CHAPTER - II

INDIAN SECULARISM
A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SURVEY

Secularism, as a concept and an ideology, has its origin in the west and relates to the separation of religion from the state, giving the state a position of neutrality between different religions, at the same time guaranteeing all citizens the right to profess any religion or faith of their choice. Sometimes the word ‘secular’ is used as a contrast to the word ‘religion’ and hence people might think that secularism is opposed to religion. But it is clear that even in Western countries, the word secular is not used as opposed to religion but as non-religious or divorced from all religions having nothing to do with the conduct of state matters or affairs.

Historically, as social phenomena, modernity and secularism have emerged simultaneously in the western world. There was a long drawn struggle between the church and state for supremacy, which ultimately resulted in the division of human affairs into this worldly and other worldly, the former,
would be taken care of by the state and the latter exclusively came under the church. From seventeenth century onwards, discoveries of science began challenging the deeply held beliefs and faith, which were integral part of the broad spectrum of religion. In fact, the secularization process in Europe started along with the Renaissance and the French Enlightenment. Of course, the initial motivations of western secularism were multifarious and variegated, viz. to check absolutism, religious bigotry, and fanaticism, to ensure that the values enshrined in a particular religion did not trump other values, to manage religious conflicts reasonably, etc.¹

The emergence of secularism can be traced back to the social and political situations existing in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The emergence of the concept of ‘secularism’ must be understood in the context of the conflict between the church and state, which started much earlier. It was through this conflict that a gradual delimitation of the spheres of the temporal and spiritual authorities was made and it led to the evolution of the various principles associated with secularism, viz. freedom of religion and of
conscience, tolerance, a democratic conception of citizenship, etc.\textsuperscript{2} Secularism is generally seen in the context of separation of the temporal and the spiritual. Thus separation of state and religion is the most commonly recognized component of secularism with the underlying assumption that the state shall not undertake religious functions and vice versa, nor will the state impose any religion upon its subjects.\textsuperscript{3}

The struggle for supremacy between the state and the church continued throughout the Middle Age. The revolt against the church was not a revolt against religion. It was a revolt against corruption, greed and domination. The idea of religious liberty and toleration was almost unknown in the Middle Ages as the medieval Church considered it as its duty to force a like belief in all men. The result was that the secular-minded people and secular authorities did not spare any opportunity to counter Papal authority and the Church, and they found support even among the devout.\textsuperscript{4} The educated and economically advanced sections of the society, along with other secular-minded people, stood for liberal attitudes and laws and did not want to be restricted by theological considerations. For
them these worldly considerations were far more significant and momentous than the other-worldly ones.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the principles of religious liberty and toleration received support from political philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. Thus, the British utilitarians were ‘philosophically’ the sponsors of secularism. All these prepared the environment congenial to the establishment of secularism. Secularism, as a doctrine, emerged in the late nineteenth century, especially in the works of Holyoake. Now it is widely accepted that separation between politics and religion is an important component of secularism. The spheres of the two are distinct and relations between them are defined as “mutually exclusive rather than hostile”. Secularism, therefore, merely intends to restrict religion to the private domain and does not entail a total abandonment of religion. It is not anti-religious, but expressly guarantees freedom of religion. Freedom of religion involves the right of an individual to profess any religion without interference or compulsion by the State, i.e. individual freedom of religion.
Secularism was, no doubt, the intellectual child of the Western Renaissance. From a broad historical perspective, the modern secular ideal and concept originated in the West and crystallized as a world view under the impetus provided by three major social changes of the modern age – Religious Reformation, Industrial Revolution and the Democratic Transition. Even though certain basic ingredients of secularism lie deep in the Indian cultural tradition, India’s introduction to the ideal of modern secularism was the result of the Western impact.

We do not see any major traits of modern secular temper either in ancient or medieval India. Some historians consider the Ancient Period in Indian history as a ‘golden period’ or ‘golden age’. But it is a fact that nowhere in history, whether in India or any other country, there is a period which can rightly be called ‘golden’. Of course, the freedom of religious belief, an essential hallmark of a secular society, was apparently present in ancient India. But the secularism arising from the scientific interpretation of natural phenomena altered the consciousness of modern man, and such a consciousness
imbued with the scientific naturalism of the West, was unknown to the Hindus of the past who understood it for religious tolerance. The spirit of Hindu tolerance sprang from the religious conviction that there were many paths to moksha and that one was as good as another.

The social life in ancient India, by and large, was regulated by Manusmriti, laws codified by Manu, an ancient law giver, which prescribed different punishments for the same offence according to the caste (Varna) of the offender\textsuperscript{10}. This is contrary to the basic principles of secularism i.e., equality before law and equal protection of law irrespective of caste, religion, language, sex, etc. The position of women was abysmal, that is, very low in the social hierarchy and subject to a lot of repression by men. The condition of the lower castes, particularly the shudras, was even worse in ancient India. Both in the Vedic tradition and Manusmriti, the relationship between man and woman was structured in terms of inequality.\textsuperscript{11} In short, the ‘golden age’ concept existed only in the imagination of poets and priests.\textsuperscript{12} Nowhere in history is found any evidence of a lost ‘golden age’, an age of ‘pristine glory’. It is
a sort of escape mechanism for many of us. The more we are humili­lated in our present, the more we look to our ‘golden past’\(^\text{13}\). It provides us great emotional and spiritual balm and nothing else.

The medieval period ranges from eighth to fifteenth century A.D. But the Muslim rule in India starts from the beginning of the thirteenth century and ends formally in the middle of the eighteenth century with the battle of Plassey in 1757. Some scholars have strong disagreement over calling different periods of Indian history as the Hindu period, Muslim period and British period. They say that it is wrong to divide history into religious periods. Neither there was any ‘Hindu rule’ nor was there anything like the ‘Muslim rule’. It can, more aptly, be described as dynastic rule such as the Mauryan period, Gupta period, Tughlaq period, Khalji period, Mughal period and so on (and so forth).\(^\text{14}\)

In the medieval period too we do not see any trait of a secular temperament as of its modern nature either under the Delhi sultanate or the Mughal empire. Under the Delhi sultanate the Quranic law governed not only the personal life
of the ruler but also the entire administration of the country. For them canon law was supreme and the civil law was subordinate to it. The ideal of the sultans was to convert the heathen land of Hindustan into a holy land of the faithful. Only the Muslims could enjoy full citizenship rights and the Hindus, who constituted vast majority, were denied of them. When the Turks conquered Hindustan they offered the Hindus three choices, viz. conversion to Islam, death, or the status of second-class citizens subject to certain disabilities like payment of Jizya or poll-tax, etc. Thus the Hindus became second class citizens, who had to pay tax even for worshipping their gods. Firoz Tughlaq did everything in his power to convert the Hindus to Islam. In his autobiography, the Sultan observed, “I encouraged my infidel subjects to embrace the religion of the prophet and I proclaimed that every one who respected the creed and became a Musalman should be exempt from Jizya or poll-tax. Information of this came to the ears of people at large, and great numbers of Hindus presented themselves and were admitted to the honour of Islam”.

In matters of state employment, civic rights and
taxation, the state under the Delhi sultanate discriminated people between infidels (Hindus) and faithful (Muslims). Though strong-willed rulers like Ala-ud-din Khilji and Muhammad Tughluq defied the Ulemas, the Muslim religious leaders, the influence of the learned Muslim divines was very great at the political level; they were particularly hostile to the idolatrous Hindus; and they urged the sultan to pursue a policy of religious persecution with a view to exterminating idolatry. Ala-ud-din considered himself as the ruler of the worshippers of Allah and did not consider himself responsible for the welfare of his Hindu subjects. In order to clear his lingering doubts, the sultan consulted the famous Qasi Mughis-ud-din to know whether his policy towards the Hindus was in harmony with the laws prescribed by Islam. Dispelling all doubts, Mughis-ud-din replied:

“The Hindus are designated in the law as payers of tribute, and when the revenue officer demands silver from them, they should, without question and with all humility and respect, tender gold. If the officer throws dirt into their mouths, they must, without reluctance, open their mouths wide to
receive it. By these acts of degradation are shown the extreme obedience of the Zimmi, the glorification of the true faith. God himself orders them to be humiliated ..... The prophet has commanded us to slay them, plunder them and to make them captive ..... No other authority except the great Imam (Abu Hanifa) whose faith is to follow has sanctioned the imposition of the Jizya on the Hindus”.

Like the sultanate rulers, the Mughal administrators like Babur, Humayun and Aurangzeb ruled the country with great religious zeal and imposed Jizya on non-Muslims. Common law, common citizenship, separation of matters of religion and politics, etc, remained alien to them. It is recorded that during the reign of Aurangzeb, the Rana of Udaipur ceded a certain portion of his territory in lieu of Jizya, even though he remained loyal to the Mughal rulers and contributed troops to the Mughal army. The history of the Mughal period provides a number of such examples to prove that it was a religious imposition.

However, Akbar made some sincere efforts to create unity among the members of both communities-the Muslims and
the Hindus. Among the rulers of India, he occupies a very high place for - among other things - his having attempted to bring Hindus and Muslims together with some success. It is worth recollecting that at a time when Europe plunged into strife among warring sects of Christianity, Akbar guaranteed peace not only to warring sects, but to different religions. In the modern age, he was the first and almost the greatest experimenter in the field of religious toleration if the scope of the toleration, the races to which it was applied, and the contemporary conditions, be taken into account. Highlighting the contribution of Akbar for Hindu-Muslim unity in India, Justice J.M. Shelat observes:

“One of the marvellous gifts of Akbar- which we find in no other great monarch in history- was the ability to rise above the partisan intrigues of the court; to outgrow the ideas and traditions of his time; and to keep his efforts bent on the goal of establishing a non-religious, non-communal centre of power based on a just balance of forces. As a result, with statesmanship impossible in the sixteenth century and rare at all times, this foreign conqueror began to lay the foundations of a
national monarchy for India over a people alien in race, religion and culture. The author traces this process with meticulous care; how the Rajputs were won over; how they came to counterweigh the powerful Muslims at his court; how, outgrowing sectarianism, he brought proud Hindu princesses as members of his family and left them to follow their own religion; how he lifted the terrible pressure of persecution which the sultans had exercised over the Hindus; how he developed a non-denominational outlook which made the religious leaders of the Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Christians as honoured in his day as the religious leaders of Islam; how he frankly adopted non-Islamic ways whenever he found them militating against his cherished dream of a united Hindustan”.

Throwing light on the (unsuccessful) efforts of Akbar for creating a secular state in India, he further says, “What can be fairly claimed for Akbar is that he emancipated India from the thraldom of the religion of a minority and extricated her from the clamps of theocracy. Among the rulers of his time he ranks as the foremost for having endeavoured, in the atmosphere of fanaticism and intolerance prevalent in the sixteenth century,
to fuse together the different classes of his subjects by bonds of a common citizenship and to establish a secular state. If, he did not succeed in that great adventure, it was not due to want of effort but because the concept was too novel yet and he could not accelerate the march of events”

Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who abolished *Jizya* and *Pilgrimage tax* levied from the Hindus. He threw open doors of offices to Hindus and Muslims alike. His cosmopolitanism in religious affairs made tremendous impact on Hindu-Muslim unity in India. He found some good in every religion and showed great respect for Hindu sentiments. He ensured equal citizenship rights to his subjects irrespective of religions, which is an important breakthrough in the development of a secular state in India. But what was noticeably absent during this period was that people had no value and significance apart from the social collectivity to which they belonged. People were fully grabbed by primordial loyalties and the secular laws were subordinated to religious laws. There was no complete demarcation of affairs of religion and politics, an essential attribute of a secular state, even under the reign of
Akbar and the country, by and large, was administered by Islamic laws. After all, Akbar was considered a Muslim ruler and the Mughal Empire, an Islamic state.

