federation of communities than a disciplined cadre-based political party. The leading parties of Kerala unsuccessfully tried non-coalitional strategies in a couple of elections in the early years of the state formation, soon to realise that the state's social structure demanded a rule by a combined force. The initial twenty-five years of Kerala were awash with political uncertainty and short-lived governments primarily because the political actors failed to create a consensus on joint governance. The importance of 1980 in Kerala's political history is that it marked the realisation of political elites about the nature of the state's socio-political structure, which needed special manoeuvring. The formation of the two political alliances, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF), was the institutionalisation of a political tradition in Kerala, the coming together of different stakeholders for common goals. The alliances were the central institutions of power-sharing in the state.

This thesis highlights that Kerala developed political practices of power-sharing and accommodation in the absence of constitutionally mandated power-sharing institutions prescribed by the literature on democracy in a divided society. The constitution of India has an integrationist approach to diversity that does not explicitly recognise group identities and considers policies of safeguarding and protecting social and religious minorities to substantiate the equality of citizens. The political accommodation evident in Kerala is not an outcome of constitutional engineering, as in many power-sharing democracies, but developed in an idiosyncratic social context of the state. In other words, Kerala's uniqueness in the power-sharing world is its ability to cultivate a culture of inclusiveness within a majoritarian institutional arrangement. This study has portrayed the power-sharing culture in Kerala as an evolution process from the modern political mobilisations in the colonial period in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It has gone through multiple stages of trial and error, and 1980 marked the institutionalisation of the practices in the form of two stable political alliances.

The legacy of the colonial time social reform movements on the power-sharing system of Kerala is a culture of political cooperation that welcomed as many groups to the platform for common goals. The two antagonistic political traditions of post-independent Kerala -conservative community establishments and radical left politics- claim the legacy of the reform movements. The left parties, which developed as forces questioning the conservative tilt of the community organisations, wanted to sustain the progressive spirit of the reform movements. In contrast, community organizations strive to maintain their social relevance in the changed political environment. The left parties' vision of establishing a society bereft of sectarian identities does not impede formulating a political strategy to align with parties that cater to particular interests. On the other end, the Congress formations recognise the demands of established groups and negotiate with parties of all shades for electoral purposes. In general, the two political alliances represent the two currents within the same tradition: the Congress-led UDF articulates social conservatism that seeks open engagement with community groups; the Communist Party-led LDF is the progeny of radical political idea that calls for distancing from communal grouping. Nonetheless, as parties engaged in bipolar competition, the UDF and LDF have learned from each other to acquire a similar social and political configuration. Irrespective of their political ideologies, both practically adopted a proactive engagement strategy with communities and confessional parties. Both alliances have recognised the communities and their demands, albeit with different perspectives. The result is the involvement of all organised groups in politics and society.

This research is yet to explain whether Kerala is consociational or centripetal. Thus this work hints at future research on which kind of power-sharing Kerala has. It undertook an exercise to see whether the state confirms the idea of power-sharing, a collaboration of multiple stakeholders to establish a stable political atmosphere with the participation of all significant sections. The distinguishing element of a power-sharing system from others is its extraordinary potential to mitigate the social impediments to democratic governance with the support of all segments of society. Accordingly, the basic tenets of power-sharing theories confirm Kerala's unique capacity to manage stable governments inclusive of multiple sections of society. The question of which school of power-sharing Kerala falls is complex because there is good reason for consociational and centripetal claims. From a consociational theorist's point of view, Kerala has demonstrated all four features of consociationalism: the coalition governments' character of including people of different sections of society qualifies

