Chapter VII

TOWARDS A POLITICAL IDENTITY
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An Islamic identity, which had emerged in Malabar by the efforts of the Reformist Muslim groups in the early decades of 20th century, transformed the social landscape of Malabar into a fertile ground for the development of a sectarian political consciousness in Malabar. Along with this, the Colonial Government’s policy of recognizing religion as the unit for its political and administrative measures like separate electorate, special treatment of Mappila education etc. provided the necessary fuel for the growth of a community centred political perspective among Mappilas. Thus, by about the third decade of 20th century, religious identity became the rallying point for political organization and mobilization in Malabar, as elsewhere in India.

Comparing the Muslims of other parts of India, the Mappilas were late in accepting such a communitarian political ideology. During the Khilafath Movement, the Nationalist political leadership of Malabar, ofcourse, with the backing of the Ulemas, could effectively channelize this religious identity on the path of nationalist political ideology. 'The Muslims have got more justification to stand united behind Congress and Khilafath because one slogan given out by national leadership was a slogan dear to each religious Muslim i.e., not to touch the Turkey Khalifa'¹ says E.M.S Nambudiripad. But the traumatic experiences of the Mappilas during the last phase of the Khilafath Movement, prevailed upon them and they began to drift towards communitarian politics. As K.N. Panikkar pointed out, 'although the

Rebellion was not intrinsically communal, its consequences were decidedly so.²

Several factors had contributed for this political transformation of Mappilas. The first was the almost complete loss of credibility and influence of the Congress. The Mappilas nursed a sense of betrayal as the Congress leaders had turned away from them at the time of their distress.³ They were left alone when the police unleashed a reign of terror in South Malabar. "The Mappilas found that their Hindu brothers, both leaders and ordinary people, had abandoned them and gone away. The army began to hunt after them. Naturally the Mappilas got angry with them" says E.M.S Namboodiripad.⁴ M.B. Namboodiripad also has pointed out the ambivalent attitude of the Congress towards the cruel suppression of the Mappilas by the Government. He says, "Congress took a policy of 'let them reap what they have sowed', ignoring the fact that the whole Mappilas, not merely the culprits, were bearing the brunt of police brutality. If congress had budged against this brutal suppression, the government would not have dared to unleash a reign of terror".⁵ Further, he adds that the 'Congress party, which viewed the Amritsar killings as a dastardly event, considered 'Wagon Tragedy' as a minor event'.⁶ As M.T. Ansari put in, 'the colonial government and Nationalist leaders worked hand in glove at different levels and in different ways to quell the rebellion.'⁷ The Congress provided no legal or material help to the suffering Mappilas, majority of whom were not involved in the Rebellion.

³ Ibid., p.188.
⁵ Moozhikunnath Brahmadathan Namboodiripad, Khilafath Smaranakal (Mal.), Calicut, 1965, p.84.
⁶ Ibid., p.85.
The Congress leadership was eager to disassociate themselves from the Mappilas. Even a Congress leader like Moozhikunnath Nambudiripad, was forced to complaint that 'the inquiry conducted by T. Prakasam, on behalf of AICC, was aimed at absolving the Congress of its responsibility for the rebellion.\(^8\) To make matters worse, the resolution of 36\(^{th}\) annual conference of Congress held in December, 1921 at Allahabad, expressing regret at the violent incident of the rebellion and dissociating itself from the rebels, created an atmosphere which in due course alienated the *Mappilas* from the Congress.\(^9\)

Another impact of the Rebellion was that *Mappilas* began to identify the Congress with Hindus. For creating this impression, the attitude and activities of the Congress leaders and workers must take some blame.\(^10\) Elsewhere in this study, we have already examined how a leader like Mahatma Gandhi represented the violence of *Mappilas* during the Rebellion. The critique of Mappila violence and fanaticism by the Congress leadership, including the local leaders, had a religious connotation, which emphasized their own religious identity.\(^11\) Along with this, the partisan nature of the Reconstruction and Relief work initiated by the Congress in the Post-Rebellion phase, further alienated the *Mappilas* from the Nationalist politics. The Congress workers, who undertook relief work, appeared to be more concerned with the relief and welfare of Hindus rather than the people as a

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\(^10\) K.N. Panikkar, *op. cit.*, p. 188.  

whole. It was in this context, Mohamed Abdurahiman, a ‘nationalist muslim’ leader, was hard pressed to allege that, 'the Congress workers seem to particularize their relief activities to Hindus alone'. When the All India players like Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj started their relief work for the Hindus, the JDT Islami of Pune and Khilafat Committee organized relief camps for the Hindus. This relief works organized on communal lines helped to further the divide between the communities in Malabar.

The association of the Congress leaders in Malabar with Hindu communal organizations like Hindu Mahasabha further underlined Mappilas' apprehension about the Congress as a pro-Hindu Organization. Many Congress leaders had participated in the deliberations of Hindu Conference held at Tirunavaya in May 1929. Al-Ameen, the ‘nationalist muslim’ paper in its editorial criticized Congress leaders for their association with such organizations. As K. Umar Moulavi observed, 'the attitude and the communitarian designs of K. Madhavan Nair and K.P. Kesava Menon were in convergence with the predilections of the elite national leadership of the Congress'. M.P.S Menon, the son of veteran Congress leader M.P. Narayana Menon, also testified to this fact. He said that 'most Congress leaders from North and Madras preferred to stay at Kesava Menon's house, where Mappilas were not allowed to enter, than at M.P. Narayana Menon's house. For his close association with Mappilas, Narayana Menon was often scoffed at by other Congress leaders'. Such attitudes of the Congress leaders further

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12 Public Department (confidential) G.O. No.327 dtd. 2nd Nov. 1921, TNA.
13 For more about this, see chapter VI.
15 K. Umar Moulavi, Ormakalude Thirathu (Mal.), Cochin, 2000, p.91.
alienated the community from the Congress.\textsuperscript{17} Interestingly enough, not only the Hindu Congress leaders were branded as pro-Hindu but the nationalist Muslims like Mohamed Abdurahiman Sahib and Moidu Moulavi were scolded by \textit{Mappilas} as traitors of the community for associating with Congress politics.

