CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Kerala occupies a unique position in several spheres. It is one state which has the distinction of being one of the top halfa dozen states in India on welfare index, in spite of its very low place on the growth or development index. Kerala is way ahead in indices like literacy, public health and sanitation. It has the lowest infant mortality rates, birth rates and highest life expectancy in India. It is the only state where females outnumber males. Educationally, Kerala is India's most advanced state with cent per cent literacy rate. No other state perhaps maintains such a high level of educational facilities and enrolment ratio or spends such a large share of its income on education. This accounts partly for the high level of unemployment among the educated.

As against the social indicators, Kerala lags behind in terms of indices reflecting upon the level of development, particularly the per capita share. The per capita availability of land has fallen drastically and the number of agricultural labourers (with no land or minimal land) has risen to high proportions. The farm labourer enjoy the maximum wage rates in the agricultural sector of any Indian state. The result has been shift of operations to the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamilnadu.
Industrially, Kerala does not boast of heavy industries and the number of public sector companies is very negligible.

The state's cultural heritage contains elements of ancient Hindu culture that have been enriched by centuries of contact with both East and West. It is the most densely populated state in India. Though the majority of Malayalis belong to the Hindu community, there are also sizeable Christian and Muslim minorities. Through its cash crops such as rubber, coffee, black pepper, cardamom and cashewnut, Kerala earns valuable foreign exchange for the country.

In the political sphere, Kerala politics have been unpredictable, very often isolated from national and political currents. In the elections held in 1957, it voted the Communists to power. In 1970, Kerala voted a CPI-led and Congress backed coalition. This was repeated in 1977, though the North India voted for the Janata Party in the aftermath of the emergency. In 1980, when most other states voted for Congress, the state of Kerala did not follow that pattern. However, in the elections to Parliament in 1984, Kerala voted for the Congress-led coalition, but in the bye-elections that followed to Assembly seats, the coalition suffered reverses in all the three seats. All these developments resulted in a number of analysts bestowing their attention to find out the reasons for this phenomena. There has been no dearth of
Political Instability in Kerala

No of Days

No of Ministries since 1956

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

2500 5000 1500 1000
literature on political developments in Kerala. Studies so far done cover a wide range starting with political instability to social relations among various communities.

**POLITICAL INSTABILITY**

Political instability may be defined as the inability of governments to complete its normal tenure of five years. Kerala has been affected by political instability right from its formation in 1956. It has seen no less than ten elections and fifteen ministries between 1956 and 1994. Except twice, no ministry could complete its full tenure of five years in power. Observers have given various reasons for this political instability. To Nair, lack of Congress leadership; multiplicity of parties; failure of Communist and the Praja Socialist Party; the role of casteism and religious interest groups in politics account for Kerala's political instability.

According to John, coalition governments in Kerala have been confronted by a multi-regional, religious and communal interests. To him, therefore, communalism, regionalism, the size factor and higher literacy contributed to political instability.

Hardgrave writes, "Governments in Kerala have formed and fallen on the shifting alliances of short-term interest and common opposition and party fortunes fluctuated erratically
as a near majority of Assembly seats in one election was followed by only a handful in the next elections. This fluidity within the political system has been essentially a product of unstable coalitions in the state".

Visalakshi attributes political instability in Kerala to three reasons: one, it is largely on account of the persistence of a series of economic problems like deficiency of foodgrains; two, the powerful influence of the communal organisations seem to have a disintegrating effect on Kerala politics and the leaders of political parties in general are not free from the influence of communalism and not capable of commanding the loyalty of all sections of the society; three, the presence of innumerable parties and groups is yet another cause of political instability.

According to Mammen, political instability is due to the high rate of politicisation in Kerala. He observes, "In spite of high degree of politicisation of the society, and partially because of it, the state has not had a stable ministry so far; for politicisation has caused more inter-communal and/or interfactional competition than co-operation. As a result so far Kerala has had 13 ministries (and President's rule was imposed five times upon the state)".

