

Post-Islamist Trajectories in India: A Study of Jamaat-e Islami in Kerala

Yahya Sadic Alangadan

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Post-Islamist Trajectories in India: A Study of Jamaat-e Islami in Kerala

Presented by

Yahya Sadic Alangadan

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Supervisor (s):

Dr. Frank Peter

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Abstract

This thesis explores post-Islamist transformations of Jamaat-e Islami Hind, with special reference to its Keralite chapter. It traces the historical and political context in which the ideology of political Islam in India was formulated, and explores the diverse factors leading to the deideologization of Islamism. I examine Jamaat-e Islami's transformations in the spheres of politics, in JI's relationship with newly established modern democratic state and secular public sphere in addition to the development of the transformative discourse of gender relations within the Islamist movement.

At the end, on a concluding note, the thesis studies the diversification of political trends within Indian Islamism. The thesis contributes to the literature on Indian Islamism, and to the wider scholarship on Islamic reform and Post-Islamism.

ملخص

تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى استكشاف تحولات ما بعد الإسلاموية للجماعة الإسلامية في الهند، مع إشارة خاصة لفرع الجماعة في ولاية كيرالا. تتبع الأطروحة السياق التاريخي والسياسي الذي صيغت فيه أيديولوجية الإسلام السياسي في الهند وتستكشف كيف سهلت ظاهرة انهيار أدلجة الإسلاموية ظهور ما بعد الإسلاموية في الهند. كما أنني أدرس تحولات الجماعة الإسلامية في مجالات السياسة وعلاقة الجماعة الإسلامية بالدولة الديمقراطية الحديثة والحيز العام العلماني، بالإضافة إلى تطوير الخطاب التحويلي للعلاقات بين الجنسين داخل الحركة الإسلامية. في النهاية، استكشف انتشار أوجه عدة للإسلاموية وتنوع الاتجاهات السياسية ضمن الإسلاموية الهندية. تسعى الأطروحة إلى المساهمة في الأدب المعرفي حول الإسلاموية الهندية، وعلى نطاق أوسع، تحاول الإسهام في مجالات الدراسة عن الإصلاح الإسلامي والتحويلات ما بعد الإسلاموية للاتجاهات والحركات الإسلامية السياسية.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Islamist movements across the globe are undergoing varied yet decisive transformations. Apart from the electoral and popular legitimacy they have been able to obtain through prolonged political and civil society struggles in a number of Muslim majority societies, Islamists are facing grave challenges from the ruling elite, public intellectuals, secular bureaucracy and administration. Apparently, Islamism is mutating itself towards many trajectories in response to various encounters with varied statist and non-statist actors. The prolonged political struggle of Islamists challenged very presumptions of early Islamism. Subsequently, Islamism has been transformed from a movement, the objective of which is to execute Islamic *sharī'a* in the whole spheres of life into a social democratic political party operational within the paradigm of nation state. Such postulations devoid of the original Islamist revolutionary zeal were identified by the analysts as the phenomenon of Post-Islamism. This thesis is an attempt to examine the extent of post-Islamist transformations in Jamaat-e Islami Hind, with special reference to its Keralite chapter.

Jamaat-e Islami (hereinafter referred to as JI or Jamaat) is one of the early movements originated throughout the Muslim world as part of the advent of 'Islamic Revivalism' in the first half of the twentieth century. The movement was established for the professed objective of *Hukūmat-e ilāhi*, the establishment of divine government; the governance of Islamic way of life and divinely revealed injunctions over the whole spheres of human life. The objective of Jamaat-e Islami was rephrased later as *iqāmat al-dīn*, the establishment of religion (*al-dīn*). However, both the phrases *hukūmat-e ilāhi* and *iqāmat al-dīn* were interpreted in highly politicized and statist terms, which unambiguously concluded that the main objective of the movement is to establish a modern state on the basis of Islamic *sharī'a*, in which the supreme legislative authority (*hākimiyya*) is vested only in the God.

Subsequently, Islamism produced an imagination by which humane intervention in individual and social life should be curtailed as much as possible. The modern ideologies of democracy, secularism and nationalism were therefore vehemently criticized and the institutions of statecraft, parliamentary democracy, civil society organizations and judiciary were boycotted by early Islamists in India.

However, scholars argued that Indian Islamists transmuted to be advocates of secular democracy from an earlier position of outright rejection and harsh criticism. Secularism and democracy were considered as equal to polytheism in the early literature of political Islam in India. For Irfan Ahmad, Indian Islamists had completely abandoned their early policies of non-cooperation with the non-divine ruling system, and strategies for active engagements in the administration, judiciary, media and bureaucracy were initiated (Ahmad 2010) (Ahmad 2009). In addition, JI subscribed to the traditional scholastic view on the gender segregation and the restricted role of female individual inside and outside the family, in line with the Indian conventional social life and the norms of 'purdah zone'.¹ They have passionately opposed *tabarruj* and *ikhtilāf* at once, hence severe restrictions were put on her individual and social life.² However, it is argued that the role of women inside and outside the family and in the internal organizational structure had changed in favor of a presumed Islamic feminist approach. Female leaders have emerged from within and calls for the equal status for women are increasingly appealing among female and students activists (Ahmad 2008) (K. Salwa 2009, 48-49). We will attempt to understand how the social milieu in the purdah zone necessitated such a position in line with the conventional wisdom prevalent there in the early stages of Islamist activism. On the other hand, how did the entirely different

¹ Purdah Zone – David Mandelbaum referred to the region comprises all of Bangladesh, Pakistan in addition to the north Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh as Purdah Zone, where the practice of seclusion and veiling of women is culturally predominant. (Chowdury 1993)

² *Tabarruj* and *Ikhtilāf* are widely used concepts in the classical Islamic literature, juristic writings and were prohibited by the *Fatwās* (Non-binding legal opinions) issued by '*ulamā*' throughout the history of Muslim jurisprudence. The concepts roughly denote free movement of women in the public place, and intermixing of the gender respectively.

Keralite context produce different conceptions on gender roles inside and outside the family, organization and the public sphere, will also be examined.

A number of analysts, authors and researchers considered such transformation within political Islam as post-Islamist tendencies. This thesis is an attempt to explore such transformations occurred in Keralite Islamism and will examine to what extent the transformation of political Islam in India contribute to our understanding of Post-Islamism. In the Indian context, scholars argued that the transformation of Islamism was triggered by their engagement with the post-colonial experience in the Indian republic and negotiation with political actors on one side and engagement with civil society, general public and Muslim community on the other. During JI's interaction with nation state, secular democratic public sphere and Muslim community, Islamists were able to reinvent their practical trajectories through the organizational weapon of *shūra* (Ahmad 2010).³ It was observed that the notion of *shūra* was instrumental in transforming Indian Islamism, rather than any critical ideological intervention from Islamist thinkers, ideologues or intellectuals. Vali Reza Nasr argued that a phenomenon of end of ideology can be observed in south Asian political Islam, since no ideologue with an equivalent stature to Maudūdi ever appeared who is capable of questioning the theoretical foundations of political Islam, from a critical reformist perspective (H. Iqtidar 2011, 59) (Nasr 1994, 40). Hence, the thesis will try to shed light on how the stagnancy of Islamic ideology and the later de-ideologization habituated the progression of Islamist trajectories in Kerala. It attempts to fill a critical gap in the study of the transformation of political Islamism in south India.

Islamism and Post-Islamism

The history of Islamism as a distinct ideology and political project can be traced back to early periods of twentieth century, when Hasan Al-banna (1906-1949) of Egypt and Abul

³ *Shūra* Literally means consultation. It is the highest decision making body within the organizational structure of JI, which may correspond to Polit-Bureau in Leninist movements.

A'la Al-Maudūdi (1903-1979) of India established Muslim political organizations on the model of modern social movements. Islamists conceived themselves as the vanguards for Islamic revolution across the globe. The declared goal is to create a modern Islamic state, a divine government on the guidelines of prophet and early Muslim societies and the *sharī'a* is to be the foundational reference for running the state. In early stages, Islamists adopted a strategy of top-down reform and found resort in the Islamization of the state as the only refuge in front of the *ummah*, the Muslim nation. In this sense, scholars observed that the ideology of Islamism is statist and obsessed with the concept of secular governance, without which religion is deemed incomplete (Roy 1994, xi).

For Olivier Roy, Islamism is “the political ideologization of Islam on the model of the great political ideologies of the 20th Century” (O. Roy n.d., 57) (Shahibzadeh 2016, 1). It is an ideology that emerged in the Middle East out of the response to colonial encroachment into political, cultural and legal spheres of Muslim societies. Islamist movements are those who “conceive Islam as a political ideology. Practically, it didn't pass the test of power nor significantly altered the political landscape of Middle East, except in Iran” (Roy 1994, xi). Islamism can be understood as the political imaginations of social reformist movements emerged from Muslim societies and rooted significantly in religious elements. They are “the activists groups who see in Islam as much a political ideology as religion, and who are therefore breaking with a certain tradition themselves” (Roy 1994, 3). Islamism, therefore a sociopolitical movement aiming to stage a revolution in the name of religion, established its legitimacy on the foundational texts of Islam, *qur'ān* and *sunnah*. The conception of political revolution and taking power of the state is therefore inseparable from Islamism (Hussain 2010, 5).

The 1979 Islamic revolution of Iran was a unique manifestation of Islamic revolutionary political activism and a turning point in Islamist history. Islamists were able to overthrow the *Pahlawi* dynasty under the leadership of Āyatullāh Khomeini (1902-1989) and were

victorious in forming an Islamic state based on a novel theoretical formation of *wilāyat-e-faqīh*. Though the revolution was led by shiite clerics, a considerable number of sunni Islamists sympathized with and supported the revolution, including various divisions of Jamaat-e Islami in Indian subcontinent (قناة الجزيرة 2009).

As regards to the post-Islamism, it was conceived as the transformation of political Islam with conceptual and practical disruption with the Islamist past. It comprises more 'progressive', liberal transformation of political Islam which endorses more freedom, democracy, women's and minorities' equal rights for work, education and public service as articulated by Asef Bayat. However, this thesis will occasionally attempt to complicate the very reactive return of some segments within JI to the literalist and fundamentalist readings of *wahābi* puritanism also. For Roy, Islamism has been transmuted into two contrasting perceptions; to post-Islamism on one side and returning back to fundamentalism and salafism, and at some instances, to *jihādi* violence as well. These countercurrents within Islamism were also given attention, as these transformations are the manifestations of de-ideologization and de-politization of political Islam, which suggest a significant break with the very concept of Islamic movement that is supposed to trespass sectarian and juristic segmentations of traditional Muslim society.