Further, some Congress leaders were tactless in their dealings with ‘nationalist Muslims’. For instance, the controversy regarding the post of Chairman of Calicut Municipality in 1931 could have been avoided if the Congress leaders had shown a little more tact and understanding.\textsuperscript{18} ‘As Moidu Moulavi observed with regard to the issue, 'a Congress councilor alleged that Abdurahiman was a staunch communalist and if he was elected as President, the Municipal office would be filled with Mappilas'.\textsuperscript{19} In the election to Malabar District Board, held in 1939, Mohamed Abdurahiman contested from the constituency of Wandoor \textit{farqa} on Congress ticket. During the election campaign, the Chalappuram gang, a right wing within the Congress, distributed pamphlets in Hindu houses branding him as a Muslim fanatic.\textsuperscript{20} Such incidents of course led to the derailment of Muslims from the track of nationalist politics in Malabar. Again, certain programmes of the Congress like that of Temple Entry Satyagraha excluded the participation of Muslims.

\textsuperscript{17} This is not to argue that Muslim leaders of the Congress were free from such bias. Nationalist Muslim leaders and \textit{Al-Ameen} were branded as pro-Muslim and Anti-Hindu in a similar vein,

\textsuperscript{18} K. Gopalankutty, \textit{op. cit.}, p.110.


\textsuperscript{20} M. Abdul Rashid, \textit{Mohamed Abdurahiman Sahib} (Mal.) IPH, Calicut, 1994, p.68. During the election campaign, the Muslim orthodox section propagated that he was a reformist trying to alter the tenants of Islam. In 1937 Madras Legislative Assembly Election also the orthodox Pangil Musaliyar branded him as a 'Hindu'. During this election, Unnin, the nephew of his rival candidate distributed a pamphlet branding him as Hindu but the same man later embraced Hinduism and was killed by \textit{Mappilas} in 1948.
and other non-Hindus. In short, the programmes and the policies of the Congress leadership also played their role in drifting the Mappilas away from nationalist politics.

In this backdrop, even after the return of normalcy in Malabar, the Congress was unable to initiate political activities in southern Malabar. The Mappila aloofness from Nationalist politics became visible during the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar. When K.P.C.C took the decision to launch the CDM campaign, there was great consternation among a significant minority within the Congress party. K. Madhavan Nair resigned from the Congress fearing another Mappila Rebellion. No wonder, the rebel zones in Malabar remained quiescent even at the height of Salt Satyagraha in 1932. Only one Mappila was with Kelappan's march on foot from Calicut to Payyannur, where the Salt Satyagraha was to be inaugurated. 'There were comic situations like when the procession on foot from Payyannur leading for the Satyagraha at Guruvayur, stopped short of the rebel area and marchers took a train from Feroke to Tirur because of the rumour that Mappilas would prevent them from moving to Ernad.21

All these suggest that for the Congress the Malabar was a lost terrain for ever. Though Al-Ameen and 'Nationalist Muslim' leaders took an all out efforts to regain the lost support for the Congress and nationalist politics in Malabar, they could not succeed in this venture. As the Government Secretary put in 1937, "the efforts of local Congress men to secure in Malabar the support of Mappilas were still meeting with little success. Leading Mappilas of Ernad have instituted an anti-Congress move and have issued a manifesto urging Muslims not to join the Congress. A Congress recruiting campaign by the Ernad Congress Secretary met with no success".22

22 F.N.R dated. 23rd July, 1937, pp.4-3 TNA.
antipathy of Mappilas towards the Congress leadership, is testified by the following report of the Government official in 1937. The FNR observed that 'the Congress drive to capture the adherence of Muslims continues to meet with little success... There have also been two recent occasions in Malabar District when Muslims at public meetings have shown considerable resentment at remarks made by Hindu speakers. In one place at Tellicherry, P. Krishna Pillai, a prominent Congress Socialist, in the course of his speech said that it was pity that Muslims in some places were not working with the Congress; he had to sit down after being warned by Muslims in the audience not to speak this vein. In another occasion at Ponnani, M.P. Damodaran, Congress MLA referred to the general poverty and said that it was driving Mappila women and children to the streets. The audience took objection to this reference to the Mappila women and Damodaran had to leave the meeting.\textsuperscript{23} All these shows that the Muslims were agitated even at an innocent comment about their community by the Congress leaders. It also shows the growing sense of community identity among the Mappilas.

Another development of the thirties which fostered separate political identity was that the Mappilas began to share the growing feelings of Indian Muslims that Congress leadership was not sufficiently sympathetic to Muslim needs and desires and that a free and democratic India as envisaged would be detrimental to the interests of the community.\textsuperscript{24} This drifting towards communal politics owed a great deal of debt to the designs of colonial government. By 1919 itself, the government had recognized the provision for separate electorate to local and provincial councils. This formation of separate electorate, with religion as reference point, began to influence the Mappilas, just like their brethren in North India. Even prior to the formation

\textsuperscript{23} F.N.R, pp.4-11, dtd. 18\textsuperscript{th} June, 1937, TNA.