the institution of the grand coalition; adequate representation of groups in the house confirms the proportionality rule; the practices of two alliances leave a larger space for autonomy and veto power to communities. In a society where people explicitly show their social identity and some parties take the shape of confessional parties, a coalition of half a dozen parties representing all significant groups is no less of consociational democracy. On the other, a centripetal scholar has enough reasons to claim Kerala confirms the centripetalism. Central to the centripetal claim on Kerala politics is vote-pooling, wherein parties attract votes across communities by political appeals acceptable to all sections. Kerala's unique bipolar coalitions supported by half a dozen parties representing different interests pool votes across communities with moderate politics is the epitome of the vote-pooling mechanism, a key feature of centripetalism. Two multi-community alliances split the votes of communities and iron out the possibilities of communal consolidation. Significant to their claim is that Kerala did not have any of the institutional mechanisms prescribed by consociationalism. At the heart of the Indian democracy is the majoritarian parliamentary system with the first past the post (FPTP) electoral system, arguably the most harmful aspect of Anglo American democratic model. The majoritarian electoral system in Kerala, the FPTP, does not lead to the domination of the ethnic majority but the integration of groups and thus is arguably closer to the claim of centripetalism. The coalition governments of Kerala remarkably depart from the concept of a grand coalition in two ways. First, the political system in Kerala provides two rival political coalitions created out of a competitive party system, regularly circulating between the government and the opposition. Second, as the coalitions are not the outcome of consensus or agreement, there is an assurance to parties to get a pie of the power according to the share in the legislature.

Remarkably, Kerala's socially evolved power-sharing culture within an integrationist institutional frame has helped reap the maximum advantages of power-sharing and minimise the possible disadvantages. Consociational advantages to Kerala are the participation of all significant sections in governance, proportional representations to groups in the house, and politics of consensus in community-related affairs. A centripetal advocate would love the moderation of community appeal driven by bipolar competition, a better relationship between electors and elected due to the FPTP, and controlling ethnic outbidding in politics. For consociational scholars, Kerala has self-determined consociationalism, where the share in government for groups is not fixed before the game, contra pre-determined consociationalism. Notably, Lijphart and others have supported self-determining

consociationalism. Indeed, Kerala's system does not lead to immobilism, a criticism of power-sharing democracies.

The Left Power-Sharing

The LDF is officially an alliance of left-leaning political parties, most of which subscribe to socialism and Marxism, political ideologies with an integrationist approach to the diversity question. For a Marxist or socialist, class constitute the primary cleavage in the human society and defines the course of history. The general temptation in the left circle is to advocate disguising the social identities to the private realm and emphasise on the questions of socio-economic exploitations. However, the left had to respond to the galloping influence of ethnicity in politics, particularly since the 1960s in different countries. The left parties in some parts of the world have stolen the limelight for unique approach of recognising ethnic politics and developing power-sharing practices to settle the social tensions. The Communist Party's primary activity in India was to sensitise the people about class identity and unite a mass of people against the bourgeoisie. The ideological engagement of the party with ethnic identities in India is complex. First, it recognised the national identity as a resistance against global capitalism and sympathised with demands of separate nationhood like Pakistan's formation for the right of self-determination. It sent comrades to two sides of Pakistan after partition to spread the Marxist ideology. Second, the Communist Party supported the formation of linguistic states in the 1950s when language communities in South India demanded separate statehood. In Kerala, the party leaders were the masterminds of the United Kerala Movement for creating a separate Malayali state. Third, the party recognised the particular demands of socially deprived categories like the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC and ST) communities and minority religions but wanted to integrate them into the mainstream in the long run. The party generally considers the identity assertions in India as part of the global capitalist-Imperialist project to divide the popular movements. Fourth, the party engaged with community organisations of established groups, which it once found as the reactionary forces representing the dominant interest, as an inevitable electoral strategy to win over the bourgeois Congress Party. The Communist Party in Kerala propounded the goal of establishing a classless society where social identities do not matter while engaged with community outfits with democratic beliefs as a tactical line in parliamentary politics.

