CHAPTER - V

SYRIAN CHRISTIANS APPROACH TOWARDS UDF AND LDF
SYRIAN CHRISTIANS APPROACH TOWARDS UDF AND LDF

Kerala is a hot bed of community politics compared to the other states of the Republic of India. The politics of Kerala is centred around religion, caste and community. In this chapter we would highlight the political lenience of Syrian Christian community towards the United Democratic Front led by the Congress party and Left Democratic Front led by the Marxist party. The Christian community had a long term political fidelity to and intimate relationship with the UDF led by the Congress while they had no affinity with the LDF led by the Marxist Party. When we examine the growth of community politics from the time of independence till 1977, this community was politically very much affiliated to and connected with the Congress party. But when we go through the political scenario of Kerala after the year 1977 we can understand that there was a slow but steady change in approach of the Syrian Christian community from the UDF to the LDF. But as a whole while we make a detailed analysis of Kerala politics by taking into account of the successive governments, the Syrian Christian community was supporting the UDF led by the Congress. When we make a study of the growth of community politics in Kerala, it is quite evident that the Syrian Christian community had an inclination towards the UDF.
Right from the origin of the Indian National Congress, the Syrian Christians of Kerala were supporting Congress. The political movements of the Christian community began in Kerala against the misrule of the Princes of Kerala State. The Christian community was a well-organized and coherent community in a hierarchical order. This accelerated the rise of the Christians in social position. The Christian community participated in the freedom struggle under the banner of Indian National Congress. After the independence of India, the Syrian Christians of Kerala have been playing a decisive role in the politics of Kerala.

After Independence, the Travancore State Congress tried for responsible government in Travancore. But the state Congress was independent of the Indian National Congress. In order to form a responsible government in Travancore, an Administrative Reform Committee (ARC) was formed on the basis of the agreement between the government of Travancore Princely state and the Congress party. As a result of the agreement, many got representation based on their own community organizations. The NSS (an organization of the Nair community, SNDP (an organization of the Ezhava community, Latin Catholics (a backward community among Christians), Muslim League, S.C. federation, the
Hindu Mahasabha and the Chamber of Commerce etc. secured their positions.

The Administrative reform committee was a powerful decision making body. Since the seats were allotted on the basis of communities it became a body of various communities. As a result the Congress Party did not get a clear majority in the committee. It showed that the party was not sure of its popularity among the people independent of the support of the various communal organizations. Thus it appears that community functioned with a common cause became the foundation of all political institutions and public life in Kerala. This is the inevitable consequence of the influence of various communities in the Congress Party. Many of the communities were against responsible government and supported the rule of the Maharaja, the Syrian Christian community stood behind the State Congress Party and supported a responsible government and they did not favour the rule of the Maharaja. From this we can understand that even before independence communities were playing a dominant role in the politics of Kerala. Like any other community, the Christian community was also involved in the politics of Kerala. The best example is the Christian’s participation in

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1 Ramakrishnan, Nair R., The Successive Kerala Governments, Trivandrum: Kerala University Political Science Academy, 1976, p.28.
the Administrative Reform Committee constituted by the government of Kerala.

**The first democratically elected government**

The first popular elections based on adult franchise were held in Travancore-Cochin from February 2 to 16, 1948 for 120 seats of the State Legislative Assembly. Out of 120 seats in the Legislative Assembly, the Congress won 97 seats. The people of Kerala clearly paid a handsome tribute to the Congress party for its stewardship in the struggle for freedom and winning independence. Indian National Congress in its effort to keep its strength and unity, gave representation to all communities in the state. According to George Woodcock "The very choice of men for the first Travancore Ministry was an admission of the powerful communities". Kerala centres around four communities. Their the Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. All these communities were properly balanced and the Travancore state Congress came into existence out of the inter-caste alliance. The result was that the first legislature consisted of members belonging to the various community organisations. When the first Ministry was constituted, all

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communities were given proper representation. Pattam Thanu Pillai from the Nair community was made the C.M and T.M. Varghese from the Syrian Christian community and C.Kesavan from the Ezhava community were made ministers in the three member cabinet. The Syrian Christian Community under the leadership of T.M.Varghese supported Congress party. Pattam felt that the Syrian Christians might turn against him with Varghese as leader. He calculated that the Nairs would support him in the struggle for power among the various communities under the banner of Congress party. It was a government under the shadow of various communities. All these communities were behind Congress and they were suspecting the other community in the struggle for power. The Nair community under Pattam and the Syrian Christian community under T.M. Varghese were trying to establish their political supremacy under the clout of the Congress party. Pattam government fell because of the community rivalry and misunderstanding between Nair and Syrian Christian community for establishing their political supremacy. The Cheif Minister resigned accusing that the Syrian Christians are against him. The discontented Nair leader Pattam left Congress and joined the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). The position of the various political parties in the Assembly was as follows.
The Congress party 97 seats  80.9%
The TTNC 14 seats  11.7%
The Muslim League 8 seats  6.6%
Independents 1 seat  0.8%

Total 120 seats  100%


**Issues related to the Ministry**

1. The first conflict ensued on the question of Congress party presidentship arose. Pattam was asked to resign from the Congress Party presidentship on the ground that the same person could not hold two offices.

2. Meanwhile Pattam Thanu Pillai expanded the ministry to include more members from his community and thus fortified his position in the government. The Syrian Christian leader Varghese and Ezhava community leader threatened to resign if the new ministers were not dropped from the cabinet.

3. Land reform introduced by Pattam was dropped because of the opposition from the Syrian Christian community. In the first ministry, there was rivalry between various communities for power and the advanced Nair community was trying to dominate

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5 The Kerala Mail, February 14, 1960, p.9.
Congress. But the Syrian Christian community was highly privileged to get a birth in the government and was supporting the Congress party.

The Second Ministry of Pattam

As C.M, Pattam headed the second ministry, internal conflict soon reflected itself in the functioning of the cabinet. The C.M. Pattam who at the same time functioned as President of the Congress, found his ministerial colleagues poised against him. The upshot was that the C.M. sought to reinforce his hand and without consulting his two colleagues, enlarged the cabinet on July 13, 1948 by taking his allies K.M. Korah, A.Achuthan, G.Ramachandran and P.S. Nataraja Pillai into the cabinet 48 hours after he had sworn in.

The second ministry was also a government based on the priority of three major communities viz Nairs, Syrian Christian and Ezhavas. He acted in the role of C.M and also in the role of the President of the Congress Party. It was opposed by his own cabinet colleagues T.M. Varghese and C. Kesavan. The quarrel for power among the various communities transformed the Congress into a minority party within a few years, only those features which relate to our subject would be touched upon.⁶

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The Third ministry

It was constituted under T.K. Narayana Pillai, another prominent leader of the Congress hailing from the Nair community. The Christian community extended its support to the Narayana Pillai government. His government continued in office till 1949, when the Princely state of Cochin was merged with the Travancore State. The majority of the Nairs walked out of the Congress party and joined the Socialist party along with the former C.M. When Narayana Pillai took the reins of the government, the balance shifted in favour of the Syrian Christians in the Congress party. The Ezhava leader C. Kesavan stood with the Congress party. Although Kesavan remained within the Congress, the Ezhava community, threatened by Christian dominance increasingly shifted their support from the Congress to the Communist party. When Ezavas and Nairs left the Congress Party, the Syrian Christians became a powerful community in the Congress Party.

Under the leadership of T.K. Narayana Pillai a new cabinet was sworn in on Oct 22, 1948. The focus of power was not abolished and the new president of the party, T.K. Narayana Pillai assumed the charge of the President of the Congress party as well as the C.M. His cabinet consisted of A.J. John, K.R. Elangath, V.O.

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The consolidation was completed on December 6, 1948, when T.V. Thomas was elected speaker of the state Legislative Assembly. T.K. Narayana Pillai's cabinet was a conglomeration of the dominant communities such as the Syrian Christians, Nairs and Ezhavas.