\textsuperscript{24} Roland E. Miller, \textit{Mappila Muslims of Kerala}, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1976, p.160.
of Muslim League in Malabar, *Muslim Aikya Sangam*, in its 3rd annual conference held at Calicut on 4th June 1925, passed a resolution demanding separate electorate for District and Taluk Boards as was the case with Legislative Assembly.\(^{25}\) By 1920's, itself we come across election appeals in Malayalam dailies requesting to caste votes on the basis of religion. For instance, Purakkatt Moosa, the candidate to Madras Legislative Assembly Election of 1923, made the following appeal to the Muslim voters of Malabar through *Mathrubhumi*:

'Since I have got good command over English and Hindusthani and a thorough knowledge in Islam and its tenets, I am able to object to any move on the part of government that may turn to be tantamount to the interest of Islam. Hence, I request the Muslims, who are serious about the well being of the Muslim community, to cast your vote in favour of me.'\(^{26}\)

The *Jamiyyathul Iqwan Sangam* of Calicut and the first *Kerala Muslim Conference* held at Tellicherry (1931) passed similar resolutions demanding separate electorate for Muslims to local boards.\(^{27}\) The *Calicut Muslim Majlis Committee*, through a memorandum, demanded that *Mappilas* should be given representation in Madras Legislative Assembly on the basis of their numerical strength.\(^{28}\) As mentioned elsewhere in this study, even the pro-congress *Kerala Muslim Yuvajana Conference* held at Calicut on 14th May 1933, through a resolution appealed to set aside ten seats for *Mappilas* of Malabar out of 29 seats reserved for Muslims in Madras Legislative Assembly.\(^{29}\) It was in this context that in its editorial captioned 'How to reach Hindu-Muslim Unity' *Mathrubumi* remarked, 'the last cause for rift between

\(^{25}\) *Mathrubumi*, 6th June, 1925.
\(^{26}\) *Mathrubumi*, 7th July, 1923.
\(^{27}\) *Mathrubumi*, 26th May, and 25th August, 1931.
\(^{28}\) *Mathrubumi*, 21st July, 1932.
\(^{29}\) *Mathrubumi*, 16th May, 1933.
Hindus and Muslims was the communal representation. From Grama Panchayath to Central Legislative assembly and from village officer to the executive council member, the communal representation had become the order of the day. All these show that even prior to the emergence of Muslim League in Malabar, communitarian political demands began to be raised by various Muslims organizations. Thus, from 1920's onwards, religious identities instead of being submerged within national consciousness became the rallying point for political organization and mobilization.

**Kerala Muslim Majlis**

By 1930's, due to the efforts of *Aikya Sangam*, the first Muslim reformist organization, started in 1922, Malabar had become a fertile soil for the growth of a separatist political ideology. Through its annual conferences held at various Mappila centres during 1922-1934 period and reformist ideology, which it tried to disseminate among Mappilas, *Aikya Sangam* could forge a new kind of unity among the Mappilas. The leaders of *Aikya Sangam* like K.M. Seethi Sahib, K.M. Moulavi, Abdurahman Sahib, Moidu Moulavi etc were very active in the non-cooperation and Khilafath Movement. But by about early thirties *Aikya Sangam* had become weak due to the dissensions on the question of participation of Muslims in political activities. *Aikya Sangam* leaders like E. Moidu Moulavi and Abdurahiman Sahib saw no necessity of a political platform for the Muslims of Kerala other than Indian National Congress while Seethi Sahib; K.M. Moulavi etc contended that a separate political organization was necessary for Muslims. In the 12th and last conference held at Kannur in 1934, the *Aikya Sangam* was formally dissolved and was merged with the *Kerala Muslim Majlis*, formed in 1931, as a frontal organization of *Aikya Sangam*. According to E.K. Moulavi, a leader of the

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30 *Mathrubumi*, 8th June, 1926.
Sangam, 'as the aims and objectives of Aikya Sangam and Muslim Majlis were the same, the conference felt that there was no need for two separate organizations and passed a resolution to cease the activities of the Sangam.\textsuperscript{32}

Infact, the political polarization among the leadership of the Sangam was the real cause behind the dissolution of Sangam. While Abdurahiman Sahib and Moidu Moulavi stood for the amalgamation of the Sangam with Indian National Congress, Seethi Sahib and his associates wanted to keep away from the National Congress. It was this difference of opinion among the leadership that finally ended up in the dissolution of the Sangam. It was this difference with Seethi Sahib that prevailed upon Abdurahiman Sahib to publish a series of articles in Al-Ameen against Risalathun fil Banki, a tract of K.M. Moulavi regarding the Muslim bank. The dissolution of Sangam and its merger with Majlis was actually the victory of K.M. Seethi Sahib and his group who stood for a separate political organization for Muslims. As Moidu Moulavi observed, "the Majlis was formed by some moderates and pro-British leaders who could not agree with the policies of the Congress.\textsuperscript{33}

At the All Kerala Muslim Conference held at Tellicherry on August 22, 1931, the decision to form a Muslim Organization was taken. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} resolution of the conference was to organize Muslim Majlis for the political and economic progress of the community.\textsuperscript{34} Supporting the resolution, K.M. Seethi Sahib remarked, 'A crowd without common fraternity and ideals cannot be called a community'. The term Mappila should be a synonym for 'dignity and pride'.... For the educational and economic progress of the community, a dynamic organization is necessary'.\textsuperscript{35} Even at this conference,

\textsuperscript{33} E. Moidu Moulavi, Ente Kootukaram Mohamed Abdurahiman Sahib (Mal.) Calicut, 1964, p.190.
\textsuperscript{34} Mathrubumi, 25th August, 1931.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
differences of opinion arose as regards to the political resolution introduced by Mohamed Abdurahiman. This massive conference of Mappilas with delegates elected from each Mahal committee and thereby representing 15 lakhs of Muslims, was convened with the specific purpose of discussing the methods for Muslim progress in Kerala. It was in this conference Kerala Muslim Majlis was formed. The main aims of the Majlis were

a. To work for the reform and progress of the community.

b. To secure political and educational concessions for the community from the government.

c. To work for the inclusion of provisions in the legislative reforms for the protection and freedom of the community.\(^{36}\)

With these aims, a committee including 48 councilors was set up at Tellicherry with Jamal Mohamed as president and Haji Abdul Sathar Sait and K. Uppi Sahib as secretaries. A Muslim Educational Board was also set up with Mohamed Abdurahiman Sahib as convener. Besides the central committee, District and Taluk and even Mahal-wise committee were formed and a quarter Anna was fixed as membership fee. 'This was an organization which represent each and every one of 15 lakhs Muslims without discrimination between reformist or traditional or between rich or poor'.\(^ {37}\) But in reality, if one examines the class composition of the office bearers of this organization at district or taluk level, it was basically an organization of upper class Muslims of Malabar. Many Khan Bahadurs (the title conferred upon by the Government) could be seen in the list of its office bearers. Due to this class composition of the Majlis, in the very first conference itself, the political


\(^{37}\) Notice issued by Kerala Muslim Majlis as cited in Parappil Koya, op.cit., p.152.
resolution introduced by Mohamed Abdurahman was objected by the elite leaders of the Majlis.

