Communal Influence in Kerala politics-A study

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ABSTRACT Caste and communalism plays an important role in the Kerala politics, without which the political administration is not possible in the state. Even before the formation of Kerala state the system of caste, communal and regional elements began playing an integral role in Kerala politics. Kerala is known for its high literacy rate, and hence all the people have their own political ideology and political interests. In Kerala, around 50 percent of the total population belongs to the minority communities, and they have their own political affection towards particular political parties and it is reflected in the formation of coalition governments of Kerala. Caste and communal political parties are limiting the role of national political parties in the main stream politics of Kerala. In the study researcher finds out the presence of communal politics in all assembly elections of Kerala and analyses how these communal parties influenced the electoral politics in Kerala and also evaluates the tendency of both Left Democratic Front and United Democratic Front's attitude towards the accumulation of communal influence in the electoral politics of Kerala.

Keywords: caste, communal politics, minority.

Introduction
One of the realities in Kerala politics is the existence of caste, communal and regional elements. With the formation of UDF and LDF this elements played an important role in the political administration of Kerala. Actually, this caste and communal groups are the real determinant factors of the stability and instability of the Kerala politics. Now these caste and communal groups are integral part in the coalition ministry of Kerala.

Kerala legislative assembly election-1957, the first communist ministry came to power and they are not completely free from caste and communal factors. Dr. Jitendra Singh who made a study on the spot of the political situation in Kerala, gives a few reasons for the communist success in the 1957 election. One of the major reason he points out that, communal and caste factors were responsible for the success of the communist party. He points out that the main support of the congress comes from the Christian community especially the Catholics while the support of the communists comes from Ezhava and scheduled castes. Muslims supported the Muslim league but those nationalist Muslims who did not vote for the Muslim League, favored the congress more than the Communist party. The Nairs, therefore could wield pressure on all the three political parties. So he finds out that communist ministry came to power, with the support of caste and communal influence.

With the end of the first communist ministry, a mid-term poll was conducted in 1960. Most of the major communal groups had a pre-planned objective in their mind, that is to overthrow the communist ministry from the Kerala Legislative Assembly. For this purpose, a strong alliance was formed by the major communal and caste groups- Nairs, Christian and Muslims. In Congress, PSP and Muslim League were its political alliance. Among these groups, church organizations mobilized its efforts to ensure the electoral victory of the candidates of the united front of democratic forces. The election result over threw the communists in the Assembly election of 1960, The Congress, PSP, Muslim League alliance fought against the communists and won 94 seats, coalition ministry was formed under Pattom A. Thanu Pillai of PSP as Chief Minister. But his administration lasted only two years. In 1962, the Congress formed a government of its own under the chief ministership of R. Sankar, a popular communal leader of SNDP-a communal organization. But within two years Sankar ministry had to go out of office, because of personal and communal rivalry within the group. Then, the 1965 elections gave an entirely different picture of state politics. This change occurred due to two important events, the split within the communist party and also with the Congress party. The communist party was divided in to the CPI and CPI(M). The Congress party besides the original Indian National Congress, gave birth to a new faction, the Kerala congress, basically a christian regional party. In the election, electoral understanding was created among the CPI(M), Muslim League and SSP one side and on the other the CPI, RSP and some independents.

Again the General election of 1967 was fought between the left united front of seven parties, consisting of the CPI(M), CPI, SSP, Muslim League, RSP, KTP and KSP, which sunk their differences and agreed upon a minimum programme. The main aim of the left united front in the election was to defeat the
congress party which stood and fought alone. A majority of Christian Bishops proved pro-congress at this time. Arch bishop Benedict of Trivandrum, a known sympathizer of the Kerala Congress also made every effort for a congress-Kerala congress alliance. The congress could win only nine seats in the legislative, where as the Kerala congress strength was five. Though the left united front was successful in defeating the congress party and formed a government of its own which hardly ruled for thirty-one months, on the ruins of the CPI(M)-coalition it was replaced by another coalition ministry the ‘saptamunnani’ minus the CPI(M) called the mini-front headed by the CPI- leader C. Achutha Menon. The CPI-led coalition was created, and consisted of the CPI, the Muslim League, ISP, RSP and the Kerala Congress. This coalition discarded non-congress for a sake of necessity and ruled for nine months. A split in the Indian Socialist Party, a constituent of coalition made the government shaky. Finally the legislative assembly was dissolved on the advice of the Chief Minister and fresh elections held in September 1970.(4)

In the 1970 election the congress and the mini front together won the election and the ministry consisting of the CPI, RSP, IUML and PSP led by Achutha Menon. Congress extended outside support in the beginning and joined the ministry later. This was the first ministry in Kerala to complete the full term. In this election major communal political parties like IUML, PSP, Christian community etc. took favorable approach to C. Achutha Menon ministry. One of the important point is that the church and the Christian community were gradually mellowed towards the CPI and a new theory that amongst the Marxists and the CPI the “latter was a lesser danger” was given very wide current by the Deepika and the Malayala Manorama. (5)

