Political alliances /parties in Kerala field candidates based on religious majority of Wyanad, Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam district in Kerala State Assembly Elections (Since 2000s)

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Abstract

This study focuses on the Role of Religion in Kerala State Assembly Elections (Since2000s). This study determines if the religion of the candidate is a driving force and do the political parties in Kerala cater this kind of religious representation through candidates for voters as per the majority religion. The data used for analysis ranges from 2001 to 2016 (2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Kerala Assembly election results and Census data 2001 and 2011). This study shows effects of religion on the choice of candidates by parties and voters in Kerala for four districts namely Wayanad, Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam.

Keywords:

Role of Religion;
Kerale State Assembly
Election;
Religious Representation;

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1. Introduction

The first election in India based on universal adult suffrage was in the year 1952, since then India has had regular elections for centre and state. After 65 years, in January 2017 the Supreme Court of India, ruled that election results could be set aside if candidates were found to be lobbying votes on lines of identity politics. Elections are a secular exercise, and it is illegal to seek votes in the name of religion. Heading a seven-judge bench, Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur said the secular ethos of the Constitution had to be maintained by keeping elections a secular exercise. "The relationship between man and God and the means which humans adopt to connect with the almighty are matters of individual preferences and choices," "State is obliged to allow practicing and professing of religious faith a citizen follows, but can forbid interference of religions and religious beliefs with secular activity such as elections." (Sinha, 2017). This judgment is an indication of religion been a factor in electoral politics of Independent India.The politics of India has, over the last seven decades, moved away from the one-party dominant system to a competitive multi- party system starting from the late 1980s, thus changing the dynamics of state party politics (Shastri, 2015). Political coalition or alliance was first experimented in India in the 1957 elections to the Kerala Assembly. In 1957 the Communist Party of India (CPI) defeated Congress in legislative assembly elections in Kerala and under Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboodiripad, formed the first non-Congress government in independent India (http://ldfkeralam.org/2017/07).

2. Review of Literature

Kerala's origin is being said as linked toParasurama according to a Hindu mythological legend."Parasurama, one of the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, threw his Parasu (axe) from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari (or from Kanyakumari to Gokarnam according to another version) and water receded up to the spot where it fell. The land so thrown up constituted the land of Kerala, otherwise called Parasuramakshetram." (Menon, 2011). Kerala has a famed history of spice trade since ancient times. The state also has a history of inland Christians from 52 A.D. who were said to be converted by St. Thomas, the Syrian Christians or Nasranis. The first mosque in India was constructed at Kodungallur (Kerala) in 629 A.D. "Cheraman Masjid". Mappila Muslims are a large community in Kerala, which are an offshoot of a successful marriage tradition of Malayalam and Islamic culture, an Arab-Kerala link (Ibid).Cheraman Juma Masjid and replicas of relics a representation of Jews history in India believed to have been inscribed in 9-10th century, gained a lot of attention in 2017 when Prime Minister Modi used this religious symbolism handpicked from Keralaand during his visits,gifted them to King Salman of Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister Israeli Benjamin Netanyah(Roychowdhury, 2017b).It is worth mentioning that such religious idioms show how important is the past and the relevance of the past in the present. Machiavelli pays attention to analysing of history and suggests that the study of politics always should have a historical perspective, as politics and history are related.

The Kerala we see today is a collection made up ofprincely states and British administrative provinces (Travancore, Cochin and Malabar) (Menon 2011). The religious inclinations of the region and its people can be traced in Kerala till date. The state has 20 parliamentary constituencies and 140 assembly constituencies with a population consisting of about 55%Hindus, 27% Muslims and 18% Christians as per 2011 Census of India. The Hindus, Muslims and Christians have lived together in Kerala for centuries. The resolution introduced by Muslim League to protest the demolition of Babri Masjid and reject the building of Ayodhya temple was unanimously passed by the House. This political scenario of the state should be studied with the Muslim League policy because the party is one of the foremost collation partners of the Congress in Kerala (http://iuml.com/2017/05). Kerala is a state were the Communist party came to power through ballot for the first time in the history of the world in 1957. In 1957 the Communist Party of India (CPI) defeated Congress in legislative assembly elections in Kerala and under Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboodiripad, formed the first non-Congress government in independent India. Ever since Communist Party of India has been a tough competitor of Congress in the state of Kerala. The Congress party which branded Muslim League as a communal party, came to power in Madras Assembly with the support of five Muslim League members elected from Malabar in 1952. Ever since the reorganisation to form the state of Kerala, the Muslim League has been visibly making its presence in the parliament and state legislature.