It is pointed out that Akbar followed a policy of reconciliation towards the Hindus on account of political reasons. He was very tactful in dealing with his Hindu subjects as he was fully aware that without their support the Muslim minority could not administer the country effectively. But it is an undeniable fact that the spirit of religious tolerance triumphed during the reign of Akbar and his catholic eclecticism and secular policies helped to outlive the dangers of religious strife and promoted national solidarity. His propagation of ‘Din-i-Illahi’ (Divine faith) and Sulh-l-Kul (peace with all) were all imbued with the spirit of secularism.21 It is true that his policy of religious tolerance attracted the goodwill of the Hindus but his efforts to unite both groups, especially through Din-i-Illahi, did not materialize. Its impact was only superficial and died along with him without making and did not make any lasting effect either at the elite or the grass-root level. Thus, religious tolerance became a key factor
in the concept of Indian secularism because it had been a significant element of India’s historical tradition.

Meanwhile two concrete attempts—the Sufi movement and the Bhakti cult—were made at the popular level for cultural fusion between the two communities apart from Din-i-llahi at the political level. Both efforts could not produce the desired results and the pluralistic character of the society continued to endure. Though Bhakti and Sufi movements emerged as reform movements in Hinduism and Islam respectively, their preaching of ‘universal brotherhood of man’ made tremendous impact in creating rapport between the two communities. Obvious features of the Indian brand of secularism such as ‘composite culture’ and ‘tolerance towards other faiths’ became popular during this period. The leading lights of Sufism and Bhakti cult, namely, Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti, Baba Farid, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dadu, Tukaran and Mira Bai contributed to the development of a composite culture in such a measure that was not really possible through a political or administrative system alone. In fact, these saints made meticulous effort to unite people transcending their religious
faith. The famous remark of Guru Nanak “There is no Hindu or Mussalman”, throws light to the fact that there is no distinction between man and man in the name of religion.

Thus, the ancient as well as the medieval kingdoms were formed on religions lines and religion and politics were irretrievably and inextricably intertwined. If the state is to be a religion-based Hindu rastra or for that matter a Muslim kingdom, it cannot be called secular. Secularism essentially means preserving the religion in one’s sphere of personal and social lives i.e., not letting the clergy (Mullahs, Priests, and Brahmins) influence the policies of the state. No religion can be called secular; the secular concept is applicable exclusively to political formations, i.e., the modern nation-state. Not only that, the concept of secularism is applicable to state policy and not to religions as such.

In India, secularization of society with all modern traits of secularism started only with the establishment of British administration in the middle of the eighteenth century. Though India’s contact with the West began as early as Alexander’s invasion in the third century B.C., the culture of India had
remained uninfluenced by the West, until the British established their imperial rule, overpowering their fervent adversary, the French, over the country. The Macedonian ruler’s transience in northwest India spent almost in fighting, and the failure of Seleucus Nicater to re-establish the Greek rule due to the conquest of Chandragupta Maurya, almost ended the Hellenic influence on India. In ‘Indica’, written by Megasthenes, we find no mention of the Greek influence on the society and politics of ancient India”\(^\text{24}\).

The invasions of the foreign tribes, like the Sakas, the Pahlavas, and the Yueh-Chi, that took place in the interval between the decline of the Mauryan empire and the rise of the Guptas, led to their permanent settlement in the northwestern parts of India. These foreigners were soon absorbed into ancient Hindu society and lost their distinctive tribal identities. The most ferocious of the foreign tribes, the Hunas, who broke the unity of ancient historical tradition by destroying the Gupta Empire, were fanatical Hindus and their descendents, the Rajputs, emerged as the zealous champions of Hinduism against the onslaughts of iconoclastic Muslims
in medieval India.²⁵

On the whole, Greek influence on the social life in ancient India was ephemeral but their influence in sculpture was pronounced, as is seen in the Gandhara school of art. In South India also we come across some references of Greco-Roman influence in the Sangham works, in the first centuries of A.D. For instance, in the Nedunalvadai, one of the Ten Idylls (Pattup-Pattu), the poet refers to the fact that the lamp which had been lighted before worship was offered was made by the Yavanas.²⁶ Thus contact with the west, before the coming of the British, did not affect the cultural evolution of India, because they were peripheral and the basic traits of the Indian civilization remained unchanged.

The coming of the Muslims in the North, as conquerors, posed a challenge to the assimilating capacity of the Hindu civilization. As the Muslims had possessed a distinctive culture of their own before their coming to India and their proselytizing zeal, iconoclasm and their conception of Jihad made their assimilation into Hindu society, impossible. At the same time it became evident that the new Muslim conquerors
could not overturn Hindu India and convert it into a *Dar-ul-Islam* (land of the faithful) as they had done in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Iran, earlier. The last powerful Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, made some effort to convert India into *Dar-ul-Islam*, but failed leaving a bitter trail of animosity between the two communities. The failure to integrate the two communities socially and politically on an equal level with each other was the root cause of their separate ways of life. Thus, the Hindu and the Muslim communities faced each other with their distinctive cultural characteristics. When the militancy of the Islamic conquerors ebbed out and their initial religious fervour sobered, they settled down and became the sons of the soil. The result was that the hitherto intact monolithic Indian culture became plural and this pluralistic feature continued till day.

The British rulers who found Hindus and the Muslims leading their separate lives adopted the policy of ‘non-interference’ in the private affairs of their subjects; the rule of law they enforced further facilitated the tendency of both the communities to live apart. Though the Muslim community
could not assimilate into Hindu society, it enriched the Indian culture with its Indo-Saracenic architecture, Hindustani Music, Sufism, Urdu literature and calligraphy. Two peculiar characteristics of the Muslim community, identification with the country and its cultural uniqueness, persisted throughout the course of history. The former was due to the fact that majority of the Muslims were descended from Hindu converts and the latter was the result of their consciousness of being separate and distinctive – their Islamic heritage. These two opposing social tendencies found their political expression in modern India when the nationalist movement for freedom intensified the political consciousness of the masses; the nationalist Muslims stressed the unity of India, while the Muslim Leaguers demanded partition of the country.27

Secularism in Modern Period

The western contact heralded not only a direct confrontation between the western and eastern modes of life but a powerful challenge to the traditionally accepted ideas and values of the pluralistic Indian civilization. The westerners, who were intellectually liberated under the influence of the
Renaissance and had a critical spirit of inquiry were humanistic to the problems of man on earth. They developed a new outlook on life which historians have characterized as ‘modern’. A healthy freedom from the bond of an uncritically accepted tradition, a daring curiosity to know by extending the bounds of man’s understanding of his environment, willingness to experiment on new, untrodden lives and a readiness to abandon the things not fitting into the scheme of scientific reasoning, etc, were the intellectual qualities that characterized the western people as modern and scientific.

This new spirit, though had many features of a secular temper, had not become fully secular. It was the Newtonian scientific revolution which, ultimately, culminated in the secularization of the west. The earliest impact of the sciences upon western culture took the form of secularizing thought, of setting up, as formative notions, conceptions of the world and of man which were alien to its inherited ethos, which in this case was the Judaic - Christian tradition. Scientific theories in that climate of thought stood opposed to the Biblical views of creation.28
The British, who imbibed the spirit of the Renaissance and the scientific revolution, had to rule a people totally different from them in ethos and culture. The social practices of the Hindus and the Muslims, bound by tradition, did not reveal the secular spirit of the westerners and expressed themselves in the observance of religious customs. What distinguished both the communities was their rigid adherence to their respective religions. The Hindus who out-numbered the Muslims as a social collectivity were divided into mutually exclusive social groups called *Jatis* (castes). Thus, the people were identified in the name of the religion they belonged to. So both the Hindus and the Muslims lacked awareness of the secular, modern spirit that set the western man on the path of progress in an eternal quest for improvement and change. In fact the British had good apprehension about the successful operation of the representative institutions, which they were planning to introduce in a land where men were motivated and moved by their primordial loyalties to social and religious groups.

The British rulers whose social and political ideas and values were formed by their belief in the secular philosophy
of individualism and common law found that the social system in India, by and large, was communal. Among the Hindus and Muslims, there was no awareness of individual rights. The unit of society was not the individual but a social group, like a caste or a religious community. The Indian social system was ascriptive, rigid and horizontal and in it ‘birth’ determined the status of individuals. Not only that, social groups, like caste or religious community, exercised control over the individual even in the matter of choosing a spouse or learning a craft. In such a society, the individual had no worth apart from the social group to which he belonged. The ideals of individualism, common law, civil rights of person and property and the principle of equality before law, etc, were as alien as the British masters, to the Indians. The only solace for the British was that there was an emerging enlightened middle class in Indian society which imbibed the western system of culture and thought. Thinkers and social activists from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Mahadev Govind Ranade and G. Subramania Iyer belong to this group.

The secular individualism of western culture was very much needed in India so that the Hindu and Muslim elements
might fuse into a united political society animated by the secular political ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity without any distinction based on religion, community and caste. The working of the new leaven of the secular, western culture was first seen in the movement for the abolition of Sati led by Ram Mohan Roy and other progressive minded Hindus who made common cause with the Christian missionaries. The movement against Sati clearly showed how the Indians of the early nineteenth century applied the western ideas and techniques to the problems of their social and religious life. Incidentally, prohibition of the practice of Sati by law revealed to the Hindus that the secular law of the state could interfere with their religious customs.29

The roots of secularism could be traced to the system of government and law established by the British in India in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Lord Cornwallis’s overruling indigenous customs and laws anglicized the administration. He reserved all higher offices for Europeans. The decision of Cornwallis meant that the westernizing tendency was to prevail and transform the functioning of
government. In fact, the Cornwallis Code of 1793 broke completely and deliberately with the personal absolutist tradition of the existing Indian system of government, whether Hindu or Muslim.\textsuperscript{30}

The striking feature of Cornwallis’s system was that civil rights were equally granted to all British Indian subjects and that they could be enforced even against the government through the courts of law. The judicial system expressed the new alien principle of the rule of law and revealed the fundamental difference between the British Indian government and its earlier Hindu and Muslim counterparts, since it removed the element of arbitrariness in the dealings of government officials with the subjects. It ignored all differences based on religion and guaranteed equality before the law to the individual subject, which was hitherto unknown to both the Hindus and Muslims.