Pylee and John's study deals with the reasons for Kerala being ruled by a coalition government. They state, "the
Communists and Congress are more or less of equal strength in Kerala. "Together they account for a total of some 65 per cent of the state's voters. Thus, it is clear that neither can, on its own strength, form a ministry and give the state a stable government". Hence, if either of them aim at capturing power, it becomes absolutely necessary to forge an alliance with one or more of the small parties. That seems to be a political imperative in the given Kerala situation. A political party which ignores this dimension would do so only at its own peril. Another interesting feature is that among those who consistently support the Communists are the Ezhavas - the largest single community in Kerala. In contrast, the bulk of the Congress strength is derived from the two economically most powerful communities viz., Christians and Nairs.

Chhabra and Jones attribute Kerala's economic maladies to its uncertain political situation. They write, "...in Kerala every prospect pleaseth, only politics is vile. This implies that the root of Kerala's economic maladies lies in its politics. It is significant to note that the Kerala electorate has never voted any single party to power ever since that state was formed in 1956. The uncertain political atmosphere accompanied by the administrative inability of the state machinery has thwarted all economic progress. Consequently, there is a kind of feeling among the people
that elections provide merely a brief pause before introduction of President's rule." This fact has been aptly summed up by them as follows: "the elections appear like a fixed rule, that is being run for the sake of form".

As can be made out from the above trends that there is prevalence of uncertain political situation in Kerala. People resort to "checks and balances" on the basis of issues that crop up from time to time. This can be fruitfully exemplified by the fact that the same electorate behave differently on different occasions. To wit, the electorate gave the LDF a resounding victory in the Assembly elections but in the 1989 parliamentary elections, it sent 17 out of 20 United Democratic Front (UDF) representatives to the Lok Sabha. The remaining three seats were won by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) candidates. When the Left Democratic Front appeared to be crumbling, the electorate gave a new lease of life by exercising their franchise in favour of the party in 12 out of 14 districts in the elections held in January 1991 for the District Councils. The same electorate gave a resounding victory to the UDF during the June 1991 Assembly elections.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Some writers trace the reasons for political instability in Kerala to the evolution of the state and its impact on
social relations among the people. The case in point is the breakdown of the matrilineal system among the Nairs. There has also been assertion by various other communities for a share in the political spoils. The emergence and growth of NSS and SNDP and other organisations among the Christians along with other trends changed the entire complexion of Kerala.

Jeffrey's study deals with the breakdown of the matrilineal social system which resulted not only in the overall decline in the position of the dominant caste but it has pushed into competition with the other communities. He observes, "From the 1850's onwards, the balance of the political and social system was increasingly disturbed as new resources became available for which all men, regardless of caste or religion, could compete on fairly equal terms. The commercial and menial occupations of many Christians and low caste-Hindus and their association with European missionaries, gave them advantages in this competition, which Nairs did not share. Indeed, the economic pressures, changing values and rigorous legal system, which were the concomitant of the new resources seriously weakened the Nair matrilineal joint-family and thereby hastened its disintegration. As the bonds of the matrilineal family loosened, so did the hold of Nairs on the land". 
Kurian finds that the Christians, though a dominant force, demographically and socially are not a homogeneous entity. The Christians in Kerala are broadly divided into two sects - Syrian Christians and the Backward Christians. The Syrian Christians in general display certain uniform pattern in socio-economic and cultural behaviour; whereas the Backward Christians remained completely oblivious to the changes taking place on the socio-economic plane. In the modernization and development of the state’s economy and society, the Syrian Christians have been on the vanguard. The Backward Christians who are converts from the lower castes of Hinduism neither enjoy the same privileges nor have shown that much of enterprise to offset the power and influence of the Syrian Christians.