The three major religions (Hindus, Muslims and Christians) of Kerala, though numerically unequal, acquire are very important for the state's electoral politics. The state is almost divided on the basis of religion and region, geographically. Numerically, Kerala has the highest number of Christian, as compared to anywhere in India, though the state wise percentage may not match up to it. Political parties have their support base in different religions and sects for example, the Left Democractic Front(LDF) has its support base amongst the Dalits, other backward castes, some from the upper castes and some from the minorities. Ezhavas have been its backbone. Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) is concentrated to the Kollam area in Kerala, with support amongst fishing communities. Whereas, Congress / United Democractic Front (UDF) support bases comprise of Muslims, Christians and a sizable number of people from the Nair Community. Kerala Congress (M) has a mass base predominantly amongst Christians from Kottayam and Idukki districts, its roots in the erstwhile Travancore region and is traditionally dominated by the farmers, mostly the Saint Thomas Christians. With this background, it is interesting to take up a study of Kerala Assembly Elections and look at its electoral competition, power-sharing arrangements through its subtle forms of communal politics in the state. This study focuses on the relationship of religion and political participation in Kerala. It showcases how the political parties play on the religious sentiments of the citizens, for votes, and whether citizens give any importance to 'religion' while making a political choice. By taking into consideration the dominant religion in the district, this study looks at how political parties they chose their candidates. This article will look at Kerala Politics through the three R's: Region, Religion and Representation in four

assembly elections of the state since the 2000s (2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016). For this purpose, the parties which fall under the two major alliances LDF and UDF in Kerala will be analysed.

3. Trajectory of Political Competition

Kerala has been called the political laboratory of India (Pillai, 1987). The Christians and Muslims constitute the minority whereas the Hindu backward classes and castes are in majority in Kerala. The political battle is based on this social stratification. The 1937 legislature which got elected was that of the Joint Political Congress party consisting of Christians, Muslims and Ezhavas, which favoured communal representation in the legislature and public services. The Travancore State Congress of 1938 was the new face of Joint Political Congress, the counterpart in erstwhile Cochin State was the Cochin 'Praja Mandal'. The political history of Travancore- Cochin has been that of rivalry between Christians and members of the Nair community and later Ezhavas and the Nairs thus leading to Congress in Travancore-Cochin area an amalgamation of communal and caste forces. The Nair and Ezhava communities' hostility/rivalry submerged into the Communist party as it accommodated their combined political power. The Kerala Congress (the breakaway of original Congress) constituted a privileged section of the society. Political situation in Malabar was different from that of Travancore and Cochin. Malabar was part of the Madras State till 1956. The Congress was enforced to turn communist and the leadership at all level went to Congress Socialist Party, once the message of National movement reached the masses. The leaders of this party later went into the communist fold and became pioneers of the party in the state. The backward Hindu community constituted the support base, whereas the Muslim community were aloof from the party and preferred Muslim League. Interest groups such as the Church, Nair Service Society (NSS) and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam (SNDP) dominate the politics of Travancore-Cochin rather than political parties.

Even after independence, religion has continued to maintain its hold on politics. The Church remained totally identified with the Congress after the first two decades of independence. Bishops always indicated their political choice through pastoral letters. The Kerala Congress was regarded as the political wing of the Christian community. The Syrian Christians dominate the political scene in Kerala in comparison to fellow Christians in the State. The Latin Christians decide the fate of elections in some constituencies. The political wing of the Muslim community is the Muslim League which is powerful in the Malabar Region. The political alignment and realignment in Kerala, keeps changing before and after the election, be it the State Assembly election or the National election. More often these coalitions break due to personality clashes rather than ideology clashes. Factionalism has plagued into almost all political parties. 'Split within a split' can be appropriately used in Kerala Context. These splinter groups are known in the name of their leaders indicating the reason for the split (Ibid). The electoral politics in Kerala has evolved and the struggle for power has boiled down to the two major fronts i.e United Democratic Front (UDF) led by Congress and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by Communist party of India. "The political parties of the state condemn communalism but make use of the support of communal organisation to win election. The strength of the caste and communal organisation of Kerala has been proved by their high degree of institutionalisation. However, the political movement of Kerala are not merely 'political overflow' of communal stir. The communities designated as backward aspire for higher social status, but are interested in retaining reservation benefits in public employment. Some of them clamour for their inclusion in the less socially prestigious list of Scheduled Castes. The politics of the state is fascinating as various secular and non-secular factors operate simultaneously" (Nair, 1994). From the years 1957 to 2001, 12 elections were held to the State Legislative Assembly and during this time span there were seventeen governments. Only twice did a single party rule/government make a foothold by undivided Communist party in the year 1957 and Congress party in the years from 1962-64. Congress Party in Kerala was forced to enter coalition politics for its political existence. Between 1967 and 2001 the Congress led six governments and the CPI(M) four governments. The Congress in Kerala is a coalition of caste-communal interest groups; and other than Congress no other party can match the ability of having raised leadership from every caste and community in Kerala (Kumar, 2001). The Ezhavas, more numerous than the Nairs, have the same kind of influence in the districts of Kollam, Kottayam, Alapuzha, Thrissur and a considerable amount in North Kerala. Christians and Muslims in Kerala cannot be considered as minority communities, since it is observed that during elections there is an existence