Treating all people alike without distinction of caste and religion was a novel experience for both the Hindus and Muslims. It was for the first time in the history of this country that members of both the communities were subjected to the
impact of the same laws, the same institutions and the same administrative and judicial procedures. The British, while allowing both the Hindus and Muslims the right of enjoying their private law in the matter of marriage and inheritance, did not discriminate between them in their official dealings. This equality of treatment under the rule of law was actually a secularizing process that created an environment, conducive to the growth of the secular temper among the Hindus and the Muslims.31

The British, as we have seen, with a system of government and law based on the principles of common law and common citizenship, sowed the seeds of secular culture. Concurrently, the system of education introduced by them with the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity facilitated considerably the secularization process of Indian society. Lord William Bentinck, the first Governor – General of India, while introducing western education against the opposition of the Orientalists, would never have thought that he was setting in motion the forces that would create an Indian intelligentsia, secular in outlook, nationalist in temper and liberal in ideology.
Though the British rulers introduced western education with the object of creating a host of loyal and subordinate officials, these English educated, middle-class intellectuals, who with an all-India awareness, founded the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. It may be an irony of history that it was this organization which spearheaded our national struggle for freedom against the British. The birth of this new unifying force of secular nationalism was the outcome of a system of education alien to the ethos of the Hindus and Muslims.

The early political leaders of INC, imbibing the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, demanded representative and responsible government. It was on the basis of the secular political ideology of liberalism that founders of the INC attempted to unite the members of different religious communities and different linguistic regions into a new Indian nation. It is true that western education played an important role in developing secular nationalism in India and all early leaders of INC were western educated. It is also true that there were also leaders among early nationalists who did not consider western education as supporting secular nationalism. Both
Lokmanya Tilak and Arabindo Ghose struck a discordant note by harking back to the Hindu past. Mahatma Gandhi also had his own reservations against western education. His points of discord were but on moral ground.

Whatever may be the arguments for or against western education, it cannot be denied that its introduction has played a significant role in making Indian society secular and modern. India was fortunate to have a group of western educated middle class men who became the torch-bearers of modern secular ideas and they, in that, even surpassed their British masters. For instance, twelve years before Lord William Bentinck took the decision in favour of western education, Raja Ram Mohan Roy had protested to Lord Amherst against the proposal of the government to establish a Sanskrit college under the Hindu pundits. Pointing out the futility of teaching the pupils what had been known two thousand years ago, he urged the Governor-General “to promote a more enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences”.33 Ram Mohan Roy started the first college, the Hindu College of Calcutta,
committed to secular western education, in co-operation with David Hara, an illiterate but philanthropic watch-maker, and Sir Edward Hyde, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.34

Thus, the concept of secularism, with all its modern features, was introduced by the British through their system of administration. The system of western education which preceded the British rule had sowed its seeds. However, it may be absolutely wrong if we presume that the British were liberal in their functioning in India or they treated the Indians on a par with the Europeans according to the principles of rule of law. Conversely, they impoverished the country through their callous economic exploitation, and in human (rights) violations they even outdid many ancient and medieval administrations. The great tragedy of Amritsar in early forties was an indelible stain on the entire fabric of British rule. It cannot be denied that the company’s government was as absolute as the old regimes of the Muslims and the Hindus. While the British sowed the seeds of secularism in modern India, concurrently they sowed the seeds of communalism, which is the greatest enemy of secularism, through their ‘divide and rule’ policy.
and ‘separate electorate’ system.

Thus, it is true that secularism in the west grew as a natural historical process, whereas in India it was unconsciously transplanted by the British through their system of administration as well as education. The secular spirit which arose in the west as a result of the seventeenth century scientific revolution based on a rational and scientific explanation of the natural phenomena which rejected all the religious explanations to hitherto human development, did not develop in India since the intellectual climate favourable to its growth was conspicuously absent in the country.

The absence of a secular, modern spirit on the part of Indians did not, in any way, indicate that their culture was obsolete. Their culture possessing the virtue of stability was of a different genre and exhibited different qualities, like metaphysical subtlety, exquisite artistic skills and superb literary imagination. But what was lacking was the vital element of dynamism possessed by the post-Renaissance west. In other words, the culture of India did not reveal the distinguishing characteristic of modernity, namely, the capacity for rapid
internal change and adjustment to such a change without breaking up. Indians, whether Hindus or Muslims, valued stability more than change, for, stability assured them continuity of their tradition to which they had been attached, and that tradition satisfied the demands of their worldly life and life beyond that.

The main characteristic of secularism is the demarcation of religious and mundane matters, the former exclusively controlled by the spiritual leaders whereas the latter managed by the state. The status of religion to be a private matter of individuals, absolute freedom granted to the individuals in matters of religion only to be interfered by the state in certain exceptional cases, common citizenship, the principle of neutrality to be observed by the state in its dealings with the religious matters of people, etc, were alien to the Indians. These basic features of secularism began to be introduced to them first with the liberal principles of western education and later by the administrative system introduced by the British.

Many factors have contributed to the growth of secularism in the modern period. The traditional religious tolerance of
Hindus contributing to the co-existence of different religious traditions, the peculiar liberal temper of the British authoritarian rule that gave the different communities religious freedom, and the cultural impact of the western liberal ideas that deeply influenced the rising of an English-educated middle class in the latter half of the nineteenth century- all looked beyond the social, religious and linguistic differences with the modern outlook of secular Indian nationalism and hoped to raise a unified Indian society on the foundations of religious pluralism. This new awareness of an all-India unity indicated the birth of nationalism in a society whose traditional mores, habits of thought and historical experience could not comprehend the secular national spirit that conceived the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Sikhs as Indians. The Indians who joined in the formation of the Congress came from different parts of the country, spoke different languages and practised different religions. Yet they collaborated because they thought in terms of an Indian nation and overcame the handicaps imposed by a traditional society. The birth of the INC, a secular political organization with the vision of a United India, was the first indigenous sign of modernity in colonial India.
During this period, along with secular nationalism, communal nationalism on religious lines also started growing. These divisive communal forces represented by the Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League, sought the support of their respective communities on primordial loyalties like religion. Right from its formation, the INC was branded as a Hindu organization by the fanatic, communal Muslims. Not only that, the activities and utterances of Hindu communal organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha cemented this impression in the minds of certain sections of Muslims, which, coupled with the support of the British, led to the formation of a separate political organization for the Muslims, the Muslim League, in 1906. The imperial rulers played no less significant a role in the formation of the Muslim League as a rival political formation to the INC. It is true that it was not the question of religious freedom, which was fully assured to the Ulemas by the nationalist Congress leaders, but the question of the future sharing of power and the apprehension of majority dominance in independent India that led to the formation of the Muslim League and later the division of the country, on religious lines, to create a new nation, Pakistan.
In spite of the congenial atmosphere that existed in the 19th and 20th centuries due to the British liberal laws and their modern system of administration as well as the pervasive western education, the masses, by and large, remained unattached to the ideology of secularism. Three causes are attributed to this. First, India’s economy could not develop faster, nor had it chance of capturing world market. Thus its middle class, which is intended to develop secular and liberal outlook, remained extremely weak. Secondly, the divide and rule policy of the British, sometimes favouring the Hindus and sometimes favouring the Muslims and their awarding of separate electorate for Muslims, to appease the latter, such a policy promoted a tendency of separation between the two major communities. Thirdly, the elites of the two communities developed a sense of competition and tried to mobilize the masses of their respective communities by directly appealing to their primordial sentiments like that of religion and caste. This further weakened secular and modern tendencies which otherwise would have grown faster and stronger.35

After the attainment of freedom the destiny of the Indian
people came to the hands of our national leaders, majority of them proven secular nationalists. The non-inclusion of the word ‘secular’ in the constitution, when it was formally adopted, does not in any way mean that the framers of the constitution were uncertain on the secular nature of future India. But its makers were absolutely clear in their mind as to what they meant by secularism. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, while speaking on the Hindu Code Bill in 1951 in parliament unambiguously stated that “people of India have absolute freedom in the selection of their faith and the parliament has no right to impose a particular religion upon them”. While going through the deliberations in the Constituent Assembly one would find that the various attempts made by the members of the Constituent Assembly like Professor K.T. Shah to include the word ‘secular’ in the constitution were rejected by a majority vote. A perusal of the various provisions of the constitution would reveal that the “question of secularism was not one of sentiments, but of law. The secular objective of the state has been specifically expressed by inserting the word ‘secular’ in the preamble of the Constitution [42nd Amendment] Act 1976. Thus, secularism
became an integral part of the basic structure of the Indian constitution”.

After the partition of the country and the establishment of Pakistan on the basis of religion, there was a lot of apprehension in the minds of minorities, particularly the Muslims, whether the future India was going to be a Hindu state based on the predominance of the religion of the majority community. Dashing all such apprehensions into ground, the secular, broad-minded leaders never wavered in their espousal of the concept of a secular state in India. The constitution, which was the end product of our struggle for freedom, contained mainly such ideals and principles which were cherished and followed by our great national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Moulana Azad and so on. In fact, they became the strong advocates of secularism in modern India.

Explaining the nature of secularism in future India Mahatma Gandhi said:

“Hindustan belongs to all those who are born and bred here and who have no other country to look to. Therefore, it
belongs to Parsees, Beni Israels, Indian Christians, Muslims and other non Hindus as much as to Hindus. Free India will be no Hindu Raj, it will be Indian Raj based not on the majority of any religious sect or community, but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion. I can conceive of a mixed majority putting the Hindus in a minority. They would be elected for their record of service and merits. Religion is a personal matter, which should have no place on politics”.38

Expressing his firm adherence to a composite culture and explaining it as a major trait of Indian secularism, Gandhi further stated:

“I do not expect the India of my dreams to develop one religion, that is to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another”.

Explaining the role and characteristics of state in independent India, Gandhi said:

“I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state
would look after your secular welfare, but not your or my religion. That is everybody’s personal concern. I do not believe that the state can concern itself or cope with religious education. By religion I have not in mind fundamental ethics, but what goes by the name of denominationalism. We have suffered enough from state-aided religion and a state church. A society or a group, which depends partly or wholly on state aid for the existence of its religion does not deserve or better still, does not have any religion worth the name”.

At the conceptual level, the indissoluble link between Indian nationalism and secularism finds further affirmation, clarification and sophistication in Jawaharlal Nehru’s, the architect of modern India, thought. Nehru said:

“In a country like India, which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built except on the basis of secularity. Any narrower approach must exclude a section of the population and then nationalism itself will have a restricted meaning than it should possess…

We have not only to live up to the ideals proclaimed in our constitution, but make them a part of our thinking and living
and thus build up a really integrated nation. That does not mean absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life. Any other approach in India would mean the breaking up of India”.40

Gandhi, thus, interpreted secularism in terms of respect for all religions and found no inconsistency between his espousal of the idea of a secular state and true religiosity; his approach therefore, ruled out the prospect of confrontation between the sacred and the secular which characterized the secularization process of western societies. Nehru’s approach to secularism, on the other hand, is based on an uncompromising critique of religion in his early life and a deep appreciation and respect for religion in his later life.

The concept secularism as defined above by Gandhi and Nehru constitutes the bedrock of Indian nationalism. This concept evolved in and through the national struggle for political independence and it was ultimately incorporated and embodied in the constitution of the Sovereign Republic of India. It is clear that Indian secularism grew not in the process of direct encounter and clash with religion as in western Europe.
Secularism in India developed as a synthetic concept which transcends religious division and religious intolerance, but which incorporated the enduring and integrative values inherent within the religions of India. Indian secularism is the fruit as much of Indian Religious Reformation as of Indian Enlightenment.

