Chapter VI

CASTE AND CLASS NEXUS IN THE TREND TOWARDS SECULARISATION: 1956 AND AFTER

On 1 November 1956, Kerala state was formed. This changed the communal complexion of the state. The territories which were added to Travancore-Cochin and the areas which were taken away disturbed the earlier communal equations. However, Travancore continued to be the centre of the activity determining the permutations and combinations in politics. Communalism which germinated in Travancore's politics was the dominant feature conditioning the social life in Kerala. Therefore, after 1956, even though our universe changed, it is important to see how the Travancore communal milieu continued to shape the social life of the state as a whole. We will be centering our observations mainly on the three communities whose development in Travancore we were following till now. At the outset it may be mentioned that Muslims as a community entered Kerala politics in a big way with the formation of the new state.

Four Tamil speaking taluks were separated from southern Travancore and Malabar was incorporated from Madras state to Kerala. The Christian population in Kerala dropped to 24 per cent (from 31 per cent in Travancore-Cochin state), the Ezhava population increased from 22 per cent (T.C. state) to 26 per cent, the Muslim population rose to 17.7 per cent. Thus in 1957, the major communities in Kerala were distributed as follows:

Nairs 12.6 per cent
Ezhavas 26.4 per cent
Christians 21.3 per cent
Muslims 17.7 per cent

The principal communities like the Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims had more or less a balanced strength. They assumed greater importance as pillars of Kerala politics by 1957. And as Fic puts it "the slightest shift in their voting pattern greatly influenced the fortunes of political parties."

Christians continued to remain as the backbone of the Congress Party and the Ezhavas tilted to Communist Party. The voting pattern of Nairs in 1957 was a shift towards Communist Party and that did see the coming to power of Communists in Kerala state. Therefore, Fic comes to the conclusion that major political parties like the Congress and the Communist Party of Kerala were deeply rooted in communal equations and it proved that by 1957, the "politics in Kerala was merely a projection of the aspirations and strength of the communal organisations into political arena."

Table XVII indicates, according to Fic, the total number of members of each community and the percentage of seats which each community could secure if all its members voted for its candidates and the number of percentage of seats actually secured by each community. Fic shows that politics had reached to a strictly communal affair in Kerala and the communities vote on communal lines. His argument is on the following lines: The Hindu community accounting for 61.0 per cent of the population elected 98 Hindu MLAs, which is 69.8 per cent of the seats of the Assembly. The Christian community of 21.3 per cent
### Table XVII

**SECOND GENERAL ELECTIONS IN KERALA, 1957**

**Communal Pattern of Voting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population (million)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Seats Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HINDUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hindus</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHRISTIANS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Catholic</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Catholic</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobites</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar Thoma</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christians</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MUSLIMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Kerala Mail* (August 23, 1959)

elected 26 Christian members which is 20.6 per cent of the total seats. The Muslim community of 17.7 per cent elected 12 Muslim representatives which is 9.6 per cent. The Hindu and Christian votes went on strictly communal lines; but Muslims did not assert themselves. Fic's conclusion is that the Communist Party made an organised effort among the Hindu communities and that paid rich dividends. As far as the Nairs were concerned the points which emerge are: (a) the importance of size factor for a community in franchise, (b) the dominance of certain communities over others if they have a combination of economic, social and demographic factors. But Fic's argument and conclusions are untenable because (a) Constituencies do not have population on religious or caste basis. (b) There is substantial intra-religious variations. But it is correct to say that the mainstay of the Communist Party was Ezhavas. According to the General Secretary of the SNDP Yogam, a full 50 per cent of the party's membership was from the Ezhava community.

The Nair loyalties were shifting from the first election in the state. They had voted for Congress in the beginning, then shifted to PSP with Pattom Thanu Pillai and in 1957 supported the Communist Party. "The PSP is mainly a Nair party" was the conclusion of election studies. "The Nairs, remained in a unique position", observes Jitendra Singh in his election study of Kerala, "as they were equally divided between the Congress, the Communist Party and the PSP. The Nairs therefore could wield pressure on all the three political parties. With
the Christians supporting the Congress and the Ezhavas supporting the Communists, the Nairs could tilt the balance whichever way they liked. Therefore to talk of Communist success with Hindu votes is erroneous. In fact all the major communities were splintered between the major political parties and this differentiation was indicative of the rapid secularisation trend.

Although Fic maintained that the Christians were the main strength of the Congress, it could be argued that Christians in general and Catholics in particular were indifferent to the Congress Party in the 1957 elections. One of the reasons for this indifference was the enthusiasm evinced by most of the non-Christian sections of the Congress, particularly Nairs, in urging the government to thwart the Christian control over the private management in education. Christians realised that their hold was weakening in Congress and hence did not take active interest in elections.

Table XVIII clearly indicates the political segmentation of primordial collectivism. But this process is inevitably influenced by the political historicity of each of the communities. The underlined figures in the table indicate the community party congruence and linkage: Nairs are dominant in Communist Party and P.S.P.; Ezhavas in Communist Party; Christians in Congress. Yet none of them constitute 50 per cent of the total MLAs in any of the parties. That is, political segmentation of communities should be viewed as an indicator of decommunalisation/secularisation of politics. More importantly, the interests pursued by these political leaders should be taken
Table XVIII
1957 Elections
Community-wise (Nair, Ezhava, Christian) Distribution
of MLAs in Parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NAIRS</th>
<th>EZHAVAS</th>
<th>CHRISTIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seats</strong></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNISTS</strong></td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONGRESS</strong></td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.P.</strong></td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDEPENDENTS</strong></td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victor M. Pic, Kerala: Venan of India
Compiled from figures given in The Kerala Mail,
23 August 1959, p. 11.
cognizance of. Whether Ezhava Communist, or Nair P.S.F. or Christian Congress MLA is pursuing their community interests only is to be examined.

In 1957 the factory workers were not a sizeable number in Kerala. But the industrial workers as well as the plantation labour were politically conscious and both were within the grip of Communist Party. This could be said of the agricultural workers too. Murthy and Rao in their election study of Kerala from 1957-67 come to the conclusion that "the CPI is deriving its maximum support from heavy labour pressure areas and moderate labour pressure areas and its minimum support from cultivator dominating areas and low labour pressure areas".

The first Communist ministry did not sail smooth. The Nair and Christian leaders united to pull down the ministry when there was a threat to their vested interests. This was a clear indication that Communist Party did not succeed in enticing Nair community into its fold. By now SNDP also had emerged as an organisation with deep stakes in educational institutions. The elites of Ezhavas joined the Nair-Christian combine. This means each of the dominant community was divided into two major political sections: one which pursued civil and the other which pursued primordial collectivism.