It is argued that the post-Islamist break doesn't imply complete antagonism towards earlier Islamist postures, but a gradual development from older positions to new ones. It signifies multilayered critique of Islamist experience by Islamists themselves. "Following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy and sources of legitimacy of Islamism gets exhausted even among its once-ardent supporters" (A. Bayat 2005). It is "an awareness of anomalies and inadequacies of Islamic political system" and a project and a conscious "attempt to conceptualize and strategize rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains." Post-Islamism emphasizes "rights instead of duties, plurality in place of a singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures,

and the future instead of the past. It wants to marry Islam with individual choice and freedom, with democracy and modernity” (A. Bayat 2005). It “may find expressions in various social practices, political ideas, and religious thought as in post-Islamist urban rationale, youth and students movement, feminist practice, or theological perspectives” (A. Bayat 2005).

To narrate on post-Islamism is to examine the originality of the transformation occurred to Islamism and the nature of its assimilation in the liberal democratic governance and the secular public sphere. Many Islamist organizations were undergone radical transmutation and they were able to get rid of the ideological underpinnings of political Islamism. They have abandoned the romanticized conceptualizations of caliphate and Islamic state and abstained from demanding the application of *sharī‘a*. The model of liberal democratic governance was recognized as the only viable pattern of public governance and the values of political modernity were given blessings. Islamists began to argue in favor of the ideals of liberalism and modernity such as human rights, equal gender roles and campaigned for reinstating democratic and civil rights in the Muslim lands. Such transformation, in contrast to the classical dogmatic Islamism argued for Islamic state and application of *sharī‘a*, are considered as manifestations of post-Islamism. To define post-Islamism; therefore, is to capture the progression of some segments within Islamism into a position of accepting liberal democratic governance as the viable alternative. Islamists deliberately progressed with the reconciliation with secular governance, values of political modernity such as human rights, gender equality, democratic and civil rights and the abandoned the earlier dogmatic visions of Islamic state, caliphate and the application of *sharī‘a*.

In the South Asian context; precisely in Pakistan, post-Islamism was expressed in the nullification of the project of Islamic state by a number of liberal Muslim intellectuals who were at once ardent supporters of Maudūdi and his project. Their critique of Maudūdi’s political theory and the epistemological and hermeneutic shift were happened from outside

the mainstream Islamic movement (Amin 2010). On the contrary, post-Islamism emerged in India from within the Islamic movement and not as a result of organizational splits. Irfan Ahmad argued that the transformation of Indian Islamism is deeply ideological than tactical, to produce a condition of post-Islamism manifested in the transmutation of Jamaat-e Islami from an organization boycotted Indian political system into a movement embraced secular democracy as the only refuge for Indian Muslims in their imminent confrontation with the right wing Hindutva violence (Ahmad 2010).

Nevertheless, to elaborate post-Islamism in this thesis is not to narrate a politico-religious trend witnessed a linear progress from dogmatic Islamism to the liberal understanding of pluralism, human rights, women and minority rights. It is more than marrying Islam with liberal individualist sensibilities, and more complex than historicizing and rationalizing the Islamist discourse. The multifaceted socio-political contexts in secular India, the entrenched constitutional restraints on Islamism and the advent of right wing Hindutva and its sweeping violence against Muslims, Dalits and other oppressed classes and castes in addition to the unjust distribution of power and unfair representation of different social groups in the administration, judiciary and legislative defined and conditioned the way in which post-Islamist perceptions have been formulated. Therefore, the transformations were not simply a linear progression towards individualism and liberal reformulations of the earlier statements of Islamism, rather characterized with several continuities and breaks with the principal ideology of Islamism, though often not admitted. The proliferation of many voices in Indian Islamism and the diversification of political trends within it requires a detailed analysis, to understand the nature of Islamist transformation. This has been addressed in the concluding chapter limitedly, within the restraints of the thesis.

Background and Justification – The Landscape of Keralite Islam

From the second half of twentieth century, political Islam was at the center of debate in Muslim majority societies. Though happened to be the largest organized political trend in post-colonial Arab Muslim societies, they had to face serious challenges from the ruling elite. The idea of political Islam per se contained, or as assumed by supporters and critics alike, a serious and imminent threat to secular despotism or traditional religious monarchy prevalent in the Middle East. Recent Arab revolutions sprang over the region signaled the emergence of new socio-political settings at the beginning, in which more democracy, more freedom and human rights will be celebrated. However, the revolutions were utterly failed and either reproduced regimes that are more dictatorial or ended in never ending civil wars. Not to mention, Islamists were the prime losers from such a situation. In the south Asian regional context; on the other hand, Pakistan witnessed Islamist's continuous failures in the political process, and the proclaimed goal of Islamizing the state seems to be unintelligible and unrealistic. In response to such predicaments, certain segments of Islamists were in a position to rethink their earlier statements and many alternative discourses and revisionist trajectories were proliferated.

In such a global and regional context of flourishing conceptualizations of reforming Islamism, this research attempts to widen our understanding on the post-Islamist trajectories of political Islamism in India, with a special emphasis to its Kerala chapter. Kerala is a state in the southern border of India surrounded by Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, with a population of 33.38 Million, of which 26.56 % are Muslims (Census 2011). It is one of the rare states in India, where Muslims are considerably in large numbers, though remains a minority. They share relatively high status in health, wealth and literacy rate with their fellow Keralite thanks to the migration to the oil rich gulf countries. The human development index reports placed Kerala at the top of Indian states, which is higher than any of its counterparts in India, and reach to the European standards (Agencies 2011).

Kerala is one of the few states where communists and leftists had considerable influence, and various alliances of communist governments ruled the state for the best part of its history. The influence of ruling communist parties, the hegemony of leftist ideals in the cultural sphere and its decisive capability to define the Keralite ‘common sense’ highly influenced Islamism therein. The thesis will try to shed light on how such a reality inspired many Islamists and made their ways into specific directions.

The landscape of Keralite Islam needs to be briefly illustrated, before we move forward. The huge majority of Kerala Muslims are adherents of *sunni shāfiʿī* scholastic tradition. Sunnis are generally referred to as traditionalist and orthodox Muslims, and split into mainly three fractions or organizations.⁴ Irrespective of organizational affiliations, they place themselves in opposition to the organized reformist activism, manifested in various groups of *Mujāhids* and the Islamist Jamaat-e Islami. *Mujāhids* are following a reformist and non-scholastic line influenced by salafi reformism of Afghāni, Rashīd Riḍā and ‘Abduh, with later intrusions of *wahābi* dispositions imported, thanks to the expatriation and migration of Keralite Muslims into oil rich gulf. In addition, the huge majority of early Jamaat leaders and activists were former associates of *Mujāhid* movement. Therefore, followers of Jamaat-e Islami preserve a deep imprint of non-scholastic reformist salafi Islam in their conceptualizations of religious truths and practices (Osella 2013).

Apart from the above groups, a strong presence of *Tablīgh Jamāʿat* is also visible, who are followers of the ritualistic religion of traditional deobandi *ulamā* and emphasize the propagation of basic religious rituals among the believers (Osella 2013). Most of the Muslim groups other than Jamaat-e Islami are politically quietist and keeping a specific distance from direct political engagements. *Mujāhids* and majority of traditional *Sunnis* extent their political support mostly to the Muslim league, an extension of the All India

⁴ Traditional Muslims of Kerala (Sunnis) are split mainly into three fractions/organization named, *Samastha Kerala Jamʿiyyath al-ʿulamā(EK)*, *Samastha Kerala Jamʿiyyath al-ʿulamā(AP)* and *Dakshina Kerala Jamʿiyyath al-ʿulamā*.

Muslim league, a political party formed in British India advocating for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. The political affiliations of Kerala Muslims are diversified in between the support for various secular political parties, Muslim League and its communitarian interests and disparate forms of political Islam from Jamaat-e Islami to Popular Front; a new social movement, the proclaimed objective of which is to ensure justice, dignity and security to the minority Muslims and other oppressed class-caste groups.

Research Objective and Questions

The main objective of this thesis is to enhance our understanding on the phenomenon of post-Islamism by examining the transformation of one of the earliest and most influential Islamic political organization in south Asia, Jamaat-e Islami. Also, to explore the diversified trajectories of Islamism in Kerala is one of the objectives of this research, which will help us in complicating our understanding on the concept of post-Islamism.

Hence, the thesis attempts to answer the central question of whether a post-Islamist progression occurred in Indian Islamism, and if yes, what are the features of the transformation happened. In congruence with the main question, the thesis attempts to answer what are the roles played by Islamic ideology formulated in colonial period and the later de-ideologization of political Islam in molding / necessitating many (post) Islamist trajectories in south India. In what context, the ideology of political Islam formulated and what are the historic conditions necessitated such a novel ideological formulation? How the de-ideologization of political Islam transformed Islamist imaginations in favor of various and opposing trends within the Islamic movement?

In addition, how the concrete realities of post-colonial modern Indian state shaped Islamist trajectories in favor of abandoning its earlier dogmatic literalism and embracing a political position, which is in line with the secular democracy of India. If we understand the transformation of JI in terms of post-Islamism, how can we make sense of its early party

line which rejected any type of cooperation with what it constituted *Ṭāghūt* and Anti-Islamic? Under what conditions, such a transformation was possible for JI? What are the contributions made by its internal and outsider actors, in reformulating its priorities, programs and policies? Is there any critical theoretical engagement occurred within political Islam in India other than gradual policy changes on the basis of majority voting in the *shūra* and the highly centralized reporting and discussions among the party cadres, in accordance with the Leninist hierarchy being strictly observed by JI. In a different sense, did Indian Islamism transform from a revolutionary, exclusivist movement antagonistic to the state and its institutions, to a reformist, inclusive and a legitimate organization within the secular democratic polity of India?

How did the specificities of Keralite contexts contribute in producing a variant of Keralite Islamism, in contrast to its north Indian counterpart especially in its positioning towards the question of gender? What are the salient features of gender roles defined by Maudūdi and early Islamism and how these roles were ‘invented’ and Islamized? How the gender segregated ‘Islamic social systems’ formulated by Maudūdi in line with traditional norms of purdah zone were challenged by insider elements, both male and female activists of political Islam? How the gender relations inside JI have been progressed/evolved by the virtue of post-Islamist transformations within the movement?

What are the diversified manifestations of (post) Islamism in Indian political Islam? How do we make sense of the countercurrents within Islamism which may struggle for more fundamental and reactionary return to earlier Islamist phase? How did *wahābi* puritanism and salafi literalism influence the diversified directions of Islamism and how did such trends challenge the newer Islamist trajectories? Is there any project of post-Islamism occurred in India or the Islamist transformations are merely a condition of post-Islamism with less conscious attempts to rationalize new strategies and modalities which transcends traditional Islamism?

Sources and Methodology.

This research depends primarily on the journals/ periodicals/ special editions published by Jamaat-e Islami Hind, Kerala chapter in the local vernacular Malayalam. Since 1949, JI Kerala initiated publishing *Prabodhanam*⁵ as the official mouthpiece of organization. It was continuously being published from 1949 and never stopped except in two instances while JI was outlawed during the Emergency period,⁶ and after the demolition of historical Babri Masjid.⁷ The first *Amīr* of JI Kerala, Haji V.P. Mohamed Ali was the first editor and proofreader and the second *Amīr* K.C. Abdulla Moulavi assisted in the editing and proofreading of *Prabodhanam* (Prabodhanam 1983, 14). When JI was banned from operating in two instances, the organization took tactical steps to overcome the restriction imposed, and started publishing another weekly by the name *Bodhanam*.⁸ However, after JI has been successful in its legal battle against the ban, *prabodhanam* resumed its publication as the official weekly of JI, meanwhile *Bodhanam* continued as a research journal published bimonthly and quarterly at various occasions.