**Fourth Ministry**

The new cabinet remained in power without changes until July 1, 1949. The Central Government decided to unify Travancore and Cochin into one state, known as Tirukochi. The Union government announced that the Maharaja of Travancore would be the Rajapramukh of the new state. The unification of the two princely states brought about the reorganization of the cabinet which was formed on July 1, 1949. It consisted of Chief Minister T.K. Narayana Pillai, Panampally Govinda Menon, Ikkanda Warrier, A.J John, K. Ayyappan, E.K. Madhavan and T.A Abdullah. The State Legislative Assembly elected T.M. Varghese to the Chairmanship. The ministry headed by T.K. Narayan Pillai consisted of all communities.

The unification of Travancore and Cochin presented a new apple of discord into the already faction-ridden Congress Party, and now parochialism and regionalism began to dominate. The underlying cause of more intensive factional struggle was the
election of T.K. Narya Pillai as the President of the Tirukochi Congress Party. When Tirukochi was formed as a new state, the community equation also made visible. It is precisely because the Christian number increased in the Congress party.

**Fifth Ministry**

The adjustment in the balance of regional forces operating within the Congress was not a lasting achievement. A new struggle for the control of the party and cabinet, between the Travancore and the Cochin groups, reached a critical point and the cabinet was forced to resign on February 24, 1951. This time the Chief Minister post was placed in the hands of C. Kesavan, who thought that by reducing the number of cabinet birth that he could eliminate the factional strife based on community. His cabinet consisted of three members: himself, T.K. Narayana Pillai and A.J. John. The Congress leaders from the former Cochin Princely State was not happy with the Chief Minister. Their leader Panampally Govinda Menon, threatened to resign from the Assembly in order to defeat the government headed by T.K. Narayana Pillai. The internal strife in the Congress party compelled Narayana Pillai to resign from the Chief Minister post. C. Kesavan a prominent leader of the Congress from the Ezhava community was elected as the Chief Minister.

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* Victor M. Fiegs, Kerala: Yanon of India, op.cit, p.36.
The ministry headed by Kesavan was also not free from internal strife and contradiction. After the formation of Tirukochi as a new state, regionalism played an important role. Kesavan's cabinet was a small body of ministers consisting of Ezhava, Nair and a Syrian Catholic. Here a proper balance of community was quite visible. Here again we can see that Congress party and the government constituted under the stewardship of C. Kesavan was not an exception to community politics. His government was an amalgam of three major communities of Kerala. Shifting coalition caste and community, both have rocked each successive governments. By seeing the political situation of Kerala we can see that each community “tried to establish that democracy is the rule of its community... and laboured to control govt.... influence the governmental officials through corrupt practices to get things done for their community^10.

Sixth Ministry

The inability of the Congress to provide the people of Kerala with a stable government, in spite of its large parliamentary majority, had such a bad effect upon the public that the party realized that it could no longer afford the internal dissent. This prompted the warring groups to restore unity, to some degree by re-

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9 The Mathubhoomi daily (Malayalam), Editorial, March, 2, 1951.
electing Kesavan as the leader of the Congress party. Kesavan then agreed to accommodate the Cochin group by enlarging his cabinet. His new cabinet, formed on September 6, 1951, was composed of K.M. Kora, G.Chandrasekhar Pillai, L.M.Pylee and P.K. Kutti Krishna Menon. Meanwhile T.M. Varghese resigned his membership from the Congress party. A.M. Thomas, another Syrian Christian, was elected to the Chairmanship of the state Assembly. The sixth ministry lasted until the formation of a new cabinet, which was set up as a result of the first general elections, held India from December 1951 to January 1952.

The continuous struggle for power was not without effect upon the party itself. The struggle for power among the various communities weakened the Congress Party.

Seventh Ministry

The seventh ministry of the Congress party was the result of the general elections, held in Travancore-Cochin from December 10, 1951 to January 5, 1952. Subsequent to the unification of Travancore and Cochin into one state, the number of seats in the state Legislative Assembly was increased to 109. In the 1948 elections Congress enjoyed an almost hundred percent monopoly in the Legislative Assembly. But in the 1952 elections Congress secured only 44 seats in the house of 109 seats. In the 1952 elections Christians constituted 48% of the Congress representatives in the
Assembly. The Syrian Christian community stood with the Congress party, while the backward Ezhava community stood with the Communist Party. However, the nair community extented their support to the Socialist Party. The unification of Travancore and Cochin was a blessing for the Syrian Christian community because they became powerful in the Congress.

Assembly Elections -1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Contested</th>
<th>Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Parties and Independents</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>358</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


No party got absolute majority in the election and nobody could stake their claim to make their own government. The Congress formed a government with the support of the TTNC and the PSP and independents and one nominated independent member. With the help of these parties Congress commanded 57 seats in the house of 109. The number of seats of each party in the coalition like this – Congress: 44, TTNC: 8, PSP: 2, Independent: 2 and nominated: 1.

A. J. John from the Syrian Christian Community became the new Chief Minister. Panampally Govinda Menon, T.M. Varghesee, Kalathil Velayudan Nair, V. Madhavan, K. Kochukuttan and Chidambara Nadar were the new ministers in his ministry. By the time, not regionalism but communalism played the dominant role in the election of the Congress president and the formation of the new cabinet. A Syrian Christian, A.J. John, was elected president by defeating a rival Hindu candidate, Panampally Govinda Menon, by two votes in the party caucus.

The general elections of 1952, and the formation of the new cabinet, stabilized the volatile situation in the state only for a while. The new ministry under John had representation from all communities. “There was representation for all the communal and regional elements in the Congress party.”

13 Mathrubhoomi, Malayalam Daily, March 15, 1952.
TTNC were against John because John belonged to the Syrian Catholic community. Christians of southern Travancore dominated the TTNC. In the 1952 elections to form a viable coalition government was formed. The community affinity of the Congress with the TTNC made it possible for a winning coalition for it. The issues that precipitated the new crisis within the party was the resistance of the TTNC group to the pressure urging its dissolution and unification with the main body of the Congress. The TTNC stood for seceding kanaykuamri of the southern part of the former state of Travancore to Madras state because that area majority of the people were speaking Tamil. This was strongly opposed by the Congress, which demanded a vote of confidence on the issue in the Assembly. When the voting took place, the TTNC withdrew its support to the government.

As a result the confidence motion was defeated by 56 to 51 votes on Sept 23, 1953. After the defeat of the confidence motion proposed by the government, the assembly was dissolved and fresh mid-term elections called for, while the cabinet continued functioning as a caretaker.¹⁴

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Mid-term election 1954

Influential Hindus opposed the Congress during the mid-term elections. HinduMandalam, the cultural organization of the Hindus, was highly critical of the Congress for showing undue favouritism towards Christians.15 The open support of Syrian Catholics as well as Latin Catholics made Congress unpopular among the other sections of the population.16

A.K.Gopalan wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru the Prime Minister of India, “Almost all Church in Travancore –Cochin have been turned into election office for the Congress party”.17 The PSP made an electoral alliance with the (UF) united front leftists headed by the communists.18 The PSP was supported by the entire Nair Community and it was led by the veteran political leader and former Congress C.M. pattam who deserted Congress party and joined the PSP. He left the Congress and joined the PSP owing to increasing power of the Christians in the Congress party. The Nairs and the Ezhavas joined together under the umbrella UF, led by the Communist Party, in opposition to the communal relationship

between the Syrian Catholic Community and the Congress party. In short the 1954 election was a significant struggle of these three major communities supporting Congress party and communist party.

In the 1954 elections the Congress majority constituencies were dominated by the predominantly Christians in central Kerla, the areas inhabited chiefly by small landlords from the Christian and the Nair communities.