The first protest to the Communist government came in the field of education. AKCC complained that Christians and specially Roman Catholic educationalists were not included in the syllabus revision committee. AKCC made an issue of it and passed resolutions against the government.
Within a few months, in April 1958, with the initiative of Catholic community a "Private School Defence Committee" was formed. AKCC president P.J. Sebastian was its chairman. In 1958, a memorial was submitted to the Chief Minister of Kerala by AKCC on the School texts of Kerala saying "the books run counter to many religious and cultural values of Catholic community".

On 25 July 1958, Father Vadakhan, a Roman Catholic priest organised what was known as the Shanti Sena to oppose the militia of the Communist Party. The Christian and Nair communities were most active in organising the Shanti Sena. The volunteers organised by the Christian community were called Christophers.

A memorandum prepared by the police in May 1959 shows that the total membership of the Shanti Sena was over a lakh.

Table XIX

Membership of the Shanti Sena of the Catholic and NSS in various districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>NSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trivandrum</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilon</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleppey</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>1,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichur</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Christophers were parish based and only Roman Catholics were allowed to join it. Whenever the agitation leaders visited, the training centre, which were invariably the Church compounds, they were given wards of honour in military style.

It is interesting to note that in the Malabar region - Cannanore, Kozhikode and Palghat - it had very little impact, whereas Travancore was a fertile ground for this communal line up. Yet it was confined to Catholics and paradoxically the few non-Catholics were Nairs. Traditional social rivals found themselves united when secular forces threatened their communal interests.

Mannam initially showed tolerance towards Communists as he felt that they were an anti-Christian force. In the beginning, Mannam supported the Education Bill introduced by Communists. As we have seen, Mannam's main mission was educational and economic progress of his community and he will align
with or oppose, the state power whenever it suits the interests of his community. Progressive ideologies were of no consequence for him. Subsequently, with the Communist government also, he found that the claims of the Nair community were not being granted. This clearly shows that Communist Party did not cow down to communal pressures. Rich business and landlord interests in Christian community rejoiced because in Mannam they found a 'popular' leader of an influential community. He was the one who could mobilise Nairs in large numbers. Thus the planning to pull down Communist ministry took place in the house of a prosperous Christian businessman - Kulathumkal Pothen. When Mannam joined the anti-Communist move, the up and coming Ezhava community was outside the plan. But R. Sankar as its spokesman joined the movement quickly. Thus the communal leaders, irrespective of the community - joined hands against the communists. On the other hand, the leaders in the Communist Party whether they were Christians, Nairs or Ezhavas opposed communal mobilisation. This is what we call political segmentalisation of communities. They planned for a liberation struggle - in Malayalam it is popularly known as Vimoçhana Samaram.

The Education Bill of the Communist ministry was sought to curb the unbridled powers of the private sector in education. Catholic church was hurt and it was at the vanguard of the movement to oppose the Education Bill. Land reform bill of the Communist ministry had its stings directed both to Christian and Nair landed interests but it was disastrous mainly to Nair landlords. When the Agrarian Relation Bill was passed, Mannam,
along with other Nair leaders as well as Christians opposed the Communists. The Nair landlords saw Christians a close ally—an equally aggrieved community. They declared that 'if the Church wants us to protect its schools, the church should protect our lands' The class interests cutting across communal boundaries was amply evident.

Congress, PSP and other opposition parties found the communal upsurge, an attractive point of convergence to pull down the government and they exploited to maximum the communal feelings which was unleashed. The fear of what will happen to religion provoked the churches and the faithful. The Education Act was taken as an anchorage for the 'religion in danger', slogan. A letter of Catholic Bishops said

All Catholic parents are morally bound to send their children to Catholic schools. Even in special conditions, the permission of the Catholic Bishops is necessary to send children to other schools. In fulfilling these responsibilities vested in the parents by the Grace of God, the newly constituted private schools or government schools under the new Education Act are not at all adequate. This will not help to give out children an education according to our faith and religious principles. Educating children in such schools filled with teachers of communist conviction is equal to throwing our little ones in front of venomous serpents. (17)

All bishops and priests supported the movement and their spokesman in the political parlance was P.T. Chacko, a Catholic. Mannam was at the vanguard of Nair community and their political voice was Pattom Thanu Pillai. Ezhavas of middle and upper class supported the move and R. Sankar could throw his weight on the political bargains. Muslims also joined it. In essence,
what happened was communal leadership encouraging the common people to a kind of communal frenzy. The best expression of the nature of the movement was given by the Communist Party leader M.N. Govindan Nair saying it was a move of "palliachantheyum pillaiachanteyum" - a movement of parish priests (Catholics) and of Pillais (Nairs). Thus the 'liberation struggle' which began in June 1969 was fought on religious platform invoking the religious sentiments and mobilising the people on religious-communal grounds. Mannam skilfully mixed the economic issues with communal pride to arouse communal frenzy among Nairs. He repeatedly told the Nair community that the Agrarian relations bill was a drive of the Communist government to ruin the Nair community. Therefore the Nairs in the Communist Party are traitors. "Nair is the simple reply to those who ask as to who will rule if the Communists go". Simultaneously the church also worked to rouse the religious feelings for a fight to finish against the 'anti-God' communists who were going to take over their churches and schools. The statement of the Action Committee in the Changanacherry diocese exhorted the faithful saying, "it will not be too much if at least one young man from every house is encouraged to come forward and enlist himself as volunteer in the parish committee for action".

Although it was a sheer coincidence, it was a Communist minister belonging to the Roman Catholic community, who piloted the Education Bill. Is there an ingenuity on the party of Communists in 'using' a Catholic to introduce the Bill? If they did it deliberately we can say that it indicates how
Communist Party also does not oppose communal element in politics at that time. But conspicuously their aim was to attack communalism. When the first Communist ministry was dismissed and elections were held, the Congress-PSP-Muslim League combine fought against Communists in the mid-term election held on 1 February 1960 and rode back to power. Pattom Thanu Pillai became the Chief Minister, R. Sankar Deputy Chief Minister and P.T. Chacko the Home Minister: thus satisfying all the main three communities. Muslim League - the new communal factor in Kerala politics - was appeased with the speakership. The coalition comprised of 11 ministers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This coalition lasted only 32 months ending on 2 October 1962. The Congress-PSP coalition was basically a coalition of organised communal groups. The Nairs and Christians did cut across party lines. The Nairs were over-represented. Pattom was the acknowledged leader of the Nair interests with the support of C.K. Govindan Nair in the Congress and Mannam from outside. The Christian group was led by P.T. Chacko. They demanded as in earlier days participation in the political decision-making commensurate with their numerical strength and financial power. Rebuffed by the Nair group, Christian group wanted the ouster of Pattom as Chief Minister.

During Pattom's third tenure of chief ministership, Christians were unhappy and tried to appeal to the people on
They felt that a fair share is not being given to them in the government services. Deepika wrote:

Catholics are not a community which considers that it can live only with airkar jobs. So Catholics do not show as much interest in getting government jobs as they have in destroying anti-democratic forces. Pattnam ministry should not take it as their weakness. (20)

Malabar Mail, another Catholic paper was of opinion that while other communities are grabbing their share in government services, Catholic community seems to be sleeping. It should awake to strongly bargain jobs as its legitimate rights.