Prabodhanam published sixteen special editions on different occasions. The volumes issued during the period of 1970 to 2016 were focused, in order to trace the gradual development / transformation of political Islam. Occasionally, the weekly issues of *Prabodhanam* and bimonthly and quarterly volumes of *Bodhanam* will also be referred for the purpose of comprehending the nuances of (post) Islamist political imagination(s) in India, with special emphasis to Kerala. In addition, JI circulated four volumes in English articulating earlier phases of the organization by the name *Rūdād-e Jamaat-e Islami* (Historical narrative of

⁵ Literally, the term means propagation, The Call or الدعوة in Arabic.

⁶ In 1975, the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared Emergency throughout the country. During the Emergency period, civil rights were curtailed, political and religious organizations were outlawed and a large number of civilians were arrested for political reasons.

⁷ Babri Masjid was one of the renowned mosques in India, built by Mughal Emperor Babur. It was demolished in 1992 December by right wing Hindutva activists with latent support from the ruling elite in India.

⁸ The term *Bodhanam* carry the same literal meaning of *Prabodhanam*.

Jamaat-e Islami/ Proceedings of Jamaat-e-Islami). The volumes contain reports, minutes of *majlis-e shūra*, members meeting and public gathering from the inception.

I have conducted a number of interviews with leaders, activists and former associates of Jamaat-e Islami and feeder organizations. The identities of the interviewees were kept confidential, as desired by some of them. It was conducted in Kerala during two occasions while I have visited there in February and August 2017. In addition, a number of telephonic interviews were done and JI associates in Qatar were also conversed with.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured in five chapters. In the introduction, I have detailed the background and relevance of the study. The key objectives and central research questions are outlined in short and the principal concepts were given a fairly detailed elaboration. In the second chapter, I will attempt to shed light on the relevance of ideology for political Islam in India, and will examine in which context it was formulated. How did Islamic ideology and the condition of end of ideology witnessed in later stages shape the trajectories of Islamic movement in the post-colonial experience is also elaborated.

Two case studies will be presented in the third and fourth chapters and I will look into the Islamist transformations occurred in the arenas of politics and gender, with special reference to the Keralite specificities. In the concluding chapter, I will elaborate on the many faces of (post) Islamism in south India and the diversified ways in which Islamist political imaginations are manifested. In addition, the main arguments and results of the research are summarized in the concluding chapter by studying one of the most important political Islamic organization in the world, from a regional perspective in its interface to the changing socio political environment, in a multi religious, multi lingual and multi ethnic secular democratic polity of India.

Chapter 2 - The End of Islamic Ideology and the Post-Islamist Turn.

Political Islam is being conceived by many as politicization and ideologization of Islam, a religiously rooted political program for the administration of society. As mentioned earlier, Roy defined Islamic Movement in terms of ideologization of religion, and as a specific approach to view Islam through the prisms of great political ideologies of modern times. The ideologization was direct response to the very political realities necessitated by the colonial encroachment to the Muslim land (Roy 1994, viii). In a critique of Ali Shariāti's reformist project, Soroush argued that Islam needs to be liberated from political ideologization and exploitation for the worldly purposes, though a religious community may not end its relation with scriptures, religious culture and ethics, in its social, economic and political arenas. As far as Soroush and other 'Liberal' Muslims are concerned, Islam is more other worldly and spiritual rather than an ideology and this worldly experience, In contrast to Islamists (Soroush 2008). For 'apolitical' Muslim preachers⁹, Islam is far more nuanced than any ideology and doesn't offer a political solution per se (S. H. Yusuf 2011). Therefore, Political Islam can be distinctively understood as differing from other forms of traditional or reformist schools of Islam, in terms of ideologization of religion and as a political movement having a structured programmatic discourse for reorganizing the society.

Apparently, Jamaat-e Islami interpreted Islam more than merely a religion, an ideology and a system of life from its outset. To Quote Sayyid Yusuf, the second *Amīr* of Jamaat-e Islami: "Islam as known today, is not a congregation of specific rituals, but a system of life encompasses the whole spheres of human life" (S. Yusuf 1983, 39). T. Mohamed Velom, a young leader of JI reinstates the same position as the ideology and a concrete political

⁹ The term apolitical used here not in a pejorative nor complimentary sense, but to indicate those 'ulamā who keep specific distance from involving in direct political engagement.

program is very much of significance for Islamism (Velom 2008).¹⁰ However, whether this ideological Islam has been transformed into post ideological perspectives of Post-Islamism is the main question I seek to find an answer for in this chapter. Also, how the Islamist Ideology in India gave way to new post-ideological trajectories, which neglected the ideological assumptions of early Islamism if not abandoned it altogether. I will be looking into the Islamist literature in Malayalam, to elaborate the salient features of de-ideologization of Islamism and how these post-ideological waves defined/directed the trajectories of political Islam in its South Indian context. In the following chapters, two case studies will be presented on how the post-Islamist interpretations defined the trajectories of Islamism in the spheres of Politics and Gender Relations.

To understand the relevance of ideology for political Islam, we may elaborate a bit on the concept of ideology and various theses over deideologization and the end of ideology. Then, we will move forward to examine how some segments within Islamism which ideologized the religion at the beginning transformed itself and constructed a deideologized Islam, which in turn operational in producing many political initiatives in later stages, which could be conceived as manifestations of Post-Islamism.

Ideology and the thesis of End of Ideology

Ideology is of great significance while we discuss the socio-political history of any given society in modern times, yet Muslim societies are not exception. The modern political settings are conditioned, if not defined by ideological confrontations lasted for centuries, when the very religious hold on the public sphere lost and secularized notions on legality, administration and sovereignty demarcated boundaries of public behavior. During the post-colonial nationalist phase of Muslim societies, contesting ideologies of Liberalism and Socialism with strong nationalist substance ruled out Muslim nation states. Islamism as an

¹⁰ <http://jamaateislamihind.org/eng/about-jamaat/ideology/> In the official webpage of Jamā'at-e Islāmi, there is a section titled 'Ideology', in which the theoretical foundation of JI briefly provided. The term ideology is being used interchangeably with the oft-used term 'Aqīda in JI literature.

ideology emerged in these societies as the major competing actor against the ruling system. Hence, various manifestations of political Islam represented the real threat to the ruling elite and their dominant ideology, for a long period. It stood against various nationalisms in different Muslim societies and experienced state repression which in turn contributed in gaining increased societal support from a larger part of the religious public (Kepel 2000, 23).

Ideology refers to any “abstract or symbolic meaning system used to explain or justify social, economic, or political realities” (Jost 2006, 652). Michael Freeden defines it as “complex combinations and clusters of political concepts in sustainable patterns’ and a wide-ranging structural arrangement that attributes decontested meanings to a range of mutually defining political concepts” (M. Islam 2015, 7). For Martin Seliger, it as a ”set of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify the ends and means of organized social action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot, or rebuild a given social order” (Heywood 1992, 6). Ideology, in this sense, is a vision over the social and political settings of a given society, of its contemporaneous existence and future destinations. Political Islamists were holding such a specific vision over the administration of society, based on the theory of divine sovereignty (*Hākimiyya*), the binary vision of Islam v/s *Jāhiliyya* and the primacy of *Sharīa*.

Ideology is being used in a negative and pejorative sense also, as a set of prejudices which resist the truth and reality, and restrained by distorted notions of partiality towards an organization, a group of people or a specific political or societal trend. It is then not a system of thought, nor a set of ideas which preserves some sort of coherence and interdependence, but represents false consciousness and operates as “certain forms of irrationality in the service of justifying status quo” (Jost 2006, 652). Ideologies produce decontested and consensus meanings on political ideas, make truth claims, thus declare the debate is over and closed (M. Islam 2015, 7-8). Interestingly, Karl Marx; though he was the

founder of the grand ideology of Marxism, had a negative approach to the notion of ideology. For him, “ideas are ideological if they conceal the class contradictions” in the class society. Ideology, thus constructed to conceal the reality and intended for the benefits of the exploiting class, in contrast to the ‘scientific’ theory of Marxism, which is in service of truth, reality and revealing the entrenched class contradictions in the society (Heywood 1992, 6). Liberal writers such as Karl Popper and Daniel Bell regarded ideology as “closed systems of political thought” which claim monopoly over the truth similar to religion. It is ‘Secular Religion’ which may “leads to intolerance, censorship and political repression” and may generate repressive and totalitarian social and political systems (Heywood 1992, 7-8).

In short, Islamists conceived the religion as a political ideology. Ideological Islam inherently contain the centrality of political struggle and the primacy of the institution of state. The theory of Islam which doesn’t make any distinction between religion and state, and the conviction that modern nation state can be operated with a legal reference to Islamic *Sharīa* is central to Islamism. However, it has been argued that the pivotal role acquired by state and political struggle in the project of Islamism was due to the “configuration of the early twentieth century socio-political formations under which the state as an institution had acquired an unprecedented role in expanding its realm of action and scope of its effect” (I. Ahmad 2006, 12). In Indian Islamism, it was “the direct product of the political-electoral matrix of colonial India” and the interventionist role played by the British Colonial State into the very personal, legal, religious and private matters, which directly affected and attempted to control the everyday life of Indian political subject (I. Ahmad 2006, 12).

The thesis of End of Ideology, which is also of great significance for this research, was proliferated after the Second World War, and a number of social scientists of Post War period put forth the theory. The major arguments of the thesis were as elaborated below.

Firstly, Common citizens doesn't possess stable, consistent political attitude, as required by a said ideology. They "lack the kind of stability, consistency and constraint that ideology requires" (Jost 2006, 651). Secondly, major political ideologies of our time, such as liberalism, conservatism and socialism and political trends such as right and left lost or lacks "motivational potency and behavioral significance" (Jost 2006, 651). Also, there is no significant difference between contesting ideologies and political trends in its substance and content (Jost 2006, 651).

The proliferation of the thesis of End of Ideology was interpreted as "traumatic response to the crimes of Stalinism and fascism" during the Second World War (Eagleton 1991, xi). It is argued that the thesis of End of Ideology was the creation of the right wing political trends and put forth an imagination of ideology as "inherently closed, dogmatic and inflexible" (Eagleton 1991, ix)

The notion of End of the ideology appeared in the writings of Post-Modernist and Post-Structuralist literature in a different sense. If the 'right wing end of ideology theorists were rejected the ideology as it is dogmatic, post-modern theorists were of offensive to the ideology due to its totalitarianism and metaphysical nature as they conceived (Eagleton 1991).