Table of 1954 elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Contested</th>
<th>Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNC</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist party</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jansangh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCPI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>255</strong></td>
<td><strong>117</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total seats in the Assembly: 118, seats won: 117, Nominated seat: 1


Eighth Ministry: PSP Minority Government

In the 1954 mid-term elections no party could muster a clear majority to stake its claim to form a government. Given this new correlation of forces, the leadership of the Congress plunged into hectic negotiations with the opposition parties for the setting up of the new cabinet. But the United Front of the leftist’s parties could not be broken, nor could the PSP be won over. In the meantime the Congress High Command gave the permission to the Congress party in Kerala that they have no objection to a minority PSP cabinet backed in the Assembly by Congress. The PSP proved well disposed to the proposal. The PSP’s ideology of democratic socialism, and the experience of the Socialist parties of some countries prevented them to extend their support to Communist party to form a government. Finally the PSP decided to cooperate with Congress to form the government.

The Government constitute under the stewardship of PSP had only 19 seats in the house of 180 members. It was a minority government. Here we can see the domination of Nair community in the entire political senario of Kerala. The Nairs left the Congress and supported PSP with Pattam as their leader. They left the Congress not for any ideological difference but it was precisely because the Syrian Christian community was emerging as a dominat
group in the Congress and the relative decline of Nair dominance in the Congress.

**Ninth Ministry**

The PSP Ministry of Pattam Thanu Pillai, which was installed in power as a consequence result of the March 1954 mid-term elections, lasted 11 months. The PSP government introduced many progressive measures for the well being of the people of Kerala. The Congress party was really afraid that such progressive measures of the government may ultimately diminish the influence of the Congress Party in Kerala. So they withdrew their support to the PSP government and the Pattam government lost the majority and the government fell.

Later Panampally Govinda Menon was elected the President of the Congress party. During this time TTNC organized a campaign of agitation demanding the incorporation of Kanyakumari to Tamil Nadu because most of the people of that area speak Tamil language.\(^{21}\)

The progressive labour policy affected the government negatively. During this time two PSP MLA’s defected from the party.

and joined Congress. The Congress leader Panampally made use of the chance to pull down the PSP and to form a government led by the Congress party. In the house of 118 MLA’s, he got the support of 60 members. For that he first secured the support of 12 MLA’s of TTNC who were not happy with Pattam who tried to suppress Kanyakumari movement supported by the TTNC. The last phase of the coup de grace was executed by one member of the TTNC, who moved a no-confidence motion against the PSP regime on February 8, 1955. When TTNC moved a no-confidence motion against Pattam, the Congress supported this move, while the Communists remained neutral and the PSP it was doomed. This led to the formation of a new alliance between the Congress and TTNC. This new alliance voted out the government led by PSP, and installed a new government in Feb 1955.

Panampally Govinda Menon the leader of the Congress in the Legislative Assembly led the new government. It was the 10th ministry in Kerala since independence. It was a coalition government led by PSP and supported by Congress and TTNC. The ministry fell due to the vote of no confidence which was brought by TTNC and supported by the Congress. The Community interest of


various communities such as Syrian Christians and Nairs had rivalry among themselves for the domination of their community in politics. Hence these predominant communities of Kerala was using politics as a weapon to protect their communities interest. This community rivalry between Christians and Nairs was the main cause of the fall of the government.

**Tenth Ministry**

The tenth government was constituted under Panampally Govinda Menon. During this time crisis originated within the Congress members in the Assembly. A group of Congress MLA’s turned against the Chief Minister Panampally and demanded his resignation.

The rebels demanded the resignation of Panampilly’s cabinet because it had failed to make the Congress High Command to reject the suggestion of the State Reorganization Commission proposing the secession of the Tamil-speaking taluks from Travancore-Cochin and their incorporation into Madras state. In fact, this group led a movement called Akhanda Kerala, which campaigned for the rejection of the State Reorganization Commission’s proposal and the continuation of the Tamil-taluks within the Travancore-Cochin state. The pressure from the centre, and the visit of the Congress
president, U.N. Dhebar, to Kerala in order to unify the party by imposing disciplinary action against the rebels, proved of no avail.24

The conflict over the Akhanda Kerala movement, taking place within the Congress party, soon engulfed the House. The six rebels declared that they would not support the budget proposals, in the assembly on March 15, 1956, because they considered themselves no more members of the Congress parliamentary party. Such a step would have reduced the majority of the Congress from 60 to 54 votes. The ministry resigned on March 1956 when six Congress MLA’s voted against the C.M. there by reducing the Congress into a minority.25 The Presidents rule was imposed in Kerala. The fall of Panampally ministry inaugurated a period of hectic political activity in the state.

The Communist party and Kerala politics

After the fall of the Congress Ministry under Panampally, Central government tried to impose president’s rule in Kerala. But

24 New Age, March 18,1956,pp.1and 16.'For the interference of the Centre in the affairs of the Kerala Congress and Dehars visit to the State, S.V. Krishnan., ‘Travancore-Cochin Congress; Charges and counter charge. Here fails in Rapprochement Mission,’ New Age, Vol.III, No.39, June 24, 1956, p.2; also Unnikrishnan, S.V., ‘Travancore-Cochin rebels ultimatum’, New Age, Vol.III.No.41, July 8, 1956, p.13. the 21 rebels of Congress party met in a conference at the end of June 1956 to decided what action should be taken against the disciplinary measures imposed by New Delhi upon 8 of them. They presented the Delhi leadership with An ultimatum demanding the lifting of the ban on their activities, and no objection rose against the Akhanda Kerala Movement, which they led. Also see, New Age, Travancore-Cochin cabinet crisis created by Quarrels inside the Congress, Vol.III, No.25, March 18, 1956, p.1 and 16.

the Communist party was particularly keen to avoid President’s rule, because it was leading a popular movement demanding the formation of United Kerala, the so called Aikya Kerala Movement, which was rapidly gaining momentum. In view of this, and also because of the forthcoming general elections, to be held early in 1957, the party feared that the imposition of Presidential Rule would prevent the movement from fully unfolding its potential and thwart the party’s chances for electoral success. The Communists tried to woo the PSP to form a new government under PSP and tried to avoid the mid term elections. Meanwhile, the Central government appointed P.S. Rao as the Adviser to the Rajpramukh. MR. P.S.Rao made a declaration of the President of the Union of India to the effect that until November 18, 1956, the State would be under President’s rule.

The participation of the major communities in politics was one of the major reasons behind it. All the major communities in Kerala were jostling one another that their community should be prominent. It was a struggle for domination of one community over

26 New Age, The Community members of the Loksabha vehemently opposed the imposition of the President’s Rule upon Kerala. For the debate in the Loksabha, on March 29, 1956, see ‘suppression of democracy in Tranvancore-Cochin comes under fire’, Vol. III, No. 27, April, 1956, pp. 16.

the other. The advanced Nair community was trying to dominate the entire political scenario under the umbrella of Congress. So also the Syrian Christian community and Ezhava community. When one community tried to dominate the other two communities joined together and thwarted such attempts. The Nair community failed to capture and dominate Congress party and the reigns of power, they failed in their attempt due to the resistance of the Syrian Christian and the Ezhava community. A sizable number of Nairs left Congress and joint the PSP. A good number of Ezhavas from that community left Congress and joined the Communist party. Most of the Ezhavas were poor agricultural labours and toddy tapers. Finally the Christian community was the only major community stayed with the Congress. The community rivalry for power among the major communities affected Congress party and it was a blessing for the Communist party.