In the beginning of 1960, Palai Central Bank owned by the rich Catholics was liquidated. Although it was a central government matter, Catholic community looked at it from a Kerala communal angle. In an editorial, AKCC bulletin said

>The caste and religion of Palai Bank depositors were enquired before liquidation.... What is the relation between banking and the religious affiliation of its depositors? If most of the depositors were not Catholics, would the Bank have been liquidated? If the Palai Bank were owned by Akali Dal or NSS or SNDP, it would not have met with this fate. (22)

Then it narrated its long saga of agitations relating to 1946 education issue, 1951 Panampally scheme, 1953 Education Bill and 1959 Liberation Struggle. For all these, Catholics have spent money worth the deposit of four Palai Banks, AKCC claimed.

AKCC also complained that it had asked for an interview with the chief minister but it was not granted for several months. They were angry because Catholics felt that they were hewers of wood and drawers of water in all struggles against Communists. But when the ministry comes and advantages are
shared, their demands are not heeded. Catholics called on the ministers to change its education policy or resign in protest against government's refusal of permission to open new private schools or upgrade present ones - which is a denial of basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Behind all these moves against Patton, there was the feeling that he was a Nair.

Sankar became the chief minister on 2 September 1962 - the second Ezhava chief minister in Travancore - now that of the bigger Kerala state. Both Christian and Nair groups in the Congress supported him as a compromise candidate as the Ezhava bloc was not a significant threat to these two communities. However, a section of Nairs led by C.K. Govindan Nair was unhappy with an Ezhava chief minister.

Sankar's seeming association with Chacko group made Nairs suspicious of an Ezhava-Christian axis. Personal, communal and regional considerations took upper hand. But the later events led to a situation where the Nair-Christian interests joining together against Sankar to topple him. It was precipitated by the resignation of P.T. Chacko from the ministry (20 February 1964) under a scandal and his untimely death on 1 August 1964.

The group of Christian MLAs threatened to withhold support to Sankar ministry. After Chacko's resignation the Christian papers tried to build him up as a popular hero and the Christian community organised receptions with traditional gaiety. Sankar was accused of being a pro-Communist and an Ezhava communalist promoting Ezhava interests at the expense
of other communities. Christians under the leadership of Chacko decided to make common cause with NSS on the question of 'reservation' for backward classes.

About this time an unprecedented number of attacks on churches were reported from centres where the Ezhavas and the Christians were the dominant group. These events were the occasion for the anti-Sankar group to raise voices of sentiments against the ministry. In the distribution of (permission to start new) private schools also Sankar was accused of favouring Ezhavas. On 8 September 1964, fifteen Congress MLAs voted with the opposition to bring down Sankar ministry. The debate in the Assembly show that Sankar group replied the accusations saying that the voting against the ministry was inspired by communal considerations. George Joseph Podipara said that by invoking religious sentiments the 'defectors' are asking democracy in the state. He asked what is important - religion or man? Mannam who had raged against Sankar declared that everything has ended well with the fall of Sankar ministry.

The Christian-Nair combination saw the birth of a new party - the Kerala Congress. The Kerala Congress became a decisive factor in Kerala politics subsequently. Thus 1964, just like 1957, was another turning point in the communal politics of Kerala. Though not immediately related to the problem we are studying, the division of the Communist Party of India into CPI and CPI (M) also may be noted here, which took place in 1964. Kerala Congress began a slanderous campaign against the Congress in such a way that it would touch the
religious sentiments of Christians against the Indian National Congress. Vayala Ithiculla, a leader of the Kerala Congress depicted the Sankar ministry as an anti-Christian agency responsible for 'breaking the cross and desecrating the Holy Communion'.

Thus Mannam and Chacko group found themselves together. In the 1965 elections, a large chunk of Christian and Nair supporters of the Congress changed over to Kerala Congress because it could touch their communal sentiments. The people in general were frustrated with the Congress because of its very communalism. The condition of the Congress at that time is best summarised in the following words:

One of the main reasons for their (people's) disgust with the Congress is precisely the opportunism with which it allied with the forces of Nair, Catholic and Muslim communalism until it reduced itself to a gathering of communal chieftains. (28)

Despika, the Catholic daily exhorted Christians to disown Congressmen. "We are not prepared to canvass votes for thieves, robbers and church-breakers just on the ground that they belong to the Indian National Congress". Mannam said that the aim of 1965 election was to bury Congress for ever.

The national leadership in Delhi also realised that the church and NSS have moved to the centre of Kerala's politics. In the third week of July 1965, Gulzarilal Nanda met the NSS chief Mannam and the leaders of the Catholic Congress and had discussions with them on the political situation.

The leadership of the Church and NSS had nothing in common for a long time after the 'liberation struggle'. The
formation of Kerala Congress brought the bishops and Mannam to the political forefront. Because of its communal appeal and primordial base, there is some truth in saying that the Democratic Congress of 1950s was revived as the Kerala Congress, 31 years later.

The Christian-Nair combination was considered a threat to the upper and middle strata of Ezhava community. They wanted the community to retaliate against Kerala Congress by strengthening Indian National Congress to which Sankar belonged. This political and economic consolidation of the upper and middle class sections of Ezhava community was taking place simultaneously, much to the chagrin of the forward community leadership. In the mid-term poll the Kerala Congress captured 25 seats improving upon its earlier 15 at the time of the split. This happened mainly with the Nair-Christian votes. But no ministry could be formed after the election because no single party got majority and no coalition could be worked out.

The communal combinations took another dramatic turn by 1967. The general election saw Mannam and church leadership leaving Kerala Congress and campaigning for the Indian National Congress. There are evidences to show that Mannam made a volte-face succumbing to the lures given by the National Congress. Several important National leaders began to call on him and at the end he was awarded Padma Bhooshan. He left for Delhi to receive the award on 18 April 1966 and on 21 April 1966 from Delhi he made the statement that his desire was to see that Kerala Congress should merge with Indian National Congress. He wanted the Kerala Congress to dissolve itself and join the Congress. In June, at Perunna a meeting of the pro-merger group was convened and some important leaders obeyed the Nair
leader. But officially, Kerala Congress did not toe Mannam's line.

When Mannam's attempt failed the bishops of Kerala entered the arena to reconcile the National Congress and the Kerala Congress. Archbishop of Trivandrum, Benedict Mar Gregorios wanted merger of Congress and the Kerala Congress and sent his emissaries to the National leadership of the Congress. When his attempts did not make any headway, the Bishop of Palai, Sebastian Vayalil, took the initiative. But that too did not bear fruit. The third attempt was in November 1966, by Yuhanon Mar Thoma who, after consultations with heads of various Christian denominations invited the leaders of both the parties to a meeting at Adoor. The Kerala Congress responded but National Congress did not. The fourth and last attempt was by Bishop Tharayil of Kottayam. He invited leaders of both the parties and warned them of the consequences of disunity. But then the National Congress objected the proposal for unity.