of Christian belt and Muslim belt. This assures a sizeable representation in the State Legislature. In terms of the electoral politics of the State, these two communities cannot be overlooked or ignored, which has been a potential source of factionalism in all political parties. Caste and communal support base often decide the outcome of an election. The 1987 CPI election alone can be considered a secular election, the electorate elected a secular government when the party took a step towards secularism. But LDF abandoned this principle in subsequent election held during 1991, 1996 and 2001 (Ibid). In this context it won't be wrong to state that the political movements in Kerala are merely the political overflow of communal forces (Ibid).

The first Communist party elected in 1957 to state was brought down due to its Education bills. It got caught in the textbook controversy in Kerala, titled (Mathamillaatha Jeevan) Jeevan who has no religion yet again
Son, whats your name?"
"Jeevan".

"Good, nice name. Father's name?"

"Anvar Rasheed".

"Mother's name?"

"Lakshmi Devi".

The headmaster looked at the parents and asked: "Which religion should we note"?

"No need to note any. Please mention no religion."

"Caste?"

"The same."

The headmaster leaned back on his chair and asked rather gravely: "What if he feels the need for a religion when he grows up?"

"He can choose his religion if and when he feels so."

There was a unified allegation against this lesson standing for state propaganda of Atheism and Communism. Opposition came from all quarters all religious denominations and secular political parties joined in the protest. The Kerala Students union of Congress went on hunger strike, activists of Muslim Students Federation (MSF) then went ahead and burnt 14,000 textbooks in Malappuram.(Devika, 2008)

Keralites have always been active participants in the electoral activities. The voter turnout in assembly election has been around 70 per cent in the state. In the 2001 Assembly election it came up to 72.6 per cent. Kerala is hailed as a political laboratory where many experiments including that of coalition governments have taken place. Poll results are by and large shaped by caste and communal affiliation to politics. One of the recurring features in Kerala elections is the slender margins that separate the two-political combinations (LDF and UDF), a regular voting pattern in identifiable regions in Kerala. Anti-tenure factor and alternation of power from one front to the other in successive elections. Lastly caste and communal factors are taken into consideration while selecting the candidates as well as in the formation of the cabinet with ideological underpinning as a defence for all tactics and strategies used to win the election. All these features have been repeated in the 2001 assembly election except for the thin margin of vote difference separating the winners from the losers.

4. Objective

- ➢ To determine, if political alliances /parties in Kerala field candidates based on religious majority of Wayanad, Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam district.

This atricle is designed to assess the hypotheses that, the political parties in Kerala choose their candidates based on religion. For political parties in Kerala the dominant/ majority religion of the district plays significant role in deciding their candidates for the district.

5. Research Method

This is a case study concentrating on the state of Kerala'sfour district (Wyannad,Enakulam, Idukki and Kottayam)focussing on the relationship between religion and politics in the state in recent times. For this purpose, the most recent state assembly elections have been taken for the study i.e. 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016.

The objectives of the study have been analysed using Kerala assembly elections database for the appropriate years along with the Statistical Report from Election Commission of India – State Elections, to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala (2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016) and Census of India (2001 and 2011). The databases used for the study contain the official records and data, as authorised by the government of India and serve as the authentic and reliable representative of the targeted population (Kerala) aimed for the study. As per 2001 and 2011 Census of India, data for all four districts, the three dominant religious groups are Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Other religious communities such as Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are inconsequential, as their percentage to total population is one percent or less in every district. Hence, this study focuses on the four predominant religions in Keralai.e. the following four district Wyannad,Enakulam, Idukki and Kottayam. As these four districts are ones in which the dominant religion constitutes less than 50 percent of the population, hence it will be interesting to see how both UDF and LDF have represented infavoured religion.