ELECTIONS OF 1957

The downfall of the Congress ministry led towards another election in Kerala. As the leading party in Kerala was unable to face the 1957 elections because Congress failed to give a strong government for the people of Kerala and their internal struggle for power and rivalry among that parties leaders as well as the lenience towards various communities lost the morale of the Congress party
among the voters. The Communist party, however, carefully listened and then based its strategy upon harnessing that nationalism and cultural renaissance to its electoral campaign.²⁸

The problem of Communist party was how to place the party at the helm of the new national and cultural upsurge and make the electorate recognize in it the successor of the Congress. During this time the veteran Communist leader E.M.S. Namboodiripad, in an important work entitled "The National Question in Kerala" wrote in 1952, the underestimation of the national factor in working out the tactics of the revolution, in the failure to realise that the Communists in a colonial country can fulfill their class task only if they take proper account of the fact that the national aspirations are the decisive political factors in a colonial country.²⁹ The Communist supported the Aikya Kerala Movement. The aim of the movement was to carve a state comprising all the Malayalam speaking areas of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar.³⁰

During the 1956 elections the Communist party decided to make alliances with PSP and to make a united front in order to

²⁸ Naboothiripad, E.M.S., 'The national Question in Kerala, Bombay: (People’s publishing House)', 1952, p.154.
³⁰ E.M.S. Namboodiripad, New Age 'Let us strive for united action. Policy statement of the PSP and of the Socialist party show that, despite differences with the Communists, there is a vast area of agreement,' Vol. II, No.16, January 15, 1956, pp.3 and 12.
defeat the Congress party in the forthcoming elections. The leader of the Communist party Naboodiripad said that "it is not possible today for any of the opposition parties, either singly or collectively, to replace the Congress Government and to establish a government that is pledged to the defence of the interests of the working people". The Communist party was trying her level best to forge an alliance with all parties and individuals ready to agree to a common programme of forming an alternative government in order "to prevent the Congress from returning to power." Namboodiripad elaborated upon the meaning of the Ernakulam resolution in an article entitled "united Front also can build democratic and prosperous Kerala".

The legislative Assembly Elections of 1957

It was through the ballot box that the leadership of Kerala was formally transferred in to the hands of the Communist party. It will be recalled that for some time the party had already been the undisputed leader of the movement for national renaissance. The general elections of 1957 merely projected this dominant position

31 New Age, 'For the resolution of the Ernakulam session of the party,' see New Age, 'Kerala Committee of the Communist party of India: Unity in programme and the Formation of the alternative Government,' Vol. IV, No.4, October 21, 1956, p.6.
into the political sphere, giving it a concrete expression in the form of vote polled and seats won.

**Total Number of Constituencies in the Kerala Assembly were 126**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unopposed</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total seats</strong></td>
<td><strong>389</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources.\(^{34}\) The Report of the General Elections 1957 Published by the Government of Kerala.

In the election Communist party emerged as the second largest in terms of the votes polled, having won 34.98 percent of the votes cast, but largest in terms of the seats won, having secured 47.6 percent of seats in the Assembly. The Congress won 37.45 percent of the votes cast, and 34.1 percent of seats. True, Congress still remained the largest party in the state, polling 2.47 percent of votes more than the Communist party. It was only in the elections to the

state Legislative Assembly that the Congress retained the position of
the largest party in the state in terms of the votes polled. The votes
polled for the election of the deputies which Kerala would send to
the Loksabha, the federal parliament in New Delhi, placed the
Communist party in the leading position by giving it 37.2 percent of
votes, against the Congress 36.1 percent votes.  

Community's participation in the elections:

The voting pattern in Kerala is strictly a communitarian affair,
and that the communities vote on communal lines. In the 1957
general elections the Hindu community, accounting for 61.0 per cent
of the population of Kerala, elected 88 Hindu deputies, which is
69.8 per cent of the seats of the Assembly. The Christian community
of 21.3 per cent elected 26 Christian deputies, which is 20.6 per cent
of seats in the house. The Muslim community of 17.7 percent
elected 12 Muslim deputies, which is 9.6 per cent. Thus while the
Hindu and Christian communities voted strictly based on community
lines, the strength of the Muslim community failed to assert itself.
The disparity between the Muslim community (17.7 per cent),and
the percentage of the Muslim deputies elected (9.6 per cent), can be
attributed to the fact that a part of the female section of the Muslim

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community failed to vote. According to K.R. Narayanan, General secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, which is the organization of the Ezhavas, that the Ezhava community had contributed 30,000 to the 60,000 members of the Communist Party of Kerala full 50 per cent of the party’s membership. The Nair community which had voted for the Congress in the early post-independence days, then shifted its loyalty to the PSP and, in 1957, supported the Communist Party. The shift in the voting pattern of the Nair community in favour of the Communist, as, had already been said, was responsible for the victory of the Communist party in 1957. While Hindus backed the Communist party, Christians voted for the Congress. As stated above the Christian community of 21.3 per cent elected 26 Christian deputies, which is of 20.6 per cent of seats in the house.

The formation of the Government

After the election, the Communist party emerged as the largest party in Kerala. In the Assembly of 126, with the support of 5 independents they were able to secure a working majority to form the government. E.M.Sankar Namboodiripad the leader of the party was called upon to form the government. This was the first Communist government in the world to come to power through

\[36\] The Malabar Herald, September 27,158.
ballot box. Therefore it may be argued that the Communists came to power on the strength of anti-Congress votes.\textsuperscript{37} The Communist Ministry, as soon as it assumed power said that they will work within the frame work of the Constitution and would not go beyond the second plan on the economic front, except to insist on a fair deal ‘for Kerala’. They promised a clean and efficient administration.\textsuperscript{38}

They introduced revolutionary reforms in Kerala such as the landreform bill, nationalisation of private schools. These reforms caused anger among the foreward communities such as the Syrian Christians and the Nairs. The educational reform affected the Muslim community. All these communites joined together and agitated against the policy of the government. It challenged the government and affected the peaceful atmosphere of the state. The law and order situation was deteriorating. Taking into account of the situation in Kerala the government headed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad was suspended by the Central Government and introduced President’s rule in Kerala.

\textsuperscript{37} ‘Question mark over Kerala,’ Editorial, The Economic weekly, IX, March 30, 1957.

\textsuperscript{38} ‘Swatantra’s opportunity in Kerala’, The Economic Weekly, August 29, 1964, P. 1628.
Mid-term elections in 1960

After the fall of the Communist ministry Kerala has to face another election to induct a new government.\(^\text{39}\) The fall of the government called forth the mid-term elections in 1960.\(^\text{40}\) Community power struggle was prominent in the 1960 elections. In the 1960 mid-term elections the anti-Communist alliance of Congress –PSP and Muslim League fought the election with the good will, they had in the liberation struggle.\(^\text{41}\) Community involvement led to communalism between various communities. “More than vulgarities of politics and crude emotionalism for the purpose of the elections, the really potent danger arose from the exploitations of communalism.”\(^\text{42}\) The 1960 election was a polarization of two fronts one is led by Congress party and the other by the Communist Party.\(^\text{43}\) The partners in the front led by Congress were PSP and Muslim League. The partners led by the Communist party were RSP, KSP and Lohia Socialists.

\(^\text{40}\) Link, Delhi: Vol. 22, No. 26 January 26, 1960, p. 12
\(^\text{41}\) ‘Election prospects’, The Economic Weekly, XII, January 16, 1960, p. 76.
\(^\text{42}\) Ibid., XII, January 16, 1960, p. 78.
\(^\text{43}\) Ibid., XII, January 16, 1960, p. 83.
Election to the Legislative Assembly in 1960.

Total seats 126

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Independents</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohia Socialist Party</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jansangh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>308</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Congress PSP-Muslim League alliance won 93 seats as against the Communists, who were victorious only in 26 seats. The Communists were weakened could improve their strength by 3.3% whereas the alliance could gain an increase only 0.2% of votes in
comparison to their percentage. The new government under C.M. Pattam the leader of the PSP, Congress-PSP coalition ministry assumed office on 22 February 1960. When the government was formed Congress was unwilling to take Muslim League in the government. The Congress party high command leaders like Morarji Desai and sardar Govind Vallabha Pant indicated that they could prefer to do without League Company in the cabinet. The new government modified the disputed clauses of the education Bill, relating to the appointment, payment, transfer and pension of teachers and the freedom the Managers were enjoying was essentially re-established. And again another controversial bill introduced by the Communist government, the President with a few modifications, which did not touch the essence of the Bill, returned the Agrarian relations bill. The new government showed no interest in implementing the law. The Congress PSP coalition government did not last long. It is mainly because of two reasons. (1). Pattam’s domineering ways and (2) ambition of Congress leaders to become the Chief Minister.