Partition of the country, of course, was a heart-rending experience for all the secular nationalists of this land transcending religion, caste and language. When the country was divided on communal lines, it was a great shock and dismay to all secular-minded people who had been struggling for the unity of this ancient land. The blame of partition of the nation goes to all and excludes none. Of course, the greatest responsibility was that of Muslim League in as much as that of the Hindu communalists in INC who adopted a hardcore communal approach to Muslims and the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha in its Ahmadabad session of 1937 had endorsed the two nation theory of Jinnah. The decision to partition the country was certainly not of the people of India, but of the Muslim League and the Congress. In other words
the Hindu and Muslim elite decided the fate of the country leaving the Hindu and Muslim masses in the lurch. In fact the Muslims, especially those who were left behind after partition, were the greatest losers. They were not even sure of their survival or a future role in India. They mainly looked to the Congress in general and Nehru in particular for their safety and well being.

After Independence, the communalists continued their attack on secularism and secular forces with increased vigour. If the Muslim League was at its aggressive best before independence, after Independence it was Hindu communalism that gained in strength, which culminated in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, father of our nation and the spiritual father of Indian secularism, by the members of Rashtriya Swayam Sevaks Sangh (RSS), Nathuram Godse and his colleagues.

The Independence Day speech made by the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on 15th August, 1952, throws light on the growing menace of communalism in post – Independent India. He said: “the cult of violence, communalism, and the selfishness… that communal method
was only capable of further weakening the country and that the religious bigots and communal leaders had refused to learn any lesson from the past, we have to be aware of these communal elements as well as of the selfish greedy people, who through fraud and falsehood harm the country. These malicious forces, if not checked, will destroy our country”.44 Speech made by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru on the eve of Independence Day celebrations on 15th August, 1952.

Nehru also criticized the newspapers for spreading communalism in the country. He fell heavily on Hindu communalists saying that “some people in India wanted to imitate the League (before Independence). The Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and the RSS had donned the same cloak and had the same mind and ways to incite people in the name of religion”.45

Throughout the Fifties the country witnessed communal violence in an unprecedented scale in which hundreds lost their lives and many thousands were injured. It shows that India, despite its pledge to be secular could never free itself from the scourge of communalism and communal violence. The
communal riot at Jabalpur in 1962, which was the first major communal violence after Independence, shook the whole nation. Jawaharlal Nehru, the fervent advocator of secularism in modern India, was so shaken by this riot that he instantaneously formed National Integration Council.\textsuperscript{46} It greatly disillusioned the Muslims who had, by then, developed faith in Indian secularism in general and Nehru in particular. Even a prominent nationalist like Syed Mahmood, who was a minister in Nehru’s cabinet, felt disheartened and formed a separate Muslim platform called Muslim Majlise – Mushawarat, i.e., [the Consultation Body of Muslims]\textsuperscript{47}. Later developments show that communal polarization took place on a larger scale and Muslims belonging to other secular parties were withdrawing themselves from them to join this common platform. The Indian National Congress, strong defender and promoter of Indian secularism, could not console the Muslims. In fact, most of the Congressmen were communal at heart and never had real commitment to secularism as Nehru had.\textsuperscript{48} Many known secular Congress leaders were either supporters or sympathisers of Hindu communal outfits. The Jana Sangh, a right wing Hindu communal party, was actively propagating
against Muslims and doubting their loyalty to India in those
days. It also passed a resolution for ‘Indianising’ the Indian
Muslims as if they were not Indian enough.49 Thus, the
alienation between the elites of the two major communities
grew day by day.

The Jabalpur riot, which had already done enough damage
to Indian secularism, was followed by Ahmedabad and
Bhivandi holocausts. In both cases hundreds of ordinary people
lost their lives. What became more appalling, in these riots,
was the partisan conduct of the state administration. The state,
unable to render its constitutional obligation of giving
protection to the lives and property of the people, often behaved
in a predisposed way as if it were the protector only of one
section of people against the other. In these riots there were
instances of unabashed partiality of the police towards Hindu
communal elements. Many Hindus, especially the ordinary
folks who constitute the vast majority, either remained neutral
or stood on the side of the Muslims. The secular nationalists
among them, who were aware of the crookedness of
communalists and wily politicians, fought vehemently against
communal forces in their own community. Significantly it was this element of ‘common brotherhood’ that prevented the further growth of communalism and kept the country intact.

The period between 1970 and 1977 was comparatively peaceful and there was no major communal riot during this period. The Bangladesh movement appears to have changed the priorities. In 1971, with the help of Indian forces, East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan and became Bangladesh. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, was behind this historical event and she got support from all sections including the Muslims. The right wing communal forces even described her as the “avatar of Goddess Durga”. Though the Indian Muslims were generally not happy at the break up of Pakistan, they never expressed their displeasure publicly and communal situation remained, by and large, peaceful. It is true that as a secular leader Mrs. Gandhi had the support of all minorities including the Muslims. But some of her policies like forcible family planning, ‘Turkmen Gate operation’ in Delhi, etc, alienated the Muslims from Congress in general and Mrs. Gandhi, in particular.
Meanwhile the Jan Sangh merged with Janata Party, abandoned its communal credo and pledged at Mahatma Gandhi’s *Samadhi* [where his funeral ashes lie buried] to be secular and votary of Gandhian Socialism. Consequently the Muslims, mostly in North India, voted massively for Janata party in 1977 elections. It was the first and last time that the Muslims voted for the Jan Sangh in sheer desperation. Later developments showed that all the calculations of Muslims went wrong and a series of communal riots broke out after 1978 in places like Jamshedpur, Aligarh and Varanasi, under the rule of the Janata Government.

The Janata Party itself was full of contradictions and at last broken under its own weight. The dual membership issue of Jan Sangh members (they held membership in RSS simultaneously) was the main point of dispute between the socialists and Jana Sanghis of Janata Party. The Jan Sangh, after the break up of Janata party, took a new form under the title Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. What astonished most was that the main plank of the BJP, as declared, was ‘secularism’ and ‘Gandhian socialism’. The Congress,
advocator and guardian of Indian secularism, either compromised with communal forces or adopted soft communalism against the hard-line communalism of BJP. Conversely the Nehruvian secularism of the Congress, which was a major source of protection and security to minorities especially the Muslims, came under the severe attack of right-wing political parties like BJP. L.K. Advani, leader of the BJP, even dubbed Nehruvian secularism as nothing more than a policy of “appeasement of the Muslims.”

The BJP, being a member of the Saffron family, advocated cultural nationalism instead of secular nationalism, which was the main political plank of the Congress and Left parties. The ideological instrument used by the BJP to achieve the social and political unity of the disparate Hindu society was ‘Hindutva’. The advocacy of Hindutva involves the Hinduising of politics, culture and nationalism and the giving of a religious orientation to the solution of problems that arise in public life. Hindutva, in short, is simply nationalism and expresses the idea of one country, (Bharat) one people, (Bharatiyajati) and one culture (Bharatiya mariyada).
The BJP’s religious appeal had great impact on electoral politics and it grew from a mere two-member representation in the Lok Sabha in 1984 to the single largest party in the 1996 Lok Sabha having amassed, with all its allies, one hundred and eighty six seats. The remarkable electoral victory of the BJP, within a period of fifteen years of its formation, reveals the hold of primordial loyalties on the masses. But it must be remembered that remarkable growth of the BJP has occurred in the Hindi-speaking heartland of India, where the antipathy to Islam and its culture has been entrenched owing to the long and bitter memories of the Muslim rule among the Hindus. But the party’s communal appeal could not make the same effect in the East and in South except in the Deccan. Its support base lies mainly among the urban middle class such as the white-collar employees, self-employed people, small traders and the land lords. But its hold among the lower middle classes, the socially backward classes, the tribals, small land holders, the working classes and the landless farmers, is rather very meagre.

In order to widen its mass support and fulfill its political
agenda, the BJP launched a new agitation ‘Ratha Yatra’, to demolish the Babri Masjid and construct a Ramajanmabhoomi temple in its place. Though the agitation demanding the territory of Babri Masjid had no historical support, it launched a frontal attack on Indian secularism. The minorities particularly the Muslims began to doubt whether it was the beginning of the end of secularism in India. The declaration of the Sangh Parivar that all the historical mosques would be demolished one after another came as a great shock to all secular-minded people as much as to the Muslims, and all the constitutional guarantees to the minorities appeared to be in vain. Their panic increased further when they heard that the Sangh Parivar had prepared a list of 300 mosques in priority for demolition. What perturbed most was that even the ruling Congress government at the centre headed by Rajiv Gandhi could not do anything to prevent the mounting tide of Hindu communalism. Adding fuel to fire, Rajiv Gandhi’s Government opened the lock over the Babri Masjid and allowed the Hindus to worship Lord Ram’s idol believed to have been planted there around 1948 by some Hindu fanatics.
The demolition of Babri Masjid, on 6th December 1992, was a terrible blow to Indian secularism. The Congress-led government at the centre could not do anything to protect the centuries-old historical building. It spelt a dark shadow over the secular image of India and tarnished considerably her reputation as an emerging world leader. The post demolition period saw a series of communal riots in Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Delhi and several other places. Among these riots the most ferocious were the Bombay riots of 1992 and 1993, mainly sponsored by a member of the Saffron family, Shiv Sena, led by Bal Thackeray, who incited the communal sentiments of Hindus for personal or political gains. They undermined not only the secular image but also the democratic stature of the country in an irretrievable way.

It is true that the BJP, through the Ramjanmabhoomi Movement, gained great political mileage and it became the single largest party in the Lok Sabha in 1996, and its leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, became the Prime Minister of India. But once it came to power at the Centre, it began to downplay communal issues. Of course, there were compulsions from
coalition partners in as much as the party cadres who desired to have a non-communal (secular) image for BJP as a national party. The party leadership assured the minorities that they would be safe only under the BJP-led government at the centre. They even promised Muslims a ‘riot-free’ India, in their election manifesto of 1999, if it came to power.\textsuperscript{55} The BJP, for the first time, after its formation in 1980, was going soft on Muslims. This wooing of Muslims by the BJP is reminiscent of Mrs. Gandhi’s enticing of Hindus by adopting soft communalism in the Eighties, when she understood that Muslims were drifting the Congress for new secular parties.

In the dawn of the present century also our country witnessed a number of communal riots. The bloodiest of them was the Godhra Carnage (Gujarat, 2002). Followed by Godhra, riots took place at Ahemedabad and Vadodara, in which hundreds lost their lives. Later media exposition showed that the Godhra incident was well-planned and it was not at all a spontaneous one. It was not just anger boiling over, but there was a great deal of planning that went behind the riots. Targets were carefully selected and rarely, if ever, were mistakes made even in densely mixed population areas.\textsuperscript{56}
A historical and cultural analysis of Indian secularism reveals the fact that communal riots posed a serious threat to Indian secularism. There have been groups, organizations and political parties seeking support from the primordialities of their respective communities and working against the secular interest of the country. They could, to a great extent, succeed in creating divisions and dissensions between different religious communities and caste groups. But the country was not without the growth of secular forces. The recent origin of many regional parties such as All India Dravida Munnetta Kazhakom (AIADMK), Dravida Munnetta Kazhakom (DMK) in Tamil Nadu, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh, Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam, etc, seeking support from all the sections of population transcending religion and caste, invariably support the growth of secular forces in the country. The increasing role of left parties, based on the ideologies of socialism and communism, with emphasis on class distinctions rather than caste or religion, in regional as well as national politics, is supportive to the secularization of Indian society. The development of class consciousness is a secular
phenomenon for it derives its impulse from the economic factor; such a phenomenon acts as a counterpoise to caste or religious consciousness. Another significant sign of modernity, which is an essential attribute of secularism, is the industrialization of the society. Industrialization affects the structure of a traditional society fundamentally on class distinctions as they cut across the old social differences based on caste, religion and community. Thus the emergence of secular regional parties; the capacity of leftist ideologies to bring all especially the socially and economically backward people together, transcending caste and religion, under the banner of political parties; the growing industrialization which creates class rather than caste divisions, etc, reveal that the prospects of Indian secularism are bright.