The 6th assembly election was held on 19th march 1977. The political parties which contested the 1977 election were aligned in two fronts, the ruling front and the opposition front. The ruling front represented an alliance of recognized political parties and communal party,(INC, CPI, ML, RSP, KC, PSP, National Democratic party, a political projection of the Nair Service Society. The candidates put up by the PSP and the NDP were listed independents, (Six-NDP and 4-PSP). The opposition front consisted of four recognized political parties - the CPI(M), BLD (Janata) the ML(opposition) KC ( Pillai Group), and three unrecognized political parties - the congress radicals, the KSP, and the National RSP whose candidates were listed as independents. The ruling front, which captured 3 seats in the assembly, formed a two-member ministry with K. Karunakaran became the chief minister on 25th March 1977. The ministry was expanded adding 13 more ministers on 11 April 1977. But soon Karunakaran tendered resignation for his cabinet on 25 April 1977 related with famous ‘Rajan case’. A new ministry came to power, A.K. Antony as chief minister, but again Antony tendered resignation of his cabinet on 27 October 1978 in protest against the stand adopted by the congress on Chikkamagalur election, and P.K. Vasudevan Nair formed another ministry on 29 October 1978. His ministry also resigned on 7 October 1979. C.H Mohammed Koya was sworn the next chief minister of Kerala on 12 Oct. 1979, but the four-member ministry could continue in office only for a short term. The ministry resigned on 1December 1979 and the assembly was dissolved. The next Kerala legislative assembly elections were held on 21 January 1980, both UDF and LDF fought each other. The Congress (I) in Kerala relied heavily on the communal hosts which lined up behind it. The manifesto characterized the UDF an ‘alliance of rightist parties’ and a tent of communal and reactionary forces. The Socialist Republican Party (SRP) sponsored by the SNDP openly declared their demand they wanted to get the maximum number of seats no matter whether in the LDF camp or the UDF camp. Finally the party joined the UDF camp and SRP got 7 seats for contest. NDP Nair Dominated Party they got 9 seat for contest and other communal parties like IUML, KC( ), PSP etc supported the 1980 election. On the other hand the attempt of communist to project their front as a challenge against communalism and reaction was compromised by the fact that at least two communal organizations were found in their camp for electoral expediency. In the 1980 Assembly election LDF had a thumping majority, a seventeen member coalition cabinet was sworn in under the Chief Minister ship of Sri E.K. Nayanar on 25 th January 1980. But soon the CPI (M) led coalition proved itself as a failure to co-operate with the ideologically divergent partners. So differences among the partners began to rise very soon. The first death Knell of the ministry was heard, when the Congress ( A) under the leadership of Sri A.K. Antony with 21 members quit the ministry and Kerala Congress (M) with 8 members withdrew its support to the ruling coalition leading to the resignation of Sri E.K. Nayanar on 20th October 1981.

The next Assembly Election 1982, LDF and UDF remained the main contestants in the 1982 elections. The communal politics played an important role in the 1982 elections. There was direct fight between the AIML and the IUML in nine constituencies. The KC (M) faced the CPI (M) in ten and the CPI in four constituencies. Finally UDF coalition ministry of 1982-1987 comprised national, regional and communal parties. Casteism, communalism and regionalism played a dominant role in this election than the
previous ones in the state. But soon the factional politics and splits came into being the coalition ministry. The RSP, which confronted a split, was divided in to two factions. Thus, the Karunakaran ministry resigned on 17 March 1982. Again the 1982 assembly election conducted that culmination of certain political developments in the state. The process of political fragmentation, split of political parties, reached its highest watermark at this time, the UDF formed a ministry under the leadership of K Karunakaran. From its very inception Karunakaran ministry faced dissension, infected by communalism and widely accused of venality. In fact the ministry was like a chariot pulled on different directions by each and every coalition partners. In spite of all there events Shri K.Karunakaran completed the full term of office, a second instance in the political history of Kerala.

