

COMMUNITARIAN POLITICS AND POLITICAL ASCENDANCIES: A CASE STUDY OF INDIAN UNION MUSLIM

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to trace the nature of communitarian politics in Kerala, with a focus on how the Indian Union Muslim League (also known as Muslim League), has employed diverse religious and political strategies to create a 'political space' for the Muslim community in the state. The paper explores the significance of the party's engagement with the political structure by being part of governments within the frame of a secular democratic order to achieve its communitarian goal and thus establish political ascendancies from time to time. Muslim League's negotiations with electoral politics in order to achieve political power and enhance their stake in the formulations of policies, especially for the Muslim community, are explored in this paper. This paper also examines Muslim League's contribution to ending the 'political alienation' experienced by Muslims in the immediate aftermath of independence and enhancing the political consciousness of the community.

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Keywords: Community, Religion, Identity, Politics, Power, Muslim League.

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INTRODUCTION

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The political identity of Muslims has been a contested topic within the history of colonial and postcolonial India. The patent role played by religion in the creation of two independent nation-states—India and Pakistan—defined within the binaries of ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ nationalism, has problematized the very existence of Muslims within India. Their religious and political identity, and loyalty towards the Indian nation is always questioned by the dominant religious group, which delegitimized the political articulations Muslims. As against the narratives mentioned above, this paper focuses on the Kerala unit of Indian Union Muslim League, a religion-based community political party, which was formed out of the post-partition political trauma on 10th March 1948, to protect the interests of the Muslim community in Kerala. Despite sticking to its religious identity, Muslim League has been able to create a ‘political space’ for the development Muslim community by holding political power of the state through various electoral alliances.

It needs to be pointed out at the outset that there is, indeed, a difference between Islamism/political Islam and ‘Muslim politics’ (by which I mean religious and community politics). Political Islam entails a political ideology by articulating the idea of the necessity of establishing an Islamic government. Here, the separation of *din* (religion) from *dawla* (state) is not possible because of which political Islam, based on *Sharia* (Islamic Law), cannot operate in the realm of secular politics (Hefner 2011: 167; Ismail 2011). Muslim politics, on the other hand, operates within the realm of secular politics, with Muslims as actors of community politics occupying different positions in the social settings which they live.

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(Hefner, 2011: 167)

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Acknowledgement

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References in
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