Secularism in Kerala

In Kerala, the primordial attachment of people was exceptionally strong that they were identified mainly according to their primeval communities based on religion, caste, etc. There was hardly any organization on the broad secular lines as the one that took birth in North India in 1885- the Indian
National Congress. Unlike other parts of India it was this traditional loyalty which became instrumental in the development of secular forces in Kerala, entirely in a paradoxical way. It was this ascriptive feeling that existed among the members of each community that helped communities to get organized for greater secular needs such as greater shares in government jobs, adequate representation in legislative bodies, more educational establishments, etc, which had a positive impact on the secularization of the society. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of communal consciousness in an unprecedented way that each community formed its own communal organization. Malayali Sabha (successor of Malayali Social Union (1885)), Nazrani Jathyaikya Sangham (1866) of Syrian Christians, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) of Ezhavas, Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam (1905) of Pulayas, Nair Service Society(1914) of Nairs and Vaala Samudaya Parishkarani Sabha (1912) of Fishermen are but few of them.

When a group is discriminated against on the basis of their ascriptive nature, such as religion, caste, etc, that group
retaliates or rebels against the discrimination on the ascriptive level itself if other ideological tools are absent. To put it in other words, if communities are discriminated on the basis of their characteristics, for instance religion, the tendency will be to unite to fight at the community (religious) level itself. This situation arises when they have little or no access to an ideology transcending the narrow division of their community (religion) or to a political party, to give any effective reply to discrimination. Thus, communities, individually as well as collectively, fought for greater benefits from the government. This was clear from a series of representations in the form of memorials starting from Travancore Memorial (popularly known as the Malayali Memorial), in 1891, for more share in government jobs, more representation in decision-making bodies and finally for responsible government through adult franchise. The Malayali Memorial presented to the Maharaja of Travancore, protesting against “the denial to the Travancoreans of a fair share in the government of their country and their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of the service”, was the first sign of political awakening in Travancore. The common enemy was the Tamil Brahmin caste. The Nairs,
who were the most aggrieved community, could not go alone
and they sought the support of other communities-
Namboodiris, Christians and the Ezhavas. The under
representation of Travancoreans is well illustrated in the
following table.
### Table 1
**Foreign Brahmin Domination in Travancore Services - 1891**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Monthly salary in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malayali Hindus</td>
<td>14,36838</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Brahmins</td>
<td>25224</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Christians</td>
<td>287409</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Travancore Memorial
The Malayali Memorial was mainly an effort made by the Nair community for the redress of their long-standing grievance – underrepresentation in government jobs. But the reply from the Maharaja for the Memorial was not at all comforting for the Ezhavas. They submitted a memorial of their own collecting 13,176 signatures, popularly known as the Ezhava Memorial, to the Maharaja on 3rd September, 1896. The Memorial demanded due shares in education and government jobs for Ezhavas.

The Roman Catholics were inadequately represented not only in higher posts in government but also in the legislative assemblies of Travancore. In the public services there was religious problem in admitting persons other than high-caste Hindus. Against this social discrimination the Christians, mainly the Roman Catholics and Syrian Jacobites, lodged strong protest. They formed ‘Civic Rights League’ with the support of Muslims and Ezhavas. The Nairs, though not opposed to the move, were lukewarm as they had a monopoly of higher offices in government service. The Civic Rights Movement was formed, therefore, to assert the rights of all
citizens, especially the *avarnas* and to hold office in all departments maintained by public funds. They demanded eradication of untouchability and unapproachability, and elimination of all religious and social differences which undermined the dignity of man. The movement received tremendous support because it was a matter affecting the fundamental rights of some 2.6 million people.\(^{57}\) The distribution of government jobs in 1922 shows this apparent discrimination against non-caste Hindus (*avarnas*) (see table below).
Table 2
Distribution of Government jobs between Caste Hindu (savarnas) and non-caste Hindus (avarnas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers by Caste</th>
<th>Salary up to Rs. 20 pm</th>
<th>Between Rs. 20 &amp; Rs 50 pm</th>
<th>Above Rs. 50 pm</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste Hindus (Savarnas)</td>
<td>3325</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>91.25</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-caste Hindus (Avarnas)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3424</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is to be noted that primeval loyalties like religion and caste became instrumental for people to join together to fight for their secular civic rights. The message that the Civic Rights League conveyed to the government was that it was totally unfair to exclude the Christians and the Muslims from government jobs on the basis of their religion and Ezhavas on the basis of their caste. As P.K.K. Menon observes:

“This was a memorial to get civic rights recognized and it reflected the intensity of public feeling on a vital issue. It was not a request for the favour of appointments but a demand for the recognition of the elementary right to equality of opportunity”.59

Along with the fight for status and position, these communal organizations began demanding more access to decision-making centres of the government. They increasingly realized that political power was crucial to enhance and consolidate their status and mere enlargement of wealth was not sufficient to climb the social ladder. Thus political consciousness began to germinate even when people were fully grabbed by primitive loyalties like religion and caste. Although
monarchy was accepted as an unquestionable form of political authority, demands for a share in the instruments of power, were the essence of the work of the communal organizations. Legislative assemblies, which came into being around this time, though with a very restricted base and functions, were the centres of attraction of communal elements. The birth of Travancore Legislative Council (Sree Mulam Legislative Council), in 1888 and Travancore Legislative Assembly (Sree Mulam Popular Assembly) in 1904, though not having the features of modern representative bodies, were very much supportive to awaken the political consciousness of the people. In Kerala, as in the case of many other states, there existed a complimentary relation between the development of political consciousness and secularization process.

In 1932, on people’s demand, Balarama Varma, the then Maharaja of Travancore, decided to enlarge the powers of representative bodies and to extend franchise. Accordingly, men and women who paid a land tax of Rs. 5 or more or income tax or municipal tax of Re. 1 or more per annum and graduates and retired or pensioned military officers residing in the state,
were entitled to vote. Council voting had a higher qualification, a land tax of Rs. 25 or more. Seats were also reserved in general constituencies for Ezhavas, Muslims and Latin Catholics so as to assist their representation by election.

The reforms did not evoke any positive response from Christians, Muslims and Ezhavas. But Nairs, by and large, welcomed the reforms. The grieving communities met separately and passed resolutions for ‘adult franchise’ and ‘proportional representation’. On 31st July, 1932, the Ezhavas under All Travancore Ezhava Political League, Muslims under Wajanathul Muhammadiya Association, the Latins under Travancore Latin Christian Mahajana Sabha and the Catholics under Travancore State Catholic Congress, met at different places, passed resolutions and submitted memorials to the government demanding due representation for their respective communities in government service and representative bodies. As individual efforts did not produce the desired results, they formed an Ezhava- Christian-Muslim alliance to fight for their genuine democratic rights. Evidently it was an alliance against the predominant Nair community in Travancore. Eventually
on 17\textsuperscript{th} December 1932 a common political platform, for the three major communities – Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims - All Travancore Joint Political Conference, came into being.\textsuperscript{61} It was the first of its kind and a common forum for different communities, strictly adhering to primordial loyalties of religion and caste, and a major landmark in the history of secular politics in Travancore.

On January 25, 1933, leaders of different communities of the All Travancore Joint Political Conference met at Trivandrum and decided to abstain from the forthcoming elections. The leaders of the movement deliberately avoided the term ‘non-cooperation’ and adopted abstention as they knew it very well that it might antagonize the British against them.\textsuperscript{62} The important resolution on abstention was that the members of the various political organizations of Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims should abstain from taking part either by voting or by standing as candidates in elections or by accepting nomination to the reformed legislative bodies so long as the government did not provide for the representation in the legislature by election of all concerned communities
proportionate to their population.63

The ultimate aim of the abstention movement was to secure, in proportion to the population of respective communities, due share in all the representative institutions and public service.

The movement, in all aspects, was a great achievement and it was a pioneering effort in the direction of the formation of a full-fledged political party in Travancore. The government and the Savarnas were pitched against the Avarnas. The elections were held under prohibitory orders and the results revealed the success of the Abstention Movement.

Meanwhile, the government appointed a Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner to solve the problem of representation in the legislature with special reference to the Ezhavas, Muslims and Latin Catholics. Though the Syrian Christians were deliberately excluded from the list, the executive committee of the Joint Political Congress expressed their satisfaction over the government’s move and withdrew all attempts at an agitational approach. This period of the abstention movement saw how, through traditional
### Table 3
**Results of General Election held under Prohibilitary Orders in April, 1993**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population (in lakhs)</th>
<th>Seats in Legislative Assembly (48) and Council (22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>16.04</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Savarnas</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed Classes</td>
<td>9.17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.30</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: History of Freedom Movements in Kerala, Part II
instrumentalities (religion and caste), modern secular features (political consciousness) came up.

But the traditional instrumentalities could not go on this direction indefinitely. By then the idea of a political party began to take shape among the leaders. At this point a joint meeting of the citizens of Trivandrum was held on February 16, 1938. Thus the expectation for a political party above communal precincts found result in the formation of ‘Travancore State Congress’ on February 23, 1938, with the objective of securing responsible government, adult franchise and protection of minorities through just and peaceful means. The State Congress, compared to its predecessor, Joint Political Congress, had a wider objective and was more progressive in outlook. This political consciousness was the result of the secularizing process which paradoxically gathered momentum through the communal struggles of different communities to reach the centre of power. It was an inevitable consequence of the spread of western education, emergence of capitalism and the dawn of liberal political ideologies.
It must be admitted that the growth of secular forces was on a marginal plane and the grip of primeval elements over the people was still strong. This was clear from the comparative analysis of the origin and growth of Travancore State Congress and a branch of the Indian National Congress, which took birth in Travancore simultaneously. The broad objectives and ideals of Indian National Congress were laudable but did not immediately touch the lives of the people, whose loyalties still, were more to their communities rather than to the state. It is true that the major reason behind the rapid growth of State Congress was that it was born in the fertile ground of communalism and was nourished by primordial sentiments. However, it is clear that the early leaders of Travancore State Congress made sincere attempts to rise above narrow communal boundaries for a common cause that is, the interest of the state. This can very well be understood from the pledges the earliest leaders of State Congress were required to take. The pledge read:

“I will always consider the common good of the country above all communal interests. At any time, if a clash happens
between my communal interests and the interests of the country, I will always sacrifice my communal interests except when I have to protect the interests of minorities and weaker sections. I will not demand any special rights by virtue of being a member of a particular community. It shall be my constant endeavour to make the existing communal organizations to accept the broader interests of the country”.