The bishops in their anxiety to save Kerala from another spell of Communist rule decided to put their whole weight in favour of the Congress. K.V. Varughese writes:

Statements made by the heads of the Mar Thoma and Orthodox churches and the bishops of various Catholic dioceses during the poll campaign period gave one the impression that the Church did not have any more sympathy for the Kerala Congress. (33)

At this stage, it is too early to say from these statements that the Church was drawing closer to decommunalised secular politics. Perhaps the stronger factor was the fear of secular (Communist) forces.
Varughese gives a detailed account of the ways in which Christian community leadership tried to influence the election.

Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios had warned the Christian hierarchy against supporting the Kerala Congress in a letter sent to the bishops. A circular sent to the members of his diocese, he further pointed out that he desired to see the Congress returned to power. The official organ of the Mar Thoma Church (The Malankara Sabha Tharaka) in an editorial called upon the members of the Church to exercise their franchise with a sense of discrimination with the implication that Indian National Congress would be a better choice so far as the interests of minorities are concerned. Some bishops appeared on the Congress election platforms. For instance, Bishop of Trivandrum, Peter Bernard Pereira, presided over several Congress meetings.

The statements issued by some of them created favourable impression among considerable section of Christian voters in favour of the Congress. But the party leaders found that the average Christian and the parish priests were defying the bishops and canvassing support for Kerala Congress candidates. In the Nair community the shift from the Kerala Congress to the Congress in deference to the wishes of its leader was more pronounced. Mannam canvassed for National Congress on the same platforms from which, only two years before, he had proclaimed that his aim was to bury Congress for ever. Mannam, despite his poor health undertook a whirlwind tour to the various Kerala Congress strongholds and made a powerful plea to the
Nair community to disown the Kerala Congress. In one of the
election speeches he said that it would be suicidal to help
the Kerala Congress and asserted that he hated the Kerala
Congressmen more than the communists. This was a rude shock
to Kerala Congress leadership as they had always looked upon
Mannam as the godfather of their party.

Congress got the help of SNPD too. The President of the
SNPD, Keshavan Vaidhyan, presided over quite a few election
meetings and warned the Ezhava voters that the only party
capable of safeguarding the interests of the community was
Indian National Congress.

Mannam and Sankar became friends again. Both went from
place to place to work for the National Congress, barely after
two years of pulling down the latter by the former. The coming
together of these two communal leaders reminded people of early
fifties - the Hindu Maha Mandalam days. This resulted in
common Christian members getting antagonised to National Cong-
ress although bishops were with it. When the average Christian
found Kerala Congress as his ally, it evoked a sharp reaction
among the critical minded, politically conscious voters of
Kerala. They viewed the two communal leaders sceptically. The
Indian National Congress which professed to be a secular party
once again became a tool/medium of communal leaders.

1967 elections saw the victory of Marxist-led United
Front. Earlier the Muslim League had left the company of
Kerala Congress and joined the United Front. This could mean
two things. From the Marxist's angle we could surmise a communal
reconciliation and opportunistic alliance for power even by a secular party like that of Marxists. Secondly from the angle of communal parties it meant rubbing shoulders with a secular party and in the process, the communal parties themselves getting transformed. The latter was a sure indicator of secularisation. Anyway, Marxists got the advantage of the confused communal groupings. Congress lost heavily in terms of number of seats (they got only 9 seats in a house of 133), but it secured an increase in the percentage of votes. Kerala Congress was also mauled in the elections. In 1965 it had won 13.11 per cent of votes and 24 seats (18.04 per cent) but in 1967 its vote reduced to 7.31 per cent and seats to five (3.76 per cent). Thus the election was disastrous to the communal combination in both the Congresses.

The Nair votes did swing according to leadership's call because Nairs were more tradition bound and more resistant to the norms of a democratic political culture than Christians or Ezhavas. This seems to be the characteristics of both the declining and ascendent status groups. The first wants to consolidate on communal lines against their former inferiors, the latter wants to do the same against their former superiors. The sociological characteristics of Nairs as "a group who would not like to share responsibility with others, and would resist the entry of other participant groups into the political process" continued to be so, even in 1967. This kind of a situation always creates a crisis of participation in democratic process. But the economic individualism which characterised
the Christian and Ezhava communities began to be felt more conspicuously in the political processes too. The multiplication of the political parties and the divided allegiance was a sure sign of it.

These developments created a healthy discussion about the role of bishops in politics. While some upheld the right of the bishops to give guidance in political matters, others questioned bishops' interference in politics to strengthen a political party. Varughese observes "It may be noted that these discussions enabled the people to build up gradual resistance against the writ of the church in political matters and to minimise the importance of religious groups in power politics". No doubt, it was an indicator of the rapid secularisation process which had set in Kerala.

In short, the 1967 election showed a clear cleavage between the communal leadership and the people. The people did not, entirely support or subscribe to the wishes and views of the higher ups in the communal hierarchy. Nor they heeded to the 'pastoral letters' from the top as they used to. This was a significant development in Kerala's communal politics. This discriminatory recognition of the contextual role of community leaders by people is again indicative of secularisation. K.C. John, a political commentator of Kerala political developments observes:

The lone fight of the Kerala Congress against the top hierarchy of the Christian churches was a gain for Kerala. It ended the usual interference of the Church in elections. It no longer dared to issue pastoral letters to the faithful, nor claim to influence voting.
It retreated to its spiritual home, reluctantly accepting the advice of Christ "to render unto Caesar things that are Caesar's". (39)

The Marxist coalition lasted for 31 months and it was brought down on the issue of corruption against some ministers in the coalition. This period saw a low profile of communal organisations except in the case of Kerala University Act, 1969.

The state of affairs prevailing in the private schools and colleges left many things to be desired. The corrupt practices of accepting bribes for appointment of teachers were prevalent. It was widespread among Christian, NSS and SNPD schools and colleges. Merit was not an essential criterion in the selection of teaching staff. Capitation fees was levied on students for admission. In the matter of the appointment of principals and heads of departments, the Christian management used to show undue favour to the priests and others on communal and denomination considerations. The Act, was to curb some of these practices. The ruling party characterised the reforms envisaged in the Act as the 'Magna Carta' of private college teacher. Representatives of the government and university were mandatory on the Managing Councils of the colleges. This was considered conducive to a secular approach in education. The Act had also certain provisions enabling the government to regulate the management of the private colleges under certain circumstances. It was feared that this provision would deprive the management of its property right.