> ➢ Primary Data

Data from Kerala Assembly database and Census of India was analysed and compared; for 4 District for each election year along with the district wise dominion of religion obtained by the Census of India (2001 and 2011).The most aggregate data available for census within the state is district wise. Further sub-divisions include town and village wise data. Hence it was considered appropriate to merge the ACs into districts and then carry out the analysis.Census of India 2001 is used to analyse and classify the assembly constituencies and districts for Kerala State Assembly Election 2001 and 2006, respectively Census of India 2011 is used to analyse and classify the assembly constituencies and districts for Kerala State Assembly Election of 2011 and 2016. In the state of Kerala there is presence of national parties, regional parties and independent candidates and their number keeps changing in every election,Therefore, it was considered appropriate to study the two-major alliance/fronts which have been stable throughout in Kerala State Assembly Elections i.e. LDF, UDF.

> ➢ Field Research

As per the Indian Constitution, state is not supposed to discriminate based on religion in matters related to holding office under the state-run institutions and organisations. Therefore, the nomination papers filed by the candidates for elections, does not hold their religious background. This data was identified by the researcher. The researcher further verified the data through field research in Kerala. Personal interviews were conducted with political representatives of respective parties and political alliances in Kerala by the researcher. Structured sheets were used to conduct the qualitative research in the field.

> ➢ Secondary Data

Review of literature forms an integral part of any research. The secondary data for this study has been derived through analysis of historical records and documents such as articles, journals, magazines, newspapers, published books and reports.

Table 1. Overall description of districts according to majority religion and total number of assembly constituencies for 2001 and 2006 elections

District No	District Name	Majority Religion	Total AC
3	WYANAD	Hindu 50.44%	3
8	ERNAKULAM	Hindu 46.59%	14
9	IDUKKI	Hindu 50.23%	5
10	KOTTAYAM	Hindu 49.37%	10

Source: Author's compilation of 2001 Census data for all districts in Kerala and 2001 and 2006 Assembly wise division of district from Kerala state assembly election.

Table 2. Overall description of districts according to majority religion and total number of assembly constituencies for 2011 and 2016 elections.

District No	District Name	Majority Religion	Total AC
3	WYANAD	Hindu 49.48%	3
8	ERNAKULAM	Hindu 45.98%	14
9	IDUKKI	Hindu 48.86 %	5
10	KOTTAYAM	Hindu 49.81%	9

Source: Author's compilation of 2011 Census data for all district in Kerala and 2011 and 2016 Assembly wise division of district from Kerala state assembly election.

The above tables 1. and 2. give an overall snapshot of the four districts in Kerala and also form the basis of analysis of the study. For each district the number of assembly constituencies is considered as it will help in finding the number of religious representations through candidates in each given district election year wise. Through the district-wise census data, the dominant/majority religion was found out to understand the four-district religious distribution.

6. Data Analysis and Results

The objective of this study is to determine whether political parties in Kerala, field candidates based on the religious majority in Wayanad, Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam district. To study this objective, all assembly constituencies (AC) were compiled under the respective districts. Dominant religion of that district was found out from the respective decade's census. It has been previously mentioned that since the census data is available according to the district and not according to assembly constituencies, hence the unit of analysis becomes the district, for this study. For each of the assembly elections analysed, the party and religion of the candidate has been considered, according to their alliance/ party affiliation. The tables presented below are district-wise and election year wise. Further in each table, the AC wise and candidate wise break-up of religion and party affiliation is provided along with cenus data.

➢ District 1. Wayanad

The religious composition of Wyanad district as per 2001 census of India is Hindus 50 per cent, Muslims 27 per cent and Christians 23 per cent. (see Table3) In the 2001 and 2006 elections Wynnad had three assembly constituencies.In Wynnad district Hindus consist of half the population with 50 per cent.UDF had two Hindu out of three candidates for both 2001 and 2006 elections. For 2001 election LDF had only one Hindu

candidate and in 2006 election LDF had two Hindu candidates. The religious composition of Wynnad district as per 2011 census of India is Hindus 49 per cent, Muslims 29 per cent and Christians 21 per cent. In the 2011 and 2016 elections Wynnad had three assembly constituencies. In Wynnad district Hindus are the dominant religion with 49 per cent comprising almost half of the population. In comparison to 2001 census Muslims have increased by 2 per cent and Christians and Hindus decreased by one per cent each in Wynnad as per census of 2011. UDF had all three candidates representing religious majority of the district in both 2011 and 2016 elections. In 2011 election LDF had two out of three candidates who were Hindus whereas in 2016 the party had all three Hindu candidates.

