Some Social Determinants of Political Preference in Kerala State, India

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Recommended Citation
SOME SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL PREFERENCE
IN KERALA STATE, INDIA

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
MARCH
1963
VITA

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He was graduated from St. Aloysius High School, Edathua, in March, 1943. In the same year he joined C.M.S. College, Kottayam, for his higher studies. After passing the Intermediate Examination, he joined the Minor Seminary at Changanacherry in preparation for studies towards Priesthood. When he had finished his courses in Latin and Syriac he was selected for higher studies at the Pontifical Athenaeum in Kandy, Ceylon. There he received the Licentiate in Philosophy cum laude in December, 1950. On August 24, 1954 he was ordained priest by an American Bishop, Msgr. Glenle, S.J., of the diocese of Trincomalee, Ceylon. He also received the Licentiate in Sacred Theology in the same year.

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In February, 1961 he was admitted at the Loyola University in Chicago where he is now working for his Master's Degree in Sociology while being an Assistant at SS. Peter and Paul Church in South Chicago.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original idea of the present writer was to write his thesis on a subject pertaining to the American Society. But since the author is expected on his return to India to teach Sociology at St. Berchmans' College, Changancerry, at the advice of some of his professors he thought it worthwhile to attempt a research on some aspect of the Indian society. With this suggestion he approached Dr. Cizon, his adviser, who helped him to select the present subject.

The author avails himself of this opportunity to give expression to his profound gratitude to the University authorities for having given him admission with full tuition scholarship in the Loyola University. Had it not been for their kindness he would not have been able to come over to the United States. He wishes to record his appreciation of kindness and sympathy on the part of Reverend Stewart E. Dollard, S.J., the Dean of the Graduate School and Reverend Gallagher, S.J., the former Chairman of the Department of Sociology. Words are inadequate to express his sentiments of gratitude to Dr. Cizon, his professor and adviser who spared no pains to offer timely suggestions and corrections whenever the writer called on him. To Mr. Lennon under whom the author took three of his courses, and one of the readers of his thesis, the writer is doubly grateful. The author expresses his sincere thanks to Dr. Zahn for his kind and critical observations. The author would like to thank also Dr. Mundy and Mr. Gensert for their kindness and encouragement. May the Good Lord reward them all.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the question--Theoretical and practical rationale for the question under discussion--Sources for the study--The procedure--Explanation of terms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. KERALA TODAY</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location--Topography--Economic, demographic, and political structure--A brief survey of the political history of Kerala.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND POLITICAL PREFERENCE</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious economic problems facing the voters in Kerala--Very low income; unemployment and under employment; population explosion--Caste structure: a major divisive social factor and source of democratic class struggle--The voting pattern based on socio-economic status.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE VOTERS AND POLITICAL PREFERENCE</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy of the voters: a necessary condition for the proper working and stability of democracy--But high literacy without proportionate economic and social development may become a source of instability and may lead to the growth of extremist parties--Pattern of political preference based on educational level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF THE VOTERS AND POLITICAL PREFERENCE</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious composition of Kerala--Hindus-Christian-Muslims--Pattern of political preference along religious lines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation and assessment of the entire study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                                                 Page

I. RESULTS OF 1957 ELECTIONS IN KERALA .................................. 20
II. RESULTS OF 1960 ELECTIONS IN KERALA .................................. 24
III. GROUPS OF FAMILIES ON THE BASIS OF ANNUAL INCOME ................. 30
IV. DECENNIAL POPULATION VARIATION FROM 1901-1961 ....................... 34
V. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS ON INDIA AND KERALA ....................... 36
VI. SOCIAL CLASS AND COMMUNIST PREFERENCE IN KERALA ................ 37
VII. VOTES CASTED IN FAVOUR OF COMMUNISTS IN 1957 ..................... 45
VIII. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND COMMUNIST PREFERENCE .................... 57
IX. COMMUNIST SUPPORT AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION .................... 78
X. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND CONGRESS SUPPORT ....................... 80
XI. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF PARTY MEMBERS IN THE ASSEMBLY ....... 81
XII. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND PARTY CHOICE ............................ 82
XIII. CONSTITUENCIES IN KERALA WITH A CHRISTIAN MAJORITY .......... 83
INTRODUCTION

Kerala, the smallest of the states of India, is now in the lime light. Recently this state made history as the only state in the world where the Communists came into power through the Ballot Box and where that party was ousted also through popular election. "A Communist Party, facing the electorate all alone and coming to power through a just and free election in a democratic set up, is a strange phenomenon. A still stranger phenomenon is the overthrow of a Communist Party in power, by peaceful popular agitation. Within a short span of 28 months, Kerala had the unique fortune or misfortune to present both to an astonished world."¹ Among the various states of India, Kerala stands foremost in the literacy of its people. This state is also the most densely populated part of the Indian Republic. Since the Independence of India in 1947, Kerala has been like France, a scene of political turmoil and confusion. In this period of 15 years Kerala has witnessed five general elections, eleven ministries, and twice the President's Rule.² Hence there is no wonder that the political leaders refer to it as a problem state. The situation in Kerala not only harasses the minds of the political leaders but also arouses a deep concern in the minds of all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, or place of birth. This state of affairs poses a great threat to the young democracy of India.


²Under Art. 356 of the Indian Constitution, the President of India takes over the government of a state when the local government breaks down.
So many social factors seem to play an important part in the political upheavals of this state. The purpose of this study is to make a critical analysis of electoral behaviour of the people of Kerala with a view to finding out the social factors, if any, influencing them in their electoral choice. The importance of this question to a sociologist stems from the fact that the political behaviour of the people has a tremendous impact on the behavioural and interactional patterns of the people and on the society in general and vice versa. That is the reason why ever since the term sociology was first applied to the systematic study of social relationships, the analysis of political processes and institutions has been one of its most important concerns. "No sociologist can conceive of a study of society that does not include the political system as a major part of analysis."³

The study of voting behaviour may be designed for various purposes. It may deal with such matters as the voters' perception of politics, their reaction to the issues, their attention to mass media, their influence on one another's political preferences, the role of social class and religious affiliation in politics, and the institutional leadership of the local and national community.⁴ Thus the study of voting is designed for a better understanding of the processes of democratic elections. Yet that is by no means the only aim or product of such studies. One cannot study politics without learning a good deal about recent history, about community organization, about ethnic and class cleavages


⁴E. Burdick and A. Brodbeck, eds., American Voting Behaviour (Glencoe, 1959), pp. 80-120.
and antagonisms, about small group processes, about attitude change, and decision making in general. Observers of the social sciences often comment on the difficulty of carrying out experiments with human beings. But in a way society provides its own experimental situations, and elections in democratic countries are a good example. Under varying conditions a great diversity of people make comparable choices. Analysis of the process by which voters come to select one or the other of the candidates can illuminate human preferences in general. If we add to this consideration the obvious political importance of elections, a study of this sort becomes all the more important. Realizing, therefore, its social significance many political sociologists have given increasing attention to researches in voting and political behaviour of the different countries of the world. 5

Political democracy is a new experience in India. Some political scientists seriously doubted the workability of democracy in an underdeveloped country like India with vast millions of poor and illiterate citizens. Even Mahatma Gandhi, the architect of Indian liberation, advised Mr. Nehru against this overdose of democracy. 6 Democratic processes are only taking shape in India and the Indian electorate are being trained in a democratic way of life. The proposed analysis of voting in Kerala may provide us with an insight into the nature of the democratic experience not only in Kerala but also throughout India. The above discussion explains the sociological rationale underlying

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5S. M. Lipset in his book Political Man makes reference to several studies conducted all throughout the world in this field.

6Organizer (Delhi), 1952, January 7.
the study of topics undertaken in the present thesis.

The question has often been asked by many even in America why Kerala, the most literate and the most Catholic populated part of India, has become a fertile breeding ground for the Communists in India. Saunders Redding in his book "An American in India" referring to this state writes, "It has the highest percentage of Christianity, the highest percentage of literacy, and also the highest percentage of Communism." To many the political situation in Kerala remains a puzzling question demanding an answer. The emphasis placed on a topic of this sort seemingly makes it a valid subject conducive to sociological analysis. In addition the present research may be of considerable help to the writer in his future work as a sociologist in Kerala.

Many difficulties have been confronted in the preparation of this thesis. The long distance from India renders it difficult to make any field research concerning the subject under consideration. Sociology is a comparatively new science in India. Only recently have sociology courses been taught in the Indian universities. Of the sixty-four colleges affiliated with Kerala University, only three colleges have started conferring diplomas in sociology. The acute dearth of sociological studies and literature adds to the difficulty of attempting a study of this kind. Unfortunately there is very little recognition of the value of field research in the domain of political and sociological studies in Indian Universities.


The choice of topics for this research was influenced to a large extent by the pioneering studies of voting behaviour conducted by the Universities of Michigan, Columbia, and California. These studies furnish the background information required for the thesis. The specific data needed has been obtained through the analysis of the Election Reports and Census Reports published by the Kerala Government and numerous articles which appeared in books and magazines on the political situation in Kerala since 1957. A critical analysis of these sources seems to throw some light on the political behaviour of the people of Kerala. The present thesis, therefore, remains primarily a documentary research. Assessing the various available data, the investigator has attempted to arrive at a conclusion regarding the influence of specific social factors like socio-economic status, education, and religion of the voters on their electoral choice. There are nine districts in Kerala and the specific social factors and voting behaviour are examined in reference to these districts. From this comparative analysis the author hopes to arrive at an understanding of the influence of above mentioned social factors on the voting behaviour of the electors in Kerala.

Like any human activity voting is a complex phenomenon influenced by many social and psychological factors. The present thesis considers only specific social factors. In a democratic set up where the voters mark the ballot


10Index of Periodical Literature, 1957-61; cf. also the Bibliography.
secretly, it is difficult to ascertain who actually voted for particular political parties. However, when the number of votes and seats won by the respective parties in the various districts and constituencies are considered in the light of the socio-economic, educational, and religious characteristics of the voters in these districts and constituencies, a fair conclusion may be arrived at regarding the social factors influencing their voting behaviour.

In the first chapter "Kerala Today" a glance at the demographic, economic, and political structure of Kerala will be made to provide the background knowledge necessary for the understanding of the analysis. In the subsequent chapters the relation between the specific social factors and voting behaviour will be considered. Summation and assessment of the entire study will be made in the concluding chapter.
CHAPTER II
KERALA TODAY

In the reorganized map of South India, Kerala\(^1\) occupies a strategic position at the south western corner. Nestling amidst the blue waters of the Arabian Sea and the tall ranges of the Western Ghats, it is a narrow stretch of coastal territory from Kasargode in the North to Trivandrum in the South. It is bound on the East by the Western Ghats and on the West by the Arabian Sea. The distance from South to North is 360 miles and maximum breadth East to West is seventy-five miles in the middle narrowing down to twenty miles in the northern and southern extremities. Kerala representing the Malayalam speaking areas of India consists of the territories of the previous State of Travancore-Cochin except for four taluks\(^2\) of the Trivandrum District and a part of Shenottah taluk of the Quilon District. It takes over also Malabar District (without Laccadive and Minicoy Islands) and the Kasargode taluk of South Kanara (except Amindivi Islands) from the Madras State.

**Topography:** The land slopes from East to West. It consists of three topographic regions running South to North, namely, the Lowland bordering the Sea, the Highland covered with dense forests in the East, and Midland consisting of rolling hills and winding valleys, one region gradually merging into the other. The Highland region with its high mountain ranges forms a fortress protecting the land from the hot wind blowing from the East and causes heavy rains stopping

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\(^1\)The name Kerala means a land of Coconut (Kera) trees.

\(^2\)A taluk is a subdivision of a district.
the Southwest Monsoon winds.

For a better understanding of the discussion which is to follow in the subsequent chapters on the electoral choice of the people of Kerala, it seems highly useful to have a general idea about the demographic, economic, political structure of the state.

Demographic Structure: Kerala, the smallest of the fourteen states of India, has a population of 16,875,199 in an area of 15,002 square miles. This represents an increase of 24.5 per cent over the population of 1951. Kerala leads all the states of India in point of density. More than 57 per cent of the population and 47 per cent of the area of the state come within the density range of one thousand and more persons per square mile. Out of the nine districts, all except three have a density exceeding one thousand persons per square mile. The proportion of males to the total population is 49.46 and of the females 50.54 per cent. For every thousand males there are 1,022 females. The proportion of rural and urban population to the total population is 84.98 and 15.02 per cent respectively.³

Religious and Linguistic Composition: As in other parts of India, religion is a great divider of people in Kerala, the major religions being Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. Of the total population, 53.5 per cent belong to Hindu religion, 25 per cent to Christianity, and 19.3 per cent are members of Islam, and the remaining 2.2 per cent belong to Sikh, Jewish and other religions.⁴ Hindus are divided into many subcastes the chief of them being Brah-


mins, the Nairs, the Exhavas, and the Scheduled Castes (Untouchables). Of the Christians, 64 per cent belong to the Catholic Church and the remaining 36 per cent belong to Orthodox (Jacobites), Marthomite, and Protestant denominations. In the matter of diversity of language also Kerala is a cross section of India. Malayalam is the mother tongue of vast majority of the population. More than a million people speak the Tamil language. A few thousand speak Telugu, Hindi, Gujarathi, Konkani, Marathi, Karnadakom, and other languages. Thus religion, language, and territorial divisions are major divisive factors in the Kerala society. Narrower loyalties are fostered around these factors to the detriment of a broad, progressive national outlook.

**Literacy and Education:** Kerala stands foremost among the Indian states in literacy and educational advancement. For the purpose of Census count the literacy was laid down as the ability to both read and write with understanding. Applying this test there are 7,800,284 literates in Kerala representing 46.7 per cent of the population. The proportion of male literates to the total male population is 54.18 per cent while that of the female literates to the total female population is 38.44 per cent. It is remarkable that even the lowest rate of literacy in Kerala is higher than the all-India average which comes only to 26 per cent of the total population.

**Economic Structure:** Kerala economy is predominantly agricultural; nearly half of the state's income is derived from agriculture and allied activities.