The minority communities challenged this Act in the High Court. There were 36 petitions against the Act.
Superiors of different Catholic religious congregations .. 8
Catholic Bishops representing dioceses .. 8
Vicars of Catholic parishes .. 3
Boards of different Catholic associations/denominations .. 5
Malankara Orthodox Church bishops .. 3
Mar Thoma Syrian Church Metropolitan .. 4
Madhya Kerala Diocese of C.S.I. .. 2
Sri Sankara College Association, Kalady .. 1
S.N. Trusts, Quilon .. 1
NSS Changanacherry .. 1

The Christians invoked the provisions of Article 30 of Constitution which protects the rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The High Court struck down certain clauses which infringe upon the minority rights in spite of the validity of government's good intentions. Varughese observes:

It was impolitic and rather suicidal on the part of government to alienate the private educational agencies particularly Christian, which have done pioneer work at considerable cost and immense sacrifice in the field of higher education. Consequently the very intention of the government to control the badly managed colleges fizzled out owing to court interference. (44)

The teachers of the private colleges did support the government's move. This shows that, although most of them gained entry into these institutions through communal considerations, they were not willing to sacrifice their career interests like higher pay, security of tenure, etc. for the communal cause. In essence, the limits of primordial collectiv.
ism prompts civil collectivism.

Following the fall of Marxist led United Front in 1969 for ten years Kerala saw a CPI led ministry except when A.K. Antony was chief minister for a brief period. The Indian National Congress, the Kerala Congress and Muslim League were partners of this ministry. It was reconciliation with communal forces as a result of the compulsions of electoral politics imposed on a secular party. Achutha Menon was chief minister for 8 years from 1969 till 1977 the longest period in Kerala history.

The attitude of the Church and other communal organisations radically changed during this period. The success of United Front in Kerala brought to the communal leadership a slow realisation that they can no longer condition the minds of the electorate, except marginally. Congress also tried to get away from the communal hegemony, realising the mood of the electorate. The next phase saw a remarkable change in the attitude of the communal leadership.

There was a shift in the attitude of the Church and Christians towards the CPI. In the struggle between CPI and CPI(M), the Church favoured CPI. CPI ministers were praised by the Christian press. All this manifested in the changing moods of the church hierarchy. This might have been a pragmatic approach from the church leadership, than an ideological one. They saw that the prospects of Congress was poor as all their unity attempts have failed. Between CPI and CPI(M) the former was a lesser evil for the church. When Congress and
Communists began to move out of the communal wrangles, Kerala Congress virtually became a party of the rich and middle class Christians in Travancore. Nairs and Ezhavas were left without a political platform. Nairs formed NDP (National Democratic Party) in 1974 and Ezhavas SRP (Socialist Republican Party) in 1976. These three parties still continue as the political expression of the three major communities which we are surveying. They are able to whip up communal sentiments and primordial loyalties though only to a limited extent in politics. Because of the ideological position, they are found in the same grouping. The 1980 election is a clear example of it.

Today communal sentiments are satisfied by counting the number of MLAs and ministers belonging to one's own community — regardless of political party affiliation and irrespective of the fact whether or not these MLAs articulate the interests of the communities they belong to.

In 1970-72, Kerala again saw the agitation led by Christians, Nairs and Ezhavas against the proposed Education Bill to bring about uniformity in tuition fees in colleges and end the practice of 'bribes' for the appointment of teachers and admission of students. Massive protest meetings were organised. Bishops led the demonstrations which shouted anti-government slogans. Nair communal leaders were also in the forefront. The progressive sections saw in the agitation an instance of intensely communal nature of politics in Kerala. The National Christian Council statement said

Though it is a fact that some of the government spokesmen have been unnecessarily
aggressive in their statements against the managements and with reference to these rights, it is doubtful whether the leaders of the churches in Kerala were justified in exaggerating the alleged threat to minority rights. (49)

This is an indication that at least some of the communal organisations came to perceive matters in a 'secular' perspective. Education continued to be a sensitive issue for all the three communities and whenever under the pressure of secular forces the state wanted to regulate their activities, the existing governments were grilled by the communal leaders by organising mass agitations.

The beginning of 1970s saw another interesting development as a sequence to the communal bargaining prevailed in the state for so many years. The following table XX gives statistics of Nair-Christian-Ezhava employment in various departments in Kerala.

The Ezhavas argue that they form about 22.19 per cent (whereas Syrian Christians 16 per cent and Nairs 14.96 per cent) and proportionate to their numerical strength, their share in the jobs is indicative of discrimination against them.

As we have seen, it was in 1935 that the Government appointed a Public Service Commission in Travancore with a provision for proportionate representation in the lower grades of public services for all communities according to their numerical strength. In Cochin it happened in 1937 when R.K. Shanmoogam Shetty was the Dewan. In 1950, after Indian Constitution was adopted, government appointed a committee to decide who all should be in the backward classes. According to its
Table XX
Communitywise Employment in Kerala in the Beginning of 1970s in Different Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>LAST GRADE</th>
<th>NON-GAZETTED</th>
<th>GAZETTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EZHAVA</td>
<td>CHRISTIAN</td>
<td>NAIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGISLATURE</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>2330</td>
<td>7660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTRICITY BOARD</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROAD TRANSPORT</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUNICIPAL CORPORATION</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC SECTOR</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUASI-GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage to total population

- Ezhavas : 22.19
- Christians : 16.00
- Nairs : 14.96

Source: Samudaya -- samvaranam -- chila Yadadhyangal (1973)
Based on sample survey of Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Trivandrum. Nair Service Society has reservations about this statistics.
recommendacons, in 1952, the government passed an order in which Ezhavas were included. This continued till the Kerala state was formed. In 1957, the government decided to make some changes in the reservation percentage. Accordingly each backward community got job reservation as follows:

1. Ezhavas ........................................... 14 per cent
2. Muslims .......................................... 10 per cent
3. Latin Catholics ................................ 5 per cent
4. Backward Christians ............................ 1 per cent
5. Other backward classes ......................... 10 per cent
6. Scheduled Castes, Tribes ....................... 10 per cent

Total ............................................... 50 per cent

But this does not apply to promotions, nor does it apply to 11 state services, 9 subordinate services or state owned companies. Mannam opposed the principle of reservation for backward communities like the Ezhavas in the recruitment to the public services. Muslim League and the rank and file in SNDP were against Mannam's demand to abolish reservations for backward class and on this count they had reservations in supporting NSS during the vimechana samaram.

In 1964, a Nair candidate who applied for a munsiff post did not get the job though his rank was within the 31 candidates selected because of 'rule of rotation' in the reservation for backward classes. The candidate filed a writ petition before the High Court of Kerala. The contention was that the 'other backward classes' defined in rule 2(14) of the Kerala...
state and Subordinate Service Rules, 1958 are not 'classes' but 'castes' and 'religious communities', and therefore reservation of appointments or posts on the ground of religion and/or caste are violative of the rule of equal opportunity and so it violates article 16(1) and 16(2) of the Constitution. On this ground the petitioner contended that these reservation rules are unconstitutional. The High Court in its judgement dated 31.1.1967 dismissed the petition but observed that

there was a possibility of socially, educationally and economically backward sections in the so-called advanced communities and investigations should be made regarding this aspect. State should undertake a detailed survey as early as possible to consider whether the 'backward classes' have to be drawn from all weaker sections of citizens irrespective of the religion and/or caste to which those sections may belong. (53)

It was in pursuance of the above directions of the High Court that the government constituted the 'Backward Classes Reservation Commission' popularly known as Nettur Commission. Some of the recommendations of the Nettur Commission gave enough fuel for the people again to agitate on communal lines. Although there were several recommendations favourable to backward classes, Ezhavas opposed the following recommendations.