Even after taking up of a pledge mentioned above, there were serious cleavages and rifts within the organization in the name of communal interests. As C. Narayana Pillai succinctly puts it, “the Congress President Pattam Thanu Pillai was in the final analysis a communal (Nair) leader. T.M. Varghese and E. John Philipose were seen as leaders of the Mar Thoma –Jacobite interests. A.J. John protected the Catholic interests; C.Kesavan and V.K. Velayudhan were spokesmen of the Ezhava interests”. “It was not surprising,” he continues, “that a generation which fought between themselves on communal platforms and threw mud on each other, seeing all actions from the eyes of the community till yesterday, could not become staunch nationalists with a broad national outlook”. Later,
when it had become almost sure that the State Congress would turn out to be powerful and Travancore become part of the Indian Union, both Sankar and Mannam, leaders of the SNDP and NSS, joined it. Thus the hotchpotch of communal elements became almost complete under a single banner, Travancore State Congress.

The State Congress was in the forefront of struggle for freedom and the three big stalwarts of the Congress, Pattam Thanupillai (Nair), T.M. Varghese (Christian) and C. Kesavan (Ezhava), represented three prominent communities in Travancore. They were the ‘big three’ of Travancore and were able to carry with them these three large influential communities. To achieve the goal of freedom they were together, but once they reached the goal, differences of opinion were glaring and each went his own way. What we find after Independence is that each community vying with others for a larger share of the cake-social, economic and political-to be distributed by the state. The State Congress, through its long-drawn struggle for responsible government, had created an atmosphere where people of different communities could work
together and live together, setting aside their communal differences. That speeded up the general secularization process of the society. But when the common enemy (the King or Dewan) disappeared from the scene, the communal factor took the upper hand.

The developments after Independence, till 1956, show that no State Congress leader had the charisma to command the support of the entire people transcending religion and caste. Rather, each leader turned to his own community for support and to sustain his position. Each leader was suspicious of the other, likewise each community of the other. In the first democratic election to the Constituent Assembly of Travancore on February 4, 1948, the Congress won an absolute majority, 96 out of 120. An interim government was formed with Pattom A. Thanupillai as the chief minister and T. M. Varghese and C. Kesavan as members of the Cabinet. Pattam could not rise above narrow communal interests and what was more piteous was his own thinking that he could not do anything without a communal anchor. The Pattom Ministry fell within months of its induction and T.K. Narayana Pillai, another Nair leader,
succeeded him followed by C. Kesavan and A.J. John.

Communalism in the state took a new turn when the two enemy communities, the Ezhavas and Nairs, decided to join hands to oppose the Christians. They even formed an association, the *Hindu Maha Mandal*, to work for the interests of Hindus. Mannath Padmanabhan and R. Shankar became President and General Secretary respectively of the Mandal. They also formed a new party, Democratic Congress, to counter the influence of the Congress. As the communal forces were getting momentum threatening communal peace and harmony, the secular forces also grew, perhaps, at a greater pace. On November 26, 1949 secular forces in the All Travancore State Congress got victory over the communal elements by passing two resolutions. The first resolution condemned the direct and indirect political work of communal organizations like the NSS, SNDP and Catholic Congress even after their resolve to keep away from politics. The second resolution barred members of communal organizations from holding offices in the State Congress.
In spite of cut-throat competition and occasional allegations and counter-allegations between communities, Travancore was relatively free from communal clashes and riots. The main reason for this was that, at the grass root level, people were leading a peaceful life imbibing the spirit of co-operation and religious harmony. Also the members of each community respected the sentiments of the other and their religious symbols. Furthermore, people had their own reasoning judgment that they could not easily be manipulated and deluded. It was evident even in those most communalized days of Hindu Maha Mandalam. For instance, there was a rumour that the Hindu temple at Sabarimala had been set on fire. That was a sufficient provocation in those days for a communal conflict, especially when Nairs and Ezhavas were united against the Christians. No Hindu reacted to this rumour with alarm. Similarly, there were also reports that many churches had been looted. But the Christians did not seem to have given much political significance to those acts. In both cases, it was none other than those men of secular vision who saved the society from a communal holocaust.
Along with the democratization of political power, increase in economic opportunities and modernization and secularization of the society was happening at the subliminal level. Class consciousness was growing in Kerala as a counterpoise to communal consciousness. This growing class consciousness among the people of different communities contributed immensely to building a secular society in Kerala. It was mainly this class consciousness of the people that facilitated communal cross voting during elections and that was one of the major causes for voting the communists to power in 1957.

From 1947 to 1956 the filthy role of communalism was at its zenith and everything was seen through a communal lens. The first problem which took a communal colour, after the inception of the first democratically elected government of Pattam Thanu Pillai, was the education tussle. The demand of private school teachers for parity in their salaries with government teachers acquired a communal colour because most of the schools were under the management of Christian community and the chief executive of the state was a Nair.
The demand acquired a new dimension when the Christian members of the assembly strongly supported the move of the private school teachers. Instead of seeking an amicable solution Chief Minister Pattam Thanu Pillai saw in it a deliberate attempt on the part of the Christian community to tarnish the image of him and his government.

A similar situation arose when the T. K. Narayana pillai Government decided to evict farmers from reserve forests. The move of the government was strongly opposed by V.O. Markose, a Christian minister, on the ground that most of the forest encroachers were Christians. The other communities accused the government of succumbing to communal pressures. Not only in the functioning of the government but also in the formation of the ministry the communal elements wielded tremendous influence. As time went on even the communal denominations began to exert their influence. For instance, when T.K. Narayana Pillai formed his ministry, T.M. Varghese had to be satisfied with speakership, whereas Annie Mascrene, a Latin Catholic, found a place in it. After T.K. Narayana Pillai, C. Kesavan (Ezhava) became the Chief Minister followed by
A.J. John was a pious Christian and a Catholic to the core.

Thus, within five years, all the three prominent communities got opportunities to head the government in Travancore. There were also instances when they wrested the leadership through communal bargaining arousing communal consciousness of their respective communities. After John, Pattam Thanu Pillai, the PSP leader, became the Chief Minister. Pattom’s government was toppled by Panampally Govinda Menon, a Cochin leader, who became the next Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin. Both Christians and Nairs had strong dislike towards Govinda Menon. The Catholic Church feared that Panampally’s continuance would threaten the traditional powers of managers of private schools. The NSS did not like him because he was not amenable to the dictates of the NSS High Command.

The nine years from March 24, 1947 to March 23, 1956, saw the rise and fall of six ministries in Travancore. Each community made maximum advantage from each ministry and
its support was extended on the plea that its interest would be protected in future. Again each community took it as a splendid chance in the fame of this new-found opportunity, to consolidate itself and cement the primordial loyalties of its members. The interests of Nairs and Ezhavas were protected by their respective communal organizations like NSS and SNDP. As far as Christians were concerned, the All Kerala Catholic Congress (AKCC) was in the forefront to protect the community’s political interest. In fact, AKCC was the mouthpiece of the Church hierarchy and its decisions were nothing but the decisions of the Church leaders.

Neither Church hierarchy nor AKCC was in favour of forming a separate political party exclusively for Christians as they had sufficient hold over the State Congress. It was even nick-named ‘the Party of Christians’. The AKCC vehemently opposed all moves whether on the part of the government or another community to endanger the near monopoly of Christian managements in the field of education. Also it wanted the Catholics to go ahead unhindered in agriculture, industry and trade, which would ensure a high status in society and powerful
voice in politics. The AKCC also raised voice against the under representation of Christians in government service. While demanding due shares in the public service and ministries, the AKCC asserted that “we do not want to get our rights as a charity from others with a begging bowl in hand, we will take on our own strength all legitimate rights due for us”. The 25th annual meeting of AKCC held at Olloor had passed a resolution saying that “the Travancore–Cochin government ignored the legitimate rights of Catholics for senior posts in the government”. It cited the case of High Court judges, saying there was not a single judge from a community whose population constituted 18.4 percent in the state.

The AKCC has always been in the forefront in protecting the political interest of the community. On the eve of the election the AKCC used to meet and consider how many Christians (and out of them how many Catholics) should be given tickets by the Congress party. In the 1952 general elections the AKCC raised strong protest against the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) as it did not consult the Catholic leaders before nominating candidates. They
complained on this to the state leaders as well as to Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. It went to the extent of asking Catholic voters to support only Catholic candidates. The 1951 December issue of the AKCC bulletin had a list of candidates whom the Catholics should vote for. The NSS and SNDP also made similar demands and the KPCC tickets came to be divided according to the strength of the community in each constituency.

Education is another area, perhaps more important, where the Church keeps her special interest. It went in for confrontation with the government whenever the latter attempted for some control over its educational institutions. The AKCC submitted a mammoth memorial with 2,55,313 signatures to the Maharaja of Travancore in September 1946 against the move of the Dewan to take over their primary schools. With the same vigour, the AKCC made strong protests against the ‘Private Secondary School Scheme’ introduced by Panampally Govinda Menon in 1951. The scheme, as in the case of the Dewan’s educational reforms, had the support of two other prominent communities, the Nairs and the Ezhavas.
Both communities found it an easy way for their community members getting employment in Christian schools. The annual meeting of the AKCC (1955) passed a resolution saying:

“This meeting view with concern the resolution passed by the NSS budget meeting that the teachers’ appointments to private schools be held through the Public Service Commission (PSC). It strongly opposes the decision to hold appointments through PSC”.

Thus the activities of AKCC from 1947 to 1957 show that they could effectively convey to the people that loyalty to their community was of paramount importance and all other things secondary. Like NSS and SNDP, AKCC did everything possible to incite communal feelings and sentiments whenever government attempted to introduce same reforms on secular lines, mostly in the field of education. The AKCC was successful to a great extent in keeping the people under the pressure of communal demands. Nairs through NSS and Ezhavas through SNDP did the same and the first decade after attaining freedom saw a triangular pull and push on democratic institutions for maximizing the gains of each community in
the social life.

The decade after Independence saw not only the development of communal consciousness but also secular awareness. When each community vied with others for maximum advantage in economic and social field, modernization and secularization were taking place at the subliminal level. For instance, when each community competed for more schools and colleges, the community members got easy access to education, which in turn helped them to acquire better jobs and better prospects not only within the country but also outside. People who went outside for jobs as well as higher education got entangled with other cultures and became more secularized in their lives. When each community encouraged their members to participate in political processes, the people became more aware of their civil and political rights. This speeded up the tendency within each community for upward political mobility. This increasing political consciousness of the people developed their civic consciousness which, of course, had a secularizing effect not only on their respective communities but also on the general
society. Similarly economic advancement in each community had created a middle class, progressive in outlook and secular in approach, which had close affinity and interaction with similar classes in other communities transcending their traditional loyalties. For instance, it was the common interests of the richer sections of Nairs and Christians that united them against the common enemy, Praja Socialists’ Government.

Meanwhile the development of class consciousness led to the formation of a number of trade unions. The first trade union was born at Alleppy in March 1922, named the Travancore Labour Association. Quilon became a centre of workers’ unions. Agrarian movements also began to take shape. Although the intensity of the agrarian movement in Malabar was higher, Travancore had its share as well. It was this growing class consciousness that led to the political segmentation of communities and communal cross-voting in elections. The table below shows that the communist party got support from all communities in spite of the open antagonism taken by some communal organizations. For instance, AKCC had openly declared that communism was its main enemy. As early as
1948 the AKCC organized a fund called the Anti-Communist Fund.