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6 *Manorama Year Book (Kottayam, 1960), p. 98.*

7 *Hand Book of Census of Kerala, p. 9.*
Despite a fifteen per cent rise since 1948-49, the per capita income remains one of the lowest in India. The annual per capita income is $46 while the annual per capita income for the whole of India is about $64. The total annual income for the state during the year 1959-60 was Rs. 39,52 Lakhs. Net investment in the economy has been rising, yet at present it amounts to only 6.5 per cent of the state income. According to the National Sample Survey results, over three-fifths of the consumer expenditure was on food articles. In the rural areas the percentage is even higher (64. per cent). 8

Rapid growth of population, acute food shortage, increasing pressure on the cultivatable land, and agricultural economy with a low per capita income, chronic unemployment especially among the educated and lack of technical skill are the most serious problems facing the economy of Kerala. 9 The presence of natural resources, the availability of cheap electric power, and the existence of numerous rivers and water ways adds to the industrial potential of Kerala. But due to lack of technical development and lack of capital many of these resources are not yet tapped and industrialization remains at a very low level.

Political Structure: The state of Kerala is divided into nine districts—Alleppey, Cannanore, Kottayam, Kozhikode, Palghat, Quilon, Trichur, and Trivandrum. Each district is subdivided into taluks and villages. There are fifty-five taluks and 4,615 villages in Kerala. At present there are ninety-one towns, twenty-seven municipalities, and 897 panchayats. 10 The administrative

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10 Panchayath is a local self-governing unit on the village level.
National and State Legislature: India is a sovereign Republic with a Parliamentary form of government based on universal adult suffrage. The legislature of the Indian Union which is called Parliament consists of the President and the two Houses known respectively as the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha). For every state there is a Legislature which consists of the Governor appointed by the Indian President and either a bicameral or unicameral assembly. Kerala has a unicameral Legislature consisting of 127 members one of whom is nominated by the Governor to represent the Anglo-Indian community. Twelve seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the areas with a heavy concentration of these people. General elections for the National and State Legislatures take place every five years unless the Legislature is dissolved on account of administrative breakdown of the Cabinet.

Political Party System: The normal pattern of democracy involves the existence of two or more organized political parties which seek the vote of the people for forming a government and carrying on the administration of the country in conformity with its declared principles. "The quality of democracy is determined by the quality of the parties and that of the electorate. If the electorate is wise and discerning it would use its wisdom and discernment for choosing its rulers. The parties also would be obliged to raise themselves to the level of popular discernment, if not higher. India has a multi-party

11 India, Constitution, Part V and Part VI.
12 The terms used in the Constitution to designate "The Untouchables."
system and many parties have been formed representing different interests.

The Indian National Congress: This is the party which led the country to its freedom and has been in power since the independence. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 by Mr. Allan Octavian Hume, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, to unite all the anti-colonial forces and sentiments in their fight against the British rule. With the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian scene in 1920, the National Congress took an entirely new turn in its future policies and programs. With truth and non-violence as its guiding principles, the whole movement was raised to a high moral plane and attracted world-wide attention. In the first elections following India's independence in 1947, the Congress Party emerged as the governing party with an overwhelming majority both in the centre and in the states.

The aim of the party is to lead India towards a democratic socialistic Republic through peaceful and constructive measures especially through the implementation of its five year plans. According to its policy, all the basic industries are to be owned or controlled by the state though a large field for private enterprise also is to be retained. The whole economy of the country, however, will be ultimately based on a planned economy in which the Economic Commission will play a significant part. The Congress Party has been led for the last fifteen years by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The symbol for the party is two yoked bullocks.

The Communist Party of India: Of the five accepted all-India parties, the Communist Party is second in number of representatives seated in Parliament. The Communist Party was founded in 1924 under the inspiration of the Communist leaders of Great Britain and under the patronage of the Russian leaders. The party was soon thereafter made illegal by the British Government. The result was that most of its workers carried on their activities under the Congress flag on the Congress platform masquerading as Congress supporters. Their activity was mainly devoted to the organization of trade unions and student bodies. The fundamental difference of their outlook from that of the Congress became very well marked in the "August Movement of 1942," when the coming of Russia to the side of the allies in the last war suddenly made them declare the erstwhile imperialist war to be the people's war and advocate help to the British in their war effort against the stand of the Congress. The immediate effect of this change in the policy was the lifting of the ban on the party in 1943 by the British Government. The Communists were officially expelled from the Congress under charges of disloyalty and active opposition to the Congress creed and program in 1945. Since then they have functioned as an independent body.

The Communist Party of India like Communist parties all over the world, uses Russian Communist policies as its focal point in National as well as International spheres. The basic aim of the party as defined in the preamble

16John H. Kautsky, Moscow and the Communist Party of India (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1956); Frank Moraes, India Today, pp. 112-139.
to the constitution of the party is:

The organization of the toiling masses in the struggle for the victorious anti-imperialistic and agrarian revolution for complete national independence, for the establishment of a people's democratic state led by the working class, for the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat and for building up of socialism according to the teachings of Marxian Leninism. 17

The aims are more clearly described in concrete terms in the draft program of the party issued in April, 1954, under the auspices of the Politburo. This program calls for the confiscation of all foreign capital, complete withdrawal from the British Commonwealth, and united front and friendship with peace loving countries after having completely severed all ties with imperialist powers like Britain and the United States of America. It also emphasizes a program of 100% Swadeshi. 18 Chronic unemployment, population explosion, communal rivalries, lack of effective leadership among the Congress rank, and regional tensions have provided a fertile ground for Communist activities exploiting the social ills of the society to their maximum advantage. The strength and organization of the party is evident in the success it has had in winning numerous seats in the elections.

The Praja Socialist Party was formerly known as the Congress Socialist Party. It was formed in 1934-35 as a leftwing organization to function within the Congress fold. After the attainment of freedom, the party dropped the word


18 Swadeshi literally means native made article, but it refers to a movement started in India to popularize the use of native goods and to ban the use of foreign made goods.

"congress" from its name and completely broke from the Congress in March 1948.

Before the Second General Elections, the Socialist Party merged with the Kisan Muzdoor Praja Party, a reformist offshoot of Congress Party organized in June 1951 and came to be known as the Praja Socialist Party. Some of the objectives of the party on which special emphasis has been laid may be stated here. The aim of the party is to achieve a classless and casteless society by peaceful means. The party once in power will strive for the socialization of the key industries, foreign trade and such sectors of economy where the capital tends to accumulate. The party favours foreign policy of neutrality and non-involve­ment and co-operation with like-minded forces in other countries. Acharya Kripalani and Asoka Mehta are its most important national leaders.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party is a Marxist organization whose aim is the establishment of a classless socialistic society through revolution. This radical activist party differs from the Communists only in the elaboration of their objectives. This party has a great influence among the labourers especially in the district of Quilon. Mr. Srikandan Nair is the most prominent leader of this party in Kerala.

Muslim League: Unlike other parties it is a communal party organized to safeguard the interests of the Muslim Community who form 3,353,060 of the population of Kerala. This is a local party mostly popular among the Muslims of the Palghat, Kozhikode, and Cannanore districts. Muslim League has no expectation of getting into power as the ruling party. Because of its communal

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nature all the top ranking leaders of India look with suspicion and disfavour on this party.

Besides these major parties there are other splinter parties like Jana Sangh, Kerala Socialist Party, and Swatantra Party. But none of these parties involves a sizable support from the people of Kerala.

A SHORT HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN KERALA

Because of Kerala's wavering between democratic and communistic control, it is worth scrutinizing its political background in some detail before attempting an analysis of some social factors influencing the people in their electoral choice. After having reviewed the political instability and Communist success in Kerala, Frank Moraes has made the following salient observations:

The same stresses—regional, religious, factional, communal, casteist, and personal which are increasingly assertive at state levels throughout India, influenced the course of politics in Kerala and placed it finally in the hands of the Communists. How these factors, combined with the calculations of the Reds, led to a democratically governed state being converted by democratic medium of the ballot box into a Communist controlled areas carries a warning and is an object lesson on the way the Marxist work and conspire to achieve power. In so far as it reflects these divisive forces, and tactics, Kerala is a microcosm of modern India. 22

In July, 1949, the two erstwhile princely states of Travancore and Cochin were merged to form the Travancore-Cochin state. This state lasted until November 1, 1956, when the State of Kerala was formed on a linguistic basis embrac-

22 Frank Moraes, India Today, p. 104.
ing all the Malayalam speaking areas. The Malabar District which formerly belonged to the Madras State was also added to the new state of Kerala. This introduced another divisive factor, namely, provincialism into the politics. The Communists were the first to agitate for the formation of Kerala State foreseeing that the composition of the state would be in their favour since that would join the Malabar District which was already a stronghold of Communist influence, and that it would eliminate the four taluks from the Trivandrum District where the influence of Congress was strong. Besides, in the Communist manifesto for the elections in 1952 and 1954, the demand for a separate state for the Malayalam speaking areas was a key issue. The Congress Party, on the other hand, was not in favour of linguistic states fearing that it would hamper national unity. So, in the first general elections in 1957 after the formation of the State of Kerala, the Communists had an advantage over the Congress members as being the chief sponsors for the formation of Kerala.

In the period of fourteen years since 1948 Kerala witnessed five general elections and the rise and fall of eleven ministries. It also witnessed the rise of the Congress, which reached its apex in 1948 when it had 93 members in an Assembly of 108 members; and thereafter its sharp decline until it was able to muster only 43 members in a House of 127 members nine years later. No one had done more to discredit the Congress than the Congressmen themselves. Torn

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by internal rivalries, they appeared to the electorate as selfish opportunists and manipulators willing to do a deal with any party or person as long as it ensured their continuance in office. On the eve of the elections in 1957, the party was divided not only within itself but within its separate elements, Christians, Hindus, Muslims each of whom was at least indirectly responsible for the victory of the Communists in the forthcoming elections. 25

On the basis of caste and religion Kerala society is divided into different factions. These divisive factors contributed a great deal to the success of the Communists in Kerala. With the reorganization of the state in November 1956, the Christians who were the mainstay of the Congress, were reduced from 31 per cent to 25 per cent of the population, while the Ezhavas and Scheduled Castes who were sympathetic towards the Communists increased in strength. From 22 per cent the Ezhava group rose to 26 per cent and with Scheduled Castes they now comprise over 30 per cent of the population. Simultaneously the Nairs, who were rather dissatisfied with the Congress Organization owing to its Christian predominance, were reduced from 23 per cent to 17 per cent. 26

There was widespread demoralization not only in the Congress hierarchy but also among the Party's rank and file. Once in power the Congress leaders seemed to have forgotten their assurances to the people. Partly due to the magnitude of the problems and partly due to their utter selfishness, the Congress government could not raise the living standard of the people and they were rapidly losing touch with the rural workers and masses. The Congress Organization

25 Frank Moraes, India Today, p. 108.

in Kerala was a weak structure built around a group of personally ambitious and largely inexperienced individuals who in turn gathered around them others equally anxious to share the fruits of power. As a result discipline slumped at higher levels and there was no real affinity with the people.27

The Congress leaders themselves represented various communal or regional interests and had no well defined program for the welfare of the state. Politics was thereby reduced to shoddy tactical maneuvers to remain in office. The Congress leader Panampally Govinda Menon confessed at the time of his resignation in March 1956 that the debacle which threatened his party was due to its own making and not to any positive action by the Communists. Even more frank was Congress President Dhebar's declaration that he could not name a single prominent Kerala Congress leader who at one time or other had not intrigued against his own party government.28 Political instability makes it difficult to take bold measures to solve the staggering economic problems of the state and ironically it was the same economic problems which to a large extent were responsible for the political instability. Thus the situation presented a vicious circle. The field was ready for the Communist take over.

1957 Elections:29 According to the fresh delimitation of constituencies after the reorganization of states in November 1956, Kerala had 102 single-member and twelve double-member constituencies. The total number of electors, according to final rolls was 7,514,626. Women voters constituted 50 per cent

28 Frank Moraes, India Today, p.111.
of the electorate. The symbol system of voting was in vogue during the election, each candidate having a separate ballot box in the polling booth with his symbol affixed. The total number of candidates contested from 111 constituencies was 380. One candidate was returned unopposed. The percentage of votes polled was 65.95 of the total number of voters in Kerala. It is estimated that 70.44 per cent of the eligible male voters and 62.95 of the eligible female voters voted during the 1957 elections. The results of voting and percentage of votes polled are given in the following table.

TABLE I
RESULTS OF 1957 ELECTIONS IN KERALA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Seats Contested</th>
<th>No. of Seats Won</th>
<th>No. of Votes Polled</th>
<th>Per Cent of Valid Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Indian National Congress</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2,209,251</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party of India</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2,059,251</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim League and Independents</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>751,965</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Praja Socialist Party</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>628,261</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Revolutionary Socialist Party</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>188,553</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unopposed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>5,837,577</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Muslim League was not recognized as a political party and this party was, therefore, grouped with independents. Eight from among the 19 Muslim League candidates who contested the elections were returned. The remaining five independents were returned with the support of the Communist party. With 60 party candidates and five independents the Communist party commanded the majority in the Kerala Legislative Assembly of 126 elected members and one nominated member. The Communist success was a surprise not only for the Congress leaders, but even for the Communists. Thus, in India Kerala demonstrated that the difference between a revolution by consent and a revolution by coercion can sometimes be very thin.

The dawn of April 5, 1957 witnessed an event of epoch-making importance. For the first time in the history of parliamentary democracy, a Communist Government was sworn in to work under a democratic constitution and for the first time in the history of the Communist parties of the world, a Communist Government was installed in office through fair and free elections. Also for the first time in the history of a Central Government committed to parliamentary system, the Communist party was allowed to take charge of the government in one of its states. 30 In a pandal specially erected for the purpose on the lawns of Raj Bhavan, E.M.S. Nambuthiripad and his colleagues took the oath of office. Breaking past traditions, the common man was allowed to witness the installation ceremony. To him the policy statement made by the chief Minister immediately after swearing in, came like a breath of hope and he returned home with colorful visions of a happy future.