(a) 'Rs.8,000 and below' shall be the level of aggregate annual family income at which economic test shall be applied. (Ezhavas said that there should not be any economic limit for members of backward class).

(a) The total quantum of reservation in favour of backward classes other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes shall be 33 per cent of the general vacancies (from the existing
40 per cent) (Ezhavas wanted to raise reservation to 49 per cent as in Tamil Nadu).

(c) The test of social backwardness due to historical reasons cannot be applied on an objective basis. That is, to include those communities which are not listed in the backward class table (Ezhavas do not want to include any more community in the backward class list).

But earlier, in the matter of admission to professional education, economic criterion was introduced by the Kumara Pillai Commission appointed in 1963. Before the Kumara Pillai Commission submitted its recommendations in 1965, admission for backward classes to professional colleges in Kerala were governed by the following percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>13 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>9 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Catholics</td>
<td>3 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward class Christians</td>
<td>1 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hindus</td>
<td>9 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35 per cent</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kumara Pillai Commission fixed Rs.4,800 annual income as the limit for reservation in the backward classes. Government increased it to Rs.6,000/- and later to Rs.10,000/-. After the Commission report, the reservation for backward class in the admission was reduced from 35 to 25 per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>9 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>8 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Latin Catholics                           2 per cent  
Backward class Christians                1 per cent  
Other backward Hindus                    5 per cent  

Total                                    25 per cent

Thus introduction of economic factor in the context of reservation for Backward Classes had created a great deal of controversy in Kerala; especially between Ezhavas on the one side and Nairs and Christians on the other. The elites in the Ezhava community - who could make it to the top; the landlords, businessmen, upper layers of the professionals, top government officials, etc. - had the great disappointment because they were being deprived of the communal protection in getting jobs and admission to places of learning. The other side of the coin was that the ordinary members of the community were reeling under social backwardness and the consequent economic disabilities for centuries, and what little that could have percolated down through communal reservations did not do so because, a few who were at the top could corner it to themselves in the name of reservations. It was under these circumstances that the 1957 ministry in Kerala formed an Administrative Reforms Committee one of whose terms of reference was the question of reservation. The Committee recommended that

(i) Reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should continue unchanged.

(ii) In the case of other 'backward' communities, reservation should continue but its benefit should be denied to those who were above a particular limit of family income. (59)
However, the second proposal was not accepted by the political parties.

However, by 1970, this resulted in a slight fall in the absolute number of Nairs and Syrian Christians in the government services. NSS was perturbed about it. Nair community began to agitate to do away with backward class reservation and wanted to base reservation on economic backwardness. The NSS General Secretary Shri Kidangoor Gopalakrishan Pillai characterised reservation as a whip against the forward communities. He wanted the community to unite and fight against reservation for backward class. The Annual Conference of NSS met on 6 November 1971 adopted a resolution demanding reservation on the basis of economic backwardness. A series of meeting and discussion followed against reservation for backward class knowing well that it will directly hit the Ezhavas.

Christian papers too supported the Nair sentiments and gave prominence to the speeches of Nair leaders and their resolutions.

They held a big demonstration in the city of Trivandrum in March 1973 to pressurise the government to give up backward class reservation. This was obviously to harm the interests of Ezhavas. In defence, the Ezhavas under the auspices of SNDP Yogam organised another demonstration in Trivandrum on 29 June 1973 "to impress upon the government the urge of the community for maintenance and continuance of the existing reservation till adequate representation is secured in favour of the backward classes".
Thus, the decade following the assumption of CPI ministry into power saw only two instances when communal passions were aroused on a state level.

1. The agitation organised by the churches, Nairs and SN Trust against control of private colleges.

2. The formation of NDP and SRP.

When Achutha Menon laid down his office in 1977, following the general elections, Congress got the chief ministership. K. Karunakaran and A.K. Antony were chief ministers for brief periods. The split in the Congress party saw Karunakaran and Antony in opposite camps. Then it went to P.K. Vasudevan Nair of CPI. P.K. Vasudevan Nair's exit after 11 months saw again a communal coalition - with Mohammed Koya of Muslim League as chief minister and a NDP member getting ministership. Perhaps this was a brief whimper the communal forces got in Kerala.

Hindu editorially wrote about this combination, saying

The frontmen have so far been drawn from forces who are communal and sectarian in their own local right and specialise in making an appeal to primordial sentiments. The new gang up which is likely to prove short-lived in every respect is an abomination thrust upon the people of Kerala. (66) (emphasis added)

The combination which was brought about with a touch of primordial loyalties could not last longer than 1½ months. The election on 21 January 1980 (the election was due only in March 1982) was crucial which gave a declining preference by the people for political expression in terms of communal ties. The Left Democratic Front won 93 seats with 50.04 per cent votes while United Democratic Front and Janata Party together got only 46
seats and 40.10 per cent votes.

The communal groups which got a bad treatment in the hands of the electorate under the banner of the United Democratic Front were:

1. Nairs National Democratic Party (NDP)
2. Ezhavas Socialist Republican Party (SRP)
3. Christians Kerala Congress (Joseph group)
4. Hindu-Savamma Janata - RSS elements
5. Muslims Muslim League
6. Cashing communal sentiments of all communities Congress(I)

This grouping was characterised as a federation of communal forces. K.V.S. Ilayathu, writing about this combination and its lack of economic programme commented: "Perhaps, they thought that once the communal feeling were aroused, there was no need for policy and programmes to catch votes". The Christian bishops issued an appeal to vote only for those who believe in God with an obvious reference to the UDF led by communal leaders and parties. The leader of the Congress-I Party, Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited the Guruvayoor Temple in Trichur, Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Trivandrum, the Narayanaguru Samadhi of the Ezhavas at Varkala and the top hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Kerala, during her election campaign to woo the communal elements. But in all the districts where Christians are a dominant community, the Front gave way to Left Democratic Front, led by Marxists.
Table XXI

Seats won by the two alignments in Christian dominated districts during 1980 elections to Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
<th>Seats won Democratic Front</th>
<th>Seats won Left Democratic Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quilon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleppey</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kerala Samadham, 10 February 1980.