### Table 4
1957 Elections Nair, Ezhava, Christian MLAs in three major parties and independents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nair</th>
<th>Ezhava</th>
<th>Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from figures given in The Kerala Mail, August 23, 1959.

The table above indicates two things. First, community-party congruence and linkage still continues; and secondly, there is political segmentation of communities (a section of traditional supporters of one community of a party think
differently and support another party). Thus it is clear that 15.2% of traditional Congress supporters of the Christian community crossed over to the Communist party in 1957 elections. This political segmentation of communities which started mainly with the elections of 1957 continued in all the subsequent elections with varying degrees. It considerably reduced the effect of poll eve exhortations of communal leaders. This is a good sign of secularization of society in general and of secular politics in particular.

The Kerala Education Bill and the Land Reform Bill of the first communist ministry evoked strong opposition from communal forces particularly the Nairs and the Christians. Later, middle and upper classes of the Ezhava and Muslim communities joined the fray, thus making the blend of communal forces in the state complete. The traditional social rivals, the Nairs and the Christians, came together when their secular interests were threatened. The Nair landlords regarded Christians as a close ally because they were equally aggrieved. It was apparent from the declaration of Nair landlords. They declared that, “if the Church wants us to protect
its schools the Church should protect our lands”\textsuperscript{76}. The consolidation of caste/religious communities became almost complete, in 1959, when the four prominent communities—the Christians, the Nairs, the Ezhavas and the Muslims—of the state came together to oppose a democratically elected government, for the protection of their secular interests. The struggle against the communist government was termed as ‘liberation struggle’, popularly known in Malayalam as ‘vimochana samaram’. The communal leaders invoked religious sentiments and mobilized people on religious – caste grounds. The minorities, particularly the Christians, were incited to communal frenzy by the clarion calls like ‘religion in danger’ ‘infringement of minority rights’, etc, by the Church hierarchy. A letter of the Catholic bishops read:

“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 our 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”.77

The agitation by the communal forces led to the dismissal of the first communist government by the Central government according to Article 356. In the mid-term poll which was held on February 1, 1960, the Congress – PSP- Muslim League combine got majority of seats and Pattam Thanu Pillai became the Chief Minister along with R.Sankar, Deputy Chief Minister and P.T. Chacko, as Home Minister. The Christians nurtured their grievances as they were not given their due share in the new ministry and in the government service. Regarding inadequate representation of Christians in government service, Deepika, a pro-Christian daily, wrote:

“Catholics are not a community which considers that it can live only with Sirkar jobs. So the Catholics do not show as much interest in getting government jobs as they have in destroying anti-democratic forces. The Pattom Ministry should
not take it as their (Christians) weakness”.

AKCC made strong protest against the liquidation of Palai Central Bank and it criticized the government’s action from a communal angle. AKCC Bulletin said: “The caste and religion of Palai Bank depositors were enquired into 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 the Akali Dal or NSS or SNDP, it would not have met with this fate”.

The AKCC statement highlights once again the point that everything was seen through communal lens at that time.

The election results of 1967 were in favour of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M))-led United Front. The communists made best use of the confused communal situation in the state. The Congress lost heavily in terms of seats (they won only nine in a house of 133), but its percentage of votes increased. The Kerala Congress lost a great deal in terms of percentage of votes as well as seats. It got only 7.31 percent of total votes and 5 seats. The 1967 elections
showed a clear cleavage between the communal leadership and the people. The people did not fully endorse what their hierarchical leadership exhorted them to do rather they had their own individual judgment of things. Another thing is that the pastoral letters could not make the same impact as they did earlier. This discriminating recognition of the contextual role of community leaders by the people is again indicative of the development of a social consciousness which is opposed to the religious-communal solidarity. The remark made by K.C. John, a commentator of Kerala’s political development, is indicative of the future role of Church hierarchy in Kerala politics. He 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 into Caesar things that are Caesar’s”.”

80
The 31 months Marxist coalition rule saw a low profile of communal organizations except in the case of the Kerala University Act, 1969. The Act was designed to check bribery and corruption in private colleges and make higher education more secular. The minority communities challenged this act in the Kerala High Court on the plea that it was a violation of Article 30 of the Constitution. The Court came to the rescue of private managements by striking down certain clauses of the act on the ground that they infringed on minority rights. It is to be noted here that the teachers of the private colleges did support government’s move. They were not willing to sacrifice their career interests like higher pay and security of tenure, etc, at the altar of communal loyalty.

Church’s opposition mitigated towards Communists, particularly the CPI, during the reign of the CPI-led Ministry headed by C. Achutha Menon. This change might have been more of a pragmatic nature rather than ideological. It may also be the result of the general attitude of communal elements to have good relations with those who are in power. But the Kerala Education Bill 1972 turned the situation upside down.
It harnessed all communal forces against the government spearheaded by the Catholic Church. As in the 1959 agitation, the Church was the most aggrieved party as most of the higher educational institutions were under its control.

The election on January 21, 1980, once again proved that communal appeal to the electorate was becoming feeble. The poll eve exhortations by the Church hierarchy to the flocks were limited to a mere advice to vote only for the theists and not to atheists. The visit of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Congress leader, to Guruvayoor Temple, Padmanabha Swamy temple in Trivandrum, Narayana Guru Samadhi at Varkala and her meeting with the top hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Kerala to woo communal elements in favour of UDF, did not make any equivalent impact on election results. For instance, in all the districts where Christians were a dominant community, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was pushed back by the Left Democratic Front (LDF). The following table shows this trend.
Table 5
Seats Won by LDF and UDF in Christian Dominated Districts in 1980 Election to Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Seats won by UDF</th>
<th>Seats won by LDF</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>Alleppy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kerala Shabdam, February 10, 1980
The 1987 Assembly election was a unique experiment for Kerala as there had been, by then, a general impression that no party could rule the state without the support of the caste-communal parties. While all communal elements found a comfortable place in the UDF, the CPI (M)-led LDF was free from communal and caste elements. In fact, it was a tussle between communal forces and secular forces led by the INC and the CPI (M) respectively. It was a do-or-die battle in all aspects because the future of the parties that constituted the two fronts (UDF&LDF) was at stake. Apart from that, the political experiment, based on ideological polarization of political forces into LDF and UDF was in its infancy. For the Congress (I) it was the question of sustaining its position while for the CPI (M) it was the acid test of the efficiency of a new policy viz. keeping the caste and communal parties at arm’s length.

Meanwhile the right-wing Hindu communal elements formed a rival communal political organization, the Hindu Munnani, to counter the growing influence of communal parties like Kerala Congress and Muslim League. Its anti-communal
political ploy and election slogan, “save Kerala from the quagmire of Communalism”, framed on the eve of elections, appeared to have elicited only an unenthusiastic response even from the people of their own community. A record number of 80.55 percent of voters exercised their franchise. The LDF bagged 78 seats while the UDF 60. The BJP with the support of Hindu Munnani contested 127 seats and drew only a blank forfeiting their deposits in most of the constituencies. The people gave a clear verdict in favour of the CPI (M) and left parties because of their non-alliance with caste and community-based parties and groups. It was a verdict against the communalisation of politics. The following table highlights a profile of 1987 election results.
Table - 6

1987 Assembly Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front/Party</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Votes polled</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2,912,999</td>
<td>22.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M) (Ind.)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,664,446</td>
<td>2.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10,29,409</td>
<td>8.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI(Ind.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43,970</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress(S)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5,11,777</td>
<td>4.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janata</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,82,408</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,10,004</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lok Dal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78,389</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5,735,402</td>
<td>44.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress(I)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31,64259</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUML</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>985,011</td>
<td>7.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>KC(J)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>450,475</td>
<td>3.53</td>
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<td>KC(M)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>425,348</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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<td>NDP(P)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>283,851</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRP(S)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>154,450</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP(S)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29,895</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74,023</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5,567,309</td>
<td>43.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP-HM</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>825,607</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41,098</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>443,899</td>
<td>3.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Total</td>
<td>1254</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>12,754,675</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Assembly Elections since 1951, Department of Public Relations, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1988, P.5.
The election results showed the dwindling influence of the dictates of communal hierarchies to their flocks. The appeal to primordial sentiments by the communal leadership did not evoke the same response as it did in nineteen forties and fifties. Realizing the new trend in society the communal leadership took extra care not to give any specific party-centered exhortations but rather give only general guidelines. It is to be noted that in some elections the hierarchy even went to the extent of exhorting the believers to vote for those candidates and parties which stood for specific social classes like the poor, women, socially backward, etc, and also for some common causes like social justice, national interests, uplift of the poor and downtrodden, secularism, moral and human values, etc., transcending religion and caste. In fact the communal leaders were forced to move in consonance with the changing perception of people in society that was getting momentum due to many factors like high literacy, economic advancement, growing civic sense, etc.

In the ninth election to the state assembly, in 1991, Bishop Soosa pakiam of Thiruvananthapuram, in one of his poll-eve
pastoral letters, called upon the faithful to vote according to their conscience. P K Narayana Panicker, general secretary of NSS and Chairman of National Democratic Party (NDP), in 1996 elections, urged his community members to vote for a government which would safeguard democracy, secularism and socialist principles. The Catholic Bishops’ Council of India (CBCI), in the same election, went a step further and urged the flocks to vote for those candidates and parties which would protect the ‘class interest’ of deprived sections and uphold human values. The veteran CPI (M) leader, EMS Namboodiripad, did even compliment the bishops who had taken a secular, principled stand.

Some communal leaders, unable to take stern political stand either in favour of LDF or UDF, adopted an ‘equi-distance policy’ and a ‘candidate-specific approach’ during some elections. For instance, the NSS took such a policy during several elections since 1998. In fact, such a policy would give the community members a good measure of political freedom to make free choice of candidates. In 1998 elections, the supremo of the Marthoma Church, Dr. Alexander Marthoma
Metropolitan, urged the Church believers to vote for those who stood for ‘peace and justice’. The pastoral council of Thrissur Archdiocese, presided over by Archbishop Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhi, urged its followers to cast their votes for those who stood for justice, belief in God, secularism, rights of minorities and democratic and moral values.

During some elections, the top Church hierarchy, in their poll-eve exhortations, upheld the cause of the most deprived sections of the society as a goodwill measure. For instance, the Syro-Malabar Archbishop, Mar Varkey Vithayathil, exhorted the faithful to vote for those candidates who held moral values high, respected all religions and stood for peace, justice and the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. He also said that while voting the voters should not distinguish candidates on the basis of their caste or religion. During the 11th State Legislative Assembly elections held on May 10, 2001, the hierarchy wanted to convey the message that the Church was with the poor and weak in society. Cardinal Mar Varkey Vithayathil exhorted the people to support candidates with a mind for the weaker sections of society. He said it was only
then that the culture of love would prevail. In another poll-eve exhortation to the faithful, Bishop Soosa Pakiam (Thiruvananthapuram) said that he would not ask the faithful to cast vote for a particular candidate. Each and every citizen has the right to vote according to the dictates of his conscience. It is a fact that the hierarchy’s conscious move was exactly in tune with the general mood of the society and community and they had no escape from it.