The Communists were in power for twenty eight months. Though they came into power promising to safeguard the Constitution and to work for the well-being of the people of Kerala, they tried to consolidate their party influence on the people and all spheres of government through fair and foul means. For this end scandalous party favouritism was demonstrated from the very beginning of the Red regime. Everything was subordinated to party interests, law and order became subservient to "Cell" directives and justice tampered with. A privileged class was created denying social justice to non-Communists. All these produced general resentment among large sections of the people. They introduced so many drastic reforms in utter disregard for the opinion of the people. On the top of it all came the Education Act introducing revolutionary changes with the objective of state monopoly of schooling and indoctrination of the youth. Their attempt at nationalization of private schools of which more than 2,000 were owned by the Christian community forced the Christians to rally against the government. Dissatisfied with the autocratic rule of the government other communities also joined hands with the Christians. The people of Kerala were split into two camps, those who supported the Communists and those who opposed the Communists tooth and nail. The liberation struggle was begun. In a great mass upsurge against the Communist government, thousands were arrested, and a few mostly Catholics were shot to death. Law and order

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broke down. Disorder and chaos, almost bordering on anarchy set in.\textsuperscript{33} Nehru himself, after reviewing the situation in Kerala, was forced to make the following statement: "It seems clear that a dangerous situation full of the possibility of violent conflicts is rapidly developing in the state."\textsuperscript{34} As a result of the fast deteriorating political situation, the President of India making use of the extra-ordinary power granted to him by the Constitution took over the government of Kerala on July 31, 1959 dismissing the Communist Government.

\textbf{1960 Election in Kerala:}\textsuperscript{35} After six months of President rule, new elections were held on February 1, 1960. This time the Congress, Praja Socialist Party and Muslim League entered into an alliance to face the Communist Party in the elections. Assembly constituencies remained the same as before. According to the revised list a total increase of 523,465 voters has been recorded, the number of electors being 8,038,097. All the 126 seats in Kerala were contested. The political parties which had entered in the field were the Communist Party, the Congress, Praja Socialist Party, the Muslim League, and Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The Revolutionary Socialist Party was not recognized by the Election Commission as a Party. Revolutionary Socialist Party and such other parties had, therefore, been grouped with independents. Three hundred and twelve candidates were contesting the elections of which 80 were Congress candidates, 108 Communists, 12 Muslim League candidates, three for Jana Sangh, and 76 independents including Revolutionary Socialist Party and Kerala Socialist

\textsuperscript{33}Kainikkara Padmanabhan, pp. 173-203.

\textsuperscript{34}From the statement made at Coimbatore on June 7, 1959 after reviewing the situation in Kerala.

Party candidates and also independents with Communist support. Party position after the elections is given in the following table.

TABLE II

RESULTS OF 1960 ELECTIONS IN KERALA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Seats Contested</th>
<th>No. of Seats Won</th>
<th>No. of Votes Polled</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2,791,294</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2,975,259</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. S. P.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1,146,029</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>399,925</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. S. P.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>106,137</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>652,602</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>8,071,246</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Manorama Yearbook (Kottayam, 1962), p. 687.
After the elections a coalition ministry was formed and sworn into office under the leadership of the Praja Socialist Party leader, Mr. Pattom Thanu Pillai. Of the eleven members of his cabinet, eight belonged to the Congress Party and three belonged to the Praja Socialist Party, including the Prime Minister. Even now the situation in Kerala is far from peaceful. Because of the inefficiency of the political leadership, internal dissension among the ruling parties, and the staggering economic problems which remain unsolved, the present government also seems to be in trouble. Communalism, casteism, and factionalism have again begun to exert their divisive influence. Will the present anti-Communist Government be able to rule the state for their full term? Will the Communist Party come into power through coming elections? These are the questions often asked today even by the man on the street in the State of Kerala.

36 The Deepika (Kottayam), February 28, 1962, p. 2.
CHAPTER III
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND POLITICAL PREFERENCE

In the previous chapter an attempt was made to give a general picture of Kerala at the present time. At the end of the chapter a brief survey of the democratic experience of the people of this state was made, bringing into focus the different trends in the electoral choice. From the analysis of the two general elections held since the formation of this state in 1956, it seems clear that a growing number of electors vote for the Communist party. In 1957 the Communists were successful in the elections as the majority party and formed the government. Even in the elections held in 1960 after the dismissal of the Communist government, the Communist party in Kerala scored the highest percentage of votes for any single party, though they failed to get the majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly as they did in the previous election.\(^1\)

This was partly due to the system of simple majority in the constituencies instead of proportional representation and also due to the fact that in this election all the other main parties like Congress, P.S.P., and the Muslim League faced the electorate as a United Front.

In the present and subsequent chapters the electoral choice of the people of Kerala will be examined more closely to discover the social factors which may have influenced them to vote for one particular party rather than another party. In other words our endeavour will be to find what are the social char-

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\(^1\) See Tables I and II on pp. 20 and 24 of the thesis.
acteristics of those who voted for the Communists and non-Communists and to examine any possible differences. The present chapter will be devoted to the consideration of socio-economic characteristics of the voters and their electoral preference.

The most common generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development. The more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy. From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that only in a wealthy state in which relatively few citizens lived at the level of real poverty could there be a situation in which the mass of the population intelligently participate in politics and develop self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of irresponsible demagogues. A society divided between a large impoverished mass and a small favoured elite results either in oligarchy of the small upper stratum or in tyranny. The following words of Aristotle concerning the conditions of the democratic order are relevant:

Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by the citizens of the middle class, and those states are likely to be well administered, in which the middle class is large.... Great then is the good fortune of a state in which the citizens have a moderate and sufficient property; for where some possesses much, and the other nothing, there may arise an extreme democracy or a pure oligarchy; or a tyranny may arise out of either extreme. ...And democracies are safer and more permanent than oligarchies because they have a middle class which is more numerous and has a greater share in government; for when

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there is no middle class, and the poor greatly exceed in number, troubles arise and the state will soon come to an end.3

The fact that the peaceful working of democracy is related to the economic development of a country is amply illustrated when one observes that all stable democracies in the world today are found in countries where the economic development is high compared to the countries in which democracy is unstable. Making use of the indices of economic development like average income, industrialization, urbanization, and education, Seymour Martin Lipset found that higher the economic development of a country, the more likely that the democracy in that country is more stable.4 Countries like Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States which have high scores on the indices of economic development have stable democracies, while underdeveloped countries like Latin America, Asia and Africa have mostly unstable democracies. Lyle W. Shannon has correlated indices of economic development with whether a country is self-governing or not, and his conclusions are substantially the same.5

The relationship between low per capita income and precipitation of sufficient discontent to provide the social basis for political extremism is supported by a recent comparative survey of attitudes of citizens of nine countries. Among these countries, feelings of security correlated with per capita

4S. M. Lipset, Political Man, pp. 50f.
income (.45) and with per capita food supply (.55). It seems to be a fact of modern political history that in the countries of both the West and of the East the lower strata people favour the Communist Party in their elections.

With this international background let us now focus our attention on situation in Kerala. In Kerala the Communists and other extremist parties apparently score more success in the constituencies and districts where there is a heavy concentration of poor people. Before we go into details of the election results, it may be useful to consider at some length the deplorable economic situation in Kerala.

Extreme Poverty of the Masses: The appalling poverty and misery of the masses and the inevitable low standard of life; the rapid growth and density of population coupled with an extreme food scarcity both in quantity and in quality; growing unemployment and unrest both in the agrarian and industrial areas; the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few and consequent unequal distribution of wealth among the people, all these economic characteristics seem to produce an utter dissatisfaction among the people for the present social order and prompt them to listen to the promises for a bright future by the Communist Party. The late President of the Philippines, Ramon Magsaysay, who successfully fought Communists in the Philippines once said:

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When a man with an empty belly works in a rice paddy on land which is not his, always in debt and with his children hungry---when a man in that position hears someone say, "Land belongs to the man who works it, come to us, and we will give it to you," then something happens to that man. It is as if a cool wind blew through hell on earth.8

Food, Clothing, and Shelter: The most salient facts about the economy of Kerala are the low levels of consumption, income, and savings, which help to perpetuate utter poverty and economic stagnation, and thus deprive the vast and growing population of the state of the barest necessities for a decent existence in keeping with the dignity of the human being. Although international comparisons are not very reliable and the statistics taken in Kerala are scanty and liable to wide margins of error, a rough idea of the economic backwardness of this state can be gathered from the following statistics. The estimated per capita income per day in Kerala is 14 cents whereas the per capita income per day in the U.S.A. is seven dollars and for India as a whole is about 18 cents. On the basis of annual family income the families in Kerala can be grouped as follows:

TABLE III

GROUPING OF FAMILIES ON THE BASIS OF ANNUAL INCOME9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Family Income</th>
<th>Percentage of the Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under Rs. 600 ($126)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 600 to 1200</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 1200 to 1800</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 1800 to 3000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Rs. 3000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the above table shows, 51 per cent of the families in Kerala have only an income under Rs. 600 ($126) per annum. The average membership of the family being 5 according to official estimation, a member of the family has an average monthly income of Rs. 10 ($2.10). In most of the families the number of dependents is high. Of the total population only 20 per cent are self-supporting. Six per cent are partial dependents and the remaining 66 per cent are full dependents. Of the male population 43 per cent are self-supporting; 4.8 partial dependents; and 52.2 per cent are full dependents. Likewise among the female population 12.5 per cent are self-supporting; 7.1 partial dependents; and 80.4 are full dependents. Another distressing fact is the scarcity of cultivable land. According to 1961 Census the average land distribution per person is only 25 cents of land. The percentage of landless agricultural labourers of the total population is 21.1 per cent which is the highest percentage in Asia. Agricultural labour is mostly seasonal which takes about 108 days of the year and they have to spend the rest of the year idly. Since industrialization has not progressed to any considerable extent, and 53.6 per cent of the population are engaged in agricultural pursuits, chronic unemployment and underemployment is experienced by vast number of people.

The pattern of consumption expenditure also shows the backwardness of Kerala economy. The consumption expenditure of Kerala on food absorbs 60.5 per cent of the total consumption expenditure as against 30.1 in the United Kingdom and 21.8 in the United States. In spite of the predominance of food

10 Manorama Year Book (1960), pp.97-98.

in the state expenditure, the per capita intake of nutritive food has been much lower than in the technically advanced countries. The average intake of food in the U.S.A. amounts to 3300 calories whereas in Kerala it is only about 1890 calories. Kerala's food consists primarily of cereals, beans and vegetables and very little of protein foods like milk, fruits, and animal foods. The low income is chiefly responsible for this large scale underfeeding and malnutrition which tells upon the population of Kerala. In addition defective diet habits and unscientific cooking processes have aggravated the evil. Per capita food production in Kerala amounts to less than six ounces per day. On the assumption that the normal daily consumption of rice by one individual is 12 ounces, Kerala has to import 50 per cent of its rice needs.\(^\text{12}\)

Inequitable distribution of wealth and income has made the situation worse. It has been estimated by the National Sample Survey that a third of Kerala's income goes to about 5 per cent of the population, another third to the next 35 per cent, while only the remaining third is shared among the remaining 60 per cent. Lack of proper clothing is another problem facing the people. The problem of adequate housing is equally serious. Vast majority of the people of Kerala live in poor huts built of mud walls and bamboo roofing. They lack clean drinking water, drainage, and proper sanitation. The condition of houses in urban areas is still worse. Squalor, lack of proper ventilation, and overcrowded conditions are the main features of most of the houses occupied by the lower classes. Thus a majority of the people of Kerala are ill-fed, ill-cloth-

\(^{12}\)Most of the data given above is gathered from a Kerala Government publication entitled Second Five Year Plan of Kerala (1958).
ed, and ill-housed and possibly cannot afford to spend on amusements, medical aid, and for other amenities of life which human beings require. The level of health is intimately connected with a low standard of food, clothing, and housing. Compared to other countries, Kerala's standard of health is shockingly depressed. Medical facilities are very inadequate. Kerala Government provides one hospital for every 43,000 persons, one doctor for every 7,000 persons, one nurse for every 19,000 persons, and one bed for every 1,400 persons. The average life span in Kerala is 37 years compared with 42 years for the whole of India, 68 years in England, and 67 years in the United States. In the United States there is one doctor for every 800 persons; also, there is one scientist or engineer per 200 persons while in Kerala there is only one among 30,000. Every third American has an automobile, while in Kerala only one in 150,000 has this status symbol.

Population Explosion: Another social factor which aggravates and engulfs Kerala's faltering economy is its population explosion. According to the 1961 Census the population of Kerala is 16,875,199 in an area of 15,002 square miles, which marks an increase of 24.55 per cent over the population of 1951 which stood at 13,549,118. The density of population in Kerala has risen from 426 persons per square mile in 1901 to 1125 persons in 1961 which marks the highest density rate in the whole of India. India has a density of 384 persons per square mile. The following table indicates the decennial increase of population

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14 The data is gathered partly from Information Please Almanac, 1960.
in Kerala;

TABLE IV

DECENNIAL POPULATION VARIATION IN KERALA FROM 1901-61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of persons per sq. mile</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>1125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population in millions</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage increase</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>21.85</td>
<td>16.04</td>
<td>22.82</td>
<td>24.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifty-four point seventy-two per cent of the population and 40.16 per cent of the area of the state come within the density range of 1000 and more persons per square mile. Among the various districts Alleppey has record population of 2556 persons per square mile. The net reproduction rate is comparatively higher among the people of the lower income groups. Thus poor families already burdened with large families are further burdened by the birth of new babies.

That Communism thrives on the poverty and misery of human beings is sufficiently clear from the history of Communism in Russia, China, Burma, Latin America, and other countries. The following comparative analysis conducted by Seymour Lipset substantiates the above statement:

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In the two wealthiest countries, the United States and Canada, not only are Communist party almost non-existent but socialist parties have never been able to establish themselves as major forces. Among the eight next wealthiest countries--New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia, Norway, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Netherlands--all of whom had a per capita income over $500 a year in 1949, moderate socialism exists as the form of leftist politics. In none of these countries did the Communists secure more than 7 per cent of the vote, and the Communist party average among them has been about 4 per cent. In the eight European countries which were below the 500 dollar per capita income mark in 1949--France, Iceland, Czechoslovakia, Finland, West Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Austria--and which have had at least one democratic election in which both the Communist and non-Communist parties could compete, the Communist party has had more than 16 per cent of the votes in six and an overall average of more than 20 per cent in the eight countries as a group.17

Since in India, Kerala faces more serious economic problems than any other state the Communists were able to transform economic despair into a legislative majority. Kerala has the highest density of population, the lowest per capita income, the highest percentage of unemployed, the lowest per capita possession of land, the highest percentage of food deficit 18--all these factors made the situation highly explosive. Even after 15 years of independence and implementation of two five year plans, the economic problems still remain staggering. The following table brings into focus the seriousness of the economic situation in Kerala compared to the whole of India:

17 S. M. Lipset, Political Man, p. 61. This book is an excellent study of political behavior in an international perspective.