45 The Election Commission of India, Report on the general Election to the Kerala Legislative Assembly, New Delhi: 1960, p.33ff.
47 Link, Delhi: February 14, 1960, p.10.
The PSP walked out of the coalition and the government fell. According to Hardgrave, a leading American writer and author of Kerala political situations in his studies about the Kerala government. He said that Communal dimension was crystallizing around the Christian Home Minister P.T. Chacko and the Ezhava deputy Chief Minister R.Sankar. The Syrian Christians were a dominating community in the Congress.\(^{48}\) In order to get the support of the Ezhava community, Kamaraj Nadar in his official capacity as the President of the Congress Party declared that R. Sankar will be the Chief Minister of Kerala. This act of making Sankar as the C.M. of Kerala accelerated community rivalry between the Nairs and other leading community like Christians and Ezhavas. This rivalry of communities ended in the exit of the PSP from the government.

Issues: (1). At the time of ministerial reshuffle following the exit of the PSP, P.T.Chacko Congress leader as well as a prominent figure among the Syrian Catholic community asked two favours. First to expand his portfolio, second to include Alexander Parampithara, a Latin Catholic MLA, in the Ministry so as to get proper representation for the Latin Catholic community because of its consistent support to Congress. At this time the leader of the NSS (organ of the Nair Community) demanded the induction of a

Nair in the cabinet. The Congress General Secretary allowed P.T. Chacko to expand his portfolio, including law and revenue, but no Latin Catholic nominee was taken in. As a result the Nair Christian balance in the ministry was maintained. The Nair—Syrian Christian confrontation again surfaced at the time of the election of KPCC (Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee) President. Damodara Menon Nair nominated himself as likely the candidate to capture the votes of Malabar region of Kerala as well as the Nair community. While the prominent Syrian Catholic leader P.T. Chacko had nominated his own candidate to become the KPCC President. The election verdict went against Chacko and the Christians, while Damodara Menon from the Nair community was elected. Another issue faced by the government was the rivalry between Nair and Christian community went to the climax while Chacko dismissed two highly placed administrative officials, both of them were from the Nair community. Mannam the leader of the Nair community was provoked by the action of P.T. Chacko. During this time a no-confidence motion was brought by opposition against Sankar Ministry and it was defeated by the Ezhava-Christian coalition. The ministerial wing of Sankar-Chacko lost in the organizational elections to the state and the district Congress.

49 'Kerala After Coalition Collapse,' The Economic Weekly, October 20, 1962, p. 1653.
50 'Ibid', p.1953.
committee that was dominated by the Nairs from the Malabar region, Alleppy and Trivandrum.  

Meanwhile Fr. Vadakkan, a Syrian Catholic priest made a hunger strike to protect the interest of the Syrian Catholic settlers in Chulli-Keerithode area in higher ranges of Kerala. P.T. Chacko supported this movement enunciated by Fr. Vadakkan against the government. Fr. Vadakkan was one of the pioneers of Vimochanasamaram (Liberation struggle) in Kerala. The eviction of Catholics from keerithode forest area was a tragic show of force on the part of the State. Sankar did not help the settlers problem. Chacko supported them. The leader of the Nair community Mannam supported P.T. Chacko. According to Mannam Chacko was the only person who could save Kerala from the Ezhava dominance, because Nairs were not happy that R. Sankar from the Ezhava community was made the Chief Minister of Kerala. Taking into account of this view, the Muslim League too supported Chacko. They supported Chacko because they understood by supporting Chacko, their community and their party can make political advantages. Fr. Vadakkan's movement was supported by A.K.

54 Ibid, p.612.
Gopalan the leader of the Communist Party. This may the first instance for the Syrian Christian community to tilt towards Communists at least emotionally.

Taking into account of the situation, C.M. “K.M. Joseph General secretary of the Catholic Congress attacked R.Sankar and characterized him as an arch communalist. From this remark it was clear that Chacko was enjoying support of the Syrian Christian community. Since he turned against the Ezhavas, the Nair community also extended their support through their veteran leader Mannam. P.T. Chacko was the Home Minister of Kerala. Following a scandal he was forced to resign from the government. After few months Chacko died due to a massive heart attack. The power struggle between the various communities led to the fall of Sankar government.

Birth of Kerala Congress

A month after the death of P.T. Chacko on August 1, 1964, 15 Congress MLA’s of the supporters of Chacko joined the opposition and voted a no-confidence motion against Sankar government. The government headed by Sankar fell. The Congress High Command

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56 The Indian Express, Madurai: June 18, 1964.
suspended 15 MLAs from the Congress party. Afterwards Congressmen loyal to Sri P.T. Chacko joined together and formed a new political party: The Keala Congress. Thus Kerala Congress was born as a new Political party in the political horizons of Kerala on October 9, 1964 under the leadership of K.M. George. It was a humiliation for the Syrian Christian community especially for the Syrian Catholics. A good number of people from the Syrian Christian community mainly the Syrian Catholics and a sizable number of Nairs under the influence of Mannam extented their support to Kerala Congress. It was nothing but the political undercurrents of the state that led to the formation of this new political party. The birth of Kerala Congress as a regional party terribly affected the traditional vote banks of the Congress party. Some of the landlords from the Syrian Christian community extended their support to Kerala Congress.

Objectivies and Programmes of Kerala Congress

The birth of Kerala Congress was the aftermath of community politics in Kerala. The major communities of Kerala especially the Christians, Nairs and Ezhavas were struggling for

power under the umbrella of Congress party. Kerala Congress was a party mainly dominated by the Syrian Christian community.

The aim of Kerala Congress is to build a classless and socialist society through democratic means. It supported the gradual implementation of the planned development schemes with a view to uplift the standard of living of the people by increasing wealth of the nation. And more freedom and power for states in the Union.

**Mid-term election to the Legislative Assembly in 1965**

One of the major events in Kerala politics is the split in the Congress party and the birth of the Kerala Congress. After the birth of Kerala Congress it became inevitable for mid term election. Kerala Congress made an electoral understanding with PSP a leftist party. One of the major events in Kerala politics is the split in the Congress and the Communist parties. One of the remarkable features of 1965 elections was the rout of the CPI and the emergence of CPI(M) as the single largest party, impressive performance of the Kerala Congress and the mighty decline of Congress party in Kerala. In the election no single party. Won the majority of seats for the formation of ministry. The Syrian Christian community and the Nair Community supported the Kerala Congress. They could capture seats mainly from Kottayam and Ernakulam Dts; and the
Communities such as the Syrian Christians and the Nairs played an important part in the 1965 elections.  

Table: Position of Political parties in the Kerala Legislative Elections 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Seats secured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samyuktha Socialist Party</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jansangh</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantrata Party</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>558</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Why Syrian Christians supported Kerala Congress?

The Syrian Christian community supported Kerala Congress for the following reasons. The birth of Kerala Congress as a regional party is not different from that of the Congress Party. It was always siding with the UD alliance. This is one of the major reasons for the Syrian Christian community to support Kerala Congress. Besides as a regional party the primary aim of Kerala Congress is to protect the interest of the advanced communities like Syrian Christians, Nairs and Nambodhiri Brahmins. The party declared as its goal the abolition of land-tax, granting of educational concessions on the basis of economic backwardness, allocation of reservation for education and job to the economically backward people of the advanced communities, development of plantation and fishing industries, protect the interests of the farmers because most of the Syrian Christians were farmers, to fight for the interest of Kerala against the Central governmnet, and stand for the preservation of private educational institutions. Eventhough it is a regional party, it followed the ideology of Indian National Congress. It supported the fixing of land celing but insisted that religious institutions and plantations should be exempted.\textsuperscript{62} Their ideology, lenience towards

the interest of the Christian community were some of the important reasons for Kerala Congress to get the support of the Syrian Christians.