Table 3.Assembly Constituency wise 2001, 2006,2011 and 2016 Election break-up of candidate's religion, religion distribution and party affiliation for Wynnad District.

District/Year	Census Data 2001: H-50%, M-27%,C-23%					Census Data 2011: H-49%, M-29%, C -21%				
	2001	2001		2006		2011	2011		2016	
	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF
Wayanad	3	H- 2 C-1	H-1 M-1 C-1	H-2 C-1	H-2 J- 1	3	H-3	H-2 M-1	H-3	H-3

Source: Author's compilation of data from state election commission data (Kerala Assembly Election database for 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016) with 2001 and 2011 census data for Wayanad district.

> ➤ District 2.Ernakulam

The religious composition of Ernakulam district as per 2001 census of India is Hindus 47 per cent, Muslims 15 per cent and Christians 39 per cent. (See Table 4) In the 2001 and 2006 elections Ernakulam had fourteen assembly constituencies. In Ernakulam district Hindus are the dominant religious group, but not a majority with 47 per cent.UDF had seven Christian candidates, four Hindu candidates and three Muslim candidates for both 2001 and 2006 elections. LDF had six Hindu candidates and eight Christian candidates in 2001 election and in 2006 election LDF had eight Christian candidates, four Hindu candidates and one Muslim candidate. The religious composition of Ernakulam district as per 2011 census of India is Hindus 46 per cent, Muslims 16 per cent and Christians 38 per cent. In the 2011 and 2016 elections Ernakulam had fourteen assembly constituencies. In Ernakulam district Hindus are a dominant religious group but not a majority with 46 per cent of the population. UDF in 2011 and 2016 elections had eight Christian candidates, four Hindu candidates and two Muslim candidates. LDF had seven Christian candidates, five Hindu candidates and two Muslim candidates for both 2011 and 2016 elections.

Table 4. Assembly Constituency wise 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Election break-up of candidate's religion, religion distribution and party affiliation for Ernakulam District.

District/Year	Census Data 2001: H-47%, M-15%,C-39%					Census Data 2011: H-46%, M-16%, C -38%				
	2001	2001		2006		2011	2011		2016	
	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF
Ernakulam	14	H-4 M-3 C-7	H-6 C-8	H-4 M-3 C-7	H- 4 M- 1 C- 8	14	H-4 M-2 C-8	H-5 M-2 C-7	H-4 M-2 C-8	H-5 M-2 C-7

Source: Author's compilation of data from state election commission data (Kerala Assembly Election database for 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016) with 2001 and 2011 census data for Ernakulam district.

➢ District 3.Idukki

The religious composition of Idukki district as per 2001 census of India is Hindus 50 per cent, Muslims 7 per cent and Christians 43 per cent. (see Table 5)In the 2001 and 2006 elections Idukki had five assembly constituencies. In Idukki district Hindus are in a majority with 50 per cent. UDF had four Christian candidates for 2001 election and in 2006 election three Christian candidates and one Muslim candidate. UDF had one Hindu candidate for both 2001 and 2006 election. LDF had three Christian candidates and two Hindu candidates for 2001 and 2006 elections. The religious composition of Idukki district as per 2011 census of India is Hindus 49 per cent, Muslims 7 per cent and Christians 43 per cent. In the 2011 and 2016 elections Idukki had five assembly constituencies. In Idukki district Hindus are the dominant religious group with 49 per cent of the population, closely followed by the Christians at 43 per cent. In comparison to 2001 census Hindu population has declined by one per cent, proposition of Muslims and Christians population has been relatively same in Idukki as per census of 2011. In 2011 election UDF had four Christian candidates and one Hindu candidate and in 2016 had three Christian candidates and two Hindu candidates. LDF in 2011 election had three Hindu candidates and two Christian candidates and for 2016 election three Christian candidates and two Hindu candidates.

Table 5. Assembly Constituency wise 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Election break-up of candidate's religion, religion distribution and party affiliation for Idukki District.