Aiyappan looks at the reasons for breakdown of the traditional Hindu society and the consequent problems from a slightly different angle. He observes, "...feudalism and rigid caste unmitigated by the consolidation of Vaishnavism on the one hand, and the presence of two egalitarian faiths for a long period slowly but surely undermined the hold of Hinduism on the lower castes. These were two of the most important factors that led to the earlier disorganisation of traditional Hindu society and the consequent social ferment in Kerala."
ELECTION STUDIES

Hartmann traced the changing political behaviour of the electorate for the period 1948 to 1967. His analysis attempted to establish that while caste and communal considerations continued to be operative, the results of the 1967 elections, unlike the earlier ones, revealed greater secular trends in the voting behaviour.

Krishnamurthy and Lakshmana Rao made a detailed electoral analysis of the Kerala general elections of 1957, 1960, 1965 and 1967. They examined the voting behaviour on the basis of some of the aggregate socio-economic and occupational characteristics. They noticed that massive voter turn-out in any election was a setback for the Communists excepting the Malabar region. Congress, on the other hand, gained from a higher voter turn-out. Among the rural areas the backbone of the Congress Party comprised the poor farmer or the owner-cultivators falling in the category of five acres and below. The appeal of the Communist parties seem to be more among the landless labourers than the poor peasantry in Kerala.

Bhagat's study deals with the elections of 1960 held immediately after the dismissal of the first Communist ministry headed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad. The author notes that the 'triple alliance' of the Congress Party, the Praja
Socialist Party and the Muslim League won the Kerala mid-term election of 1960 mainly due to its passionate anti-communist campaign and not necessarily due to its organisational efforts. Though defeated, the Communists did improve their vote bank because of the support from a large number of agricultural worker, poor tenants, peasants, fisherfolk, a bulk of factory, transport, plantation workers and toddy tappers. They voted for Communist party as they were attracted and impressed with the programmes, policies and principles which the CPI pursued while it was in office in spite of certain odds against it.

Gough in a study of 1965 elections, while not denying caste and communal influence in Kerala elections, finds evidence suggesting significant association between occupation and party affiliation. She finds that the propertyless and the poor generally support the Communists as against the propertied and the rich who promote non-Communists. She also finds that the supporters of the Communist party "have greater political allegiance to it than to their caste or any organised communal association".

Nair in a study of the 1967 election finds that the electorate had grown enlightened and politically articulate. Another trend noticed was declining hold of communal leaders and the Church over their traditional following. He
observes, "From a position of meek submission and abject obedience, some of the Catholics rose to challenging the propriety of their bishops ...the Nair Service Society leader enjoyed an unbroken reputation for carrying with him a sizeable section of the electorate whichever side he joined, since 1948. But this time, his support for the Congress did not prove effective".

Sengupta and Chakraborty observe, "the history of electoral politics in Kerala shows that there has been periodical ups and downs in the fortunes of political parties. In the 1965 mid-term elections, there was the success of the Left Front followed by the formation of a United Front during the period 1965-67. But from 1967 onwards, the nature of Kerala's politics became highly complex. During this period, a number of important political events took place: formation of a United Front Ministry (1967-1969), formation of a mini-front ministry (1969-1970 and again in 1970-71), large front ministry (1971-1975) and the like".

Pillai in his study of the Assembly elections of 1977 concludes that the verdict of the people in favour of UDF should not be construed as a verdict on emergency. Rather, it was an approval for political stability and economic justice which the previous administration was able to provide but only in some measure.
Pillai traced the political events of Kerala from March 1977 to the election of 1980. This short period witnessed a series of changes in Chief Ministers and cabinet, splits within political parties, alignments and re-alignments of political parties. The re-alignments resulted in the new front - the LDF led by the CPI(M) - coming to power in the 1980 election. About the elections the author observed the dilemma when he stated that "they proved beyond doubt that the Marxist Party is the strongest political party in the state with a wider mass base. But, then it has also shown that it is difficult for any political party in Kerala to come to power without the support of one or other communal party".

Chander examined how factions and factional infights have grown in the Congress(I) and the Kerala Congress, and affected the prospects of the UDF in the March elections of 1987. He observed, "there was a spurt of rebel candidates on account of dissatisfaction with the UDF leadership. Factional leaders went to the extent of canvassing against the UDF candidates and in the process digging their own grave. This development must have naturally persuaded many UDF voters to move into the LDF camp..."