An objective assessment would indicate that to divide the two fronts - the one in power and the other which was defeated - into a communal-secular dichotomy could be simplistic. The Left Democratic Front was not free from communal appeals or pulls. But our emphasis is that the communal appeal of the United Democratic Front was glaring and it polled votes based on the communal appeals of the community leadership of Christians, Nairs, Ezhavas and Muslims. The Nadars as a community was solidly behind UDF in south of Trivandrum. So also the Nair community in Trivandrum district, not to speak of Muslim voters who have been traditionally communal in elections in Kerala. But the point we are making is that the pull of religion was becoming feeble. As Tarun Ganguly observes:
Though considered one of the most literate states in India, the backward pull of caste and religion was present in Kerala. But it is to the credit of the Left Front that it has been able to earn the support of the electorate despite religious and casteist propaganda. The Congress(I) election strategy was mainly centred around casteist and religious considerations, although the Left Front was not completely free of it. That the pull of religion is becoming feeble in Kerala has been proved conclusively. (71)

From 1957, election, we find 'flexibility' and 'readiness to experiment with' more than one party as the hallmark of electoral politics in Kerala. With minor exception, no party was exclusively owned, supported and guided by the leaders and common people of a single community. When Congress was routed in 1957, various communal interests who were the main plank of Congress Party till then looked for other parties or became indifferent. More than party as such, the communal identity of the candidate became important for the voter. As R. Rama Krishnan Nair puts it, "the general attitude of communal organisations was to support candidates belonging to their respective communities irrespective of their party label".

In 1957, the communities which were traditionally considered to be anti-Communists supported Communist candidates selectively. Rama Krishnan Nair gives the following picture. The non-Catholic Christian community even supported Communist or pro-Communist candidates in some constituencies. The Catholic Church maintained its anti-Communist stance but there was a remarkable degree of coolness. Nairs, Ezhavas and Muslims did not stick together with their respective communal leaders. A prominent Congress member and a leader of Nair community
Gankunni Pillai of Kottayam actively helped Communists and his paper *Desabandhu* campaigned against Congress. The Kerala Kaumudi owned by an Ezhava leader K. Sukumaran gave full support to Communists.

This was the culmination of several factors beyond the control of any communal leader and in the subsequent history of Kerala we find communal loyalties taking a symbolic form than active existential form. Whenever the leadership had found that a total control of the political party as an instrument for the community's interest was not possible, they had tried to divide it to have full control thinking that a party could be built up whipping up communal sentiments as in the past. The story of communal organisations, parties and mobilisation since 1957 indicate that it has not paid much dividend as the leadership had anticipated.

Although political wings of communal bargaining and appeal on primordial loyalties to win votes ceased to be a major factor, the 'Nairness', the 'Ezhavaness' or 'Christianness' has not disappeared. The communal sentiments are still a factor in Kerala's social life. For instance even militant secular parties like the Communist parties have to take into account communal factor even today.

The studies of highly politicised agrarian organisational bases in Kerala have shown the active existence, of primordial collectivism in terms of the community to which majority of the members belong. This is partly because of the traditional association between caste and occupation. The following table gives the affiliation of cultivators and labourers belonging to
The above table indicates the possibility of overcoming the divisive influence of caste and uniting the poor of various castes. "In spite of this general trend", says K.C. Alexander, "it must be noted that a significant minority of higher caste labourers continued to be affiliated with non-Communist parties,

### Table XXII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Kerala Cong. (R)</th>
<th>CPI</th>
<th>CPI(M)</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>% N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultivators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu High Castes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Castes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijans</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Caste Christians</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Caste Christians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijan Christians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Labourers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu Higher Castes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Castes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijans</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Caste Christians</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Caste Christians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijan Christians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Peasants Organisations in South India.
indicating the negative influence of caste in building class organisations in India".  

Elections witness the search for candidates belonging to the numerically dominant community in a particular constituency. E.M.S. Namboodiripad brings to light this point when he writes:

'It would be totally unrealistic to close one’s eyes to the fact that even those political parties which claim to be secular and above all considerations of caste and community, have to take into consideration the caste or communal composition of particular constituencies when they select their candidates for elections. (77)'

The communal affiliation of a party member has its advantages and disadvantages even today. SRP could not grow beyond a point because of the caste-communal base of Marxist party. That is, most of the Ezhavas are in the CPI(M). Says E.M.S.

'The consciousness of one’s caste, sub-caste or religious community is still a strong force exercising its influence on the functioning of even political parties, with no political party being free to dismiss this particular factor in selecting candidates for election, in making appointments to the ministries and so on. The party of the working class with its advanced ideology has also to take account of this factor. (78)'

It may be in order, to dwell upon briefly, on those factors which were beyond the control of communal leaders which helped the process of secularisation and communalisation. The seeds of these social factors were sown during the earlier phases and it did flower during this phase.

(a) Migration

We had mentioned the importance of migration in the Malayalee character. This assumed an important dimension during
this phase. According to the estimates made by the State Bureau of Economics and Statistics, there were in November-December 1977, 4.32 lakhs Keralites employed outside Kerala, 1.35 lakhs being outside the country.

Table XXIII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District/State</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total persons outside Kerala</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total persons outside India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trivandrum</td>
<td>33912</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>20530</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilon</td>
<td>52038</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>13735</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleppey</td>
<td>72606</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>14777</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>19935</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>4937</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idikki</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>17462</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4543</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichur</td>
<td>79512</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>26367</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malappuram</td>
<td>37128</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>19762</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palghat</td>
<td>35707</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>3171</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozhikode</td>
<td>23476</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9056</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannanore</td>
<td>53096</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>17792</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>431888</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>135187</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This phenomenon, drastically altered the functions of the traditional social institutions and attitudes and values of the society towards other people, money, investments and social celebrations.

(b) **Impact of Education**

The high level of education received by the people of Kerala resulted in a powerful literary movement and library movement. The Grandhasala Sangham of the Kerala Library Society which began in 1946 has now more than 4,000 affiliated libraries spread all over the state. In 1974, there were 0.8 million members (approximately 1 in 4 rural households) and the total number of books borrowed was nearly 24 million. The infrastructure for this development was built 160 years ago. The Trivandrum Public Library (1829) is the oldest public library in existence in India.

The high number of libraries and readership shows behind it a flourishing literary activity. During the phase we survey the *Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangham* (Writers' co-operative society), Kottayam, had become a unique venture in the whole of India. Although the beginning of the publications in Malayalam saw it catering to particular communal segments in society like Nairs, Brahmins, Ezhavas, Christians or Muslims, it went beyond the communal boundaries ending up in universal outlook. An association was formed in 1882 for the promotion of Malayalam literature and this association later developed into an All Kerala organisation - the Kerala Sahitya Parishat
in 1927. In the early 1930s, there was a movement among Malayali intellectuals to burn the Ramayana and Mahabharatha. Novels, short stories, poetry and literary criticisms proliferated into the community, most of them were based on themes of social reform and economic change. A distinct school developed in Malayalam literature known as 'progressive literature'. K. Damodaran's Paattabakki and Thoppil Bhasi's Ninalenno Communistakki were milestones in the progressive Malayalam dramas which could capture the imagination of the people to transcend primordial loyalties. During the united Kerala phase Malayalam stage was a powerful medium in the ideational realm. What Ramanujan Nair has said about Library movement holds good for all other movements we briefly discussed in this section. "Perhaps the most outstanding achievement of the Sangham" says Nair, "was the quiet but enduring contribution made by the movement towards the establishment of the grass roots of democracy".