[Contextualizing Islamic Reform and Political Islam in India](#)

After having a brief note on the concepts of Ideology and End of Ideology, we may move forward to examine the context of Muslim reformism in India. Muslim dynasties ruled the territory known as India today for a thousand years. Until British East India Company encroached Indian borders through trade contracts and later with military power, Muslim rulers from dynasties of Delhi Sultanate, regional Muslim kingdoms and the Mughals were ruling over the most parts of Indian subcontinent (Metcalf 2006, 1-28). The decline of Mughal Empire and the emergence of British colonialism radically transformed the fate of

Indian Muslims. They were to be thrown out to the margins of administrative, economic, educational and cultural spheres of Indian life in the colonial era, the effect of which still haunts the community. The declaration of English as the official language in 1835 replacing Persian (Metcalf 2006, 67) further created a generation of ‘illiterates’ devoid of neither political power nor economic and cultural capital though they were at once the harbingers of culture, education and poetry. However, under British Colonialism and in congruence with material, economic and social transformations, the educated middle class from Muslim community produced various manifestations of reformism and modernism, which was to act as the foundation of Muslim Political activism in the future.

W.C Smith illustrates the steady progress of Modernist Islam into what we can contemplate as the diversified trends of communalism and political Islam. From the Nineteenth century, the new imperial practices created a new middle class infiltrated with British liberal culture which produced a Modernist Islam congruent with the 19th Century Liberal ideas (Smith 1943, 2). Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was the iconic figure represents this group of modernists who enthusiastically defended Western science, economic capitalism and humanism in Muslim societies. He was the founder of renowned Aligarh Educational Institutions, first of its kind in India. As far as he is concerned, the way out for Muslims from the situations necessitated by the power loss is in obtaining western education and not in agitating against the invaders. Politically, early Modernists were allied to British Imperialism and antagonistic to any attempt questioning British Power initiated by *‘ulamā* or peasantry (Smith 1943, 5-45).

In the era of developing Indian Industrialism, the Indian Middle class expanded and its political position of loyalty towards Imperialism undergone a transition to comparative rivalry. In 1912, All India Muslim League; which was considered as the party of Muslim elites loyal to British government, passed a resolution declaring *Swaraj* (self-rule) as the political destination of Indians (T. Mohamed 2006, 70). In this context, Liberal Islam had

withdrawn political support but kept its fidelity to western liberalism. It was argued that Western Liberalism is the result of Muslim Civilizational progress and Islam is “not only compatible with but the very source of Western Liberalism” (Smith 1943, 3). The civilizational and scientific progress in the Abbasid period was celebrated and western humanism and industrialism were depicted as inspired from Muslims. This stage signifies a phase of politically liberated but culturally subdued to West and Amīr Ali could be considered as the right representative of this phase (Smith 1943, 46-107).

In its third phase, Muslim Modernist responses progressed towards a position of self-assertion and political liberation from Imperialism. The celebration of Abbasid Progress and the Muslim past was questioned. The progress and modernism under ‘Muslim Imperialisms’ were rejected but considered the entire history of Muslim Kingship as aberration from the right path. They have urged Muslim community to go back to the very early purity of Revelation, the rule of Prophet and *Rāshidūn* Caliphate (Smith 1943, 109-154).

The Modern Political Islam in India was in fact the development of Muslim Modernism at this stage as Smith illustrated. The cravings for an Islamic state in the rhetoric of Political Islam was personification of the political and cultural rejection of West, and an attempt to find out an alternative within the constraints of Modernity. The concept of Islamic state was in fact signifies the ideological support to Muslim community in the context of resisting British Imperialism and colonial modernity (Parari 2012). A coherent anti colonial ideology was not developed during the Modernist phase. It was with Iqbāl, Maudūdi and other political Islamists, the culmination of Muslim reformism reached to a position of asserting Islam as a civilizational alternative and Political Islam was formulated as a coherent anti colonial ideology (I. Ahmad 2006, 12).

However, Maudūdi’s transition to (or invention of) Islamism was result of his engagement in the politics of colonial India and formulated as a result of his conversation with diversified political trends and individuals prevalent during that period. Irfan Ahmad argued

that the pivotal role of state and politics in Islamism is should not be due to Islam theologically endorse it, but “because of the configuration of the early twentieth century socio political formations” (I. Ahmad 2006, 12).

When the Caliphate Movement emerged in 1919, Maudūdi participated together with his brother (T. Mohamed 2006, 23). The movement was supported by Congress and MK Gandhi and was part of Indian freedom struggle in the broader sense. He was also part of the society formed to financially support Muslim prisoners and worked as an Editor of the magazine ‘*Taj*’, which was supportive of INC and freedom movement (T. Mohamed 2006, 24). The publisher of *Taj* was imprisoned by the British Government due to an article authored by Maudūdi, which lead him to resign from the position (T. Mohamed 2006, 26).

Later in 1924, Maudūdi was appointed as the Chief Editor of ‘*Al-jam ‘iyyat*’, the official mouthpiece of *Jam ‘iyyath ‘ulamā-e Hind*, an ūlamā organization supportive of INC’s secular nationalism and freedom movement (T. Mohamed 2006, 34). However, as soon the Hindu-Muslim communal tensions spread out, the shared feeling among Muslims was that Congress is preserving Hindu communal interests. Proclamations of Congress leaders such as Madan Mohan Malavya and Lala Lajpat Ray were enough to prove the communal bias of Congress as far as Muslim Intellectuals are concerned (T. Mohamed 2006, 37).

Apparently, the disenchantment with INC lead Maudūdi to formulate a new political position, which is in favor of Muslim Nationalism and community interests in a turbulent situation of communal tensions. However, it didn’t prolong so much and the vision of Political Islam was shaped as rejecting Indian Nationalism, Muslim separatism and British Colonialism at the very moment. Maudūdi wrote on this transition: “When I began writing ‘*Al jihād*’¹¹, my intention was to preserve the interests of Muslim Nationalism. However, I have finished the book with the feeling of preserving interests of Islam, not the communal

¹¹ *Al-jihād fi al-Islam* is the first book authored by Maudūdi, inspired by a call of Maulānā Muḥammad ‘Ali jawḥar to explain the real meaning of jihād in Islam, in a turbulent situation in which the very term was widely miscommunicated.

interests of Muslims. During this period, I was able to realize the real meaning of Islam and possible modes of its revival. I took pledge that my entry to journalism in future will be only with an objective of serving Islam” (T. Mohamed 2006, 42). This fascinating transition from a Muslim journalist and intellectual committed to the cause of Indian national freedom, to Muslim communalism and finally into political Islam entailed a novel formation of ideological Islam, the salient features of which we will be elaborating in the following lines.

Political Ideologization and Deideologization of Islam.

If the Liberal criticism towards the ideology was on the religious notions inherent in it, as we elaborated, Islamists were confronting another mode of criticism from opposite direction; ideologizing and politicizing Islam. Jamaat-e Islami’s distinctive religio-political outlook was new for the political religious sphere of India and was formulated almost solely by the intellectual contribution of Maudūdi. His novel theoretical positions which separated himself from his contemporaries from Muslim secular intellectuals on one side and the traditional ‘*ulamā*’ on the other, were in fact the result of his association with the politics of India under British Colonialism (Siddiqi 2000) (I. Ahmad 2006, 12).

In his novel theoretical formulation, the categories of Islam and Muslim were redefined and modern assumptions on citizenship, civilization, state and sovereignty were imposed upon Muslims both as an individual and community. Islam has been transformed into a revolutionary ideology rather than a religion, and Jamaat-e Islami was considered the revolutionary vanguard supposed to lead Islamic Revolution to bring a new social order based on Divine Sovereignty, the concept of *Hākimiyya* (Nasr 1996, 50). He considered the adoption of modern social thought and organization as the only way out to escape from the pathetic conditions Muslim communities shackled within. In Maudūdi’s Islamist ideology, the Muslim is no more a mere follower of the religion of Islam, but “a modern creature with

modern social links, political aspirations, and ultimately, cultural outlook” (Nasr 1996, 51-52). Acquiring political power is inevitable for establishing and sustaining a Muslim society, since a large part of religion needs coercive power to reinforce its injunctions (Nasr 1996, 57). The concept of *Hākimiyya*, the divine sovereignty was one of the novel theoretical formulations of Maudūdi, which had deeper impact even outside Indian subcontinent and on the various trajectories of Political Islamic movements throughout the world.

Another aspect of the ideology of Islamism in the imaginaries of Maudūdi and Indian Islamists is the constant struggle between Islam and Non-Islam/ *the Jāhiliyya*, and the persistent need for reformation and revival, the theory of which apparent imprints of western historicism (Nasr 1996, 56). *Jāhiliyya* is any worldview, outlook and ideology which is not established on the pure truth of revelation and monotheism, be it atheism, polytheism or asceticism. It is Non-Islam in a nutshell, and the onslaught of Non-Islam/*Jāhiliyya* on the historical current of Islam is resisted through Prophets and *mujaddids* (Revivalists) whose only objective is to establish a social system of Islam which is based on revelation and Monotheism (Al-Maudūdi 2002). Such a social system of Islam will be possible only if the individual Muslims are offering their absolute obedience to the God, not only in the spiritual and religious matters, but also in the spheres of secular and public behavior (Abdulla 1983, 25-37).

However, while observing the history of Political Islam in India carefully, there is a shift can be noticed from the Ideological Islam ‘invented’ by Islamist ideologues, to a more pragmatic position while dealing with state apparatus, civil society, community institutions and the religious and community settings of Muslim masses and *‘ulamā*. Once demonized institution of secular state and the idea of secular democracy were reconsidered as practical realities Political Islamists can do without. The dogmatic ideological positions were gave

way to more pragmatic positions of inclusive activism through which Islamism progressed (Pookkoottur 2017) (Shakir 2017).

One way the progression of Islamism occurred was in deideologizing Islam and considering it a religion rather than an ideology with more other worldly concerns. Religion is an ethical framework, individuals and societies may need to refer to for the smooth functioning of this-worldly life. It is not an ideology per se nor intended to rule over the whole society. The emergence and proliferation of new Islamic discourses within Islamic Movement emphasizing ethics and morality and the high objectives of Sharī‘a could be understood as the departure from being statist to individualist, and considering religion other worldly than this worldly. An increased number of articles were authored by young Islamist scholars and published through issues of Prabodhanam and Bodhanam (A. Kizhuparamba 2016) (Ghaffār 2016, 122-127).

In order to liberate Islamic activism from the shackles of ideological constraints, a new argument was raised, as the Islamic Political engagement is to be distinctively understood as different from the notion of Islamic state. Muhsin Parari, a young film director and former state council member of SIO, had attempted to legitimize the new modes of Islamist engagements within secular democratic polity, in which any reference to the Islamic state is no more required (Parari 2012). The practical impossibilities of reformulating society and state run by religious sanctions in a non-Muslim majority society was highly influential in this departure from ideological Islamism.