Narain and Dutt in a study of the 1987 elections stated that the LDF won because of its appeal to the voters from a secular and non-communal platform. The Congress, on
the other hand, fell a prey to its own deeds—lack of cooperation and internal disorganisation. For it had to spend a lot of time trying to balance different communal and religious segments. The UDF was further handicapped by its educational policy and its stand on the reservation issue. Total rejection of the Nair based NDP and Ezhava based SRP and also the Kerala Congress indicates weakening of communal forces and politics associated with them.

TRENDS AND FEATURES OF KERALA POLITICS

Kumar studied the trends and features of regional politics—their growth and the party system. He observes that regional parties have their roots in certain vote banks and adds that the regional parties in Kerala are the offshoot of caste, economic and environmental factors. He concludes that the splinter groups in Kerala have come to stay. It is in this context that single-party rule is almost not possible.

Varghese assessed the role of ideology in politics and showed how ideology got watered down by the constraints of coalition politics. More often coalitions have been formed to prevent a common enemy from capturing power. In this context the coalescing parties having ideological differences are compelled to come to a compromise as they have to choose the lesser of the two evils...A coalition devoid of
ideological moorings survives till the enemy is humbled. Once the euphoria of victory is over, the differences come to the surface and the structure collapses like a pack of cards.

Mathur and others analysed the historical legacies and various economic forces at work in Kerala and concludes that "Kerala is moving towards a polarisation of political forces". They add, "Kerala politics show a reversal of the trend of fragmentation of political choices... For instance, as seen earlier also, a large number of voters are shifting their preference either to the CPI(M) or to the Congress. The other political parties are definitely in for some heavy political weather. Secondly, both CPI(M) and the Congress, have lately been pre-occupied with consolidating their popular support base".

Francis in a study of Kerala politics says that the root cause of the political struggle in Kerala state has been its caste structure. Caste in a feudal society is almost equal to class. The lower classes tend to unite on caste basis to fight against caste prejudices and for their human rights.

In sum, the political scene in Kerala presents a 'mosaic' picture than a uniform pattern compared to many other states. Voter preferences have changed over time from one front to the other. Various communal/caste groupings further complicated the situation. Thus, nothing can be
predicted about the voting behaviour as 'issue' based alliances among different political parties seem to be gradually weakening. No political party for sure, can be complacent about its success at the hustings, be it for the national, state or local bodies.

COMMUNAL POLITICS

For some political analysts the burden of their song has been that Kerala politics is characterised by communal and caste factors. All political parties are to be blamed for the growth of communalism because they at one time or another made use of communal parties to improve their electoral chances. Fic notes that Kerala politics is merely a projection of the aspirations and strength of the communal organisations into the political arena. Therefore it failed to reflect the class affiliation of voters. In fact, they (communal organisations) have been critical factors of politics in Kerala and a slightest shift in their voting pattern can upset the fortunes of political parties.

Fadia observes that caste and communalism have been the catalysts of political consciousness in Kerala. As the Muslims are concentrated in certain areas of Malabar, so is the position of other communities in different regions in Kerala. Each political party in Kerala must, therefore, seriously count the dominant community, or what Communists
prefer to call it as 'social base' in the selection of the candidates. Although elements of each community are present in all parties (except for the Muslim League), the parties in Kerala have come to be identified with specific communities. And in each party, there is factionalism expressed through the division of religion and caste. In fact the politics of caste constitutes fundamental reality of political culture in Kerala.

Chacko blames the major parties for the mushrooming of communal and factional parties in Kerala. He observes, "In their eager pursuit of power both have discharged ideological principles. Opportunists were forged to get to the reins of power and to keep the other out of power as long as possible. The practice followed by both CPI(M) and Congress, of offering ministerial berths to one leader centered parties and communal groups have only whetted further the insatiable power appetite of splinter groups".