The social configuration of the Communist Party in Kerala is not entirely independent of the social cleavage structure. Mainly in three ways, the social history of Kerala impacted the Communist Party making in the state. First, the social origin of mainstream parties in Kerala, including the Communist Party, traces to the social reform movements in colonial times, spearheaded by the caste/community collectives. People associated with the formation of left parties in Kerala were initially part of caste/community organisations in the absence of non-community organisations in the early decades of the twentieth century. The historical juncture of secular party formation in Kerala was in the 1930s when a section of activists grown in community organisations realised that the primordial collectives had lost relevance in the changed socio-political scenario. They represented a radical stream in the community collectives who questioned the ideological base of social and religious conservatism. Second, the formulation of a non-sectarian political party independent of the communal ideologies and influences did not insulate the communists from the intriguing social divisions of Kerala society. The religious profile of the party in independent Kerala reveals the domination of Hindus in the rank and file with minimal presence of people belonging to religious minorities. As a party that propelled the reformist legacy of the social reform movements, the Communist Party's hold over sections outside the influence of social reform, like the minorities, was limited. The general psyche of both religious minorities in Kerala was against communism and supported movements to overthrow the left government in 1959. Throughout the period, minorities constituted the most significant base of anti-communist formations like the Congress-led UDF. Third, a caste-blind approach to social questions in Kerala created a peculiar social composition of the party in the early stages, with leadership dominated by the upper castes and members by lower castes. Although the situation has substantially changed with the emergence of leadership from the Ezhava backward caste, the upper castes continue to get a proportionately higher share in the party roles compared to other groups. And the emergence of a communist figurehead from the marginalised Dalit and Adivasis is yet to happen.

The parliamentary route of the Communist Party in Kerala marked a tectonic shift in the party ideology in dealing with the community outfits. Expanding the party beyond the traditional support base required sufficient changes in the ideological interpretation in the Indian context. The first phase of expansion involved lesser compromises as it constituted an endorsement of class or agrarian questions pertinent to minority religious groups, who were generally outside the influence of the left politics. For instance, the party supported the

Catholic Church-led peasant struggles to resist the eviction of farmers from the migrated lands in hill areas, most of which were tribal lands. The second phase was the open engagement with parties directly catering to particular interests to strengthen the anti-Congress democratic forces. That included the alignment with the Muslim League and Kerala Congress, which represented the exclusive interests of the Muslims and Christians. The left front's aversion to shelter any parties pandering to caste communities within the Hindus, the traditional base of the party, reflects the practical considerations of such engagements. Remarkably, the Communist Party's dealings with communities manifest a distinct approach to political accommodation. The party's engagement with the confessional parties and established groups were markedly different from the policy of the Congress-led UDF, which acted as a federation of communities. The LDF has generally kept the negotiations on community questions behind the curtain and controlled the political clout of community organisations in politics. An ideological commitment to establish a classless society coexisted with proactive engagement with parochial and particular interests to build a democratic coalition. In that sense, the left approach in Kerala has shown a unique way of addressing the community question in Indian politics. Kerala left politics denoted lenience to integrationist approach with practical consideration to political accommodation, which was inevitable to maintain balance with opposition parties.

The political adaptation of the Communist Party to the social realities of Kerala partly explains the survival of the party in the state. The party ideologues contextually interpreted the Marxist theory to engage with practical questions of competitive party politics. The prompt response of the Communist Party to the changing political environments gave it an edge over parties like Congress. In the early phases, the Communist Party found involvement in governments in states to broaden the party's base to unite a maximum number of people for the movement towards socialism. In later phases, the party identified the governments in the states as the means for facilitating better living conditions for the people, and involvement in power became inevitable for the party to preserve its political salience. A gradual decline in the Communist Party's stubbornness to radical policies like land reform and liberating education from community-led private management indicates how the party has been transformed. The left government in 2007 declined the demand for the second phase of the land reform to solve the land question of thousands of families, the majority of whom belonged to the scheduled communities. The Communist Party pulled out from the early commitment to fighting against the privatisation of education after aligning with parties and

organisations standing for those interests. The recent documents of the party support the private participation in the education sector and the opening of branches by foreign private universities in Kerala. The significance of the party's ideological shift on land and education is that they had constituted the bone contention between the progressive and regressive groups in Kerala politics. Although some of those changes are in tune with the party's ideological shift in economic policies, they have implications to the new approach of the party with community establishments.