Next election to the Kerala assembly was held on March 23,1987. The UDF and the LDF were the major political fronts. But in this election LDF took completely a deviation from caste and communal politics. The result was that the communist ministry came to power. Thus E. K. Nayanar's government is called anti-communal government. This is the first ministry, which proved that political party can form a government without the support of caste and communal elements. The elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assembly were scheduled to be held on may 23rd 1991. The nation suffered a great tragedy in the assassination of Shri. Rajeev Gandhi, the former Prime minister of India, therefore, the elections were postponed to 18th June 1991. This incident made contradictions in the political calculations of the LDF. One of the important feature of the 1991 assembly election was the BJP contested in a large number of seats but it could not win even a single seat. However, it could raise its voting strength to 5.53%. UDF formed its cabinet under the chief minister ship of K. Karunakaran on 24th June 1991. During this time the Kerala congress again divided and a new group emerged under the leadership of T.M. Jacob. Again communal and regional based political parties emerged in this period. Shri.Ibrahim Suleiman Sett of IUML organised a new party - Indian National League (INL) owing to his dissatisfaction over the failure of the Muslim League to uplift the Muslim community, the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 the relationship between Muslim League and Congress worsened. Shri. Abdul Nazar Madani, a revolutionary Muslim leader, organised a new party called People's Democratic Party (PDP). The factionalism can be also seen in the CPI(M). This period can be regarded as the golden days of split in the political history of Kerala. Factions, communal problem, corruption mounting pressure from congress and alliance partners compelled Shri. K. Karunakaran to reluctantly resign chief ministership on 16th march 1995. A.K.Antony took over the state administration 22nd march 1995 as the leader of the UDF. Changes in leadership from K. Karunakaran to A.K. Antony did not improve the political atmosphere in Kerala. Shri. Antony had to ride in rough weather. But he completed the term fiver year.

The 1996 election also witnessed the fight between the two powerful fronts - LDF and UDF. One of the notable features of Kerala politics in 1996 was the disappearance of two communally oriented political parties - SRP and NDP. The LDF secured 80 seats as against 60 seats secured by the UDF. The disappearance of SRP, NDP and the intake of the JSS of Smt. K.R. Gowri, which had the support of the considerable section of the CPI(M) ranks, especially from the Ezhava community. The BJP, a third force in Kerala politics could not win even a seat in this election. However, they could secure 5.48% of upper caste Hindu votes from Kerala. This entire political atmosphere was very favorable to the LDF and they became the ruling party under the leadership of E.K. Nayanar on May20 1996.

The 11th assembly election held on 10th may 2001. the assembly won by UDF. The communal parties are played major role in both LDF and UDF. InUDF-IUML, KC(M), KC(Jacob) played a lot for acquiring communal and caste vote especially from Muslims and Christians.(6) In the 2006, general assembly election the CPI(M) led LDF beat the incumbent Indian National Congress led UDF by a margin of 99/140 seats. Veteran CPI(M) leader V.S. Achuthanandan led the LDF government in Kerala in the 2006assembly election. In 2006 Assembly election the large number of votes gained by the LDF was mainly from Ezhava community. In 2006 victory of LDF both Ezhava and Nairs jointly supported them. In UDF, the main support came from Christians and Muslims. BJP got a little percentage that mainly from upper caste Hindus.(7) The Kerala assembly election 2011 verdict was viewed as a remarkable retrieval of the LDF and upset for the UDF, as the latter narrowly escaped from a defeat. In this election the UDF received only 0.9% votes more than the LDF. Although the LDF was able to overcome the anti-incumbency towards the end of their tenure, it failed to return the power due to the significant reason, that is the traditional attitude of two major communities that is – Christian and Muslims they polled in favor of UDF. Thus the Christians, especially from Kottayam, Idukki and Ernakulam districts and Muslims of Malappuram district determined the narrow victory of UDF in the 2011 Kerala legislative assembly election. The UDF got 65% vote from Muslims and 67% from Christians in the election. (8)
The 2016 assembly polls assumed greater significance in the political history of Kerala. In 2016 election for the first time in Kerala's history, a social-religious organizations like SNDP Yogam decided to enter in the state politics by making electoral alliance with the BJP, and they formed a new political party BDJS. The newly-formed BDJS though it failed to open its accounts in assembly but it bagged 3.9% votes beyond the expectation of both the fronts. The BJP led NDA, it was an opportunity to put an end to its 36 year old struggle to enter the state legislature, thus BJP rewrote the bipolar electoral history of the state, the BJP opened its account through O. Rajagopal from 'Nemam' constituency. The BJP emerged second in 7 other constituencies with K. Surendran lost by a mere 89 votes at Manjeswaram. All these facts reveals that the communal sentiments of Keralities towards BJP and BDJS. According to the election commission, the performance of BJP is very high as compared to both LDF and UDF.

Conclusion

In Kerala, caste and communal influence are very high as compared to any other part of India. The Malabar, Cochin and Travancore area reveals separate group of communal tendencies towards the political system of Kerala, this tendency intensified after the formation of Kerala state too, this is the reason behind the up and down politics of Left Democratic Front and United Democratic Front. In Kerala, the caste and communal influence is increasing and it may create number of problems like communalization of politics, communal clash, riots, administrative inefficiency, personal and political bias, instability of government etc. It will change the democratic face in to an anarchy one.

References.

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