Further, JIs political positions throughout the decades from Indian Independence and partition could be understood as adaptive to the situations, not based on any original theoretical innovation. It is situational in the sense that various social political realities and conditions in the post-colonial Indian Polity and the high pressure from the Muslim masses, Government and Secular public sphere directed JI to formulate an approach which aims to

adapt to the current conditions and political scenarios being unfolded. Though JI have proceeded with adaptation methods to cope with the changing realities of Indian polity and public sphere, there were no original attempts to produce a theory based on Islamic textual references or earlier Islamist literature. No interpretation was provided on the changing priorities of JI, other than in terms of situational requirement and needs.

Since JI had departed from the attachment to the Islamist Ideology in its practical trajectories, the political attitudes of JI associates vary from one to another. They have produced flawed and fragmented nature of political behavior, which we will elaborate in Chapter five. Absence of a theory or a concrete system of ideas which interpret social, economic and political instances and incidents almost in a similar and structured way, does mean that the ideology has been ended or at least interrupted. We can observe many individuals within Islamism, whose thinking and acting can inform on the presence of Liberal Islam. On the very moment, there are Islamists whose politics of insisting communitarian interests and identity and argue for wider solidarity of the oppressed castes and classes. In addition, literal Salafi (a)political positions could also be observed among the Islamists. The students' wing of JI had a recent reputation for creating new alliances with emerging forces of Ambedkarism¹² and involving in a broader solidarity politics of the Oppressed castes and classes including Muslims and other minorities in opposition to all forms of elitist Brahmanic right and left wing politics, in the University campuses throughout the country. We will elaborate on this various and diversified political expressions of Islamism in the Chapter five, in some details.

¹² Ambedkarism refer to the political line following the writings, theories and vision of Dr. B.R Ambedkar, India's first law minister, renowned Jurist, politician and the main architect of Indian constitution. It could be understood as the Dalit responses towards the atrocities of Indian Brahmin class-caste system in summary. For more, the below link can be referred.

<http://www.ambedkar.org/D-Mag/D-MagAmb.pdf>

The Deideologization of Islam, The departure from Islamism

Olivier Roy argued that Islamist political ideology and the related theoretical framework has been ended, in terms of texts, concepts and actions. There are no intellectuals, ideologues and philosophers of Political Islam in equal posture to Maudūdi, Khumeini, Sharī‘ati and Sayyid Qutb appeared after 1978. The new texts and ideological literature of Political Islam is nothing “but brochures, prayers, feeble glosses and citations of canonical authors”. It is also reached into an impasse, since the Islamist political model is impossible to achieve due to the very contradiction inherent in it, in terms of the defining nature of Individual piety. Islamist thought is strikingly poor on political institutions, but put all trust on the individual virtue and piety in the administration of institutions and country. In addition, Islamist ideology broken down in practical sense due to its failure to create a viable political model in terms of administration, economic stability, and a unified community liberated from sectarian and ethnic fragmentations (Roy 1994, 60-61).

While narrating the history of Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan, Vali Reza Nasr also pointed to the phenomenon of End of Ideology occurred in JI Pakistan, and the subsequent advent of Pragmatic Politics. After the partition, JI Pakistan had immensely involved in the electoral politics of newly formed Pakistan, though Maudūdi and Jamaat were against the idea of a separate nation state for Muslims. This increased involvement in Politics lead to a feeling among some members that JI is losing the ethical holds, and opportunism, populism and financial misdeeds are encroaching to the cadres and bureaucracy of Jamaat. Some of the leaders were resigned and Amīn Aḥsan Islāhi and Iṣrār Aḥmad¹³ were the most famous of them. Their main objection was against the over politicization and the increasing hold of bureaucracy in the party structure, a phenomenon they have felt unhealthy for an Islamic Religious organization like JI (Nasr 1994).

¹³ Amin Ahsan Islahi and Dr. Israr Ahmed were prominent scholars and leaders of JI, among those who left the organization.

An alleged purge of the dissonant voices within Jamaat occurred during the organizational and structural reformulation in mid-fifties. Hence, the ideological, religious and theoretical framework of Jamaat ceased to be as important as earlier, and an increased involvement in Politics and Pragmatism could be observed. The leadership and organizational structures were more bureaucratized and the *shūra* lost its relevance in front of the increased influence of the Office of *Amīr*. JI ceased to be a 'holy community', the party programs were revised and the organization transformed from a religious organization with ideological backing to a full-fledged political party (Nasr 1994).

Humeira Iqtidar observe the End of Ideology in Political Islam in South Asia, in a different context. For her, a movement bereft of an ideologue in equal stature to Maudūdi does signify the deideologization in some sense, though they have produced a number of public intellectuals. JI's failure to produce a theory to substantiate its political program was manifestation of the end of Ideology. The political rhetoric of JI, the broad categories JI internalized in its political propagation were devoid of a structured ideological backing and a deep insight into the various aspects of those overarching categories. "For instance, the denunciation of "Imperialism" in contemporary JI political language is not accompanied by any substantial inquiry into the different types or meanings of "Imperialism". Rather, they represent pragmatic decisions..." (H. Iqtidar 2011, 59)

Ziauddin Sardar, in his auto biographical *desperately seeking paradise*, stated that: "I was appalled at the guru syndrome that dominated Jamaat-e islami. Maudūdi was not only the founder and lifelong leader of the movement, but the ever present, ever-shining sun that illuminated everything its members did" (Sardar 2005, 32). For Sardar, the guru syndrome dominated the cadres of JI, the narrow loyalty and the unflinching obedience to Maudūdi and his vision, has prevented the intellectual and ideological development of the movement. The high intellectuals and scholar of JI were turned to rigid and mechanical devotees and followers of their Guru's vision, which truncated JI's ideological or theological progression

and advancement, as far as Sardar is concerned. (Sardar 2005, 32). In this sense, JI stuck in the theology and ideology formulated by Maudūdi and failed to develop a critical relationship with Maudūdi's own thought and vision or to progress in different special temporal contexts.

Waseem RS, an SIO activist of JNU¹⁴ had argued that the founding narratives of Islamic Movements including JI and SIO are needs to be historically situated and can be rejected, but without denouncing the historical legacy of Islam and Islamism (RS 2016). 'Ārif 'Ali, the current vice president of JI takes this further and suggest that it is important for JI to trespass the Guru Syndrome and to overgrow Maudūdi and his vision on Islamic Movement. Maudūdi himself didn't grant this position of ever guiding leader of Islamic movement but abstained from interfering in the internal affairs of JI India, after the partition. He had provided the below justifications for JI to be independent from Maudūdi and to start criticizing JI's earlier vision.

1. The constitution of JI in its article 3, reads: "Knowing and recognizing this reality, it becomes imperative that one.....should not acknowledge the permanent and absolute leadership and guidance of anyone excepting God's messenger; the act of following others should be subject to its conforming with Allah's Book and the Sunna of Allah's messenger....

Should hold no human being, except the messenger of God, as the criterion of right and wrong, nor regard anyone above criticism, nor be under mental servitude of anyone" (T. A. Ali 2017, 62-63).

2. Maudūdi himself had criticized a number of prophet's companion in his *Khilāfat aur Mulūkiyat* (Caliphate and Monarchy). Hence, it is quite normal for Islamist Intellectuals

¹⁴ JNU is a prestigious Indian University situated at the Capital Delhi and one of the Main plots were Islamists students were victorious in formulating new political lines and alliances with other oppressed class-caste groups and organizations.

and scholars to question Maudūdi's visions and ideas on Islamic movement (T. A. Ali 2017, 63).

3. After the partition of India and Pakistan, Maudūdi had abstained from providing any clear cut instruction while responding to the enquiries from JI cadres left in India on what policies should be taken in political process of independent India. He was of the opinion that the cadres in India are most appropriate to formulate any such policy, in relation to the Indian context (T. A. Ali 2017, 65).

This vision and attempts for initiating a self-critique represents the reformist position within JI, which struggle for a renewed understanding of the vision and mission of Jamaat-e Islami in secular democratic India. They argue that the positions taken in pre-partitioned colonial India should not have been a base for Jamaat-e Islami after the Independence. The Post-Islamist transformations occurred in JI, which will be expounded in the following chapters, was manifestation of this reformist vision within the movement.

Among the early proponents for this vision of new JI in new Secular Democratic Polity was Hāfiẓ Imāmuddīn Ramnagari. He suggested to rename Jamaat-e Islami, to break itself from the JI of pre-partitioned colonial India, in order for the earlier policies and programs not to haunt the organization in the new circumstances. Also, he proposed that the constitution of JI should be completely rewritten and reconsidered, as per the new conditions. The very political proclaimed goal of *Hukūmat-e ilāhi* (Divine Government) should be replaced with *Kalima ṭayyiba (Lā ilāha illallāh)*. In short, the share of politics in the priorities of movement needs to be curtailed to the minimum level, and more efforts are to be given to the practice of *Da'wa* (Beegum 2017, 53). Further, conditions for the membership needs to be liberalized and the party literature needs to be revised, and much of the same should be abandoned, especially that of political contents (Beegum 2017, 53-54).

However, his observations were not given enough attention on time and JI Hind continued as the extension of JI of colonial India. The socio-political context of Colonial India in which JI was established was entirely different from that of Independent, separated democratic secular India. JI had stuck in the ideology originated in and shaped by the political realities of British Colonial period, and failed to produce a new theoretical approach towards the newly formed secular democratic polity. In one of the speech delivered by Maudūdi prior to the partition, he opposed the very concept of Secular democracy and nationalism vehemently, the objective of which was to oppose the secularization of Pakistan. The speech was exclusively meant for Muslims who are in Pakistan, or those who were to migrate to the new Muslim state, was widely celebrated by the followers of JI in India and published by the title '*The Message of Jamaat-e Islami*'. The book reprinted several times and the title was changed to "*Secularism, Nationalism and Democracy, a theoretical analysis*" (Al-Maudūdi 2000). It is ironic that the book, despite being meant for Muslims of Pakistan, was considered by most of Indian Islamists as one of the foundational literature of the party. Hence, the Islamist Ideology in Independent India had been aborted before its birth due to the very attachment it had to the colonial realities, not to the post-colonial building of a new nation state.

Irfan Ahmad also argued that the transformation of Islamism in favor of democracy, secularism and nationalism lacked theoretical substantiation, since no innovative theoretical framework was proposed by anyone to go beyond the earlier Islamist dogmas. Hence, the absence of ideological novelty could signify the deideologization in political Islam and we will now attempt to elaborate how the end of ideology in Indian Islamism and precisely in its Keralite specificities occurred. Depending on the above, I would argue that the deideologization occurred mainly in four areas. First, in JI's failure to declare a break with its colonial past and in the absence of the production of theory, to progress with ever changing socio-political realities. It is basically on the failure to produce a theory congruent

to the constitutional framework of newly formed Secular democratic India. Secondly, the end of self-critique and the guru syndrome dominated over the organization and the quasi-divine status attained by the office of the *amīr and shūra*. Thirdly, the emergence of Post-Islamism more as a condition, than a project and the non-unified political behaviors of various Islamist actors. Lastly, it was the failure of Political Islam in India to go beyond the segregated sectarian settings of Muslim India, but to convert itself into a *firqa*, with specific theological and juristic contents.

Islamism in Colonial and Post-Colonial India.