Thomas maintains that the interest groups in Kerala are invariably either communal or occupational. These groups enjoy greater importance because the society is divided into four major communities - Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. About Christians, he says that their main interest is in the field of education. Their interference in politics is itself due to its anxiety to preserve their 'right' and
privileges in the field of education. The Church takes to politics only when driven to it. At other times, it prefers to keep aloof from politics, though it is always on the alert against encroachments on minority rights.  

Nayar has dealt with the communal interest group in Kerala. He finds that the religious and caste-centered interest groups exercise greater influence on state politics than pressure groups based on class or occupation. The three powerful interest groups are the Nair Service Society representing the Nairs, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam representing the Ezhavas and the Syrian Christians organised into Catholic and non-Catholic churches. This study also reveals that the leadership of these communal interests has been very often able to dictate its terms to the formal leadership of political parties. From this it is clear that one of the major factors contributing to governmental instability in the state of Kerala has been the ability of communal groups to overthrow cabinets found to be unresponsive to their needs and demands.  

Gladstone believes that communal consciousness got intensified with the growth of nationalism in Kerala. He observes that "the growth of nationalism furthered the sense of freedom which had been inspiring various communities for many decades. At one level people belonging to different
communities shared the national feeling though their political aims were different from those of the people of British India. At another level, there was an attempt by almost every community to strengthen and improve its own members, resulting in the growth of communalism. One of the manifestations of this tendency was the formation of communal organisations such as SNDP, NSS, etc and the changing of caste names. For the old caste names, for these groups, symbolised inferiority and humiliation in varying degrees."

Tharakan finds that Kerala's history of communal influence in politics is closely linked with the pattern of social and economic development. He observes, "the distortions that occurred in the development process, particularly in the absence of strong urbanisation and industrialisation, created the premises for the growth of communalist politics. Such political organisations survived on the basis of the revival of earlier communal identities for contemporary political bargaining. In a society which does not have a sufficiently developed industrial base to absorb the increasing pressure from the unemployed, the government with its manifold avenues of patronage becomes all the more important. In this context, we would further hypothesise that the government in Kerala itself has become a participant and not any more an arbitrator in the communal wheeling and dealing."
Varghese while analysing the phenomenon of communalism notes that religion is not the root of communalism but rather a powerful instrument in the hands of those who seek to play their political game through it. Communalism is born of secular issues and what communal parties and groups want to safeguard is not the spiritual but the material interests of their followers. More employment, more business facilities, more forest land for cultivation, more schools, more seats in professional colleges, more berths in the ministry - are the issues around which communal parties and groups revolve and thrive. It may be wrong to conclude that communalism thrives only under the patronage of parties having communal labels; in fact 'secular parties' also function as its breeding ground. It is during the time of election that communal groups get maximum access to secular parties. It is not therefore surprising that communal groups and parties play a decisive role in the politics of Kerala.

Tharakan makes another analysis of the behaviour of communal votes in Kerala Assembly elections of 1987. He identifies six political formations, viz., Hindu Munnani, BJP, IUML, Kerala Congress, NDP and SRP that were found to be motivated by communal persuasions. As to the outcome of the 1987 elections, he observes a mixed scenario. On the one hand, both communal and anti-communal forces have grouped under one or the other political umbrella. There was an
anti-communal feeling among the young voters who moved towards the LDF because of their more positive political inclinations. A tendency to regroup under more integral religious banners such as Hindu, Muslim and Christians is also noticed.

Bhaskar tries to highlight the sociological aspects of communal problems in Kerala. She maintains that caste and community have a close association with the political alignments in a pre-capitalist society. The emergence of caste organisations is conditioned by specific socio-historical and cultural configurations wherein the ideational or material or both, are being challenged. Regarding politics, she says that its parliamentary politics is heavily dependent on caste or religious organisations. The balance between the two forces changes from time to time depending on the changes in the economic and political organisations. In Kerala, as in other parts of India, the political counterpoise between various communities to maintain its paramountcy is carried out through the devices of communal representation, communal electorate and the like to suit the ruling class interest and help to accentuate communalism.