However, this conference and the formation of Muslim Majlis was hailed as a historic event by the Muslim journals of Kerala. Deepika wrote 'the conference held at Tellicherry on 23rd August, 1931 is a turning point in the history of the community. For a long period, Kerala Muslims have been living in lethargy, without an organization and unity. Though many organizations, representing the community exist, they are almost moribund due to the lack of proper manuring. Unity, organization, co-operation, self-sacrifice etc are the factors for the growth of a healthy organization of the community. It is by considering all these issues, that certain well-wishers of the community in Malabar have convened such a meeting. We realize that such a successful meeting, with representatives of all factions and localities is first of its kind in Kerala. One can hope that this self-realization of the community will lead it to a bright future.'

During the second conference of Kerala Muslim Majlis held at Calicut in 1933, the young Turks of Majlis was forced to organize a young Muslim Conference with the blessings of Mohamed Abdurahiman, and braving the opposition of the Majlis leadership. In the second conference, the elite leadership, most of who were from North Malabar, also found it difficult to support the resolution opposing the Marumakhathayam system among Muslims. Right from its inception, internal rift regarding political affiliation had been causing troubles and finally the proposal of K.M. Seethi Sahib was adopted by the Majlis and the Congress Muslims left the organization. The young members of the Majlis formed Calicut Young Muslim Association (CYMA) with the blessings of pro-Congress leaders of Majlis. From the very

39 Mathrubumi, 14th May, 1933.
beginning, the Majlis showed its leaning towards the Muslim League. In the annual conference held on 25\textsuperscript{th} May 1936 the Majlis resolved to accept the leadership of All India Muslim League. In the last conference of Majlis held on 1\textsuperscript{st} May 1937 of Tellicherry, Ali Raj, the president, viewed with great concern the efforts to bring Muslims under the Congress.\textsuperscript{40} At this conference, Majlis was merged with Muslim League.

It was during this period, election to central assembly was declared and in the election held on 10\textsuperscript{th} November, 1934, Mohamed Abduralahman, the Congress candidate was defeated by Abdul Sathar Sait, a sympathizer of Muslim League, from South Canara constituency. Since franchise in the election was restricted to those who paid minimum of Rs.50 as tax, this victory was those of the upper class Muslims and the Muslim bureaucrats. The total number of voters was 4000 only.\textsuperscript{41} The election result was a clear indication of the tilting of elite Muslim mind towards Muslim League even at a time when Muslim League was not officially started in Malabar.

**Formation of Muslim League**

The Muslim club of Tellicherry, in which K.M. Seethi Sahib played a significant role, was influential in starting a journal called Chandrika from Tellicherry which later became the mouthpiece of Muslim League. By 1932 itself, Seethi Sahib had shifted his practice from Ernakulam to Tellicherry and within a short span of time; Seethi Sahib and his Chandrika could garner support for Muslim League among the Mappilas. In 1935, Abdul Sathar Sait, K.M. Seethi Sahib, A.K. Kunji Mayin Haji, B. Pocker Sahib etc met at Tellicherry and formed the first Muslim League unit in Malabar. In the same year, K.M. Moulavi formed a Muslim League unit at Tirurangadi with 10 members including Kolakkadan Koyamu Haji, Tottungal Valiya Mohamed

\textsuperscript{40} M. Abdul Azeez, *op. cit.*, p.24.
\textsuperscript{41} S.K. Pottekkatt et al., *op. cit.*, p.322.
In 1936, a meeting of League sympathizers was held at Calicut and formed a Muslim League Committee. Kadirikoya Haji, Hydros Vakil, B.V. Abdulla Koya, P.V. Mohamed Moulavi (Pulikkal) etc. were the main leaders of Calicut committee. P.V. Mohamed Moulavi travelled through the length and breadth of Malabar to organize the unit committees for Muslim League. The District Muslim League Committee was constituted at a meeting held at Tellicherry on 20 December 1937 with Arakkal Ali Raja as President and Abdul Sathar Sait as General Secretary. Uppi Sahib, K.M. Seethi Sahib, M.V. Hydros, C.P. Mammukeyi were the other office bearers of the committee. In the same conference, the Muslim Majlis, first organization of Muslim League sympathizers, was merged with Muslim League. All these show that it was the stalwarts of Aikya Sangam and Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulema who were the founding fathers of Muslim League in Malabar. But still it could not get mass support in the South Malabar as testified by the Government Report in 1937: 'The situation among Malabar Muslims at present is that three parties or at least followers of three policies; those who have joined the Congress unconditionally, those who adhere to Jinnah and Muslim League and those who are anxious to stand apart from both parties as independent loyalists, the second is probably the strongest in North Malabar while the recent movement towards forming the third party, is so far confined to Ernad and Walluvanad in South Malabar'.

During the late 1930's, both Congress and Muslims League engaged in a fierce battle for the hearts of Muslims of Malabar and in the final battle, the Muslim League could win the support of Malabar Muslims. However in the election held to the Provincial Legislative Assembly in February 1937, the Muslim League candidates from both the constituencies of Calicut and

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43 Mathrubumi, 22nd December, 1937.
44 FNR, pp.4-14, dtd. 6 August 1937, TNA.
Kurumbranad (Adv. P.K. Hassankoya and B. Pokker Sahib) were defeated by their Congress opponents, P.I Kunhahamed Haji and Khan Bahadur Attakoya Thangal.\textsuperscript{45} For the election campaign of Muslim League, Moulana Shoukathali came to Calicut and during his visit, he exhorted Muslims to strengthen Muslim League. In one such meeting he said, 'I am happy to see the descendants of Arabs in this beautiful land. Muslims should live in unity and Muslim League is an organization striving for the unification of Muslims'.\textsuperscript{46} Moulana's visit had given an additional fillip to the activities of Muslim League in Malabar.