**Karshaka Thozilali Party (KTP)**

Karshaka Thozilali Party (KTP) was a so-called Christian party founded by Fr. Vadakkan a Syrian Catholic priest. He formed this regional party on May 8, 1964. He was one of the pioneers of Vimochana Samaram (Liberation struggle) in Kerala. He founded this party in order to uphold the rights of the peasants evicted from the government lands by the Congress Government in 1961 for illegal occupation and those evicted from Shimoga in Karnataka state by Karnataka government almost on similar ground. The Marxist party and its leader A.K. Gopalan supported this adventurous endeavour sponsored by Fr. Vadakan. His Party made an alliance with the Marxist party. It was the first time in the history of Kerala that a considerable number of Syrian Catholics from the economically backward people of that community supported KTP who made alliance with a left front alliance led by the Marxist

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63 P. John, John, Coalition Governments in Kerala, op.cit, p.113.
party. Thus the leftist party especially the Communist party could make an inroad into the Syrian Christian community.

**Kerala Assembly Elections - 1967**

One of the notable features of the 1967 elections is that a new polarization of political forces emerged in Kerala leading to new electoral alliances. A seven party United Front consisting of the CPI(M), the CPI, the SSP, the Muslim League, the RSP, and the KTP, and the KSP was constituted for the purpose of election.⁶⁶ The Indian National Congress and the Kerala Congress fought the elections alone without making an alliance with other parties. The main contestants were the UF led by CPI(M), the Congress and the Kerala Congress.

**The attitude of the community leaders towards the elections**

The leaders of the Christian community was afraid of the United Front alliance constituted under the CPI(M). because they were afraid that if CPI(M) comes to power they may have to the same situation what they had undergone during the 1957 elections and the following Liberation struggle against the Communist Government. Therefore the leaders of the Christian community, the

Bishops took initiative to unify Congress and Kerala Congress. As a result of it a meeting was convened by the leaders of Congresss and Kerala Congress in the presence of the Archbishop of Trivandrum and the Bishop of Palai in an attempt to come to a common understanding to form a united programme. For Example the Bishop of Trivandrum diocese took side with the Congress. While the sympathy of some of the Syrian Catholic Bishops were with the Kerala Congress. In short the Christian communities approach was mainly with the UDF, led by Congress. The Bishop of Pala Mar Sebastian Vayalil and Mar Gregarios openly supported through their circular letters.

The leftists come back to power

In the elections held in February 1967, the seven party alliance of opposition parties led by CPI(M), won 113 seats and secured 51.4 percent of the votes. The respective party position was as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samstha Kerala Muslim League</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jansangh</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>423</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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The figure shows that the UF won 90 out of 117 seats with more than 50% of vote. The election result shows the defeat of the Congress party and Kerala Congress. The election result was an indication of the Syrian Christian communities lenience towards the Left Democratic coalition led by the CPI(M). In terms of patterns of voting, one might refer to an observation made by Horst Hartman: "The change in voting behaviour for the people was only one of degree...none of the community leaders could command the same hypothesis that a larger section of the people than ever before were influenced by secular considerations in their voting decisions."

The Syrian Christians dominated districts of Ernakulam, Kottayam, Alleppy were the traditional strong holds of Christian community. The 1967 state Legislative election proved that as in the previous elections Christian community was supporting the UDF led by the Congress Party.

The United front Government and the Christian Community

The UF government came to a head-on collision with the Catholic Bishops when they introduced the University Bill. The

74 C.P. Suresh, op.cit, P.163.
clauses like,”the private college can be taken over for a period of five years on the ground of mismanagement if the government considers that public interest warants such an action.” The government may take over a College with or without recommendation to that effect from the University”. And after the take-over, the College will be administered by a governing council composed of representatives of the University, the government, the teachers and the management,will put the private managed colleges out of gear. The Kerala Bishop's Conference, which controlled 64 out of the 115 private Colleges at that time, issued a statement opposing the Bill, referred to the constitutional provisions regarding the freedom of the minorities to run their own educational institutions. They threatened that they would rather do without grant-in-aid from the government than submitting to the penal provisions of the bill. The educational policy of the government was strongly opposed by the Christian community. But the government could not implement their educational reform because before implementing their educational policy the government fell. In general we can say that the Syrian Christians approach towards the LDF was negative. And they had a strained relationship with the government led by the CPI (M) in Kerala.

76 Ibid, p.1715.
The Coalition government led by CPI under the leadership of C. Achutha Menon

After the fall of the government led by CPI(M), a new coalition government was formed under the CPI leader C. Achutha Menon. Achutha Menon Ministry was sworn in on 1 November, 1969.

The Kerala Congress joined the Mini Front and the Congress supported it from outside. When Kerala Congress joined the CPI led government it was the first time in the history of Kerala that Syrian Christian Community extended their support to the government led by the CPI. This sign shows that the Syrian Christian community through CPI leaning towards the leftist parties through Kerala Congress. When it is compared with the CPI(M), though the CPI being a leftist party, they are not as revolutionary as the Marxist party CPI(M). The Communist party split into two CPI(M) and CPI. The CPI(M) supported China and the CPI supported USSR. After the split in the following elections CPI(M) became powerful and they could become the largest party in the 1967 Assembly elections and a government known as UF formed under their leadership. When Achutha Menon became the Chief Minister of Kerala, he was a member of Rajyasabha. Therefore, he had to contest for the Assembly seat. He contested from the Kottarakkara constituency. In
the bye-elections the C.M. won by 26,000 votes. At this critical juncture C.Achutha menon called for a vote of confidence and won by a narrow marjority.

The Mid-Term Poll in 1970

After the resignation of Achutha Menon ministry Kerala once again faced Assembly elections. The mid-term elections were held in 1970. This time comparing to previous elections there were three fronts, but the constituents of those fronts were different. The Leftist Front was led by the CPI(M). CPI(M) was the largest partner. The minor parties like SSP, KTP, KSP and ISP joined the CPI(M) front, While the ruling front was led by the Congress(I). In that alliance CPI, RSP, PSP, and Muslim League joined the front. While a third front was forged under the leadership of Kerala Congress, the Congress(O) joined in the Kerala Congress alliance. In the ruling front there was a fair representation from all communities, except the Christians. All the regional parties had vote banks among the various communities and in their respective pockets.

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80 E.J. Thomas, op.cit, 1985, p.121.
The Assembly election which was held in September 1970, the United Front led by Congress and its allies such as CPI, RSP, Muslim League and PSP won 69 seats out of 133 and formed a coalition ministry under the leadership of Achutha Menon. The respective party positions are indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kerala Assembly Election Results, 1970. (Total seats 133)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress(N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jansangh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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A total number of 505 candidates including nine women contested the elections. The party-wise breakup of the seats contested by the ruling front was: INC(J) 55, CPI 31, RSP 14, PSP 6, and the ML 29. The number of seats contested by the opposition was: CPI(M) 71, SSP 14, ISP 12, KTP 4, and KSP 3. In the election the partners of the ruling front alliance secured 69 seats out of the total 113 seats. Though the opposition front was defeated, the CPI(M) emerged as the single largest party in terms of votes polled (23.2 per cent) by any single party in the elections. Among the parties Congress and CPI(M) came out as the largest parties drawing 30 seats each. From an apparently weak position, the Kerala Congress bagged 14 (including two independents) seats with more than 6 percent of the total votes. This showed that besides the CPI(M) and the Muslim League, the Kerala Congress too had considerable following in Kerala. In the election parties like the Jansangh, DMK, Communist revolutionary party, Kerala Karshaka party, Republican party, Socialist unity centre, Vettuva sabha and Swatntra drew a blank in the elections.