District/Year	Census Data 2001: H-50%, M-7%,C-43%				Census Data 2011: H-49%, M-7%, C -43%				
	2001	2001		2006		2011	2011		2016	
	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF
Idukki	5	H-1 C-4	H-2 C-3	H-1 M-1 C-3	H-2 C-3	5	H-1 C-4	H-3 C-2	H-2 C-3	H-2 C-3

Source: Author's compilation of data from state election commission data (Kerala Assembly Election database for 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016) with 2001 and 2011 census data for Idukki district.

➢ District 4.Kottayam

The religious composition of Kottayam district as per 2001 census of India was Hindus 49 per cent, Muslims 6 per cent and Christians 45 per cent. (see Table 6) In the 2001 and 2006 elections Kottayam had ten assembly constituencies. UDF had eight Christian candidates and two Hindu candidates in 2001 elections and in 2006, seven Christian candidates and three Hindu candidates in Kottayam. LDF had five Hindu candidates, four Christian and one Muslim candidate for 2001 elections. In 2006 elections LDF had five Christian candidates, four Hindu and one Muslim candidate. The religious composition of Kottayam district as per 2011 census of India was Hindus 50 per cent, Muslims 6 per cent and Christians 43 per cent. Assembly Constituencies were decreased by one in Kottayam district, hence in 2011 and 2016 elections Kottayam had nine assembly constituencies. In comparison to 2001 census there is a peripheral increase in the proportion of Hindu and Muslims population and Christian population has been relatively same in Kottayam as per census of 2011. In 2011 and 2016 elections UDF had six Christian candidates and three Hindu candidates. For 2011 election LDF had four Hindu candidates, four Christian candidates and one Muslim candidate and in 2016 there were six Christian candidates and three Hindu candidates.

Table 6. Assembly Constituency wise 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Election break-up of candidate's religion, religion distribution and party affiliation for Kottayam District.

District/Year	Census Data 2001: H-49%, M-6%,C-45%				Census Data 2011: H-50%, M-6%, C -43%				
	2001	2001		2006		2011	2011		2016	
	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF	No. of. Ac	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF

Kottyam	10	H-2 C-8	H-5 M-1 C-4	H-3 C-7	H-4 M-1 C-5	9	H-3 C-6	H-4 M-1 C-4	H-3 C-6	H-3 C-6

Source: Author's compilation of data from state election commission data (Kerala Assembly Election database for 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016) with 2001 and 2011 census data for Kottayam district.

Overall analysis of party and political alliances in Kerala i.e. UDF and LDF indicate that most of the candidates fielded by the parties are according to the distribution of the dominant religion of the population in the district and constituencies. UDF and LDF show more or less identical patterns and trends in their political representation of religion through their candidates. It is interesting to note that in districts such as Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam where the dominant religion constitutes less than 50 percent of the population, both UDF and LDF have represented and favoured the second dominant religion. While the alliances do not exactly define or idolize the idea of secularism in Kerala, they have been accommodative to religious representation of minorities/ other religions through their candidatures, even though the overall agenda may be to win over the electorate by appealing to their religious sentiments. It should be noted that in Kerala, secularism is not about being aloof from religion and religious representation, instead it's the intertwining of politics with religion, both coexisting while reaping the benefits from each other.

7.Conclusion

Based on the data, it can safely conclude that parties and alliances while fielding candidates, do keep in mind the religious distribution/ composition of the district and assembly constituencies. Parties have fielded candidates as per the districts' majority religion or the second dominant religion and have taken into account the Assembly Constituency wise preference. This observation is not trying to ignore or undermine the fact that individual candidates have done work in their region to be capable to garner votes based on the same. But parties do acknowledge this religious distribution in districts while fielding candidates. This also may be acknowledged as the start of a cycle where, once the parties field candidates based on religion, the candidates appeal to the people playing to their religious sentiments, and ultimately when people choose candidates, religion plays an important role in determining the winner. Religion is not supposed to be part of politics but religious identity of the candidates as well as of the citizens is acknowledged and exploited for gaining votes in the elections. The present study has relied largely on quantitative techniques of data collection. Hence, the people's perspective or the voter's perspective is not elaborated here.The data collection was confined to only four assembly elections.The study is limited to the two major alliances (LDF, UDF) in Kerala, excluding other regional parties and independent candidates.The data collection was confined to four districts and only district wise census data, and it lacks access to assembly constituency wise census data.

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