The foundational theoretical framework of Indian Islamism has been shaped by the religious, social, communal and political realities of colonial period, and the engagement Muslim community, Scholars had with it. Maudūdi had analyzed this unfolding political events and positions of various actors in a unique way through his books and articles published in *Tarjumān al-Qurān*. For the proponents of JI, the formation of Jamaat-e Islami was a result of the public debate on the Political future of India held in the thirties of twentieth century and the involvement Maudūdi had in it (Siddiqi 2000). During his tenure as a journalist, Maudūdi had authored a book by the name *Musalmān aur Maujūda Siyāsi Kashmakash* (Muslims and the current political tensions), in which he provided a critique of two major political trends prevailing at that time. Indian Nationalism (Hindu Nationalism, for Maudūdi) represented in Indian National Congress and ‘Muslim Nationalism’ of Muslim League were those two political currents he vehemently criticized in his ‘*Kashmakash*’. The conception of an Islamic movement heralding a revolution based on a divine message was hence the product of colonial realities (I. Ahmad 2006). We have also shed the light on the transition of Maudūdi as an Intellectual from Secular Nationalism to Muslim Communalism into Islamism, as his final destination.

Since the ideology of Islamism and the conception of an Islamic Party was originated as a response to colonial realities, it was expected to generate tensions with a newly formed,

completely different political settings of Secular Democratic Post-Colonial India, if a serious reconsideration of its earlier statements were not occurred. There were prolonged discussions on how should act JI in India within the scholarship and party cadres, and some of the scholars proposed to make a complete break with the past and to rename the movement, which was not happened. As mentioned earlier, Hāfīz Imāmuddīn Ramnagari was one of those who argued for a complete break with the ‘colonial Jamaat-e Islami’, and to initiate a comprehensive reformulation of the movement, in terms of constitution, ideology, policies and programs (Beegum 2017, 53). On the other hand, many of JI scholars were of the opinion that JI in India shouldn’t have even break with its Pakistani counterpart, Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan, since two leaderships for a movement working for the same objective is not justifiable, in their romanticized conception of global caliphate. JI leaders in India consulted with the leadership of JI Pakistan, in order to appoint Amīn Aḥsan Islāhi as the caretaker for Indian Chapter of JI. However, Maudūdi replied: “In the new contexts necessitated by the partition, it is inevitable for Jamaat-e Islami in India and Pakistan to be completely independent from each other” (Beegum 2017, 52-53).

Hence, JI continued as the extension of Jamaat-e Islami of pre-partitioned India though reformulated independently in Indian Union in terms of Organizational structure. In the new context, JI had to operate within the constitutional framework of new secular democratic polity, in which Muslims were a weak and vulnerable minority, devoid of political power, cultural capital or educational base. The world view of JI as a revolutionary vanguard for Islamic revolution in a country where Muslims are a minority was nevertheless unrealistic and generated tensions with the Government and secular public sphere. Further, Muslim society, community institutions and *‘Ulamā* class were also not comfortable with the revolutionary slogans of JI, since they sought to maintain the political quietism towards the power.

Apparently, there were no serious reconsideration of JIs earlier statements to be in congruent with the new socio political realities, let alone constant ideological reformulation and readjustment. The theories of JI, as produced in response to the colonial realities were not viable to address the new situations. Further, the desired expansion of Islamic ideology was not occurred and no continuity witnessed in the production of theory in favor of developing Islamist ideology in changing spatiotemporal contexts. However, this stagnancy in the colonial period was in contrast to several Islamist parties throughout the world. During sixties and seventies, Egyptian Islamism produced a second wave of Islamic revivalism represented in Syed Qutb's radical reinterpretation of Islamic Activism. An abundance of theories, ideas and new directions for Islamic Activism were introduced by Sharī'ati, Sayyid Qutb and Khomeini and other ideologues of Islamism (Al-Turabi 2005). Lately after 1990, there were projects of Post-Islamism witnessed in Tunisia and Iran, by the initiatives of Rāshid Al-Ghanūshi, Soroush and others (A. Bayat 1996) (A. S. Tamimi 2001).

In his famous Madras Speech in 1947, Maudūdi urged that Muslim groups and individuals, like other political and social groups, will have to reconsider their early statements and programs fashioned during their conversation with colonial realities, in a radically different secular republic. He even foreseen that the "leadership of today meet its logical end" and those who were being considered as the saviors then, will be seen as the "cause of all troubles and afflictions" Muslim community faces (Al-Maudūdi 2009, 12). This serious reconsideration of earlier statements and strategies as advised by Maudūdi himself, was not occurred with JI in India. Rather, they have continued as the natural extension of JI in the pre-partitioned colonial India who strives to realize '*Hukūmat-e ilāhi*' in a land where Muslims are a vulnerable minority.

The Absence of Self Critique

As indicated earlier, the ideology of Political Islamism was produced in the Colonial period, and while JI was formed in Indian union after the partition, the attempts by a number of scholars/intellectuals to create a complete break with its colonial history was not successful (Beegum 2017). Then, how should have Islamism acted in relation to the changing contexts in India, after the formation of secular democracy ? The answer is constant renovation of the practice, based on the decisions made by *shūra*, the organizational weapon of change (Ahmad 2010). JI was able to redefine its priorities, policies and programs throughout the time. However, whether this transformation in praxis accompanied any substantiation with a critique towards the old theory? If we elaborate the intellectual and political history of JI, it would be obvious that they have failed to come with an innovative theory, which is based on Islamic references and earlier Islamist literature, in favor of the changes they have gone through. The celebrated changes were political readjustments and adaptation policies, without a critical theoretical assessment towards the old statements, especially till the end of twentieth century.

Irfan Ahmad observes that while political Islamists recognize the ‘fundamental change’ in the trajectories of JI ‘off record’, they tend to deny any such changes from the ‘true path’ in public (Ahmad 2010, 239). The reason behind this double stand is due to the need for satisfying conflicting groups within and without the party (Ahmad 2010, 239). However, this signifies the absence of a coherent ideology for the transforming Islamism; the absence of a structured interpretation of the ideology of Islamism which lead to diversified and at times contradictory political behaviors among the cadres.

The often used argument to counter the criticisms of ‘changing’ Jamaat-e Islami which ‘disown’ its past, ideologues and even founder Al Maudūdi, was the earlier positions were right in its own spatiotemporal contexts and the new policies are also true in the current time and space, since these political decisions, programs and policies were designed by the

shūra as Karakkunn argues (Karakkunn 2000, 50-55).¹⁵ For the office of *Amīr* and the machinery of *shūra*, there is a quasi-divine position among the cadres of JI which elevate to a position of infallibility, though it may not argue for explicitly (المودودي 1978). Also, it is not the ideology/ *Aqīda* which is transforming, but the policies and programs, the application of which may differ from time to time. In Islamist literature, *Aqīda* and ideology are being interchangeably used, which inform a presumption which doesn't accept any critique towards the *Aqīda*, the fundamental reference and the foundation of practice. Hence, the adaptive, neither fundamental nor radical aspects of JIs transformation is apparently manifested in these positions (Karakkunn 1988).

Any criticism against Maudūdi and his conceptions were not welcomed generally. In 2007, in a private session to JI central leaders arranged in Delhi Rāshid Al-Ghanūshi had criticized Maudūdi's earlier positions on Democracy as unacceptable to the current realities. The session ended in chaos and criticism, though the interference by Al-Ghanūshi meant for constructive support to JIs new policies on Democracy, was received with contempt and anger from the central leaders.¹⁶ On another occasion, *Al-Ghanūshi's* critique of Maudūdi's positions towards Feudalism in Pakistan and the permissibility of unlimited land ownership was published in *Prabodhanam* (Al-Ghanūshi 2008). The responses from the cadres was not so different, and articles passionately attempting to disprove Ghanūshi were published in the following issues of *Prabodhanam* (A. L. Koduvally 2008).

The Non-uniformity of Political Behavior.

Bayat makes a difference between the project of Post-Islamism and the condition of Post-Islamism. The project, does signify a programmatic discourse, a conscious attempt to revise the earlier statements of Political Islam, “to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains”, where

¹⁵ Shaikh Mohamed Karakkunn is a renowned author and one of the Three Vice Presidents of JI Kerala.

¹⁶ Personal interview with a JI associate attended the meeting

the condition is a natural disposition of Political Islamism, a situation reached after prolonged struggle and political activism which compelled the reinvention of Political Islamism by its supporters themselves (A. Bayat 2005, 5). In Indian JI, the Post-Islamism appeared more as a condition than a conscious project, hence produced diversified trends and political behaviors without a coherent and structured ideological backing. In fact, one of the five fundamental principles of Organizational upbringing of JI (*tarbiyya*) is to develop “unified way of thinking among the workers” (Rahman 1983, 62). Post-Islamism, in this sense, is manifested in transcending the very foundations of organizational and structural upbringing, the *tarbiya* of cadres.

If the hallmark of Islamist rhetoric during 1990s is the possibility of Islam as an alternative against Capitalism and Socialism alike, it was the Left-Islam unity against the onslaught of Capitalism and ‘War on Terror’ from the beginning of twenty first century. The fall of Soviet Union necessitated the first position and the post 9/11 global conditions entailed the second position of Left-Islamist unity against onslaught of Imperialism and the advent of Indian Fascism.¹⁷ The youth wing and the elderly generations within JI were in favor of developing such a political alliance with Kerala Left, and electoral support were generously provided to the Communist parties in public elections. In the intellectual arena, a new school of leftist Islam which liberalized Islamic religiosity developed and a considerable number of Islamists were in support of Liberal Islam.

However, the student body of JI, SIO upholds a specific political leaning which is in direct contrast with Solidarity’s¹⁸ ‘non-communal’, ‘humanistic’, ‘liberal’ and ‘leftist’ Islam. Throughout the Universities, they have initiated new alliances with Ambedkarites and Dalits/oppressed caste-class organizations as part of the wider solidarity and unity among

¹⁷ If we go through the weekly issues of Prabodhanam and Bodhanam from 1990s, the trend of placing islam as an alternative ideology against Capitalism and Communism is obvious. Many articles in Prabodhanam can be referred to such as (P. Y. Ashraf 1997) (Vaniyambalam 1997) (Kizhuparamba 1993) (Adams 1994) (Javādi 1992) (Şiddīqi 1997) (Abdu 1997)

¹⁸ Solidarity Youth Movement is the Youth wing of Jamaat-e IslamiKerala.

the oppressed against Brahmanic right and left. The mother organization and the elderly generation seems to be a bit confused here and were practically supporting Solidarity politics of non-confrontation with the left and direct opposition to Brahmanism. We will elaborate this in chapter five, however the non-uniformity of political action among various actors of Islamic movement in India is obvious, which was in fact generated from the absence of a coherent and viable ideology define the political behavior of its followers.