A new government came under the leadership of C. Achutha Menon, leader of the CPI. Though the Congress was the largest

83 C.P. Suresh, op. cit, P. 168.
85 Link, 'Republic Day Number', 1971, p. 15.
partner, they did not join because the Youth Congress resisted the Congress party to join the government. But later they joined the government in September 1971. The Kerala Congress was not a partner in the Ruling United Front led by Congress. The Kerala Congress stood in opposition from 1970-75. But the declaration of national emergency in 1975 whisked the Kerala Congress into the coalition government. The declaration of emergency persuaded Kerala Congress to join the ministry in December 1975.

The fourth Kerala Legislative Assembly had the distinction of being the first Legislative Assembly in the state to complete its normal term of five years. The main reason behind was that Achutha Menon government could provide a stable administration to the state. Its term of five years was extended three times, six months every time, following the imposition of emergency in June 1975. It thus remained in power for six and a half years an unbeaten record in the political history of any government in India since independence. The United Government headed by Achutha Menon could provide a fairly stable government to the people of Kerala yearning for political stability over the years. By and large the United Front government had implemented, a substantial measure, the minimum programme presented at the time of the elections in

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86 R. Balakrishnan Nair, op.cit, p.92.
They did bring about significant changes in the land holdings system in Kerala; property rights were given to nearly three lakh hut-dwellers who in turn got plots ranging from three to ten cents of land. Besides, one of the remarkable success of the UF government was that the Kerala Agrarian Reforms Bill (1972) provided for minimum wages and security to agricultural workers numbering about 2.5 million. Another notable progressive measure implemented by the UF government was the expansion of public as well as small scale industries gave the rightful place in the economy of the state.

Thus the government headed by Achutha Menon could make great success by implementing progressive measures for the progress of Kerala state.

The attitude of Syrian Christian Community towards the United Front led coalition government

After the split in the Congress in 1969 the Syrian Christians in Kerala who were traditionally supporting Congress extended their support to the Congress led by Indira Gandhi. But the Christian community as a whole was not supporting Congress. A considerable

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87 Mathrubhoomi, February 24, 1977.
number of Syrian Christians were supporting Kerala Congress. In the early 1970's the Syrian Christian community found itself in an awkward position since it had to support the CPI led Ministry in order to keep out the Marxists. The tact and popularity of the CPI Chief Minister C. Achutha Menon compelled the Syrian Christian community especially the Syrian Catholic communities Bishops to adopt a more realistic attitude towards the Communists who also realised the futility of irritating the Christian community unnecessarily. But when the ruling front interfered in matters of educational institutions the Christian community reacted against it. It was the earnest desire of the Youth Congress to nationalise private educational institutions especially private Colleges run by private agencies and other communities. This was interpreted by the UF partners as a rigid and unworkable attitude. When the case of private colleges came up the Christian Bishops, the NSS, an organ of the Nair Community and the SNDP, an organ of Ezhava community formed a strong opposition. They publically boasted that no government which had dared to meddle in their private domain had been able to survive. For the first time in the history of India a

90 It has to remembered that Pattam Ministry in 1952, Pannampally Ministry in 1955, Communist Ministry in 1957, all tried and never succeeded in the nationalization of the educational institutions in Kerala.
Catholic Bishop, Mar Joseph Kundukulam of the Syrian Catholic diocese of Trichur, led a procession against the Ruling
government.\textsuperscript{91}

The Syrian Christian community as a whole was supporting
Congress and its front. At the same time their community also have
shown lenience towards the Communist party of India(CPI), due to
the image of its Chief Minister C. Achutha Menon. However, when
the youth wing of Congress party took initiative to nationalise
Private Colleges, the relationship between the Congress and the
Christian Community was strained. The Youth Congress attitude
towards educational institutions paved the way for the Syrian
Christian community to show lenience towards CPI as well as to the
Kerala Congress. Their approach towards the leftist front as well as
the rights front was a unique example of the political
manoeuvering of Syrians Christian towards Communist Party as well
to the Congress Party.

The General Elections 1977

The 1977 general elections witnessed a different aura in the
political scenario of Kerala. It was the birth of the Socialist
Republican Party (SRP) supported by the Ezhava community and

\textsuperscript{91} E.J. Thomas, op.cit, p.124.
the National Democratic Party (NDP) supported by the Nair community. The birth of these two regional parties supported by Nair and Ezhava communities gave a new dimension to the community politics that was prevailing in Kerala. But these parties could not make any greater impact among these two communities. (Emergence of the political wing of the two community organisations, the Socialist Republican party of the SNDP an organisation of the Ezhavas community and the National Democratic party of the Nair Service Society, (NSS) were significant trends in the Kerala politics. However, they received little support from any other political party except the Kerala Congress which supported the NSS stand. Though Kerala Congress is a regional party it is being dominated by the Syrian Christian community. Therefore, when they emerged in the political field, the election became a symbol of various communities. During the time of elections the Kerala Congress was however, torn between the Marxist camp and the Ruling Front. Both the parties realised soon that the understanding between the Congress and the Kerala Congress would increase the Christian influence within the Ruling Front.) The Muslim League and Kerala Congress were the other regional political parties in Kerala. The Kerala Congress was supported by the Syrian Christians especially the Syrian Catholics of Central Kerala, while the Muslim
League was supported by the Muslim community in Northern Kerala.

The emergence of two fronts for the 1977 elections

Electon to the State Assembly was held on March 19, 1977. It was the sixth Assembly election held in Kerala since the formation of the state. The political parties which contested the 1977 elections were aligned in two fronts, the Ruling Front and the Opposition Front. "The Ruling United Front' consisting of the Congress, the CPI, the Kerala Congress, Muslim League, Revolutionary Socialist Party(RSP) and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) came to power with an overwhelming majority. The Ruling United Front defeated the opposition front led by the CPI(M) the Janata party, Muslim League (opposition) Kerala Congresss (Pillai), Kerala Socialist party and National RSP.\textsuperscript{92} The Ruling Front fielded 130 candidates, representing recognized political parties and supported ten independents (Six of the NDP and four of the PSP). The Opposition Front consisted of four recognised political parties-the CPI(M), the BLD(Janata), the Muslim League(opposition), and the Kerala Congress(Pillai group), and three unrecognised political parties, viz., the Congress radicals, the KSP, and the national RSP whose

\textsuperscript{92} K. Raman Pillai, 'People's Verdict in Kerala', in the Indian Political Science Review, Vol.XI; No.2, July 1977, pp.174-175
candidates were listed as independents. The opposition Front put up 126 candidates, representing recognized political parties, four candidates of unrecognized political constituents, and supported 11 independents. The party-wise breakdown of the seats contested by the Ruling Front was INC 54, CPI 27, Muslim League 16, Kerala Congress 22, RSP 11, Independents 10 (NDP and PSP 4). The Opposition Front consisted of CPI(M) 68, BLD (Janata) 27, Muslim League (Opposition) 16 Kerala Congress (Pillai Group) 15, Independents 15, (Congress Radicals 2, KSP 1, NRSP 1, others 11).  