The left party distancing from early radicalism to moderation has helped bridge the gap between the party and power-sharing practices. The change is evident in the efforts of governments formed after the first communist government to ease the relationship with the community outfits and the subsequent decrease in the confrontation between the communist government and the community establishments. From a political environment of all established interests forming a federation against the communist government in 1959, the situation has transformed to the communist chief ministers visiting community headquarters for friendly conversations and tea parties. The take-away for the power-sharing theory is that two conflicting parties have found common ground for negotiations and settlement moderating their appeals. Beyond that, the Communist Party significantly changed the community blind approach of the early phases to accommodate more people from traditionally underrepresented groups in the party cadre and governments. Notably, the number of communist MLAs from minority groups has increased remarkably in the last two decades, reflecting the party's engagement with those groups. The ideological compromises in the Communist Party, which drew criticism of the de-radicalisation of left politics, have contributed to the development of a left version of the power-sharing practice.

Congress and Consociationalism

This study has noted some remarkable differences between the Congress Party in Kerala and elsewhere in the country, partly justifying why the party sustained in the state even after losing its heartlands in India. The divergence started from the origin that the Kerala unit of the Congress has a genesis different from the party at the national level. The social origin of the Congress in Kerala is the community-led social reform movements, not the anti-colonial movements which defined the base of the party at the national level. The social protest struggles of early twentieth-century Kerala, which went through multiple civil rights movements and popular mobilisations under the guidance of caste/community leaders,

eventually acquired the structure of a party with the formation of the Travancore State Congress (TSC), the progenitor of the Congress Party in the state. Second, Kerala was one of the places where Congress faced unusual political challenges in the nascent decades of independence when the party had smooth sailing in national politics. The very first election to the Kerala Legislative Assembly signalled the weakened position of the Congress in Kerala that an opposition party captured power, marking the first significant electoral setback to the party in independent India. Third, the real distinction of the Congress Kerala unit from other state units was the mastery of the state Congress leaders in designing a political strategy to deal with the weakened party position in the state. The Congress bonded with a few like-minded parties to construct a systematic pre-electoral coalition to house people of different hues in a single apartment to fight against the bête noire, the Communist Party. The successful working of the UDF for more than three-decade manifested the political capacity of the Congress in Kerala. The remarkable aspect of Congress politics in the second half of the last century was its ability to rejuvenate from a shaky nine members in the legislative assembly in 1967 to capture the leadership role in the ruling coalition in 1982 with the support of half a dozen parties representing a multitude of social interests. The coalition history of the Congress in Kerala is perhaps the longest-surviving and successful coalition experiment of the party-state units in India. Significantly, Congress's coalition mechanism in Kerala is an excellent example of applying power-sharing theories in Indian politics.

Consociational theory better explains the Congress Party's engagement with community questions in Kerala than other power-sharing theories. The mark of distinction between the UDF and LDF in the early 1980s was their differences in approach to community-sponsored parties and organisations. The UDF adopted an open position on accommodating group interests, often resembling a federation of communities with shared objectives. The segmental approach of the UDF and Congress that did not problematise parties or leaders articulating particular interests without harming others is akin to what Arend Lijphart theorised in consociational theory. There is hardly any formal restriction on parties in the UDF system on directly mobilising people for a community cause, contra the LDF. The Congress Party has a tradition of permitting its members to keep dual membership of the party and community organisations. The Congress-led formations take the principle of social proportionality more seriously than the left front by dividing the seats and offices on a community basis. The UDF and Congress follow a balancing principle to adjust the inclusion of all significant groups and reward the support base of the front. The principles of communal

autonomy and veto power resonate in the working of the UDF in better ways. For instance, the UDF mechanism prioritises minority parties in dealing with portfolios related the minority communities. The analysis here has not deemphasised the integrationist edge of the Congress Party. An influential section within the Congress prefers developing Kerala society without the direct interference of community establishments in political processes. While authorising segmental parties and leadership, Congress has also cultivated many figures acceptable across society.