From Islam as an Alternative to a Sectarian Theological School

Islamists promised that the idea of Islam as a complete way of life, the conceptual framework of divine sovereignty (*Hākimiyya*) and the return to Sharī'a will liberate the mankind from the arbitrariness of grand ideologies of the time. They have presented Islam(ism) as the alternative to both Capitalism and Socialism, and the ideology of the oppressed (S. M. Karakkunn 1990, 71-81). In 1998, JI had conducted a massive state conference with state wide campaigns for presenting Islam as “The ideology of twenty first century” (Palath 2000, 15). During the same decade, SIO, the student body of JI had initiated a nationwide campaign titled “A New system for new century” to present Islam as the ideological alternative to both Capitalism and Communism after the end of Soviet Union and the fall of Berlin Wall.

However, such a promise of an alternative system and a mode of thinking is almost absent now. In the Post-Islamist phase, diversified political religious projects obtained prominence within the different strata and social groups of Islamic movement, as we have seen earlier. One was the apologetic liberal Islam which tend to defend Islam from the antagonistic arguments of terrorism and communalism, directed by right wing nationalists, the Indian Left and the secularized Muslim intellectuals. Their formulations of Islamism was thus an apology for liberal Islam, bereft of the original revolutionary enthusiasm Maudūdi and other

master ideologues of Islamism propagated and the activists of Political Islam preserved throughout the time.

The other group, which departed the very revolutionary Islamist path was those *'Ulamā*, a number of them obtained higher education in the Religious Colleges of GCC countries, through which *wahābi* Salafi theology and jurisprudence intruded to the scholarly circles of JI. At the outset, at least in theory, Jamaat-e Islami considered itself as an Islamic movement without affiliation to any of the sectarian theological schools or jurisprudential scholastic or non-scholastic traditions within Muslim Community. On the contrary, JI conceived of the conception of Islamic Movement, which identified with itself, as a collective struggle go beyond the sectarian and juristic settings of Indian Muslims. A movement with potential to trespass the theological and jurisprudential segregation Indian Muslims are caught within. Maudūdi had this vision of trespassing the boundaries of segregated sectarian understanding of Islam (Muhammedali 2003, 26), (Al-Maudūdi 2008, 50-51). This position of non-alignment to any of the sectarian understanding of Islam was abandoned by the *'Ulamā*, and they have transformed Islamism into a specific juristic theological school, within the larger *Ahl al-sunna wal- jamā'a*.¹⁹ We will elaborate these countercurrents of Liberal Islam and Return to Fundamentalism within Islamic movement, in Chapter five.

Since this phenomenon of End of Ideology allowed various actors of Islamism to depart from their original ideological commitment to diversified positions; to more pragmatic, at times literalist and at some other instances Liberalized readings of Islam, of which we will attempt to shed light on in the coming chapters, it is useful to recapitulate the very features of End of Ideology within Indian Islamism below.

¹⁹ The volume of Bodhanam (2015 Jan-March) was exclusively on the question of Shia-Sunni Dialogue. It was (in)famous even among the associates of JI to contain a number of articles authored by professors in the religious universities under JI, with a visible tone of sectarianism and racism against the Shia, unfamiliar among Islamist circle till a very recent time.

The theoretical foundation of Indian Islamism formulated during colonial era. While India obtained independence from British Colonialism and the Indian republic established on the very concepts of Secular democracy, there were Islamists argue for a complete break with the former Islamic movement, which was not happened. The result was Indian Islamism had to base on a theoretical framework not suited to the completely different spatiotemporal contexts of secular democratic India. An outdated ideology was the very base for Islamic thinking and acting in the Independent India, from the very beginning.

Further, there were no ideologue appeared among the cadres of Islamism, to contribute with new requirements of Ideological proliferation, to cope with ever changing socio-political and religious/community settings in the post independent Secular Democracy of India. Though Islamist positions over various political issues were developed throughout the time, it was mainly in the arena of praxis and Islamist Intellectuals failed to concretely situate its practical positions within a coherent theoretical framework.

However, practically JI has been transformed. This transformation was not based on any critical theoretical interference from the intellectuals of Jamaat especially till the end of twentieth century. Rather, it was the pragmatism and based on the organizational mechanism, which primarily based on the body of *shūra* and its time to time decisions based on majority voting. These transformations didn't accompany any systemic theoretical backing and a critique towards the old theory and practice. No ideologue from JI came forward with a critique of the ideological formulations of JI nor against the old practices though it had brought a lot of complications in the path of Islamic movement in the new situations. On the contrary, the fundamentality of the transformations was denied in public while it was agreed off the record. Hence, the stagnancy of Islamism in theory and the expansion of its pragmatism together defined the development of Post-Islamist trajectories in India.

As Ziauddin Sardar observed, the Guru Syndrome affected the development of ideology in Indian Islamism. Maudūdi was considered the sole authority over the ideology of Political Islam, and no critical intervention were never occurred neither from the leadership nor cadres of Organization. The centralized decision making, the quasi divine status of organizational weapon of *shūra* and the position of *Amīr* as understood by JI cadres contributed in this condition of absence of critique, towards the political theology of Maudūdi.

The term ideology was frequently translated into *Aqīda*, and the oft repeated argument was that the transformation is not in the ideology, but in the policies and programs, as if ideological renovation is something which is to be abandoned. This is due to the very concept of Islamic Movement was conceived by many of the proponents of JI, as a religious sect rather than a socio-political movement. Also, the rhetoric of all-righteousness and the quasi divine status of *shūra* were also established on this assumption of the stagnancy of *Aqīda*/ideology.

Also, JI had failed to show the ability to construct a unified political, social and religious behavior across the movement. Islamists were left at some times and right at times, liberal for some occasions and conservative on many instances. Political Islam was meant to unify juristic and theological schools under the umbrella of *Hukūmat-e ilāhi* (Divine State/Government) or *Iqāmat al-dīn* (The Establishment of Religion) and supposed to trespass the sectarian and organizational settings of Indian Islam. However, Indian Islamism failed to produce a unifying ideology in which juristic and theological differences were tolerated, for the high political purpose of *Iqāmat al-dīn*, formation of Islamic society and state. Instead, it was identified itself with specific sectarian and scholastic preferences and contributed in bringing sectarianism to the forefront of the society. It was a moderated Sunni Salafi organization in Kerala, and a diluted sunni deobandi trend in North India.

Since the political content of Islamism diminished in the understanding of many of its proponents, especially of the *‘Ulamā*, the presentation of Islam as an alternative ideology to grand narratives of Capitalism and Communism ceased to exist. Instead of uniting all juristic and theological schools of Islam under the umbrella of *Iqāmat al-dīn*, as Maudūdi envisioned, new scholars of JI conceived JI as a subject within larger *Ahl al-sunna wal-jamā‘a*, with specific theological and to an extent juristic content differ them from other organizations and movements.

This condition of the less relevance for ideology with far reaching transformation in practical sphere without theoretical or ideological substantiation in Keralite Islamism produced various manifestations of Post-Islamism. Further, the irrelevance of ideology after Islamism transmuted into a *firqa* with specific juristic and theological content, with a clear departure from its earlier position of the legitimacy of all scholastic and non-scholastic traditions, were also to be understood as return to the fundamentalism and deideologization. Though some segments within Islamism attempted to provide a critique of foundational narratives of Islamism in later stages, the massive transformations occurred during the period from Independence to the end of twentieth century was not accompanied with theoretical substantiation. We will be examining the salient features of this condition of Post-Islamism in the following chapters, mainly in three areas, politics, gender and the emergence of religious liberalism and many voices within Islamist Circles.

Chapter 3 – Secular Democracy and Post-Islamist Trajectories

We have argued that the ideology of Islamism was fashioned in response to the socio-political realities of British Colonial period. The emergence of Indian Freedom movement with its twine currents of Indian Nationalism²⁰ and Pakistan Movement²¹ shaped the ideological and practical trajectories of Indian Islamism. Maudūdi, as a journalist and political activist committed to the destiny of Muslim community believed in the capability of neither Hindu nationalism nor Muslim Separatism to provide a solution for the Muslim question, after his conversation with both positions. Hence, a third way of political action emerged, which based on return to the fundamentals of Religion as he conceived and a complete reformulation of Islam as a religion and a community, which was materialized in his novel construction of Islamist Ideology. This novel formation of Islamism; Islam as a movement and political party influenced by various manifestations of Modernity, Modern Organizational Mechanisms and specifically the Leninist Organizational Constructs (Ahmad 2010, 50-58). The organization of Jamaat-e Islami has been established in this sense as a revolutionary vanguard movement and they were expecting for an impending Islamic Revolution in India, in the same way third world revolutionaries imagined the imminent anti-colonial revolution. PK Sadiq, a member of Solidarity's State council contends that Colonial state had its contribution in creating various political subjectivities including that of Maudūdi, the ideology of Political Islam (Sadiq 2017, 274).

Based on the above, we will attempt in this chapter to elaborate how the ideology of Islamism (which was originated in British India) was understood by Islamists while they had to engage with in the newly formed Secular Democratic Independent India where Muslims were a minority? How Islamism is a modern construct, in contrast to the traditional

²⁰ Indian Nationalist movement manifested in the Freedom struggle under the banner of Indian National Congress and MK Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malavya and Bal Gangadhara Thilak were the leaders among others. The movement of Indian Nationalism was conceived by Maudūdi as representing Hindu interests and he termed it as Hindu Nationalism.

²¹ Pakistan Movement under All India Muslim League called for a separate Muslim state for Muslims.

religiosity? What the term *Dīn* means to Islamism and in which ways it is different / departed from the concept of religion among traditionalist on one side, and secular conceptions of religion on the other? how the Political Theology of *Ḥākimiyya* shaped the early Islamist phase of JI and directed the political behaviors of Islamist individuals and collectives in their relationship with Indian Polity? What are the practical complexities while applying the Islamist ideology as such and how it was transformed into a new approach which could be understood as Post-Islamist?

Also, we will look in to the various manifestations of Post-Islamism in the arena of Politics, in its conceptualization of Islamic State and Islamic Political activism? How did Islamists attempt to justify the transformation Islamism undergone? In a minority context, to what extent the dream for an Islamic State is reasonable, which seems irrational, impractical and at times dangerous to the very existence of Muslim community? How the new interpretations, Post-Islamist arguments were disputed by reactionary currents within the Islamic movement?

We will attempt to understand the context in which the ideology of Islamism, the new conceptions such as *Ḥākimiyya*, *Jāhiliyya* and *Ṭāghūt* proliferated. Then, we will move on to describe shortly, the theory of Islamism and how the new conceptions fashioned various manifestations of political behaviors of Islamists in India during its conversation with Indian Republic.

Contextualizing *Ḥākimiyya* and the Primacy of Territorial Nation State in Islamist Thinking

The state had obtained an important position in Islamist theory and praxis. Taking over state and islamization of Nation-state were the key objectives of Islamism from the outset. While JI was founded in pre-partitioned India, the JI constitution declared its primary objective is to establish *Hukūmat-e ilāhi* (the governance of God) and “the sovereignty of Allah in the

world and achieve the divine pleasure hereafter” (J. Ali 2010). The islamization of state was primarily manifested in the application of the revolutionary concept of Divine Sovereignty (*Hākimiyyah*). *Hākimiyyah* is a modern political construct and a novel theoretical formulation developed by Maudūdi, the Islamic authenticity of such a notion was contested by a number of scholars since it couldn't be found in the authoritative sources of *Qurān* and *Hadīth* (Tibi 2014, 85). Following Maudūdi, Islamists believed that the notion of sovereignty which is a foundational concept in Modern political theory and statecraft is contrary to the very idea of religion, faith and the act of complete submission to the God.