According to Pillai, Kerala's social and political structure is characterised by established communal system. He writes that bulk of the electorate were swayed more by
caste and communal considerations than by ideological postures or political attitudes. The struggle for power and position of top leadership had been consistently waged by different communal leaders.

To Gangadharan the influence of communal organisations pervades not only the political life but also all socio-economic activities including the day-to-day working of the bureaucracy in the state. In the political field, their influence is all pervasive and is enhanced by separate political parties sponsored by the most powerful of such organisations.

Mammen traces the historical origins and evolution of the main socio-religious communities in the state as well as their shifting political loyalties which have characterised its politics. The high rate of politicisation has prevented Kerala from having a stable ministry so far since politicisation has caused more inter-communal and/or inter factional competition than co-operation. Each one of the ministries Kerala has had so far was created and subsequently toppled by the political configuration of any two or more of the five communities or factions within them. Even parties like CPI for its survival gave up its secular outlook at the altar of the powerful communal solidarity groups. Thus the party became what he calls
'traditionalised' in the antecedent communal culture of the traditional society.

Pillai unlike others who dealt with communalism, do not take a pessimistic view of communalisation of Kerala politics. He tries to examine role of caste and communal forces in Kerala politics from a historical perspective to bring out the positive outcomes of such interaction. He says that the transgression of castes into political forces was an institutional necessity and that it took place with predictable spontaneity. The caste associations had to incarnate themselves into political interest groups to protect the socio-economic interests of its members; and the political parties had no choice but to exploit the prevailing institutional milieu to attain and retain power. In fact, interaction of caste and politics was the most efficient way to democratise Kerala's traditional society. Once the caste interest groups succeeded in political manipulation, their own internal contradictions began to surface and their influence, political or otherwise began to evaporate.

Mathew also maintains that Kerala with all its communal manifestations is making a definite move towards a secular society. In his work, he tries to encapsulate the struggle for power and status by the three principal communities of Kerala. He examines how basic group identities and
primordial loyalties in which the religious factor is common, play a sustaining role in social movements, with the eventual result of initiating a secularising process. He studies how traditional (ascriptive) loyalties like religion (caste included) were made instruments to demand modern, secular (achievement oriented) ends. Though Kerala has a strong religious identity, the people of Kerala sought power and not the blood of one another. The quest for power is the underlying denominator of secularisation process in Kerala. There had been bloody clashes in Kerala between political groups but not on inter-communal identities. Therefore to capture power, the communal groups try various permutations and combinations among themselves and with the established secular political parties as well. In the process, Kerala has shown a way, a religious-communal way, towards achieving a secular society.

Lieten demolishes the notion that Kerala politics is purely a caste-communal affair. He brings out how a purely class based organisation, the Communist Party of India, projected an alternative programme and made tremendous advances by rallying the people in the national, democratic and economic struggles. As regards the liberation struggle launched by the communal interest groups, he says that it was not a mass upsurge as made out by the other parties. He notes, "in the first place, the media, which was almost
totally in the hands of opposition parties and had been spitting venom upon Communism during the whole period, spread a highly one-sided picture of the events. Petty police actions were frightfully exaggerated as terrible repression; rallies by the Communists were blanked out; violence against the government was played up and even small jathas and public meetings were given the aura of heroic, glittering mass demonstrations". 

Ahmed observes that primordial and parochial ties and loyalties tend to erode and weaken when drawn into the political process. With regard to Kerala, he writes, "the temporary and shifting alliances that the compulsions of electoral politics forced upon caste and communal groups in Kerala have tended to reduce the coherence and weaken the power of their parochial appeal among the public. At the same time, the use of governmental patronage by those in power had helped to encourage important individuals in different communities to break their ties with strictly communal organisations".

As can be made out from the above analysis, the emerging trend appears to be the increasing nature of communalisation of Kerala politics. Although there have been different interpretations, the demographic composition of the various communities and their geographical location have helped them
to play an important role in the politics of the state. The major political parties in their eager pursuit of power diluted their own ideology by entering into alliances with parties that represented different communities. In the process, they had lent legitimacy to these communal parties.