TABLE V
SOME COMPARATIVE STATISTICS ON INDIA AND KERALA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS COMPARED</th>
<th>INDIA</th>
<th>KERALA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Density of population per square mile</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>1125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita annual income</td>
<td>Rs. 330 ($68)</td>
<td>230 ($48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land per capita in acres</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of unemployment</td>
<td>20 (apprx.)</td>
<td>30 (apprx.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Kerala as in other places the Communist party concentrates all its attention on the poor masses and tries to rally them under the Communist banner. They pose themselves as their champions in redressing their grievances. If one observes the Communist rallies and public meetings, he can see that a vast majority of the people who take part in them are poor people. Long before the elections, the Communists began canvassing among the poor visiting them in their houses. The analysis of the election results show that they invariably score majority of their seats in the constituencies where there is a heavy concentration of poor people. The fact of Communist party preference among the poor

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19 The data for the table is gathered from *India 1960*, pp. 182-194.


21 Communist success in Alleppey, Shertala, Mararikkulom, Aroor, Kayamkulom, Punaloor, Karthikapally, Varkkala, and in Palghat District is attributed to the chronic unemployment and poverty of these areas (*Deepika*, March 15, 1957.).
strata can be seen also from the Opinion Polling conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion in Kerala and Andhra just before the 1957 elections.

The following table shows the results:

**TABLE VI**

**COMMUNIST PARTY PREFERENCE IN KERALA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table clearly shows that people belonging to the lower middle and lower classes are the main supporters of the Communists in Kerala. Another consequence of poverty of the electorate is that the votes of these people can be bought like any other commodity by the party willing to offer them the best bid. It is an open secret that many thus vote for one party not for the programs they have promised to carry out but on account of the petty sum they have received. Sometimes it is accused that a voter receives money from more than one party promising to offer his vote. Sometimes they are paid money not to take part in voting fearing that in case they vote they may vote for another

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22 Indian Institute of Public Opinion Monthly Surveys, Vol. 12, Nos. 4, 5, 6, and 7.
party. So, in Kerala and in other underdeveloped areas of the world where vast majority of the electorate are extremely poor the rational free use of suffrage for the betterment of democracy becomes practically difficult.

From what has been said above it seems clear that economic backwardness is a major social factor for the instability of democracy in Kerala and also for the growth of Communist influence in Kerala. The author does not want to leave the impression that only the poor people vote for the Communists. Even some of the land owners and big business men, and members of the royal families worked and voted for the Communist party but they seem to be few in number.

The Caste-System and Communalism—A Powerful Divisive Factor: People all over the world are familiar with the time-old and traditional caste system in India. Unlike American and other Western Societies, India has been till recently a closed society which has been stratified into rigid groups called the Castes. One is born into a caste and has to share either the honor or the stigma attached remaining till his death in the same caste. In so far as this social phenomenon influences the party preference of the respective caste members, it deserves detailed consideration. The caste and communal feelings separate a great number of the people of Kerala into closed compartments with rigid rules which inhibit interdining, intermarriage, and other social interaction between the different castes.23

The Caste-System is thousands of years old. Although it evolved from occupation of the people of the Indo-Aryan society, religious sanction has made it very complicated and difficult to eradicate. The term used originally to indicate caste seems to have been Varna which means color. The difference in color could have been the first dividing line. Even now the broadest line of division between the high and low caste is based on color: the Savarna and the Avarna, i.e., the colorful and the colorless. There are four main castes—Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas, and the Sudras. The Brahmins belonged to the deity and it was their privilege to minister to the deities. The Kshatriyas were the farmers and traders. These three classes were allowed to wear the sacred thread which entitled them to the consolations of the religious rite of the temples and those of Hindu social life. The Sudras on the otherhand, were the slaves and outcastes who had none of the privileges of society or of the Hindu religion. They were to serve the higher castes, and no intermarriage or dining together were possible for a Sundra with a person of the higher caste.

Within each main caste there are many subcastes and it is estimated that there are about 3000 castes in India. All have evolved from the original four castes. It must be remembered that the caste system remained almost intact despite the vicissitudes of time and the many foreign conquests to which the country was exposed. The Hindu believes that caste system is an institution.

25J. H. Hutton, Caste in India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946.)
26Ibidem.
founded on the Vedas and his religion. Caste system is related to the Hindu doctrine of *Karma* according to which each man's position in the caste hierarchy is determined by the way he fulfilled his *dharma* or duty in his previous birth. If one fulfills his *dharma* satisfactorily, he will be born in his next life in a higher caste. After a series of births and deaths, when he is fully purified will he attain *Moksha* or salvation and merge into the Absolute. Thus the doctrine of *Karma* is related to the doctrine of Transmigration.

**Untouchables—the Underdogs** At the bottom of the caste system are the Untouchables, some sixty million people, described as the "largest subordinate group in the world." Untouchables are the menials of India, doing the dirty and degrading tasks, being the scavengers, the tanners, washers of dirty linen, and handlers of dead carcasses. Untouchability has been defined as "the Jimcrowism on a fantastic scale." Untouchables must live apart, separated from their fellow villagers. Their touch, contiguity, and sometimes even their shadows are considered to be polluting to the high caste Hindus. In the past they were denied access to Hindu temples, they could not draw water directly from the village wells, and their children could not attend school along with the other Hindu children. They have even been forbidden to walk on the public roads. In many villages higher caste Hindus have done many things to stress the inferiority of the Untouchables. These unfortunate were not supposed to dress well, may not ride on a horse, could not build a two story house, nor use

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brass vessels within the kitchen. It was natural, therefore, that the Untouchables as a class have a bare subsistence living and are paid pitifully low wages. If, as sometimes happens, a member of the "Depressed Classes" is able to obtain a good education and make a mark for himself as a businessman or lawyer, despite all the culture and wealth that may be accumulated this self-made man remains an untouchable, the social inferior of the higher castes and he is barred from their society.

Whatever might have been the justification for the existence of this infamous stratification of society in the past, caste system seems to be quite out of tune with the democratic principles of the modern era. Throughout his life Mahatma Gandhi fought against this social injustice and worked for the liberation of the Untouchables from their deplorable condition. In his weekly paper call Harijan, Gandhi launched a frontal attack on caste system and exposed the evils emerging from the practice of caste distinctions.29 Following the lead given by Gandhi, Nehru has written that "in the social organization of today it (caste system) has no place left, and that it has to change completely, for it is wholly opposed to modern conditions and democratic ideal."30 After Independence, the Indian leaders started a massive campaign for the removal of caste distinctions from the face of India. The Indian Constitution has declared that there will be no discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of caste and the practice of Untouchability was declared a criminal offence in 1955. Special privileges and protections are guaranteed


to the Untouchables by the Constitution and the Government in the field of education and job opportunities. Despite the constitutional guarantees and the special protective and developmental programs of government, the condition of the Untouchables is far from satisfactory. The report of the Commission for the Scheduled Castes reported in 1953 that "there has been no appreciable improvement with regard to the practice of Untouchability." In the villages, the citadel of orthodox Hinduism, discrimination against Untouchables has not lessened. Laws on the statute books can do little without the support of public opinion. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his book *The Removal of Untouchability* that "no religion worth the name, can be guilty of such atrocity as untouchability, which is contrary to the essentially non-violent spirit of Hinduism. So it must be cut out, root and branch, or Hinduism would perish."

Thus caste system has been and is the curse of India and a great divisive factor in the Indian society. With this historic concept of the caste structure of Indian society with its glaring social injustices and discriminations against the "Depressed or Scheduled Classes" of India it is easy to understand the present electoral choice of these people once they have secured the right to vote. The Communists take real advantage of the disabilities suffered by the low caste Hindus proposing to them the idea of a caste-less and classless society to be founded by revolution in which all will be equal.

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Communists picture Russia as a brotherhood of free and equal peoples, and Soviet race relations as one of the major social triumphs of our day.

In Kerala 30 per cent of the population belongs to the once untouchable classes. One major group among them is the Ezhave Community. Numerically this is most important group in Kerala being 26 per cent of the population. About thirty years ago, the Ezhavas were part of the "Depressed Classes." Although originally Hindus because of their low caste position, they were prohibited from entering the Hindu temples and even from practising their religion. In spite of their recent advancement, the Ezhaves are on the whole poor and landless. Their traditional caste trade was tapping toddy, and intoxicating drink from the coconut blossom, and some of them are employed to do menial services for the Nairs and Christians. Of late, however, they have taken to factory work and other types of work of the labouring class. Because of their large number, the Ezhavas wield a great political influence in Kerala since they received suffrage rights. They also have enormous influence on other "Depressed or Scheduled Castes" who follow them as friends in affliction. They have been waging war on the Hindu community which looked down upon them as low castes. The Communists tell them that the lowest classes have nothing to lose but their age-old chains and they are assured of equality and equal opportunity in a classless and caste society. The youth of the Ezhava community who have some education are now mostly Communists imbued with the Communist ideology and the uneducated masses of their group follow their lead. With the rapid growth of industries in State, the Ezhavas flocked to the factories and firms for work. They were cleverly organized by the Communists into their trade unions without much trouble. They are asked to give up their traditional
jobs and their former leaders. From what has been explained so far it should be clear that because of the social disabilities and discriminations caused by their low social position in the caste structure in Kerala, the Ezhaveas and other Scheduled Caste people were pushed to the side of the Communists in utter contempt for the present social system. The 1957 election results show their Communist preference quite clearly. It is estimated on the basis of the returns in elections that of the nearly 2,060,000 votes obtained by the Communists in 1957, about 70 per cent or over 1,400,000 votes were given them by the Ezhavas and other "Depressed Classes." They voted for Communists en masse, 100 per cent in several constituencies. All the other communities together gave the Communists only less than 30 per cent of the votes. Among the 60 Communist candidates who won the elections, 35 were members of the Ezhava and other lower caste groups. The Nairs in general supported the PSP or the Congress provided the candidate belonged to their community. But if the Communist candidate happens to be a Nair and the PSP or Congress candidate happens to be a Christian because of the communal spirit so rampant in Kerala, the Nairs would prefer to vote for the Nair Communist rather than the Congress or PSP non-Nair candidate. This, however, was not the case of the Ezhavas and other lower castes who stood four score behind the Communist party. If a Christian happened to stand on a Communist ticket,

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and an Ezhava on a Congress of PSP ticket, the Ezhavas voted as a solid block for Christian Communists. 36

The Communist party could thus rely safely on the faithful backing of 30 per cent of the total population in Kerala for planning their campaign for the elections. And unless some unexpected changes take place, it seems to be difficult to undermine the strength of the Communist party in Kerala. The following table indicates the number of votes cast in favour of the Communists at the polls in 1957 by the different communal groups.

TABLE VII

VOTES CAST IN FAVOUR OF COMMUNISTS 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Group</th>
<th>Number of Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HINDU</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed Class</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL HINDU</strong></td>
<td>1,650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MUSLIM</strong></td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHRISTIAN</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Catholic Christians</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CHRISTIAN</strong></td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHERS</strong></td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36 Ibidem; New Socialist, New Delhi, October 1958; For analysis of this polarization, see M. N. Srinivas, "Caste in Modern India," Journal of Asian Studies, August 1957, p. 543.

37 The above figures are taken from a table given in Political Quarterly.
Based mainly on the support of the Ezhavas and the Depressed Classes the Communists maneuvered well before the elections by organizing night schools and house to house visits. The Communist cells were organized all over the state and canvassing was well engineered from the grass-roots level upwards. Altogether more than 1,000 volunteers (100 for each of the districts) were selected to supervise their campaign where as the Congress party had only 200 or 300 for the whole state. They began to raise funds many months earlier and the sums they collected were supposed to be very large. By intimidating the land owners and big business men they succeeded in getting huge sums of money for their party. If a big business man or agriculturist refused to contribute to their party, he was sure to be embarrassed by a series of strikes and picketing of the labourers at the instigation of their Communist bosses. So, few people refused to contribute to their fund; being afraid of reprisal even some of the Christians had to give them money. Besides, it is alleged by the Congress party that the Communists were getting help through foreign sources. Another factor which must be borne in mind is that the Ezhavas and the Depressed Classes exercised their franchise at the high rate of almost 90 per cent while scarcely 70 per cent of the other communities went to polls in 1957. The Communist workers lined their supporters in queues before the polling booths much

of April 1960, p. 191, in an article written by J. Singh entitled "Communism in Kerala." The author of the article took his Ph.D. at the London School of Economics and Political Science and is now a member of the Research Staff of the Institute of Public Administration. After the Communist success in Kerala he made a study on the spot of political situation in Kerala for Diwan Chand, Indian Information Centre. The article published in Political Quarterly is a summary of his research.

earlier than the supporters of other parties.39

Once sure of the support of a large section of the lower income groups, and a vast majority of voters of the lower castes, the Communists were involved in 13 straight contests in which they succeeded in as many as 10 constituencies. They were also engaged in 58 three-cornered fights, of which they came out successful in 31 constituencies. Had the democratic parties joined their forces in these 58 constituencies as they did in 1960, the Communists would have stood no chance in more than half of the 31 in which they triumphed. Any keen analysis of the results of 1957 elections in Kerala is bound to come to the conclusion that the victory of the Communists was largely due to appalling poverty of the masses, casteism, communalism, the disunity of democratic parties, and the calculated maneuverings of the peculiar situation of this state by the Communists for the benefit of their party.40