Even in cases where the hierarchy went in for some political preference contrary to the wishes of society and their community, they got severe setback. In 1984 Lok Sabha Polls, in spite of all the support extended by the Church to Scaria Thomas (Kerala Congress (M)), a Roman Catholic, who contested from Kottayam constituency, the constituency went in favour of Suresh Kurup of CPI (M). The substance of the victory of Suresh Kurup lies in the fact that the constituency is dominated by Christians. Thus the exhortations of the Church for conscience vote and the victory of a non-Christian, leave alone a Catholic, in a Christian dominated constituency is a sign of secularization of politics in a communally polarized society.
Similarly the defeat of Sri K. Karunakaran, the veteran Congress leader, in the 1996 Lok Sabha polls, in the Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency, in spite of the enthusiastic support extended to him by the Bishop of Thrissur, Mar Kundukulam, is another indication of this new trend. Even the traditional pro-Congress Ernakulum District went against UDF in spite of the strong support of the Church. Likewise in Alappuzha District, where the anti-Antony forces were in full swing especially in the Nair belt areas and the open defiance of SNDP leadership against V.M. Sudheeran, were expected to make an indentation, Antony and his party colleague easily got over. V.M. Sudheeran not only sustained his seat but also improved his victory margin from 25,949 to 40,637. The uproarious arrack ban decision, the clean image of A K Antony and the unflinching support of the Church could not help the UDF and prevent this growing political segmentation of the communities in 1996 elections. The following table is indicative of this drift.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Caste</th>
<th>UDF</th>
<th>LDF</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey by Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)
Even in the assembly elections of 2001, when the communal consolidation reached its zenith in favour of UDF, no substantial change took place in this emerging new trend. The table below vindicates this fact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Caste</th>
<th>LDF</th>
<th>UDF</th>
<th>BJP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Upper castes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian/Roman Christians</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddy Tappers</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim OBC</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Christians</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Muslims</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christians</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Post Poll Survey, Kerala Assembly Elections Study, 2001, CSDS
The 2004 Lok Sabha polls was a golden opportunity for BJP and its allies as the communal equations changed against the UDF. Some of the traditional supporters of UDF, especially prominent minority communities like Muslims and Christians, abandoned it either for LDF or the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The BJP and its constituents were in full swing to open its ‘account’ in Kerala for that they sought the support of all the Hindu communal elements. Side by side there was some informal tie-up between the NSS and SNDP (representing two prominent sections of Hindu community) chiefly against the ‘organized bargaining politics’ of minority communities. BJP was busy in framing new political tactics to make maximum advantage from the changed political situation and with much optimism they fielded the most popular and widely recognized national stalwart, O.Rajagopal, in the Thiruvananthapuram constituency. Some of the Church hierarchies were also virulent in extending support to Rajagopal and NDA, deviating from their conventional stance of supporting the Congress. The election results show that, though Rajagopal scored the highest percent of votes ever scored by a BJP candidate in the State in the Lok Sabha polls, he was pushed
to the third paving way for the LDF to wrest the seat. A very low profile of BJP in Kerala politics and failure of the combined effort of BJP – Hindu Munnani to open its account in Kerala and the defeat of O. Rajagopal, in spite of all favourable conditions, testify the low profile of communal appeal and higher advancement of Kerala society on the secular line.

The political segmentation of communities, which was a positive sign of secularization of society, that started with the elections of 1957, reached its peak in 2004’s Lok Sabha polls. The following table highlights this fact.
Table 9  
Caste/Religion wise Voting in 2004 Lok Sabha Polls (In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste/Religion</th>
<th>LDF</th>
<th>UDF</th>
<th>BJP</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu Upper Caste</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBCs</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalits</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Election Study- 2004
Thus, from the forgoing analysis it has become clear that secular forces have been growing as a counterpoise to primeval forces which had great impact over the thinking and actions of the people. Civic and political consciousness of the people, of course, had a great secularizing effect on society. But communal attachment of the people was a factor to be reckoned with by all political parties. It was obvious from the fact that during elections, all parties, whether right or left, are in search for a candidate who belongs to the numerically dominant community in that particular constituency. EMS Namboodiripad brings to light this point when he wrote:

“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”.

The communal affiliation of members of any party has its direct pull and push effect on the respective parties in Kerala, says Namboodiripad,
“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”.

Apart from the growing political segmentation of communities, which is an inevitable outcome of general secularization of society due to the factors such as the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, spread of English education, large scale migration to other states and other countries and economic advancement, the ideological polarization that took place since 1980’s in the political system of Kerala, into UDF and LDF, also helped the secularization of the society. The teachings Sree Narayana Guru were indicative of how religion helped the process of secularization of society in a big way. On the level of consciousness other than Christian religious teachings, the most revolutionary one in this period was that of Sree Narayana Guru. When Guru declared that whatever might be
a man’s religion, it was enough if he were good, he was propounding a revolutionary secularizing ideology. Regarding the teachings of Guru, K. Damodaran writes.

“Freeing himself from the straitjacket of feudalist thinking he boldly proclaimed one caste, one religion, and one God for all men. This resounding slogan was at once a challenge to a decadent society and a call to build up a new culture suited to modern times”.94

His movement was for the elimination of exclusive gods and goddess and the establishment of the unity of all people with one god. This message, which went against the grain of upper caste ideology, had great impact on caste - ridden Kerala society predominantly among the Ezhava community. The Guru’s teachings had an abstract impact on the future leaders of Ezhava community and they grew more secular than their counterparts in other communities. For instance, when heard a rumour that the Hindu temple at Sabarimala had been set on fire (by the Christians), the immediate response of C.Kesavan, the Congress president and Ezhava leader, was that, “If one temple is destroyed that much superstition also is destroyed”.95
The impact of education, particularly English education had a clear secularization effect on society. Western education inculcated in young minds ideas like equality, liberty, rule of law, equality before law, etc, which induced them to question unreasonable customs and practices that existed in the tradition-bound Kerala society. When communities vied with each other for more educational institutions on ascriptive basis they have been indirectly preparing the ground helpful for the growth of secularization of society. The people, who got higher and professional education, went out to other parts of the country as well as outside the country for better job prospects. Even uneducated or average-educated people also have migrated to the Gulf countries due to want of job opportunities in Kerala. A recent study shows that more than fifty per cent of Gulf migrants have education below matriculation (tenth standard). These people had sufficient opportunity to interact with other cultures and people and the influence of primordial sentiments like religion and caste began to deteriorate. Also a large number of people have migrated to European countries and America, settled there and have become either permanent citizens or acquired permanent residentship, and their offspring,
who have been brought up there, have only little affinity towards the caste and religion of their ancestors. This large scale migration, besides creating a cultural synthesis, has created better economic conditions which has a positive impact on the process of modernization and secularization of society.

The emergence of a bi-polar system in the political arena of Kerala since 1980’s has a positive effect on the secularization of Kerala society. The ideological clustering of political parties around two distinct poles is a sine qua non for political stability and that has reduced considerably the influence of community-based political parties. This ideological polarization had a great impact in Kerala politics that it has reduced considerably the bargaining capacity of community and caste-based political parties. At present it is not uncommon that the communal parties are being sidelined and often they are at a begging state waiting for the mercy of secular parties. Both poles, the LDF and the UDF, led by, the secular political parties, CPI (M) and Congress(I) respectively, and the association of major communities with these secular groupings, make the prospects of future politics more secular.
Comparatively low communal riots recorded in the state and the harmonious relations that exist between different communities despite occasional provocations by some communal leaders are indicative of the smooth flow of the secular stream in Kerala society. The recent tie-up of SNDP and NSS, two prominent sections of the Hindu community, targeting some political mileage against the organized minorities, the Christians and the Muslims, ended up, due to their internal contradictions, without getting much support from the rank and file of their own communities, after a few months of standing, is indicative of this trend. The recent exhortations of the Syro-Malabar Archbishop, Mar Joseph Powathil, that Christian parents should send their wards only to Christian educational institutions, elicited severe criticism from within and outside his community. Similarly the recent exhortation by Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop of Changanacherry, to the faithful, urging them to sever their relations with communist parties and communist ideology as a pre-condition for holding offices in Church and Church-run institutions, did not evoke any equivalent response from the faithful. These are testimonials of the shrinking influence of hierarchical
dictates. Of course, the seeds of secularization were sown well in advance through education, economic augmentation, religious and social reforms, etc, and its acceleration still continues unhindered.

**Conclusion**

It must be noted that secularism with all its modern traits originated in India with the establishment of British administration about the middle of the eighteenth century. Akbar, of course, made some sincere attempts at the political level for communal amity between the Hindus and Muslims. Religious tolerance, which is an important hallmark of Indian secularism, was evidently present in ancient India and in medieval period especially during the reign of Akbar, the great Mughal emperor. The British administration based on rule of law, equality before law, etc, laid the foundation of modern secular state in India. The birth of the Indian National Congress, a secular political organization with a vision of United India, was the first indigenous sign of modernity in colonial India. It was the result of the great vision as well as determination of our national leaders that modern India remained to be a secular,
democratic state, in which all people, irrespective of caste or religious distinctions, are assured freedom, equality and justice. After the death of Nehru, the main proponent of Indian secularism, secularism in India began to be sidelined. Mrs. Gandhi in her earlier political career appeared to be a staunch secular leader and won the support of all minorities including the Muslims. But it is an irony of history that she abandoned Nehruvian secularism and adopted a soft *Hindutva* during the later part of her political life. This drift from the nationalist tradition did irreparable damage to the image of the Congress as an ‘umbrella party’ and it has never been able to regain its lost glory. Communalism had made untold damage to Indian secularism. The Babri-Masjid demolition was a great blow to Indian secularism and the Bombay riots of 1992 and 1993 tarnished, internationally, the image of India as a secular nation. The Godhra riots, which were the last in a series of major riots, made irretrievable damage to the prestige of the Indian nation and government.

In Kerala communal consciousness of the people was so strong that in the second half of the 19th century there arose a
large number of communal organizations. The Malayali Memorial was the first sign of political awakening in Travancore. All Travancore Joint Political Congress was the first of its kind, a trans-communal organization, of different communities especially of avarnas. The Abstention Movement a result of this political get-together and the first collective fight for due share in representative institutions and public services.

The first political party in Travancore found its origin in the formation of Travancore State Congress on February 23, 1938. Its formation, cutting across all caste and communal loyalties for greater secular needs, was a landmark move in the secularization of Kerala society. The victory of communists in the first elections to the Kerala Assembly was remarkable in many respects. Political segmentation of communities, which began as a result of the development of political consciousness, was evident in this election. The agitation popularly known as ‘Vimochana Samaram’ was organized by different communities which resulted in the ousting of the first elected (communists) government in Kerala, after its reorganization on linguistic basis, in 1959.
Along with communal consciousness, secular consciousness also developed among the people, perhaps, in a much greater pace, during this period. The communal exhortation during poll-eve times and otherwise igniting much lesser warmth testifies this developing trend. That is the reason why the recent poll-eve exhortations by the hierarchies were limited to giving only some general guidelines. Though many factors have contributed to the development of secularization of Kerala society, the most notable among them are teaching of religious leaders like Sree Narayana Guru, spread of education, British rule, economic advancement and migrations. The increasing political segmentation of communities, as reflected in recent elections in the state especially to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly, is a positive sign of growing secularization of Kerala society.
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