March 1977 Election to the State Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Party</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruling United Front</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>111</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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93 C.P. Suresh, op.cit, P.17.
### March 1977 Elections to the State Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of party</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opposition Front</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPL(M)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janata</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League (Opposition)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress (Pillai group)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National RSP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parivarthan vadi Congress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:**

The Ruling Front which captured 111 seats in the Assembly. The result of the election showed that the success of the Ruling Front mainly depended on the support of the three communities: The Muslim (Muslim League 13 seats), the Christians (Kerala Congress 20 seats) and Nairs (NDP 5 seats) together counted for 38 seats (34.23%) for the Ruling Front. Moreover the success of these communities made it possible for the other members of the alliance's success. A new ministry was formed under the Chief Ministership of K. Karunakaran, the leader of the undivided Congress on March 27, 1977. However, Karunakaran tendered his resignation of his
cabinet on 25 April 1977, following certain references by the Kerala High Court in what had been known as the Rajan case. A new ministry with A.K. Antony as Chief Minister assumed office on 27 April 1977. After the formation of the state of Kerala, he was the first Syrian Catholic to become the Chief Minister of Kerala. In protest against the attitude of the Congress High Command on the Chikmangalur election, submitted his resignation as Chief Minister on October 27, 1978. A new ministry was sworn in on October 29, 1978 with P.K. Vasudevan Nair, CPI leader as chief Minister. The Vasudevan Nair Ministry had only a short span of time. The Ministry resigned on October 7, 1979 after 343 days in power. The 1977 election was a great success for Congress Party because it could make alliance with political parties having a community base. The Christian community, Muslim community and the Nair community came under the alliance of the Congress. Thus a triple community alliance led to the success of Congress.

P.K.V. Ministry and the Land Gift Deeds Bill

After the resignation of A.K. Antony, P.K. Vasudevan Nair of the CPI took the reigns United Front led by Congress. His ministry resigned mainly because of the controversy over the Land Gift Deeds Bill and to pave the way for the leftist parties. The Land Gift Deeds Ordinance was a package deal to propitiate the landlord from
the Christian and Muslim communities who were adversely affected by the Land Ceiling Bill. The CPM was bitterly against the Ordinance because it deprived many peasants of the land they were tilling. On the other hand, the ruling front, including the CPI, was committed to pass the Bill to replace the Ordinance.

The CPI leader Vasudevan Nair resigned and Muhamad Koya from the Muslim took the saddle of Chief Minister ship. He could not continue as C.M because the Congress (U) one of the partners of the coalition withdrew its support and the ministry fell. The Assembly was dissolved on 4 December 1979 and the state was put under President’s rule.

Elections 1980

Election to the Kerala Legislative Assembly was held on 21 January following the Loksabha elections. In order to face the coming elections the political parties joined in two fronts. One is the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Congress and the other is the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by Marxist party. The constituents of the UDF were Cong(I), IMUL, Kerala Congress(J), PSP, NDP, and SRP. The UDF had electoral understanding with

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96 The Hindu, October 12, 1979.
97 The Indian Express, November 28, 1979.
98 The Hindu, December 1, 1979.
Janata in three constituencies. The CPI(M), CPI, Congress(U), Kerala Congress(M), AIML, Kerala Congress(Pillai), and RSP were the constituents of the LDF which enjoyed the support of the Lok Dal and the National RSP.

**The verdict of the assembly elections 1980**

The verdict of the voters came in favour of the LDF. The front won 93 out of 140 seats in the Assembly. The UDF got only 46 seats. One independent candidate was elected without the support of either of the two fronts from Patanamthitta constituency. The LDF alliance polled 4836486 votes, which formed 50.70 per cent of the total valid votes polled in the election. The UDF alliance, including the votes polled by all the 29 candidates put up by the Janata party, got only 4152827 votes which came up to 43.53 Per cent. All the independents including the Janata(S) candidates together polled 548983 votes, which formed 5.75 per cent of the total valid votes.99

Party-wise the highest number of seats won and the percentage of votes polled was by the CPI(M). The party secured 35 seats out of 50 it contested, with 19.35 per cent votes. Next came the Congress(I) which secured 17 seats out of 53 it contested, with 17.35 per cent votes. The Congress(U) got 21 seats out of 30 contested, with 10.95 per cent votes. The Janata party which

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99 C.P. Suresh, op.cit. P.181.
contested along with the UDF, got only 5 seats, with 7.62 per cent votes.\textsuperscript{100}

### Results of the Kerala Assembly Elections, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LDF Alliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress(U)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress(M)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL India Muslim League(AIML)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress(P)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UDF Alliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress(I)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Union Muslim League</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala Congress(J)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Party</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Republican Party</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janata</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents *</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>620</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Independents include 9 Janata(S)candidates. None of them was elected.


\textsuperscript{100} C.P. Suresh, op.cit, P.1830.

Formation of LDF ministry under CPI(M) leader E.K.Nayanar

After the elections LDF emerged as a powerful force in terms of numbers and distribution of potential votes. For the first time since 1967 the Marxist parties support was a combined, a factor that in several areas of Travancore and Cochin-particularly in Quilon district-made victory for the left front likely or certain. The sound and effective combination of the political parties, their earnest election campaign and the support of the voters enabled the LDF to win a decisive majority in the election.

Following the Assembly elections, 17 member ministry was sworn in headed by E.K. Nayanar on 25 January 1980. The Nayanar ministry, however, remained in office only for a short period. Despite the thumping majority for the LDF in the Assembly, there arose ideological differences among the ruling partners. Kerala's Marxist led Left democratic Front(LDF) and the Kerala's eleventh ministry in twenty-five years came crashing down on the debris of its own fragments, when Antony, led his 22 member group 'rechristened the Congress(S)' out of the coalition on 16 October 1981. The 8 member Kerala Congress(M) also withdrew its support to the ministry on 20 October 1981. A.K.Antony leader of the Congress(S), who had engineered the unity of the so called

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102 Babulal Fadia, op.cit,p.110.
“left hand democratic forces” by allying his party with the CPI(M) has turned decisely against Marxists.

“I did not have a single day of mental peace after I joined hands with the CPI(M)”, he admitted that the CPI(M) can never function as a democratic party. Their approach eventually forced the Congress(S) and Kerala Congress(M) to pull out from the ruling left front. Thus on 20 October 1981, the CPI(M) finally relinquished office in Kerala. “One of the major failures of the LDF was that it simply had no workable alternative programme; said a CPI(M) sympathiser, 'mere anti-Indira Gandhism’ as a line could not survive beyond a point”. However, the Assembly was kept in suspended animation. With the support of the Congress (S) and the KC(M), an eight member UDF ministry was sworn in on 28 December 1981 with K. Karunakaran, leader of the Congress(I), as Chief Minister.

Conclusion (A Critical Appraisal)

Political parties in Kerala; such as Congress, Communists or Socialists are all the products of various religious communities in Kerala. It was rightly noted by Jitendra Singh that communal consciousness takes place of political life in Kerala. And it was


104 Jithendra Singh, Communist Rule in Kerala, Delhi: 1959, p.11.
also stated that no party which has an eye on power could alienate the various communities in Kerala. Every member of the cabinet believed that he is there to safeguard the interests of his community.\textsuperscript{105} The parties in Kerala are associated with some particular communities. The Syrian Christians are traditionally associated with Congress and Kerala Congress. While the the Communists are associated with the Ezhavas and the backward communities.

The Syrian Christian community was very much associated with the Congress right from the beginning of independence. In every election the Syrian Catholic hierarchy i.e. the Bishops through their Pastoral letters requested the faithful to vote for the Congress and should not support the Communists because it is against religion.

After the 1977 election one of the fractions of the Kerala Congress (Mani group) sided with the CPI(M). Again in the 1980 election the other fraction of Kerala Congress (Joseph group) supported the LDF, then some of the Bishops silently supported LDF front because Kerala Congress (Joseph) was with them. From 1980 a remarkable change was taking place regarding the political allegiance of the Syrian Christian community. Till 1980 they were

\textsuperscript{105} K.P. Kesava Menon, Link, August 15, 1962, p.41.s
supporting either Congress or Kerala Congress. Kerala Congress is a party mainly dominated by the Syrian Catholics tilted towards the LDF openly. Soon after independence and till early 1970s Christian community were following the instruction of their Bishops in politics. Now the Christian community do not give much importance to the advice of the Bishops and they began to support openly to the Left Democratic Front led by CPI(M). The leaders of the Congress or Kerala Congress give priority to their political advantage more than the advantage of their community. They mainly exploited the vote bank of their community to get power and to rule Kerala.