A solid social base among religious minorities was a catalyst in the Congress-led coalition's policy of giving weightage to minorities in seat allocation and cabinet positions, a consociational practice. Lijphart had suggested providing an overrepresentation of numerically smaller sections to balance the power among groups. Minorities held around fifty per cent of the positions in the UDF cabinets formed between 1982 and 2016, while the leaders from the Hindu community also managed prominent positions. However, the Congress and UDF were less consociational in parting offices within the Hindu caste groups because it slotted lesser preference for backward Hindus for their meagre presence in the party and the front. The SC/ST communities received a better deal from the UDF than the LDF in some respect. In the K. Karunakaran Government (1982-87), the chief minister handled the portfolio of the welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, while the SC community's minister held the transportation portfolio. The Oommen Chandy Government (2011-16) went a step ahead by inducting the first tribal minister in Kerala along with a minister from the SC community, who handled the Tourism department, a prominent portfolio. While the left front commanded the most significant support base of the scheduled groups, they are yet to give substantial consideration to the group in the cabinet formation and portfolio allocation.

The Congress Party in Kerala took a position in support of the socially conservative policies in government against the Communist Party's stand for progressive politics. In the intra-party debates in the Congress in Kerala on approaches to the social question, the group supporting traditionalism gained prominence over the progressive faction. After the Kerala unit of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) parted with the Congress in 1941 to merge with the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Congress in the state became the party dominated by social conservatives. In the early years of independence, some stands of the Congress Party on socio-political issues were less distinguishable from that of the Jana Sangh, which pandered to traditionalist groups in India. A section of Congress leaders unsuccessfully tried

to guide the party in a progressive anti-communal line against the party's official view, favouring the policy of open engagement with community establishments. The Congress-led government's policies generally safeguarded the interest of the dominant communities, which constituted the party's core base. The party was among the earliest supporters of extending reservation benefits to the economically backward sections in the forward communities amid intense opposition from the backward groups. Pandering to the established interests and social conservatism is a realisation in the Congress camp that the dominant communities and conservative groups provide the party's electoral base.

The tame performance of the UDF in recent elections sheds light on some serious cautionary notes about the survival of Congress's social coalition strategy in the changed political environment. The Communist Party's disciplined party system, coupled with mastery in managing the coalition mechanism, has given it an edge over the Congress Party in Kerala politics in general and in assembly elections in particular. Two significant external factors and an internal have significantly contributed to the faded profile of the Congress Party in current Kerala politics. First, the Communist Party has made a remarkable shift in the approach to community outfits from confrontation to collaboration, hitting the Congress Party's traditional vote base. The left has successfully snatched support from the social groups in the UDF kit one after the other. The minority religious groups, who provided the most prominent support base to the UDF, have started preferring the Communist Party over the Congress in some crucial political issues. Second, the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), pandering to the socially conservative Hindus, has hit the Congress vote base, particularly the upper caste Nairs. If the BJP eats into the Congress Party's traditional Hindu vote base in Kerala, as it did in many other states, the fate of the Congress would be a question mark. Third, a formidable crisis of the UDF is the absence of a charismatic leader like K. Karunakaran, who could balance a better relationship with various social groups, coupled with a weakened Delhi-based High Command, which used to mediate the intra-party factionalism within the party. The prospectus of the Congress Party in Kerala relies heavily on an emergency patchwork in the party and the front.

Sustainability of Power-Sharing

Forces outside the mainstream alliance tradition of Kerala can potentially upset the state's power-sharing system. Socio-political groups with basic respect for alliance politics and the principle of communal coexistence could generally find a niche in Kerala's electoral

politics. Both alliances have set only a narrow line of ideological commitment and focussed more on practical engagements to enable negotiations with maximum players to win the fierce bipolar competition. The combined vote share of the alliance, eight-five to ninety per cent during the period between 1980 and 2016, implies a significant fact about the political accommodation in the state: the maximum number of groups have taken part in mainstream politics. The alternation of government between the two all-encompassing powerhouses helped ensure the minimisation of possible exclusion of any section from power over an extended period. Against this political backdrop, the forces outside the mainstream wanted to set foot in Kerala politics. The non-mainstream parties failed to gate-crash the coalitions or build an alternative third force as their organisational strategy did not jell with Kerala's political frame. The rise of a political force outside the structure of Kerala's coalition politics may upset the existing equations between the communities and parties.