Before long, the Muslim league could get the support of masses. Actually, the interest of Muslim elite leadership was of little concern to the ordinary Muslims in the countryside. But now material concerns were no longer the sole determinant of the relationship between urban educated and the rural masses. The ideological propaganda had forged a new and strong links transcending the diversity of material interest. The league leadership now sought close ties with masses in the name of a shared faith. As Arakkal Ali Raja, the first president of Malabar District Muslim League said, in a meeting held on 16\textsuperscript{th} December 1937 at Calicut, 'It is a religious duty for Muslims to be united. This unity under an organization is not intended to oppress anybody or to create tension in society. It is for protecting and propagating the faith of Islam'.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly K.M. Moulavi, another leader of Muslim League, exhorted that all Muslims, forgetting the ideological differences, should rally behind the Muslim League'.\textsuperscript{48} Muslim League leadership was now eager to promote Muslim solidarity and mobilize the masses in support of Muslim demands. They now recognized the importance

\textsuperscript{45} Parappil Koya, \textit{op. cit.}, p.154.
\textsuperscript{46} Mathrubumi, 16\textsuperscript{th} February, 1937.
\textsuperscript{47} Mathrubumi, 18\textsuperscript{th} December, 1937.
\textsuperscript{48} KKM Kareem, \textit{op. cit.}, p.170.
of political pressure in securing concessions and safeguards from the government. A glance through the resolutions of the first District Muslim League Council held at Tellicherry in December 1937 would reveal this concern of the Muslim league.\(^{49}\) The following were the main resolutions.

a. The first resolution appealed the Madras Government and Malabar District Board not to stop the separate schools for Muslims, as it would retard the progress of Muslim education in Malabar.

b. A second resolution demanded separate electorate for Muslims in local boards as well as Municipalities and to bring about changes accordingly in Madras Local Board Acts and Madras District Municipalities Act.

c. Another resolution urged the government not to recognize the *Vande Madaram* as national anthem, as it contains defamatory reference about Muslims and their religious belief.\(^{50}\)

The District council also resolved to chalk out a crash programme for the educational and economic uplift of the community, which includes:

a. To send each and every Muslim child to schools and to set up night schools for illiterate labourers and farmers for imparting both temporal and religious education.

b. To encourage reading habits among common people and to set up reading rooms and libraries for the same.

c. To collect the *Zakath* (religious tithes) from each *Mahal* and to distribute it to the deserving members of the community.

d. To enlighten people to set aside anti-Islamic rituals and extravagance connected with marriage.


\(^{50}\) *Ibid.*
e. To encourage small scale industries of each region and to work for sustaining such industries.

f. To foster unity and fraternity among Muslims by resolving the factional feuds and legal battles.

g. To strive for developing religiosity and punctuality in observance of religious rituals especially the Friday congregational prayers.

h. To set up gymnasiums for Muslims and to organize a volunteer core under each unit of Muslim League.\textsuperscript{51}

Through such programmes, League could easily win over the support of Muslim masses. As K.M. Seethi Sahib claimed, ‘within a period of seven months, 15000 people joined the Muslim League’.\textsuperscript{52} Muslim League took up almost every issue concerning the community and by 1938, the membership of Muslim League rose up to 32,000 in Malabar.\textsuperscript{53}

It is to be noted that Muslim League leadership always focused on the distinctiveness of Muslims and the cunningness of the majority community. For instance, Hamid Khan, the Muslim League leader, in a public meeting held at Kannur advised its members that, ‘only through rallying under the banner of Muslim League that Muslims could save themselves from the persecution of majority community’.\textsuperscript{54} Similarly, Fazalul Haq, the League leader from Bengal, at the District League meeting held at Calicut, made the following advice:

‘Be a Muslim first and second. Those who claim that they are Indians first and Muslim second are not real Muslims…. Hindus

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.21-22.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Mathrubumi}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} December, 1937.

\textsuperscript{53} Presidential speech of Hamid Khan in Muslim League Meeting- \textit{Mathrubumi}, 27\textsuperscript{th} July, 1938.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Mathrubumi}, 27\textsuperscript{th} July, 1938.
and Muslims are poles apart. Why is that the killing of cows by Muslims objectionable to Hindus and Hindu's tom-toying before mosques, irritating to Muslims? It shows that both are different...... The salvation of South Indian Muslim lies in the hands of Mappilas and they will always get the support and assistance of Muslims of majority provinces'.

A massive District Muslim League Conference attended by more than 10,000 members, was held at Calicut on 30th April 1940. This meeting accepted the Lahore Resolution of 'Two Nation Theory' of All India Muslim League. In the conference, Fazalul Haq, the premier of Bengal remarked that 'Mappilas alone would be sufficient to resist the Hindu domination' and provoked the Congress workers. Supporting the Lahore resolution, C.P. Mammukeyi said, 'we are a minority but Hindus should shed the notion that they can do anything on us. Let them not forget the lesson of the battle of Badr. They won't forget the example in which a handful of Muslims defeated a massive army of infidels. As long as Arab blood flows in our veins, their 'majority' is trivial to us'. The following appeals were made at the same meeting to the All India Muslim League Committee.

a. Muslims should get proper representation in provincial governments.

b. Separate electorate for Muslims in local and municipal boards.

c. To form a committee of Muslim members of the legislative assembly to safeguard the religious, economic and educational interest of the community.