Conclusion

An analysis of the various aspects mentioned above show that classes and political parties based on broad principles have assumed greater importance in the political life of Travancore or Central Kerala. The differentiation within communities and political parties is a sure sign of this trend. But the existence of primordial loyalties is a reality. Without an appreciation of the role played by community organisation it is not possible to understand the force with which secularisation
took place in Kerala. This role was not something which the communal leadership consciously undertook - it was in the subliminal level.
Notes and References


3 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

4 General Secretary of SNDP Yogam at that time was K.R. Narayanan. See the Malayalam Herald, 27 September 1968.


6 Ibid., p. 246. However, R. Ramakrishnan Nair considers this view "a gross mistake". See How Communists came to Power in Kerala, p. 40.

7 This opinion was expressed by a Catholic journal Prakasam 'Kerala Turning Red' (Supplement), Calicut, 1958. Quoted in How Communists came to Power in Kerala, pp. 31-32.

Prakasam was of opinion that the Niyogi Report published some time before the elections also made the Christians apprehensive of the safety of their interests in the hands of the Congress. Dr. M.B. Niyogi was the chairman of the Christian Missionary activities Enquiry Committee appointed by the Congress Government of Madhya Pradesh on 14 April 1954. Some of the observations of the Committee in its report were loudly resented by Christians in India and it is said that the report had its repercussions in Kerala also in the Christian community's attitude towards Congress.

8 Krishna Murthy and Lakshmana Rao, op. cit., p. 78.

9 AKCC Bulletin, December 1967, p. 2. The government press release in reply to the resolutions said that no education expert had been denied a place in the committee on the basis of community. On these issues, the committee's communal representation had been no criterion.


12 *The Hindu*, 30 April 1964.

It is recorded that Mannam became an enemy of Communists after its ministry failed to help him get government approval for his Engineering College at Palghat. K.C. John, op. cit., p. 47.


On 16 August 1958 at the AKCC leadership meeting held at Kottayam, Mr. V.J. Joseph, president, AKCC in his speech exhorted Catholic community to oppose the Education Bill and safeguard Catholic community interests, p. 9. See also *AKCC Bulletin*, October 1958, December 1958, February 1959, April 1959 and June 1959. AKCC Working Committee resolutions and Christian Education Action Committee meeting at Kottayam opposed the moves by Communist government to control private education.

14 The Revenue Minister Smt. K.R. Gouri in her reply to the discussions on the Agrarian Relations Bill in the Assembly said that the bill was not against Nairs or Christians or religious institutions. K.R. Gouri, "Kerala's Land Bill" reply to the discussion on the Agrarian Relations Bill in the Kerala Legislative Assembly reproduced in *New Age*, July 1959, vol. VIII, no. 7, pp. 1-12.


17 Quoted in R.T. Ranadive, op. cit., p. 5.

18 Quoted in C. Unni Raja, op. cit., p. 7.

19 Ibid., p. 7.
Deepika, 2 May 1960.

Malabar Mail, 7 May 1960.


Ibid.

Ibid., August 1961.

The Hindu, 19 March 1964.

Iruttill Piranna Aviswasam, Kerala Pradesh Congress Publication, 1964. This book contains speeches by K.C. Abraham, the KPCC President, George Joseph Podipara and C.H. Stephen accusing the MLAs who supported the non-confidence motion, of bringing to forefront of Kerala politics worst form of communalism and religious sentiments. They said that the Catholic Church is behind this move to topple Sankar ministry.

Deepika, 31 January 1965.


Deepika, 3 March 1965.

Ibid., 27 July 1965.

Puthupally Raghavan in an interview.


Ibid., p. 21.

Ibid., p. 21.


K.V. Varughese, op. cit., p. 22.


See for instance the political resolution of Kerala branch of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 26 August 1970.


21 July 1972 reports of Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhoomi, Despika and Kerala Kaumudi.

Chathannur Thankappan Pillai, 'Kanakajubilitykku sesham pathu kollam' in NSS Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, 1974, p. 310.


There was also an articulate section in the local churches who opposed the church hierarchy. See "Victimisation of Priests Opposed", Indian Express (Bangalore), 8 August 1972; Mathrubhoomi, 1 August 1972; "Vandya Thirumenimarode oru Abhyartha" (Malayalam Pamphlet dated 27 July 1972); "Abhvandyar Mar Thoma Metropolita Thirumanasilekkku oru Thuranna Kathu" (Malayalam Pamphlet dated 7 August 1972). These letters and pamphlets show an open defiance by laymen of the church's leadership on the Education Bill of 1972.


Justice P. Govindan Nair and Justice K.K. Mathew on 31 January 1967 in the High Court of Kerala. The third Judge Gopalan Nambiyar had a dissenting judgement.
Report of the Backward Classes Reservation Commission, Kerala, vols. 1 and 2. A Committee was constituted by Order No. (MS)343/PD dated 17 October 1967 with Shri Nettur P. Damodaran, Ex-M.P. as Chairman. This committee was re-designated as "Backward Classes Reservation Commission" on 8 February 1968.

The Memorandum submitted to the Kerala Government by the Socialist Republican Party dated 2 August 1977 (Malayalam Pamphlet).


Ibid., p. 232.


According to NSS President Kalathil Velayudhan Nair from 1961-62 till 1968-69, in the appointments by Public Service Commission, out of 73,689 appointments 52,476 were from backward classes. Only 22 per cent went to forward communities, while 78 per cent was for backward classes. Press Conference at Kottayam, 29 August 1971, Malayala Manorama.

Speech by the General Secretary Sri Kidangoor Gopalan Krishna Pillai, 6 November 1971. Mannam Jayanthi Souvenir, 1972, p. 121.


See report of the SNDP General Secretary Prof. P.S. Velayudhan at the 75th Annual Meeting held at Quilon, 30 December 1978, p. 17; Also report of the General Secretary at the 72, 73 and 74 Joint Annual Meeting, pp. 14-12.


65

The Hindu (Madras), 12 October 1979.

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Ibid., p. 5.

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Ibid., pp. 72-73.

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EMS Namboodiripad, "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development", *Social Scientist*, November 1977, p. 3.

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Ibid., p. 25.

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80


81

For a perceptive study of the development of Malayalam literature in its secularisation process see EMS
Namboodiripad, Marxisayum Malayala Sahityavum (Mal.),
Trivandrum: Chinta Publishers, 1974. See also C.O.
Kurien, Literature and Social Transformation: A Socio-
logical Analysis of Malayalam Literature (M.Phil
Dissertation), New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University,
1975.


Ibid., p. 284.

P. Ramanujan Nair, op. cit., p. 355.