Political forces who do not subscribe to the social logic of the mainstream coalitions have shown their heads in Kerala. The social wings of radical organisations have extensively invested in setting up institutions in media, healthcare, and private welfare initiatives. The organisational systems of extreme outfits in Kerala have more advanced features than most of their units elsewhere in the country. The question is how long Kerala can dam up the political developments outside the state. The rise of Hindu nationalism in other parts of India has produced trembling in Kerala. A section of Hindus has turned to the right in echoing the political development in India at large. In response to the Hindu right-wing threat, a group of Muslims has chosen the radical path to support parties like the Popular Front of India (PFI) and Jamat-e-Islami. The radical current has started gaining ground among the Christian community as well. The secular forces are in trouble facing the allegations of the radical parties that moderate behaviour rattles the community interest. Nevertheless, the extreme parties were not successful in winning elections in Kerala precisely because they did not fit with the age-old political equations in the state, which revolved around communal moderation and cooperation.

It is imperative to mention two significant gaps in Kerala's power-sharing model. First, the people who have left out of the Kerala development model, like the SC/ST communities and the fishermen groups, have yet to receive adequate attention in the state's

accommodation model.[3] Many people feel they could not reap the benefits of Kerala's acquired prosperity over the last few decades, like remittance, land, and education.[4] The celebrated land reform of Kerala, which has given land to three and a half million landless people, is a significant point of criticism by the SC/ST communities, many of whom are still part of landless families.[5] They argue that the land reform of Kerala did not consider the rights of the people at the bottom, who were the real peasants. The latest identity assertions among lower castes have questioned the left party's legacy in protecting the interest of the lower caste groups. The contradiction between the lower caste demands for land and the left party's reluctance to further change the land relation is evident in the Chengara Land Struggle, where the Dalit landless families are in confrontation with the Communist Party-affiliated trade unions.[6] A section of disillusioned lower castes has turned to the Hindu right, losing hope in the approaches of the mainstream parties to their questions. Second, Kerala has not been an exception to the general tendency of power-sharing societies to ignore the participation of women. Given the poor representation of women in Kerala politics, which is apparent with a cursory glance, there is a need to 'gendering power-sharing'[7] mechanism in the state.

A perplexing question about the sustenance of Kerala's power-sharing is the puzzle involved in the differentiation of two versions of communalism, saamudayikatha (a softer and acceptable form of communalism that connotes allegiance to own group without hurting others) and vargeeyatha (a harder and unacceptable form of communalism that involves violence and antagonism with others), explained in the first chapter. On the one side, there is a demand to consider all shades of communalism as representing the same ideology and thus dangerous; on the other, the extreme groups claim they are not different from parties following a softer communal appeal. The secular parties who have a presence outside the

[3] John Kurien, "The Kerala Model: it's Central Tendency and the Outlier," *Social Scientist* 23, no. 1/3 (1995): 70-90; and P. K. Michael Tharakan, *When the Kerala Model of Development is Historicised: A Chronological Perspective*, (Kochi: Centre for Socio-Economic & Environmental Studies, 2008).

[4] Suma Scaria, "Changes in Land Relations: The Political Economy of Land Reforms in a Kerala Village," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 26-27 (2010): 191-198.

[5] C. R. Yadu, and C. K. Vijayasuryan, "Triple Exclusion of Dalits in Land Ownership in Kerala," *Social Change* 46, no. 3 (2016): 393–408.

[6] M. S. Sreerekha, "'Illegal Land, Illegal People': The Chengara Land Struggle in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no. 30 (2012): 21–24.

[7] Siobhan Byrne, and Allison McCulloch, "Gendering Power-Sharing," in *Power-Sharing: Empirical and Normative Challenges*, ed. Allison McCulloch and John McGarry, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 250-267.

state also puzzle to justify their bond with confessional parties in Kerala. Thus, the survival of the political accommodation system in Kerala will rely on the system's capacity to meet the new challenges and fill up the lacunas.

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