55 Mathrubumi, 30th April, 1940.
56 FNR of May, 1940. p.32. TNA.
57 Mathrubumi, 1st May 1, 1940.
d. If ¾ of the Muslim members in legislative bodies oppose, such matters should be scrapped.58

Once the District Muslim League accepted the Lahore Resolution for separate nation, the scuffle between Muslim League and the Congress Muslims in Malabar reached its highest pitch. In 1944, the Nationalist Muslims had convened an All India Meeting at Delhi under the chairmanship of Alla Baksh, the Prime Minister of Sindh and decided to form an All India Muslim Majlis, a 'Nationalist Muslim' Forum to work among the Muslims against the Two Nation Theory. As per the decision of this meeting, in July 1944, the Malabar District Muslim Majlis was formed at Calicut with K.P. Nurudin as President and C.N. Imbichammar as secretary. Before long, local units of the Majlis were formed in almost all major centres of Malabar.59 It is interesting to note that Muslim Majlis, though basically a forum of nationalist Muslims, throughout its career, made communitarian appeals to attract the Muslims towards its fold. In its first annual Conference held at Calicut on 20th May, 1945, Moulana Abdul Majid Kwaja, the president of All India Muslim Majlis, said, "the primary aim of Majlis is to propagate the real ideal of Islam among Muslims and to bind them closer to faith. The second is the achievement of India's freedom. My last request to you is to live, if needed die, as Muslims'.60 The conference in its resolution regretted of Travancore Government's attitude of not giving proper representation to Muslims in Government services and urged Cochin government to reinstate the educational concessions to Muslim students. It also condemned the District Board's partisan attitude in not appointing Muslims in high posts even when Muslim candidates were applicants.61 Such communitarian demands were

58 Ibid.
59 Mathrubumi, 20th April, 1945.
60 Mathrubumi, 22nd May, 1945.
61 Mathrubumi, 20th April, 1945.
profusely undertaken by Muslim Majlis to counter the League's allegation that they were the stooges of 'Hindu Congress Party'. Thus, as the government report mentioned, 'in Malabar feelings between the Muslim League and Muslim Majlis were bitter and there had been already some instances of unruly behaviour. Leaders of both parties had been warned by collector that violence would not be tolerated'. The District Collector also reported that there was evidence in 'League's speeches of more truculent attitude towards the government to counter the congress leaders' allegation that Muslim League had done little for the cause of freedom. The rivalry between Muslim League and Majlis gave rise to friction not only in political but also in social and religious matters in some areas of the District and a Majlis sympathizer was refused permission to offer prayer in a mosque. K. Umar Moulavi, a sympathizer of League, had to resign the post of Qazi of the Pattalappalli of Calicut, due to differences of opinion with mosque committee, dominated by Majlis activists. In 1940's even in Qutuba, Jinna was mentioned and P.V. Mohamed Moulavi, a staunch League supporter argued that one can pray for Jinna in Qutuba. Chandrika, the official organ of Muslim League, used to add the honorific title 'Sri' or 'Mr' with names of Majlis leaders while the title Janab was used only with leaders of Muslim League.

Allegations and counter allegations went on between League and Majlis supporters through print media. One such pamphlets titled, If Swaraj

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62 FNR, Do. No. pp.4-20. dtd. Nov. 1945, TNA.
63 Ibid.
64 FNR, Do. No. pp.4-24. dated. 11 Jan. 1945, TNA.
65 K. Umar Moulavi, op. cit., p.92.
66 K. Moidu Moulavi, Ormakurippukal, IPH Calicut, 1992, p.101. It is to be noted that both the reformist and Sunni priests had no objection in accepting Jinna, an Ismaili Shia, as their Imam (leader).
67 S.K. Pottekkat et al., op.cit., p.596. This was an indirect way of excluding the nationalist Muslims from the Muslim community.
comes published by the Calicut Muslim League Committee in September 1945 alleged that K. Kelappan, the Congress leader has opined that once Swaraj is attained, both cow slaughter and religious propagation will be banned.\(^{68}\)

While the Muslim League consistently argued for separate school for Muslims and opposed the move of District Board to stop communal school in Malabar, the Muslim members of KPCC prevailed upon the Congress to pass a resolution for the continuation of communal school.\(^{69}\) The Majlis also exposed the pro-rich attitude of the elite leadership of the Muslim League by showing its reluctance to support the Agrarian Protection Bill. The pro-British attitude of League was also exposed by showing its reluctance to take up the Mampuram Restoration Issue.\(^{70}\)

But in this battle for hearts, the league won and by 1940's league became the ultimate political body of the Muslims of Malabar. They went on taking up communal demands. In 1941, on behalf of the Malabar League Committee, Abdurahiman Ali Raja submitted a memorandum to the chief secretary of Madras which says, 'By the working of the existing Madras Local Boards Act and the District Municipalities Act, the Muslim community and especially the Mappilas of Malabar have never had proper representation in local bodies in compliance with repeated representations made by the Muslim community in that behalf. From joint electorate, undesirable candidates, who could not by any stretch of imagination be considered to represent the wishes of Muslim voters have been returned and they most unjustly claim to be representatives of Muslim community. The bitter experience of the working of Malabar District Board bears out this fact. The so-called Muslim members of the Board who were returned on the Congress

\(^{68}\) Mathrubumi, 12th September., 1945.

\(^{69}\) Mathrubumi, 12th August, 1938. For more details see chapter 'Colonial Governmentality and the Making of a Community'.

\(^{70}\) Mathrubumi, 3rd January, 1938.
ticket would not have succeeded to come to board but for the support of non-Muslim voters whose interest are in many respects in conflict with those of Muslim voters'.\textsuperscript{71} In this way, the Memorandum requested the government to amend the Local Board and Municipalities Acts, so as to introduce separate electorate for Muslims.