Unlike conditions in other democratic countries, it cannot be said that large groups of the Indian population are firmly committed politically. There is of course the traditional loyalty of the people to the Congress. The Congress which won freedom for the country and went through a great deal of suffering for its sake and which has Shri Nehru to lead it and with which Gandhi's magic name is inseparably associated, still commands the love and respect of the people as is evident from the fact that the people voted Congress into power both in the Centre and in 13 of the 14 states throughout the last 15

39 Ibidem.

years. But this love and respect diminishes as one moves to the lower rungs of the Congress ladder. A local Congress man in the days of freedom fight was a worshipped person. A halo of martyrdom surrounded him. People knew him as a Tyagi. He was at their side in famine, pestilence, and flood. He was the voice of the people. In jail and out of it, the Congress man was often in their thoughts. There was no other strong party or organizations to demand their following. But now the picture is different. After the independence people thought that all their chronic problems would be solved overnight by the Congress government. The Congress government is launching out on great plans for the good of the country, but so multitudinous are the troubles of the people that long range programs of development fail to provide immediate relief for the misery of the people on the local level. Even after 15 years of Congress rule the vast majority of the population live in sub-standard conditions and experience, insecurity and frustration. "Acceptance of the norms of democracy requires a high level of sophistication and ego security. The less sophisticated and less stable an individual, the more likely he is to favour a simplified view of politics...and find difficulty in grasping or tolerating a gradualist image of political change." This great concern of the present and the lack of a long range perspective in the political outlook of the large masses of people is a serious danger facing the democracy in Kerala and all over India. Another sad feature of democracy in Kerala is that the Congress bureaucracy is missing the living touch with the masses in their day to day life. Democracy

41 Sadiq Ali, p. 66.
42 S. M. Lipset, Political Man, p. 115.
is still a set of forms, a collection of procedural rules. It has not entered
the intimate fabric of people's lives. So, anti-democratic parties which
promise an immediate and quick solution for the social ills of society are
drawing slowly but steadily large masses of people into their fold.
CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION AND POLITICAL PREFERENCE

One of the conditions apparently necessary for a healthy democracy is a high educational level of a nation's population. The higher the educational level of the people, the better the chance of democracy, and comparative data available supports this proposition.¹ The more democratic countries of Europe are almost entirely literate; the lowest has a literacy rate of 96 per cent, while the less democratic nations have an average rate of 85 per cent. In Latin America the difference is between average rate of 74 per cent for the less dictatorial countries and 46 per cent for the dictatorial. The educational enrollment at the three levels—primary, post-primary, and higher educational—is equally consistently related to the degree of democracy. The tremendous disparity is shown by the extreme cases of Asia and Africa where the literacy is regrettably low.

The relationship between education and democracy is worth extensive treatment since an entire philosophy of government has seen increased education as the basic requirement of a successful democracy. It has often been remarked by political scientists that lack of sufficient education is the cause of political instability in the underdeveloped areas of the world. Education even if it does not make men good citizens, makes it at least easier for them to become so. Education presumably broadens man's outlook, enables him to under-

stand the need for norms of tolerance, restrains him from adhering to extremist doctrines, and increases his capacity to make rational electoral choices. The evidence on the contribution of education to democracy is even more direct and strong on the level of individual behaviour within countries than it is in cross national correlations. Data gathered by public opinion research agencies which have questioned people in different countries about their beliefs on tolerance for the opposition, their attitude towards ethnic and racial minorities, and the feelings for multi-party as against one party systems have showed that the most important single factor differentiating those giving democratic responses from others has been education. The higher one's education, the more likely one is to believe in democratic values and support democratic practices. Most of the relevant studies indicate that education is a significant factor in electoral choice. The studies of American voting conducted by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, and others confirm this correlation between the level of education and electoral interest. Even in the same level of economic status the rate of voting and political participation increases as one goes higher in the level of education. Education on the college level has a significant impact on the intelligent interest one shows in politics and elections. Educational level to a large extent depends upon the economic level and thus they form a circular chain.


These findings lead us to anticipate higher correlations between national level of education and stable political practices than are actually found. Though Germany and France are among the best educated nations of Europe, this by itself did not stabilize their democracies. But the high literacy level of their citizens has served at least to inhibit other anti-democratic forces. About the relations between democracy and education Seymour Lipset makes the following comments:

If we cannot say that a high level of education is a sufficient condition for democracy, the available evidence suggests that it comes close to being a necessary condition. In Latin America where widespread illiteracy exists, only one of all the nations in which more than half the population is illiterate—Brazil can be included in the more democratic group.

Lebanon, the one member of the Arab League which has maintained democratic institutions since World War II, is by far the best educated (over 80 per cent literate). East of the Arab world the only two states, the Philippines and Japan, have since 1945 maintained democratic regimes without the presence of large anti-democratic parties. These two countries, although lower than most European states in per capita income, are among the world's leaders in educational attainment. The Philippines actually rank second to the United States in the proportion of people attending high schools and universities, and Japan has a higher educational level than any European nation.4

From what has been said above it is clear that education of the masses is a necessary condition for the working of a healthy democracy and where the literacy is at a low level, anti-democratic forces are on the increase. This is exactly what happens in India, where the literacy rate was only 16.6 per cent

4Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, p. 57; the present writer acknowledges his indebtedness to S. M. Lipset for many of the international data on elections presented in this thesis.
in 1951. Even after fifteen years of independence this situation has not improved considerably. According to the 1961 Census literacy has risen to 28 per cent which is still considerably low compared to other democratic countries. Millions of illiterate people were granted universal suffrage at the dawn of independence. Mahatma Gandhi was reported to have been sceptical about this overdose of democracy to an overwhelmingly illiterate masses of people. Rajendra Prasad, India's former President is also known to have been sceptical about this leap in the dark. Just after the first General Elections, the Radical Humanist held that "the way in which the masses...exercised their franchise...conclusively proved that they did not possess the minimum degree of intelligence and education for an intelligent exercise of the right to vote. Indeed the poverty and ignorance of our masses are so obvious that the elections only served to emphasize the fact." The abysmal ignorance of many of the voters concerning democracy and the democratic processes enables the local leaders and anti-democratic parties to exploit them. Acharya Kripalani, the leader of the PSP Party discussed his experience in Vigil under the title "Universal Franchise and Universal Ignorance." He had adopted the method of asking questions of his village audiences during the campaign tours to find out whether they had any knowledge of the affairs of the country and whether they understood the significance of the vote. He reported:

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5 Census of India, 1951.

6 A Weekly published from Calcutta advocating decentralization of power.

7 Radical Humanist, February (1952), p. 53.
My first shock came when I asked the audience in a village on the high road twenty miles from the industrial city of Cawnpore the question to whom India belonged. Quick came the answer that it belonged to Jawaharlal Nehru. To the further question "Can he leave it to his son?" the reply was "why not?". How was I to explain to such ignorance the significance of the vote? My questioning therefore took the following form:

Q. When any one of you dies to whom goes his property?
A. To his children.
Q. Are the neighbors' votes taken in the transfer of the property?
A. No.
Q. If any minister dies to whom will the office go?
A. To his son.
Q. What for then have you got the vote?
A. We do not know.
Q. Supposing you do not vote for a minister can he continue to be a minister?
A. We do not know.
Q. If you do not know, why should you vote?
A. The police will harass us if we do not.
Q. Then in what box will you cast your vote?
A. As the officials want us.

It seemed useless after this to ask any further questions about the value and the proper exercise of the vote.

The illiteracy of the Indian electorate made it necessary to assign separate symbols to the different candidates and parties taking part in the elections which interferes with the democratic process.

It is a pity that instead of popularizing in the main, candidates and programs, we have to, owing to a high degree of illiteracy in the country resort to the device of symbols in order to enable the electorate to choose the men or the party they like. It is a device to meet this hindrance of ignorance even though political education suffers in the process. There is no other and more suitable remedy for this widespread ignorance that we can think of at the moment. The symbols are likely to stay with us till we attain full literacy.

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8 Vigil (Calcutta), February 9, 1952, p. 5.
This system of assigning symbols to candidates as a means whereby the illiterate voter could identify his choice was not fully understood by many electors. Many inexperienced voters in the rural areas were confused when they arrived inside the polling booths, because they had expected to offer their ballot to a living animal, or to whatever symbol they had chosen. From all reports election campaigns had been waged in such a way as to make these expectations altogether not unreasonable. Few candidates seem to have appealed to the rural voters with a program. Rather their efforts reportedly were concentrated on attempts to popularize their symbol. They had organized parades of "bullocks," or had ridden from village to village on a "camel" or "elephant" or in a cart. One parade was described which had been led by a camel with placards reading "Vote for Me" around its neck. Another candidate whose symbol was the lion was not to be outdone, and displayed a caged lion as part of his campaign. In consequence some voters brought grass to the polls to feed the bullocks. One woman put a rupee in the congress box because she thought that the bullocks were hungry; another asked to pat the nose of the camel to whom she was giving her vote. Some women voters, finding no bullocks within the booth kept their ballots on the backs of the first cow or bullock they met on their return home. A man whose intention was to vote for the tree, climbed the tree beside his polling booth and placed his ballot on the topmost branch. Some voters brought with them petitions for food and money. The illiterates do not know how to mark a ballot and consequently a good number of votes become invalid in the elections. In 1957 elections in Kerala about 62,300 votes were declared invalid owing to defective marking. During the recent elections one old woman travelled fifteen miles in a bullock cart to cast her vote for Gandhi. When somebody told her at the booth that Gandhi was dead long ago, she was dis-
appointed and she refused to cast her vote. The foregoing episodes are but an extreme sample of the election panorama which the Indian press presented to its readers during elections in India. One fact, however, must be noted. The fact that India has already conducted three times the largest democratic elections in the world in a peaceful manner, confounded all those sceptics who thought the introduction of adult franchise was too risky an experiment in this country. It would seem, however, after fifteen years experience with Indian democracy, that the Indian masses have not yet developed enough to participate intelligently in the democratic processes.

In England, United States of America, and all other democratic countries franchise was introduced step by step. But in countries like India and Africa where the universal suffrage has been introduced all of a sudden, there is always the danger of exploitation by the demagogues of illiteracy and ignorance of the masses, and their precious voting power may turn out to be the instrument of their slavery. In countries of South East Asia where the literacy rate is very low the Communist propaganda is very virulent promising easy solutions to all their chronic problems and the poor illiterate people become an easy prey to the Communist party. The illiterate and poor masses experience a kind of anomie. Without the guidance of a sound education, they are lost as to the course they should take to better their lot. Besides, all these countries were under the domination of colonial powers for centuries and so they


very often identify western democracy with capitalistic domination to which the Communists attribute the misery in these countries.

The experience in democracy in the state of Kerala also brings into focus the tendency of the illiterate to prefer the leftist and socialist parties in the elections. Just before the 1957 General Elections the Indian Institute of Public Opinion conducted a pre-election opinion poll all throughout India. The results showed that more than 50 per cent of the illiterates preferred the Communist and leftist socialist parties. The results of the opinion poll taken in Kerala and Andhra, the two leading strong holds of Communists in India were as follows:

TABLE VIII

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND PARTY PREFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Communist Preference in Kerala, Andhra</th>
<th>Rest of India</th>
<th>Socialist Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-Matriculate</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculate--Plus</td>
<td>$\frac{9}{100}$</td>
<td>$\frac{20}{100}$</td>
<td>$\frac{26}{100}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The election results in 1957 and 1960 also confirm the findings of the opinion poll. The Communist party scored majority of their seats in the Malabar area where the literacy rate is lowest. Palaghat District which has the

12The figures have been computed from tables presented in the Indian Institute of Public Opinion, Monthly Public Opinion Surveys, Vol. 2, Nos. 4, 5, 6, and 7 (Combined Issue) New Delhi, January-April, 1957, pp. 9-16.
lowest literacy rate of 34 per cent voted 12 Communists to power in the 1957 elections and 10 Communists in 1960 out of 15 seats.\(^\text{13}\)

The results of the opinion poll cited above seem to support the proposition that Communist appeal should be substantially for the lower and uneducated strata where the party is powerful, and for the relatively higher and better educated where the influence of the party is weak. Where the Indian Communist Party is small, its support like that of the small and moderate socialist parties, comes from relatively well-to-do and better educated strata. The picture shifts sharply in Kerala and Andhra where the Communists are strong. The middle class provides only 7 per cent of the Communist support there, with the working class support of 74 per cent.\(^\text{14}\) Educational differences among party supporters show a similar pattern. The lower strata and illiterate masses will always choose the less complex alternative. In England, the United States of America, Sweden, Norway and developed countries where the Communist party is small and weak, it cannot hold out the promise of immediate changes in the situation of the most deprived. Rather such extremist parties present the fairly complex intellectual argument that in the long run they will be strengthened by tendencies inherent in the social and economic system. For the poor worker, support of the Swedish social democrats, the British Labor Party, or the Democratic Party is a simpler and more easily understood way of securing redress of grievances or improvement of social conditions than supporting an electorally insignificant Communist Party.


\(^{14}\)See Table VI of this thesis.
If literacy helps the development of a healthy democracy and checks extremist tendencies, how can one explain the curious experience of voting the Communists into power in Kerala which has the highest literacy rate in India? In the two General Elections held since the formation of the state of Kerala the Communist Party were able to secure a large percentage of votes polled whereas on an all India basis the influence of this party was much less. "Kerala had become the first state in India to elect a Communist government. It might have been expected that Kerala, the best educated and most Christian of the Indian states, would have been the last to elect a Communist government to power." Or again, "It was something of a paradox that the democratic experiment should run into difficulties in the most literate and politically conscious State of India." To understand this apparent inconsistency, one has to probe more deeply into the situation in Kerala. First of all it should be noted that even "the highest literacy rate" of Kerala which is at present 46.22 is comparatively low when compared to the literacy rate of other stable democratic countries of the world. Besides, literacy is estimated on the basis of one's ability to read and write. The fact that one can read and write does not make one really educated. Of the literates in Kerala about 20.68 per cent (2,802,996) are students who are below voting age.

Another important factor which is often lost sight of by many authors who write on Communism in South East Asia is the fact that in all these underdeveloped areas of the world there is a cadre of native intellectuals among whom


Padmanabhan, The Red Interlude in Kerala, p. 98.
Communism exerts great influence. The force of Communist appeal on the educated natives is an outcome of their experience under the colonial powers. They were very often barred from responsible and high offices. In this context the following passages from Morris Watnick, The Appeal of Communism to Underdeveloped Areas, seem to be pertinent.