GROWTH OF COMMUNISM

Jeffrey traced origins of Communism in Kerala in 1930's and described the way it spread and became popular with the Malayalis. By 1930's, the matrilineal social order that governed a section of the caste Hindus was collapsing and the orthodox notions of caste were giving into Western style education and new economic opportunities. The structural and ideological props of society were destroyed, and men and women were unsettled and displaced against their will. It was under these circumstances that Marxism made its appearance. In the words of Jeffrey, "Marxism in Kerala came to fill an ideological void keenly felt by thousands of literate, alienated people. Given glaring class divisions, high rates of literacy and population density, what was crucial in directing Malayalis towards Communism was the breakdown of the social system".

Hardgrave analysed the two Communist parties - CPI and CPI(M) - their electoral base and factional conflicts, tactics used in elections and their problems and prospects.
He points out that Communists maintained a steady one-third of the vote in almost all the elections. In addition to this, the support for each party has got highly regionalised and neither party, i.e., CPI and CPI(M) do stick to their traditional strongholds. Hardgrave notes that after the 1964 split, the CPI was left with its base of support in the areas of the Communist's weakest strength, the cultivator-dominant areas, while the Marxist base was concentrated in the traditional Communist stronghold, the areas of high agricultural labour.

Nossiter evaluates essentially an indigenous Communist movement's efforts to reconcile the demands of the mass base for immediate relief from poverty on the one hand, and political lines derived from the radical interpretations of the nature of the Indian state held by the CPI and CPI(M), on the other. He also tried to bring out how, when in power, they tried to bring about a social change through a combination of constitutional machinery reinforced with mass mobilisation, despite their lack of autonomous state power. He observes that the most lasting contribution made by the Communist movement in Kerala has been its politicisation and mobilisation of propertyless and the under-privileged.

Lieten analysed how the Communist government's attempt to disturb the superstructure in Kerala and how that had led to
the growth of a movement against it and ultimately to its dismissal. The first Communist government attempted to bring about changes in the educational system. With this aim they brought forward the Kerala Education Bill in July 1957. The main objective of the Bill was "to provide for a better organisation of general education", and more specifically to ensure the payments of salaries and security of service to teachers and provide for a check on the administration of the institutions. But this Bill set off a storm of protests from vested communal interest groups which was later supported by opposition parties. To put in Lieten's words, "The government's attempt at educational reform had attracted the immediate attention of various groups and interests who had a stake in the existing system. The opposition parties in Kerala alleged that in the field of education, government was trying to bring about a hidden 'quantitative change' through an open 'qualitative change'". 

The review of literature reveals that there are studies on different aspects of political developments of Kerala. The general trend that emerges from all these studies is the problem of chronic political instability in the history of Kerala. Writers attribute this to a number of factors like shifting of party loyalties from one front to another; the powerful influence of communal organisations and sharp divisions of the two fronts in the state. Others trace
political instability to the breakdown of the social system and claims and counter claims of various communities for a share in the spoils of power. Studies on electoral politics indicate that the parties are bereft of any ideology. They, therefore, followed haphazard strategies at the time of elections. There was, by and large, no continuity or stability in the fortunes of political parties: defeat in one election was followed by a victory in the subsequent elections.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

As already discussed above, a number of studies have been done on Kerala in general and on political instability in particular. While the value of these studies, no doubt, is high, no effort has been made to study the interactional pattern between macro and micro level political worlds in a systematic manner. One does not have enough of studies to make generalisations about the causes and motivations that govern the phenomenon. The present study tries to fill in this gap but yet a vast ground remains to be explored before any valid generalisations can be attempted.

The present study seeks to examine political instability by taking up a micro level analysis of a constituency and studying the political process in its detail. The investigator concentrated on three specific aspects of
political process: one, the influence of community over the voters; two, perceptions of people of their leaders, and its effect on instability; three, the nature of political participation in general and modes of electoral behaviour of the respondents in particular. These factors are examined in the context of the macro level trends and their interconnections.
References