The Malabar Muslim League Committee did not confine itself to the issues of Malabar Muslims but took up issues pertaining to their brethren in other parts of India. For instance, in a notice issued by the District Committee, attention was drawn to the plight of Muslims of Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, thus: 'You might be aware of the developments in Nellore where, in consequence of communal clash, the Hindu Mahasabha has been persecuting the Muslims and causing them troubles like dismissing the Muslim from Hindu establishments and banning the sale of goods to Muslims from Hindu shops, boycotting Muslim rickshaw pullers etc... Thus our brethren in Nellore are living in utter difficulties... When we were in distress due to flood and other calamities, it was the Muslim brethren from other parts of Madras province who helped us. Hence it is our bounden duty to help our brothers in Nellore at this time of distresses'.\textsuperscript{72} The notice appealed to each local committee to send their contribution to the Nellore Relief Fund.

\textit{Kerala Jaiyathul Ulema} always sympathized with Muslim League politics and provided active support to it. \textit{KJU} was not confined to theological issues and came out openly with their political stand. In its Annual Conference held in March 1947, E.K. Moulavi moved a resolution stating that 'the ulamas of Kerala affirm their confidence in the leadership off Muhammedali Jinna and pray to God to provide him health and strength to

\textsuperscript{71} Memorandum of District Muslim League Committee dtd. 4\textsuperscript{th} March 1941. Arakkal Records, KRA.

\textsuperscript{72} Notice issued by District Muslim League Committee. dtd. 17-11-1941, Arakkal Records, KRA.
lead the Muslims to the ultimate goal'. Even prior to that, K.M. Moulavi had issued a *fatwa* stating that it was obligatory on the part of each Muslim to take membership in Muslim League. While a major chunk of *KJU* leaders supported this *fatwa*, leaders like A. K. Abdul Lateef, Mohamed Abdurahiman, while agreeing with Moulavi in religious orientation, stood against the *fatwa* and remained with Congress. The support of the reformist leadership was instrumental in mobilizing the educated section of Muslims under the banner of League.

Thus, through such efforts, League could organize the masses, Islamize their outlook and attitudes and finally succeeded in mobilizing them for political purposes. Through such communitarian programmes, the message of separatist political ideology now quickly filtered down to the rural areas. In 1946 election to the Madras Legislative Assembly, the Muslim Majlis lost all the eight seats they contested to the Muslim League candidates and the only Majlis candidate who got his deposit was Avulakakka, who contested from Calicut constituency. This election once again proved the unquestionable support, the Muslim League had gained in Malabar.

It is to be remembered that the Muslim League leadership took special care to address the problems of Muslim women and a muslim woman member, T.C. Kunhachumma Sahiba from Tellicherry was nominated to All India Muslim League's Women's Council in 1938.

The Malabar Muslim League also fully supported central league policies in relation to the partition proposal. The demand for separate

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nationhood was considered as a necessary step towards pan-Islamic ideal. As K.M. Seethi Sahib remarked, 'the moment Pakistan was given the country would enjoy peace and harmony'.

In 1946, when the Direct action day was observed by AIML, with the slogan 'Pakistan or Khabaristan,' the Muslim League supporters demonstrated their strength by observing the day in Malabar.

It was in this background the Muslim League leaders proposed the establishment of 'Mappilasthan'. It submitted a proposal to the Pakistan committee members urging that in future constitution, an independent Mappilasthan, comprising Ernad, Walluvanad and Lakdives should be formed. The committee felt that for the protection of the culture, religion and political rights of Muslims, this was a necessary step. The proposal for a separate Muslim majority province in South Malabar was publicly put forward in the Madras Legislative Assembly in mid-June 1947. The fears of Indian Muslims in general and the Islamic political theory underlying Pakistan movement, coalesced to stimulate the proposal. When the Madras government proposed the division of the presidency in to four states on linguistic basis, the Muslim League put forward an amendment to this resolution, which called for the insertion of the word 'with provision for Mappilasthan'.

K.M. Seeth Sahib, the mover of the amendment explained the logic behind the proposal. He argued that 'Mappilas are a large group of people with a culture and a history of their own, related to their Arab background and they are entirely different from other communities of Malabar. Besides, they

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78 *Navakeralam*, 9th February, 1947, Also see *Malayala Rajyam*, 2nd June 1947.

79 Roland E. Miller, *op.cit.*, p.163.
are 'very very unfortunate and they struggled for independence along with their sister community, their compatriots were responsible for sending many of them to the gallows. Again, under the aegis of their sister community, they have not made an inch of progress in any walk of life. They were now as backward as they were 150 years ago. For all these reasons, the Mappilas should be given a separate state, where they could grow and develop in their own way and where they can have hope for future'.

When the resolution calling for linguistic states was passed, without considering the amendment of Muslim League, the League members staged a walkout, with cries of 'Mappilasthan Zindabad'. Finally India and Pakistan were formed and the proposal died and Mappilas became a part of Indian nation. Ofcourse a few members of Malabar League like Abdul Sathar Sait went to Pakistan and became the ambassador of Egypt. But the vast majority of Mappilas whose life was rooted in the soil of Kerala, did remain in Malabar.

At a public meeting held at Palghat on 22 December 1947, Seethi Sahib declared, ‘When the new constitution is formed, Muslim dominant places of Kerala may be grouped in to a single unit and be made a unit of Indian union.’ Interestingly enough, CPI and EMS Namboodiripad supported this move of the Muslim League on the basis of the principle of the 'self determination of people'. In 1947, EMS wrote 'considering the religious, historical, cultural, economic and political importance and the uniqueness of the Mappilas, if they wish that a separate province is necessary to safeguard their interests, the communists are not against such a move.' K. Madhava Menon, an active spokesman of Aikya Kerala Movement said, 'if any part of

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81 Ibid., p. 854.
82 Mathrubumi, 31st December, 1947.
83 Deshabhimani, 28th October, 1947.
Kerala is to be declared as Moplasthan, I for one won't feel worried. The relation between us and Moplas are so cordial and I do not think our friends will treat us in bad way, even if we have a Mappilasthan.\textsuperscript{84}