The appeal of Communism as such in these areas is first and foremost an appeal which finds lodgement with indigenous professional and intellectual groups...it is they who spearhead the propaganda drive, organize unions, youth groups and other organizations, and plan tactics of their parties, etc...The new intelligentsia was in large measure consigned by imperial system to hover uneasily between a native social base which could not find accommodation for its skills and ambitions, and the superimposed imperial structure which reserved the best places for aliens...The picture was one of a rootless intellectual proletariat possessing no real economic base in an independent native middle class. The tendency in all these areas has been to train bachelors of arts, lawyers, and other professional workers in numbers far out of proportion to the absorptive capacity of the social structures of home areas. Those who did find such employment were frozen in minor posts, the most coveted posts going to Europeans.18

Sufficient empirical material exists to support the conclusion that the Communist parties in Asia today, as in the 1920's are the creation of native intellectuals. Since 1940, they have, of course, greatly expanded their mass following and membership, but their leadership is still drawn overwhelmingly from the intelligentsia. In the case of China, this elite character of Communist party leadership was expressly recognized by Mao Tse-tung in 1917.19 The entire history of the party from its founding by Li Ta-chao and Ch-en Tu-hsu to Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-shi is virtually an unbroken record of a party con-


trolled by intellectuals. India illustrates the same trend. M. N. Roy, a high caste Brahmin of considerable intellectual achievements, was one of the first Communist leaders in India. Also indicative of the predominance of intellectuals in the leadership of the Indian Communist party is the fact that at its first All-Indian Congress in 1943, eighty-six of a total attendance of 139 delegates were members of professional and intellectual groups. And in the post-war period, the leading position of this social group in the affairs of the Indian Communist Party finds expression in men like Joshi, Ranadeve, A. K. Gopalan, and E.M.S. Namperipad. The same pattern holds good for the Communist parties in all the countries of South Asia.

As a result of their Western education many of them were exposed to the various schools of social thought contending for influence in Europe, and from this they adopted the lessons which seemed to offer the best hope for the native communities. Western Capitalism was necessarily excluded from their range of choices because of its association with imperialist rule over their own societies. The anti-capitalist sentiment is quite strong among the intellectual spokesman of these areas irrespective of their political allegiance or organization. The economic doctrines of Gandhi because of its insistence on a static

20 Political Affairs, Bombay, June 13, 1943.

21 People's War (Organ of the C.P.I.), Bombay; June 13, 1943.

subsistence economy fails to win any considerable following. On the other hand
the success of Marxist-Leninist experiment in Russia and in China captivated
their attention. Moreover some intellectuals who were dissatisfied with the
prevailing social set-up in India with its crude forms of caste distinctions
and discriminatory practices saw in Communism a powerful instrument of social
change and an effective remedy for the social ills of the Indian society. Be-
sides, from the beginning the Communists began identifying themselves with the
nationalist movements in these colonial countries of Asia and they were manip-
ulating the discontent in these areas to their favor. So, Kerala being the
most educated part of India, the Communists from the start succeeded in winning
the confidence of some of the educated citizens of this state. Initially the
Kerala Communists operated as Congress Socialists. They were to shed their
cloak only in 1940 following the breakdown of the united front of the Congress
Socialists and the Communists. From that time on the Communists began to come
to the open as Marxist-Leninists. Some of the lawyers and professional people
were drawn into the Communist leadership of the party in Kerala.23 Mr. A. K.
Gopalan, the present Communist party leader in the Indian Parliament, and E. M.
S. Namburipad, the former Communist Prime Minister of Kerala, and the present
Secretary of the Indian Communist party, as well as a number of Communist All-
India leaders are from this state.

Unemployment of the Educated: Another factor accounting for the inconsis-
tency in Kerala is the unemployment of the educated which constitutes a serious

23E. M. S. Nambudripad, The National Question in Kerala (Bombay: People's
and menacing situation. According to a study undertaken by the Manpower Division of the Directorate of Employment Exchanges, Ministry of Labor and Employment, of the pattern of unemployment among the graduates as of May 15, 1957, the highest incidence of unemployment among the graduates was found in Kerala. About 93 per cent of the unemployed graduates seeking employment were men and about 7 per cent women. Of the unemployed graduates 48.5 per cent were B.A.s, 22.7 per cent B.Sc.s, 12.8 per cent B.Com.s. This in itself signifies little since state statistics on unemployment are by no means precise and cover only the urban unemployed. Moreover, not all the unemployed register themselves. The educated unemployed is a discontented person. He is vociferous, he wields influence, and he nurtures in himself a sense of personal injury if the grievances continue for long and the numbers involved are large, as is the case in Kerala. The situation is decidedly explosive and disquieting and represents a threat to the security and stability of the state. The unemployment of persons belonging to this category is dangerous since they are not "dumb driven cattle," but intelligent people, who will not accept this deplorable situation as inevitable. The seriousness of the situation can be viewed from another angle. Even if the educated were to remain quiet, the scheme of things responsible for such a state of affairs deserves condemnation. It involves the wastage of what is best in society amounting to a national loss.

The discontent among the educated unemployed can easily be understood. It is with great hardships that most of the youngsters go through their high school and college education dreaming of a bright future. Their family often sacrifices even the barest needs in life for the sake of their education. When he gets

out of school or college, he finds all his dreams shattered. After a long period of job hunting, he experiences a kind of frustration in life and begins to feel dissatisfied with the social system responsible for his plight. There are thousands of such educated unemployed like him in Kerala. These young people, in a feeling of desperation and disillusionment, turn to Communist ideology as an instrument of quick social change. Some of these people become associated with Communist activities. The Communists take good advantage of them, utilizing their literary, musical, and histrionic talents for the benefit of their party. They are encouraged and sponsored by the party to write short stories, novels, dramas, poems extolling the glories of Communism and downgrading Capitalism. The Communist party organized for the first time cultural groups, and recreation centres, and youth festivals where many of these discontented youngsters assemble together.

Again the comparative high literacy of Kerala makes it possible for the Communists to carry on a virulent and effective propaganda campaign through radio, press, and other means of communication. There are at present five Communist newspapers published in Kerala. Compared to the other papers the subscription price for the Communist papers are very low. Consequently they get wider circulation among the poor literates of the state. Besides, many books and magazines are published by the Communists and they have opened bookstalls and libraries throughout the state. People eager to learn are attracted

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to these places of indoctrination. Also the Kerala Communists have recruited influential regional literary figures to identify the party with local aspirations. 27

Not only among the educated unemployed but even among the students the Communists carry on a strong propaganda. They have organized Communist Student Federations in most of the schools and colleges. As in Latin American countries Kerala had experienced wide unrest and student strikes during the past fifteen years under the inspiration of the Communists. They realized that the surest way to lay the foundation for Communist dictatorship and regimentation is through capture of the future generation. Therefore, the policy and programs pursued by the party were to focus and firmly hitch the attention of unsuspecting innocents to high sounding slogans of reform and progress and under cover of it hurriedly reorganize education academically, organizationally, and administratively in conformity with Communist objectives. Thus the ambition, high ideals, and enthusiasm of the students were exploited for political motives.

Education by itself cannot effect democratic preference is also evident from the fact that in Kerala a good number of teachers and other employed persons are dissatisfied with the Congress government and were to an extent sympathetic towards the Communists. The discontent was greatest among the primary and secondary school teachers. The main reason for their discontent was their pitifully low salaries. The primary school teachers were receiving an initial

pay of five or six dollars a month two decades ago. Even now after several pay
increases, a primary school teacher's salary scale is only Rs. 40-120 ($9-26). The
condition of teachers in private schools was worse; the salary was lower and
they did not have any security of tenure. The manager of the school could re­
lieve one teacher of his position under any pretext. Fully conscious of the
discontent among the teachers the Communists began organizing teachers into
Communist Federations promising them substantial pay increases and security of
tenure once they come into power. Besides, both in the Assembly and in public,
they were clamouring for justice to the teachers. Special programs were pro­
posed in their 1957 election manifesto for the welfare of the teachers and low
government officers. Just after the Communists took charge of the government,
they introduced in the Assembly the controversial Education Bill which brought
about the downfall of their ministry. The Bill was deliberately devised in
such a way as to alienate the teachers from the management and to bring the
whole education under the firm grip of their government.

Another factor which brought about the inconsistency is the failure of the
educational system in Kerala to prepare a person for life. The educational
system in India, a legacy of the colonial rule, was divorced from the realities
of life with which the student must grapple. Every year a good number of gradu­
ates come out of the colleges for whom there is no proportionate demand. If

29 Frank Moraes, India Today, pp. 131-133; Kainikkara Padmanabhan, The Red
Interlude in Kerala, pp. 132-139.
the young man or woman is unable to get a job of teaching or as a clerk, he or she is unemployed after completing the college studies. There are very few alternative openings which hold out the prospect of a living wage, not to speak of a respectable living. Most of the schools and colleges handle only the art subjects; science and technological fields are often neglected. After independence though there is a conscious effort to correct this deficiency, the situation still remains far from satisfactory.

In this connection it may also be pointed out that there is a growing resentment among the educated against the Congress leaders in the Centre, who are mostly from North India. One of the reasons for their resentment is that major the major portion of the job opportunities in the Central Government are being monopolized by people from the North. It is alleged that the Hindu speaking leaders of the North are trying to dominate over the non-Hindu speaking people of the South. The Central government is accused of deliberately neglecting the South in its developmental programs. Outcries against "Imperialism of the North" can be heard from practically all state legislatures of South India.

This resentment against the Congress leadership and alleged domination of the North is cleverly exploited by the Communists to topple the Congress governments. The greater influence of the Communist party in the non-Hindu speaking areas of the South, namely, Andhra, Kerala, and Madras may be partially explained by this opposition to the North Indian Congress leaders.

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CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND POLITICAL PREFERENCE

In the previous chapters an attempt has been made to show the influence of socio-economic status and education on the electoral choice of the voters in Kerala. On the basis of the analysis it has been established that more voters of the lower socio-economic and lower educational levels tend to prefer extremist parties than those of the higher socio-economic and educational status. Data available on the international elections also seem to confirm this tendency.\(^1\) In this chapter it is our purpose to investigate the relationship between religion and political preference of the voters in Kerala. Religion like all other social institutions exerts an influence on the interactional processes of the people in a society. Mere perusal of history convinces one of this impact of religion on society. But our specific concern here is to assess the influence of religious affiliation on the political preference of the voters in Kerala.

The American studies on voting conducted in Erie County, Ohio, in Elmira County, New York, and in Santa Clara County, San Francisco have shown that a pattern of political preference could be noticed along religious affiliation of the voters.\(^2\) A sizable majority of the Protestants in the sample voted for the Republican party and a sizable majority of the Catholics voted for the Democratic party. This finding is highlighted by the fact that in all the major cities

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\(^1\)Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*, pp. 61-68.

where Catholics are the majority, Democratic candidates are generally returned to the various legislative and administrative bodies whereas rural constituencies with a Protestant majority generally return Republican candidates. An analysis of opinion polls and election results of democracies of Europe and Latin America also reveals a pattern of party alignment along religious lines.

Religious Composition of Kerala: There are three main religions in Kerala namely, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. Of the 16.8 million people of Kerala, about 53 per cent are Hindus, 25 per cent Christians, and 19.9 per cent Muslims. The picture is quite different on the All-India scene where 85 per cent of the people are Hindus, 9.9 per cent are Muslims, 2.3 per cent are Christians, and the rest belong to other religions.

The Hindus: Of the Hindus in Kerala about 25.2 per cent belong to the Nair caste, 44.4 per cent belong to the Ezhava caste, 20.4 per cent are Scheduled Castes, and the remaining 10 per cent belong to the Brahmin and Kshatrya castes. Before India got independence, the Nair and other high caste Hindus had a privileged position in the independent princely states of Travancore and Cochin under the Maharajas. The Ezhavas and the Scheduled Castes Hindus who belong to the lower castes were engaged in menial tasks for the high caste

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4 Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, pp. 242-248.
Hindus and Christians. They were relegated to a lower social position in society. But with independence and the introduction of universal suffrage the influence of the Ezhavas and other lower caste Hindus who together form 30 per cent of the Kerala population began to be felt. Due to the power of their votes they could demand equality and equal opportunity with the high caste Hindus. Even before independence, foreseeing the potential power of these two communities the Communists began to work among them organizing Communist cells and trade unions and promising them equality with other high caste Hindus. It is but natural that they listened to them being age-old victims of social injustice and exploitation at the hands of the high caste Hindus in the name of religion. Hindus because of its rigid caste structure and discriminatory practices did not appeal to them though they were for ages nominal Hindus. Before independence being afraid of reprisal from their high caste Hindu masters, Ezhavas and the Scheduled caste Hindus had no other alternative but to accept their deplorable condition.

The high caste Hindus as was pointed out above had a privileged position before the independence under the Hindu Maharajas. The majority of them were land owners and they monopolized all governmental jobs. But with dawn of democracy drastic changes occurred. Maharajas disappeared from the political horizon and government jobs began to be given to the other communities. Consequently more members of the high caste Hindus became unemployed. Besides the joint family system with its Marumakkathayam struck a heavy blow on their financial status. This deteriorating economic situation produced a kind of

frustration among the younger members of their community. Unlike with the older generations, Hinduism seems to be losing its hold on the younger generation. Hinduism is quite amorphous in its teachings and practices. It has no rigid doctrines, no hierarchical authority to enforce its doctrines. Hindu religion embraces all shades of doctrine and philosophy including even atheistic forms of thought.

Hinduism is impossible to define in a terse and neat statement, for it comprehends a way of life, rather than a narrow, churchgoing creed and affects man's social status, his marriage, the very food he eats, the friends among whom he can mingle, and the occupation he follows. Hinduism has no canon, no precise doctrine, and it has room for the most primitive idol worshipers and at the same time for the believers in the most profound philosophy of monotheism. There are literally thousands of deities worshipped in India. One worships what or whom one pleases.

The rising tide of industrialization, urbanization, and growing contact with the Western culture challenge more than ever the claims of Hindu way of life. Whatever might have been its hold on the people of India in the past, in the present democratic set up in India Hinduism seems to be becoming more and more dysfunctional and losing its hold on the youth. While slipping away from the hold of Hinduism, many of these Hindu youths, finding no other ideals to lean on are drawn closer to the Communists.

The Muslims: According to a recent survey report published by the Kerala Muslim Jamaath Federation there are more than 3.3 million Muslims in Kerala which represents 19.9 per cent of the total population. They are mostly concentrated in the big cities throughout Kerala. Of the 29 municipalities in

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in Kerala, 14 have more than 20 per cent Muslim population. The largest concentration of Muslim population is in the Kozhikode and Palghat districts in the northern part of the state. Some of the Muslims are of foreign origin originally coming from Afghanistan. The bulk of the present day Muslims are, however, descendants of Hindus who accepted Islam either to escape low caste status or to escape death under the hands of the Muslim emperors.

Like Hinduism, Islam also is more than a religion; it is a way of life, a veritable culture all its own. Unlike the former, it believes in the fundamental equality of men and repudiates any notion of caste. Islam is iconoclastic, and idol smashing faith in contrast to the polytheism of Hinduism with its variegated array of deities. Muslims rejected child marriage, and eat meat, especially the cow. Because of the exclusiveness of the caste system of the Hindus, there could be no contact between these two communities and intermarriage was out of the question. During the 75 years before independence, differences between Hindus and Muslims took the form of open rivalries and communal riots. The rivalries between these two religious communities led to the partition of India and bitter massacres and riots following the partition.¹¹ This religious animosity is still evident in the strained relations between India and Pakistan. After the partition of India, the Muslims who remained in India identified themselves with the rest of the population and a vast majority of them joined the existing political parties. But most of the Muslims in Kerala refused to go along with them and formed a political party on a religious

basis known as the Kerala Muslim League party. Some others joined the Congress or Socialist or Communist party. The influence of the Muslim League is very strong in Kozhikode and Palghat districts where the Muslims vote mostly along religious lines as will be shown later. According to the report mentioned above the Muslim community is on the whole economically backward and their literacy rate is only 23.2 per cent whereas the literacy rate for the whole state is 46.2 per cent. Among the Muslim youth about three hundred and fifty thousand are unemployed and there seems to be a great and growing discontent among the Muslim youth.\(^\text{12}\)

**The Christians:** Christianity is a powerful social force in Kerala. The Christians form almost 25 per cent of the total population. Of these 64 per cent belong to the Catholic Church and the remaining 36 per cent belong to Jacobite, Marthomite, and Protestant churches. According to well established tradition Christianity existed in Kerala from the first century.\(^\text{13}\) St. Thomas, the Apostle, came to Kerala in 52 A.D. and through his missionary activities many Hindus became Christians. In addition many Christian immigrants came from Syria in the fourth century to escape from persecution. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many Portuguese missionaries arrived in Kerala and through their efforts, especially that of St. Francis Xavier, many more Hindus were converted to Christianity. At present there are 17 Catholic diocese belonging to the Syriac and Latin Rites.\(^\text{14}\) The majority of Catholics in Kerala

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live in Kottayam and Ernakulam districts.

From the very beginning Christians took an active and leading part in promoting education in Kerala. Attached to every diocese several schools and colleges were started where children of all castes and creeds were given education. At present more than 2,000 schools and 29 colleges in the state are owned and conducted by the Christians. Compared to other communities, Christians are more literate and forward looking. They are successful in trade and agriculture. The relative prosperity of the Christians and growing influence in educational and political fields aroused envy and suspicion of the Hindus and they have tried to keep the Christians from wielding positions of importance in the government. This attempt on the part of the Hindus often led to communal ill feeling and rivalries between the two communities.

Of the political parties in Kerala, only the Congress party could win the confidence of the Christians. The Communist party being anti-religious and atheistic was outside of their choice. The Socialist party because of its position concerning nationalization and their willingness to make political alliance with the Communists, was looked upon with suspicion by the Christians. In the absence of any other acceptable party the Christians gave their support to the Congress in spite of their displeasure with some of its policies. Christians were the main supporters of the Congress since 1948.

The Catholic Hierarchy made every effort to direct the Catholic population not to vote for the Communists. Before the elections the Catholic Bishops of Kerala issued joint Pastoral Letters to administer their Catholics not to vote for the Communists in the name of religion and morality. This apparent interference of the Catholic Hierarchy stirred strong protests from the Communists and Socialist parties. Election suits were even filed before the Election Tribunal to invalidate certain election results on the plea that the Catholic Church exerted undue pressure on the voters.

The vast majority of the Christians in Kerala are descendants of high caste Hindus who became Christians many years ago. Some others are descendants of Syrian and Portuguese immigrants. The above two groups of Christians consider themselves as "old Christians." They find easy acceptance even among high caste Hindus. But there are at present in Kerala more than a hundred thousand Christians who were converted from the low caste Ezhavas, Pulayas, and Parayas. Though officially the Church is against any social discrimination, these low caste converts to the Christian faith are considered by the so called "Old Christians" as "New Christians" and are given only a second class position in the Christian community. Most of them are poor, illiterate, and engage in menial jobs. The Communist party was quick to exploit this situation to win them over to their side. So, being dissatisfied with the discriminatory treatment they receive from so called "Old Christians" a number of them try to shed

their social stigma and disability by joining the Communist party and voting for them in the elections. On the basis of analysis of election results it has been estimated that more than 50 per cent of them voted for the Communists in 1957.

Communists consider the Church as their number one enemy in Kerala and it is their deliberate endeavour to discredit and destroy her. They try to picture the Church as an agent of capitalists and imperialists and through propaganda whip up anti-clerical feelings among the Christians. And they have succeeded to a certain extent. The Church on account of its apparent authoritarianism has created certain amount of discontent among some of its members.

In earlier days the parish priest was the most educated man in the parish and the people accepted his leadership without question. But now the situation in Kerala is quite different. A good number of the laity are more educated than the priests and they resent being "dictated to" by the clergy. The failure on the part of some of the clergy to make timely attitudinal changes in their approach to the laity has alienated even some of the educated Christians. Unfortunately, the Church in Kerala gave the impression of being an instrument of retaining the status quo. The failure of some of the clergy to advocate social reforms and social justice unfortunately gave the impression that the Church was favouring the rich.

With the opening of factories, many of the Catholics, especially of the lower economic status, went to the factories for work. The priests did not

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take sufficient care for their well-being. Meanwhile the Communists organized
trade unions in the factories which some of these Christian workers were
obliged to join to better their working conditions. At the time of elections,
therefore, the Communists could exert great influence among these workers.
Lack of unity among the different Christian denominations made it difficult for
them to make any coordinated and effective opposition to Communist propaganda.
In spite of these weaknesses, the Church wields a strong hold over the Christian
community as a whole as was manifested during the "Liberation Struggle"
against the Communist government which led to the fall of their government. 21
The following analysis of 1957 and 1960 elections also will bring out this
fact.

"No single event in the General Elections of India in 1957 aroused so
much public interest in India and abroad as the electoral victory of the Com-
munist party in Kerala." 22 So, naturally many political scientists were inter-
ested in making a study of the situation in Kerala; such a study was conducted
by Dr. J. Singh, a member of the research staff of the Indian Institute of
Public Administration. He spent some time in Kerala and made a detailed re-
search of the political situation there. A summary of his research was pub-
lished in the Political Quarterly of April 1960, pp. 185-202. Similarly, Fath-
er Victor, C. D., professor of Social Science at Alwaye Major Seminary and
Director of Catholic Social Conference, made an analysis of the election re-
sults at the request of the Institute of Social Order, Poona. Many other

21 B. N. Schoenfeld, "Kerala Crisis," Pacific Affairs, 32 (September, 1959)
pp. 235-248.

similar studies have been conducted by both Indians and foreigners. On the basis of their analysis of the elections, one of the conclusions reached seems to be the fact that the Communist victory in 1957 was due to the sizable electoral support they received from the Hindus, especially the Hindu-Ezhavas and Hindu-Scheduled castes. The breakdown of votes casted in favour of the Communist party reveals the following approximate figures for the various religious communities:

**TABLE IX**

COMMUNIST SUPPORT AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGIOUS GROUPS</th>
<th>NO. OF VOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HINDUS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed Classes</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTIANS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Catholic Christians</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table clearly shows that the success of the Communists in 1957 was due to the vast support on the part of the Hindu voters. In order to un-

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derstand better the nature of the Communist victory, one must bear in mind the composition of the people in Kerala. About 24 per cent of the population consists of Hindu-Ezhavas and 6 per cent of the Hindu-Scheduled Castes, forming together about 30 per cent of the total population. "It may be said without hesitation that these two groups are the main support and bulwark of the Communist party in Kerala." Of the votes obtained by the Communist party about 70 per cent or over one million four hundred and fifty thousand votes were given to them by these two communities. They voted for the Communist en masse, 100 per cent in several constituencies; all the other communities gave the Communists less than 30 per cent of their votes. The Hindu-Nairs in general supported the P.S.P. or the Congress; but if the Communist candidate happened to be a Nair, though a professed Communist, because of the communal spirit which is very strong in Kerala, Nairs will prefer to vote for him rather than the P.S.P. or the Congress candidate if he happens to be a baptized Christian or member of any other community. This was not the case of the Ezhavas who stood strongly behind the Communists. On the basis of Dr. Singh's and Father Victor's analysis, the support given by different religious communities for Congress can be broken down as shown below:

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25 Adapted from Social Action, July 1957, p. 283; Political Quarterly, April 1960, p. 191.

26 Selig S. Harrison, pp. 197-198.
The above table indicates the allegiance each religious group gives to the two major political parties in Kerala. "The main support of the Congress comes from Christians, and especially the Catholics." According to the table more than 58 per cent of the votes secured by the Congress came from the Christians and the remaining 42 per cent were obtained from the other religious groups.

Party preference along religious lines can also be seen from the religious affiliation of party members elected to the 1957 and 1960 Legislative Assembly. On the basis of the election results, the religious affiliation of the various party members elected can be seen in the following table:

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TABLE XI

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF PARTY MEMBERS IN
THE KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.S.P.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that of the 43 Congress members of the Legislative Assembly in 1957, 19 were Christians elected from constituencies having a Christian majority. It is to be noted that Christians form only 25 per cent of the population. Representing Hindus who form 53 per cent of the population there were only 21 Hindus representatives for the Congress. Of the 60 Communist members in the Assembly, 56 were Hindus, 3 Christians, and one Muslim. The Muslim League had 8 members in 1957 and 11 in 1960 who were elected from the constituencies in Kozikode and Palghat districts with a Muslim majority. Vast majority of Muslim voters, therefore, voted strictly on religious lines.

The impact of the religious affiliation on voting pattern can also be seen from the results of an interview study made in July, 1961 by three high school teachers at the request of the present writer. During that study 53 Christians and 87 Hindus (Nairs 27, Ezhavas 30, and Scheduled Castes, 30) were interviewed.

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28 Data gathered from published election reports.
An analysis of the election results on a district basis in the light of its religious composition shows the same pattern of political preference. In Kottayam and Ernakulam districts where the Christians constitute more than 55 per cent of the population, democratic candidates had greater success than in districts where the Hindus and Muslims are the majority. In the areas where there is a heavy concentration of Muslims as in some of the constituencies in Kozhikode and Palghat districts, the Muslims seem to have voted en masse for the Muslim League. The following table indicates the names of constituencies in Kerala with a Christian majority and the successful party in those constituencies in 1957 and in 1960.

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29 Sadiq Ali, P. 34.
TABLE XIII
CONSTITUENCIES IN KERALA WITH A CHRISTIAN MAJORITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAMES OF THE CONSTITUENCIES</th>
<th>PARTY WON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaduthuruthy</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramamangalam</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moovattupuzha</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thodupuzha</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karikode</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>Praja Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puliyamnoor</td>
<td>Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palluruthy</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnarakal</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kothakulangara</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olloor</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranni</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanjirapally</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puthupally</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kallooppara</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ettumanoor</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From what has been said so far it should be sufficiently clear that religion is an important determinant of electoral choice in Kerala. Of the different religions Christianity seems to exert more influence in electoral choice of the voters than other religions in Kerala. Next to Christianity, Islam has greatest impact on political choice of its members. Since the Christians are faced with two parties of which one is democratic and the other is totalitarian and anti-religious, they are more led by their religious convictions in voting than on the basis of issues and personalities in the elections. The study also reveals that the success of Communists in Kerala was not due to the votes of Christians but was largely due to the votes of Hindus, especially of Hindu-Ezhaves.

30Adapted from Government of Kerala, General Elections in Kerala, 1960.
Elections based on adult suffrage in a democratic order bring into action a great number of people and with it all their folly and wisdom, all their noble urges as well as their ignorances and credulities. If there is indifference and dissatisfaction among the people, it becomes evident and its impact is felt in the working of democracy. If there are cleavages based on caste, religion, region, and social class in the country, there is evidence of it in elections. To the extent there is political awareness and political idealism among certain groups of the people it also is brought into the battlefield and plays its appropriate part in the outcome of the elections. If there is anger, resentment, and frustration in regard to any particular issue, the election offers an adequate outlet. "All fanaticism--social, communal, caste, territorial, or linguistic--are provided with a unique opportunity to expend themselves in the weeks before the elections."¹ Just as a study of a crisis situation brings into the open the strength and weaknesses of a community, the elections also provide the social scientist with an excellent experimental situation to study the structure and cleavages of a community.

In the foregoing chapters, reviewing the political situation in Kerala through a documentary analysis of the election results and the available relevant literature, an attempt has been made to determine the impact of socioeconomic status, educational level, and religious affiliation on the political preference of the voters in Kerala. After a brief survey of the present polit-

¹Sadiq Ali, pp. 61-62.
In the chapter on "Socio-economic Status and Political Preference," it has been shown on the basis of available data that the deplorable economic condition of vast majority of voters was to a large extent responsible for the political instability experienced in this state and for the growing influence of the Communist Party. The Communists were more successful in constituencies and districts where the economic situation was the worst. Further it was shown in that chapter how the caste structure played an important part in their electoral choice. The so-called Untouchables, who were till recently assigned to lower social positions at the bottom of the social ladder voted largely for the Communist Party, which promised them equality and equal opportunity with the higher castes. With strategic maneuverings, the Communists could transform economic despair and social discontent into a legislative majority because of the peculiar caste and religious complexities of Kerala.  