When the Madras Leaguers met Jinnah for the last time at Delhi in June 1947, he gave the Muslim league representation from Malabar no hope, dismissing their ideas as 'fantastic'. He is reported to have declared, 'it is all closed'. The Muslim League organized Mappilasthan day in Malabar on 23\textsuperscript{rd} May 1947. This agitation was no doubt engineered as a counter to the demand for the division of Punjab and Bengal.\textsuperscript{85}

The Muslim League made propaganda work among Mappilas through pamphlets for separate nation either in the form of Pakistan or in the form of Mappilasthan. One of such booklets, titled \textit{Moplasthan} printed in 1947 contained many objectionable references about Hindus. It says, 'History will tell us that it was the Muslims who taught the great grandmother of present day Hindu damsels, who go about dressed in latest fashion, flashing the eyes how to clothe themselves without exposing their nakedness... Tippu's troops, who came to conquer Kerala, on seeing the Hindu women with naked breast, fell easy victims to many voluptuous actions and this made the Sulthan issue orders that women should not appear in public without covering their breasts.\textsuperscript{86} Another leaflet containing a song titled 'struggle song' by V. Kunhikoya of Kondotti exhorts, 'Even if Britain and Hindu Congress obstruct us we will never hesitate to shed our warm blood in our advance until the noble Pakistan is secured. Individually taking this pledge, we will undergo

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Debates of Madras Legislative Assembly} 1947, (Madras 1947) V.p. 748.
\textsuperscript{85} FNR, p. 301, 1945-47, dated. 24\textsuperscript{th} June, 1947.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Moplasthan} (Mal.), Cochin Mail press, Ernakulam and published by Al- Jihad publishing House, Cochin. GO. No. Ms. No. 3422. Public (General) Dept. dated. 19\textsuperscript{th} Nov. 1947. KRA. See Appendix XII.
wholesale sacrifices; we will demonstrate our smartness and our manliness until Muslim rule in India and until Pakistan are carefully secured’.  

After the partition of the country, there prevailed an uncertainty regarding Muslim politics in Indian union and it was even suggested that thereafter Muslim League need not function as a political party. Ismail Sahib and Seethi Sahib resisted the attempts to disband the Muslim League and in the conference held at Madras in March 1948, a programme was formulated to retain Muslim League with a new name, Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), which came in to existence as a full fledged party in 1951. Earlier in December 1947, Mohamed Ismail Sahib had been chosen as president of the Indian Union Muslim League and the resolution to continue the organization stated that, 'the aim of IUML was to devote its attention principally to the religious cultural, educational and economic interests of the community'. Despite these limited objectives, many left Muslim League and in Travancore and Cochin, the league committees were disbanded. In North India, the very name of league turned to be an anathema. But in Malabar, Muslim League remained a serious political factor. The Mappilas allegiance to League was demonstrated by the defeat of Congress Muslim candidate for the Ernad by election in 1948.

In Malabar a combined meeting of various Muslim political parties, held at Calicut and in that meeting, Moidu Moulavi and M.Adbuall kutty Moulavi argued for the dissolution of Muslim League. K.M. Moulavi and K.M. Seethi objected to this argument and stood firm with their conviction

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87 V. Kunhikoya (Kondotty), Struggle Song (Mal.), Fathima press, Manjeri, 1947. Go. MS No. 1276. Public Dept. dated. 30th April, 1947, KRA. See Appendix XIII.
89 Ibid., p.76.
that League was relevant in the contemporary context. In protest, Moidu Moulavi and his associates boycotted the meeting. K.M. Moulavi proposed the name of Bafaki Thangal as the president and K.M. Moulavi, as Vice-President of Malabar District Committee of Muslim League, which was unanimously accepted. This was a tactical move on the part of K.M. Moulavi, because the leadership of Bafakhi Thangal would naturally bring the traditionalist Sunni folk to the fold of Muslim League. Thus, Muslim League could get the support of both the traditionalist as well as the reformist sections of Mappilas. Led by its powerful state leader Bafaki Thangal, the party consolidated its hold on the Mappilas masses. In the 1952 election, five league candidates were elected to the provincial assembly from Malabar and B. Pocker Sahib was elected from Malappuram as the only League member to Indian parliament. The mass support that Muslim League continued to enjoy among Mappilas was demonstrated again and again in the successive elections in Malabar and later in United Kerala. It is to be noted that in other states of India, the Muslim League has dwindled considerably in the post-independence period. At present, Muslim League is an important factor in the coalition politics of Kerala. It was the community consciousness that developed among Mappilas in the early decades of 20th century, which led to the crystallization of this political identity, in the post-independence period, in the form of Muslim League.

Thus, the Muslim League, which actually had been formed in 1906, was officially organized in Malabar in 1937 only, but within a period of two decades, it got established firmly in Malabar, braving the hostile situations created in late 1940’s like partition, Ramasimhan murder, Hyderabad action etc. The growth of Muslim League in Malabar, ofcourse, owed a great deal

91 KKM Kareem, K. M. Mouavi Sahib (Mal.), op. cit., p.171.
92 The Muslim League's involvement in Ramasimhan Murder case of 1947 and in Hyderabad Nizam’s attempt to preserve his power was seriously debated in Malabar and Muslim League had to face stiff opposition from other parties. Ramasimhan
to British interests in helping to forge their separatist political identity as a counterpoise to nationalist challenges, led by the Congress. Thus, through the play of various factors and through a steady and slow process, Mappilas, who had not attached much significance to their distinct identity, were transformed first into a community, with an awareness of a common identity and then into a political community when it was mobilized for political action.

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(Unnian who embraced Hinduism) and his relatives were murdered by Mappilas on 1st August, 1947 and it was alleged that Muslim League leaders took efforts in getting the culprits acquitted. See Dasarathi, *Malabarile Mappila Laharakal* (Mal.), Calicut, 1992. Also see Roland E. Miller, *op. cit.*, p.229.