In the chapter on "Education and Political Preference" it was shown that illiteracy of large section of voters makes it easy for the demagogues to exploit the voters. The opinion poll conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion immediately before the 1957 elections in Kerala and Andhra brought out clearly the tendency of more illiterate voters to prefer the Communists than the literate voters. Later in the chapter it was shown that the anti-colonial

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3 Andhra is another state in India where the Communists are strong.

4 See Table VIII on Page 58.
sentiments, educated employment, the apparent success of Communists in solving the economic and social ills in Russia and China where the problems were similar to the ones facing India made Communism appealing to the idealism of even some of the intellectuals who actually spearhead the Communist activities in Kerala.  

Further it has been indicated in the chapter on "Religion and Political Preference" that a pattern of political preference could be noticed along religious affiliation of the voters in Kerala. On the evidence of election results, it seems sufficiently clear that the success of Communists in Kerala was largely due to the support of the Hindus especially of the Hindu-Ezhavas and Scheduled Castes. In the case of Christians and Muslims their religion seems to exert greater influence on their electoral choice than in the case of Hindus.

On the basis of the present research and other similar researches on political behaviour it may be safely assumed that a person thinks politically as he is socially. Social characteristics of the voters determine to a great extent their political preference. Among the social characteristics socio-economic status seems to be the most powerful determinant of political preference. With each step down the SES ladder, the proportion of democratic voters decreases in Kerala and the proportion of Communist sympathizers correspondingly increases. Though education and occupation do exert influence, it is difficult to determine the precise influence of these two social characteristics as generally those who

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are lower in the socio-economic ladder are also generally lower in the occupational and educational level. However, education seems to be a necessary condition for intelligent participation in democracy and for its stability. But as the case of Kerala very well illustrates education alone without proportionate economic development may become a source of weakness and strain for democracy.

The present research also shows another social factor, religious affiliation of the voters, as no less important. It seems clear beyond doubt from the analysis of the election results and relevant literature that at least in the case of Christians in Kerala, religious affiliation exerted great influence on their electoral choice. Their dogmatic beliefs in God and after-life, the hierarchical nature of their church contributed to this tendency. In constituencies where they had to make a choice between a Communist and democratic candidate, they preferred the democratic candidate. The relationship between vote and religious affiliation holds true on each socio-economic scale though in a diminishing degree as one goes down the socio-economic ladder. The Muslims were also influenced a great deal by their religious affiliation and voted for the Muslim League, a purely communal party. Thus it may be concluded that socio-economic status and religious affiliation are the two powerful factors influencing political preference in Kerala and these two social factors form an index of political predisposition.

The conclusions reached in this research are more or less in agreement with the conclusions arrived at by other authors who analyzed the political

7See the Tables in Chapter V of this thesis.
situation in Kerala. Selig S. Harrison in his book *India--The Most Dangerous Decades* referring to the Communist success in Kerala makes the following observations:

The success of the Kerala Communist Party as the first regional Communist Party in India to capture control of a state government can be explained above all, by its ability to manipulate the regional patriotism of all Kerala at the same time that it manipulated politically strategic caste lobbies within linguistic boundaries....Like in Andhra, the Kerala Communists were able to transform economic despair into a legislative majority because their footing on regional caste ground, notably among the numerous Ezhavas, provided the necessary margin of block strength in the necessary number of constituencies. 8

Amauri, De Rien court in the book *The Soul of India* reviewing the political situation in Kerala has made the following comments:

The rapidly developing Communist strength was based far more consistently on the shrewd exploitation of local issues than the growth of Marxist sentiments. A perfect example of this fact was their coming into power in Kerala state on the strength of 35 per cent of the votes. They cleverly turned to good account the social and communal complexities of a very peculiar state. Roughly almost a third of the population of Kerala is Christian (mostly Roman Catholic), one half Hindu split into a number of powerful castes and subcastes as well as outcastes, and rest Muslim Moplas. Furthermore, it has the distinction of being the only major area of India where a full fledged matriarchy thrives. Last but not the least, it has the highest rate of literacy, not only in India, but in the whole of Asia with the exception of Japan. Obviously a high rate of literacy combined with great poverty is a dangerous explosive mixture. And great deal of the 35 per cent votes that went to the Communists came from scattered Hindu communities who resented the fact that the Christians had captured leadership of the state Congress Party (much to the annoyance of Hindu Congress leaders in other parts of India). Their opponents who polled 65 per cent of the votes, were disunited, split among Congress, P.S.P., and the Muslim League without effective leadership. 9

8 Selig S. Harrison, p. 193.
9 Amauri De Rien court, p. 385.
Dr. J. Singh, a member of the Research Staff of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, having made a detailed on the spot study of the political situation in Kerala published a summary of his findings in an article in the Political Quarterly, April 1960. In that article with statistical support he attributes the Communist success in Kerala to the appalling economic situation aggravated by a rapidly increasing population, unemployment and underemployment of the people. Then referring to the election results he makes the following comments:

The 1957 elections also showed that communal and caste factors played an important role in the politics of Kerala....The maximum support of the Congress comes from Christian community and especially the Catholics....The main support of the Communists comes from Ezhavas and the Scheduled Castes (Untouchables), Nairs, and Brahmins.10

Frank Moraes in his book India Today deals at length on the political situation in Kerala. On the basis of his investigation he also arrived at the same conclusion that Communist success resulted from the inefficiency and stability of the previous administration, the serious economic problems of the state, the religious and class cleavages in the state, and the successful maneuverings and exploitation of the situation by the Communists.11

Referring to the 1954 elections in Kerala we find in the Indian Press Digest Series, Monograph 3, The Indian Experience with Democratic Elections the following remarks which was valid even in the elections of 1957:

Communists, declaring that the voters of the state were being asked to vote for Congress "in the name of God and Pandit Nehru," made an election issue out of the support given to Congress by the Christian Community. A. K. Gopalan, leader of the Communist group in Parliament, declared in Bangalore late in January that

10J. Singh, Political Quarterly, p. 191.

11Frank Moraes, India Today, pp. 104-139.
if the Congress group won in Travancore-Cochin it would be only "with the help of the church." Hiren Mukherjee, another Communist member of Parliament, joined Gopalan in an open letter to Nehru complaining about the Christian activity in the elections. "Almost all churches in Travancore-Cochin" they wrote, "have been turned into election offices of the Congress Party."

Religious and caste cleavages coincided roughly with party membership according to the following pattern: The Christian community (most Catholics) supported the Congress, low caste Hindus together with highest caste Brahman landholders (Nambodiris) supported the Communists, and high caste Hindu Nairs supported the Praja Socialists. One commentator suggested that the balance of power might lie with a section of Hindu voters who "look askance at the Congress's leaning increasingly on the Catholic Christian Church's support, which in Travancore-Cochin state exerts considerable influence on Christian population." 12

All these evidences seem to indicate the pattern of Communist and democratic support in Kerala elections. We have tried in this study to show how socio-economic status, education, and religious affiliation relate to the voters in their political preference. It is by no means assumed that these social factors alone account for the electoral behaviour of the people in Kerala. Similar studies of a series of major elections especially in comparison with one another, may confirm the findings of this study, correct its deficiencies, and in general clarify and complete existing knowledge of social determinants of political preference of voters in Kerala.

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APPENDIX

COMMUNIST STRATEGY IN INDIA

John H. Kautsky made a penetrating study of Moscow's relations with the Communist party of India. In that study he distinguishes three Communist strategies in the underdeveloped countries—the "right strategy," the "left strategy," and the "neo-Maoist strategy" developed after the Second World War.

According to the "right strategy," the Communists consider imperialism, feudalism, and fascism as their main enemies, and advocate an alliance with the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, and anti-fascist groups both labor and bourgeois. They thus envisage first a bourgeois-democratic revolution to be followed by a proletarian-socialist revolution when the bourgeois elements have been either eliminated or detached from their old loyalties. In short this strategy sponsors a united front "from above."

Unlike the former strategy, the "left strategy" regards even capitalism and national bourgeoisie as their enemies and therefore would skip the bourgeois-democratic revolution stage. This strategy works for a united front "from below" trying to alienate the workers, poor peasantry, and petty bourgeoisie from their erstwhile leaders. The proponents of this strategy call for violent overthrow of the existing order through violence, sabotage, and uprising.

The "neo-Maoist strategy" represents a synthesis of the above two strategies but allows more flexibility in its implementation. Like the "right strategy" it envisages two revolutions and advocates a united front of workers.

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1 Most of the data in this section is drawn from John H. Kautsky, Moscow and the Communist Party of India (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1956); M. R. Masani, The Communist Party of India (London: Verschoyle, 1954); Frank Moraes, India Today, pp. 120-124.
peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and anti-imperialist capitalists. But like the "left strategy" it seeks to form the united front "from below" by alienating the rank and file of the masses away from their present leaders. According to this strategy, the Communists pose themselves as representatives not only of the exploited class but also of the national bourgeoisie. This is the distinguishing feature of the "neo-Maoist strategy." Thus, the "neo-Maoist strategy" accepts the "right strategy" principle of united front but adopts the "left strategy" method of a united front "from below." In all the strategies the means are flexible. They are either peaceful or violent.

Till 1947 the Communists in India were following the "right strategy" as directed by the Seventh Congress of Communist International held in Moscow in August 1935. The Indian Communists formed the united front with the Congress Socialists in 1936 and were working closely with the Congress. They infiltrated not only into the ranks of the Congress but also consolidated their power among the workers and peasants. Since the Communist Party was banned, most of the Communist workers were masquerading as Congress Socialists. In the beginning of the Second World War the Communists in India branded it as Imperialist aggression, but when Russia joined the Allies against Germany they took a pro-war stand against the official policy of the Congress and made secret deals with the British government. The British government, therefore, lifted the ban on the Communist Party and they came out into the open as Communists. Not only did they join with the British against Congress programs but they even

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2For details see M. K. Masani, The Communist Party of India.
sponsored and encouraged the Muslims in their demand for the partition of India. Consequently the Congress Party excluded all Communist sympathizers from their party and severed all connections with the Communists.

In 1947, as Soviet relations with the West deteriorated, Moscow shifted its international strategy from the "right" to the "left" and the Communist Party in India followed suit. Nehru and the Congress party was denounced as "a running dog of imperialism." In the Second Congress of the Indian Communist Party held in 1948 they adopted the rougher line proposed by the Russian leader Zhdanov; and P. C. Joshi, an advocate of "right" strategy, was replaced by B.T. Ramadab, an advocate of "left" strategy, as the general secretary of the party. From 1947-1951 they unleashed a series of violent insurrections, subversion and sabotage in different parts of the country especially in Bengal, Andhra, Malabar, and Travancore-Cochin to cripple the Congress Government. But when they found that their violence was being strongly met by the government, at the advice of Moscow, they adopted the strategy of Mao Tse-tung. The change in policy and tactics of the Russian Communist Party since the death of Stalin reflected also in the policy and tactics of the Indian Communists. They began praising the foreign policy of the Nehru government. In 1955 the Russian leaders Bulganin and Krushchev toured all over India to bolster friendly relations between the two countries. Besides, Russia started giving massive financial aid to India.

As was pointed out above the Communist Party today operates according to the neo-Maoist strategy which the Kerala Communists also followed. From 1948 to 1951, when the Communist Party was banned in Travancore-Cochin the Commu...
worked underground among the rural masses, students, and trade unionists. They spearheaded the cry for a separate Kerala for the Malayalam speaking areas which Nambudiripad, the Kerala Communist leader voiced in his book *The National Question in Kerala* as far back as 1952. The Communist thus came to be regarded as the creators of Kerala in contrast to the Congress and Praja Socialist Party, who foreseeing that they would be at a political disadvantage with the formation of this state, were lukewarm in their support. So, in the elections of 1957 immediately after the formation of Kerala, the Communists had a decided advantage over the other parties.

The Manifesto issued by Kerala Communist party before 1957 elections is a clear illustration of the neo-Maoist strategy. In it the Communists promised to sponsor some 93 specific measures ranging over the economic, educational and social fields. It promised not only agrarian reforms in a predominantly rural society but also 25 per cent wage increase, minimum wages for the industrial and agricultural workers, nationalization of British owned plantations, and encouragement for private enterprise. "the Manifesto reflects the neo-Maoist strategy of including within its amorphous embrace the rural masses, and urban workers on the one hand and the intellectuals and capitalists on the other. Each individually and collectively were promised paradise on a platter." 

The history and tactics of the Communist party in Kerala are very well summarized by Mr. Kainikkara Padmanabhan in his book *The Red Interlude in Kerala* in the following words:

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6 Frank Moraes, pp. 120-121.
The Communist Party in Kerala began with the formation of a secret fraction within the Congress Socialist Party in 1937. It grew by eating into the vitals of the Congress Socialist Party through fraction work. It took to violence and subversion secretly and openly as profession and past time. It divided people by deliberately fomenting communal passion and drove its roots into the clefts so created. It scientifically convinced the followers that any stick is good to beat an opponent. It easily hoodwinked other idealist parties by the united front fraud and, having sucked their blood, cast them away. Thus a political party that burnt every house that accommodated it, kicked every ladder it climbed and smothered every friend that embraced it, marched through twenty-two years of darkness and blood to power (in Kerala in 1957).7

Only history will tell whether India's uniquely fragmented social order--divided first into linguistic regions and then at right angles into regional castes--was made in order for Communist exploitation or made to confound hopelessly the Marxist-Leninist scriptures. For their part the Indian Communists have proceeded on the assumption that social divisions are made to be exploited. Communists in any given region have claimed the chauvinism of region and caste as their own. They have deliberately made it their business to become custodians of regional patriotism. In Kerala also their apparent success seems to be due to their successful maneuverings to exploit the local problems and caste lobbies to their advantage.

7 K. Padmanabhan, p. 19.
APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Reverend Mathew Pulickaparampil has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Sociology. The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

May 31, 1963
Date

Signature of Adviser