The concept of Sovereignty developed in political theory during eighteenth and Nineteenth century, together with the transformation of the empires into states with national identities and specified borders. The renowned Westphalian treaty contributed in the formation of sovereignty as a political concept and various territories/states were reached into a common arrangement that each entity will recognize the sovereignty of the other in its internal affairs. In effect, the authority of a people over their domestic governance and territory was established, the idea which became the foundational cornerstone for statecraft and international relations in the modern age. In Muslim world, the concept of sovereignty made its entry in 19th Century, while the Ottoman Sultan introduced top-down modernization programs throughout Legal, political and social arenas (Steunebrink 2008, 7). The introduction of Sovereignty, the control of state over the legislation in Ottoman Turkey signifies the very beginning of Modernization and Secularization in the sense that traditional Sharī'a lost its significant supremacy over the process of legislation, instead, State took over it (Steunebrink 2008, 7).

During the global transformation of Empires to the states in which the political theory of sovereignty developed, the modern territorial state acquired an interventionist, all-encompassing nature and authority over all the spheres of life, which were considered as a matter of personal preferences earlier. For Hodgson, the transition from ‘traditional’ society

to a 'rational' one implies prevalence of "efficient, predictable organization over familial, patriarchal arrangements and social relations will be determined less by private personal commitments and more by impersonal legal status" (Hodgson 1993). Maudūdi was aware of the interventionist and all-encompassing nature of the Modern Nation State as he wrote in March 1938: "Now (the state) also decides what to wear or what not to wear...what to teach your kids...what language and script you adopt...So, the state has not untouched from its ultimate intervention even most peripheral issues of life...The state is beginning to acquire the same status that God has in religion" (I. Ahmad 2006, 13)

The new developments forced some Muslim intellectuals to combat the all-encompassing, totalitarian and interventionist feature of the modern state. Apparently, they have perceived that the conception of popular sovereignty contradicts religious principles, by granting authority to the people or the sovereign or any other entity other than the God to legislate. In religious sense, the authority to legislate is a right solely rest with the God. Maudūdi and Sayyid Quṭb were among those Muslim Intellectuals who disputed the very foundational concepts of Modern state on religious basis and theorized a new political theology of *Ḥākimiyya*. *Ḥākimiyya* is one of the major theoretical cornerstones of Islamist ideology and JI in India based its political action and thinking primarily based on this concept. Therefore, JI's conceptualizations of *Ḥākimiyya* necessitated absolute rejection of various manifestations of Modern Indian State and its inherent notions of democracy and secularism. The uncritical acceptance and celebration of this novel theoretical construct could be understood as the primary reason for the tension between Political Islam and the Indian republic.

[The Political Theology of *Ḥākimiyya* and its Aftermath](#)

It is obvious that there is a tension between the post-Islamist cravings for democracy , civil society and human rights and the foundational Islamist theory of *Ḥākimiyya*, in which

God's sovereignty makes all other popular aspirations and legislations irrelevant (Tibi 2014, 67). In the Indian context, the early Islamist vision on the participation / boycott of the Indian Republican political sphere was constructed based on the political theology of *Hākimiyya*. On the other hand, Post-Islamist attempts of redefining Islamism in which Democracy, human rights, civil society and liberal values incorporated, depart from the statements of early Islamism and the pre-assumptions of *Hākimiyya*.

The notion of *Hākimiyya* is the foundational cornerstone of the political theory of Islam as far as Maudūdi is concerned. The mission of the prophets were to convey the message of Islam and to persuade the people “to acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God and to render unalloyed obedience to him” (Al-Maudūdi 2000, 264). The one who denies the absolute sovereignty of God denies *Tauhīd* itself, and commit an act of polytheism since he doesn't recognize the God as *Ilāh* and *Rabb*. Any claim of individual or collective for obedience of human being is claiming godhood and reveals the inclination of man to dominate over man, which is the “root cause of all evil and mischief in the world” (Al-Maudūdi 2000, 264-268). Thus, the institution of state which necessitates coercive obedience from its subject is manifested as a false god, a *Ṭāghūt*, be the nature of state is democratic, totalitarian or monarchic. What is important is the domination of man over man, from which one can be liberated only through the struggle against *Jāhiliyya* and establishment of *Hākimiyya*.

“The sovereignty (*Hākimiyya*) in this universe is for none other than the God, and it is absolutely not possible for anybody to be sovereign over others. Further, no one has the right to have a share in it” (المودودي 1978، 10). The right of judgement and ruling is for none other than the God and the human being has to obey and submit himself in front of God's will. The God solely possess the right to produce any legal injunction over man, since he is the only sovereign over him. (المودودي 1978، 14). Qur'ān reinstates that the obedience should exclusively to be Allah, and the only law needs to be followed by human being is his law. It

is prohibited for the man to abandon Allah's law and follow others rulings, or his own willing and desires (المودودي 1978، 16).

The right model of government as per *Qur ān*, is the one which is faithful to the sovereignty of God which is in line with the commandments of his prophets. The rule of human being is legitimized as the god's *Hākimiyya* is cascaded to him, and the ruler will be considered as vicegerent of the God, within the limits detailed by the *Sharī'a* (المودودي 1978، 19). Therefore, the complete obedience to the earthly government is absolutely not an Islamic concept, since the only legitimized obedience to anybody other than the god is as prescribed by the God, and only in the righteous ways, *Bil ma'rūf*. The obedience to the legitimate ruler should be in congruence with the obedience to the God and his prophet (المودودي 1978، 21, 25).

In his controversial book '*Four Basic Qur'ānic Terms*', Maudūdi argued that the real meaning of four Qur'ānic terms, *Ilāh* (God), *Rabb* (Lord, Sovereign), *'ibādat*, (Worship, Obedience and servitude to the God) and *dīn* (More than Religion, the state) needs to be clearly understood to conceive the real objective of Islam (Al-Maudūdi n.d.). The new politicized meanings indicted by Maudūdi to these terms were vehemently criticized by many Muslim scholars and the former JI associate Abul Hasan Ali Al-Nadwi was one of them (الندوي 2013). For some scholars, the new interpretations were one of the evidences that Islamism is purely a modern phenomenon. Irfan Ahmad puts it as "the modernity of Islamism was further manifest in the new meanings Maudūdi invested in prevalent words and practices like *Allah*, *dīn*, *qaum*, *'ibādat* and *Jamaat* or party" (Ahmad 2010, 217).

Apparently, the religion in Maudūdi's conception was not the same old religion of rituals and individual spirituality. Rather, it is a totalizing entity rule over all spheres of life, the foundation of its moral, social and political system is the belief in the Unity and sovereignty of Allah (Al-Maudūdi 2000, 270). Since state intervened in the affairs of religion, personal choices and individual preferences, the religion in Maudūdi's conception was of equal

posture and substance, and the term *dīn* was translated as State. He wrote: “In reality, the word *dīn* approximately has the same meaning which the word state has in the contemporary age” (I. Ahmad 2006, 13). Talal Asad argued that “the concept of “religion” as commonly understood today belongs to a “particular history of knowledge and power out of which the modern world has been constructed” (Amesbury 2014). “What is distinctive about “secularism” is that it presupposes new concept of “religion”, “ethics,” and “politics” and new imperatives associated with them (Asad 2003, 1-2). Thus, Maudūdi’s new religion was a revolution not only against the secular claim of popular sovereignty, but also the newly constructed secular religion devoid of access to the whole spheres of life.

Islam was conceptualized as a historical and political movement and Muslims were depicted as a party, a revolutionary vanguard supposed to lead a divine revolution against all the manifestations of godhood and false-gods ruling over the people illegitimately. The challenge posed by this new understanding of religion both to secularism and the distinctive secular construction of religion was one way in which Islam became ideologized and departed from the traditional and authoritative voices of Islam.

Jāhiliyya, The Other of Islam

Similar to *Hākimiyya*, the term *Jāhiliyya* was also indicted with new meanings in the political theology of Islamism. In classical Islamic literature, the pre Islamic conditions of Arabian Peninsula was described as period of *Jāhiliyya*. The root of the term *Jāhiliyya* is from *Jahl*, Ignorance, which was understood by classical Muslim scholars as the anti-theses of Islam and a synonym of non-Islam. In the similar manner Islam revolted against the Pre Islamic religious life, social, economic and political system, Maudūdi desired to depict the current socio political and economic situation of both Muslim and non-Muslim societies as *Jāhiliyya*, a condition of non-Islam. Subsequently, it is assumed that the revolt and political struggle against the current condition will gain some appeal among the faithful masses. The

application of the classical conception of *Jāhiliyya* to the new circumstances of socio-political Muslim lives was pivotal in ideologizing Islam and rendering political appeal for the Islamist movement.

For Maudūdi, to rely upon one's sensorial perception and observation for solving the problems of life, is complete *Jāhiliyya*, the sheer ignorance (Al-Maudūdi 1992, 3). The modern society, whether the majority is Muslims or non-Muslims is being functioned either on the basis of sensorial perception and observation solely, or aided with speculation (Al-Maudūdi 1992, 3). It is not functioned on the basis of the truth, mankind was given through revelations and prophets who claimed direct link to the God. "The sovereignty is vested in human beings, and individual, family, a class, or the common people" and "the state will be governed by man-made laws... all laws shall be made or amended according to human desires and experience of circumstances" (Al-Maudūdi 1992, 4). Democracy and any modern non-divine systems of politics, or societies functioned by man-made laws are qualified to be considered as *Jāhili* society, by this interpretation of *Jāhiliyya*.

The new conceptual formation of *Hākimiyya* and the interpretation of society as *Jāhili*; whether the majority is Muslims or not, defined the way Jamaat-e Islami engaged with the society, politics and the civil society especially at its early phase. Hence JI's policy in the Independent India was manifestation of how to separate from the *Jāhiliyya* society, and how to develop a political theology of struggle against *Jāhiliyya* and *Tāghūt* in order to establish the sovereignty of God.

In the remaining of this chapter, I will attempt to elaborate on how the Political Theology of *Hākimiyya* defined the early Islamist phase of JI and how it directed the political behaviors of Islamist individuals and collectives, pertains to its relationship with Indian Polity. Also, we will be looking into how the Islamist phase in Jamaat-e Islami has been transformed towards a new Post-Islamist phase in politics, in its vision towards democracy , secularism

on one side, and its practical assimilation in the wider political arena of Indian Secular Polity. This will include, JIs gradual progression from the earlier stance of complete boycott of non-divine system of Secular Democratic India, into the integration and assimilation of Islamism into the political and social spheres, in addition to the theoretical transformation towards a yet to be developed project of Post-Islamism, which celebrates democracy and secularism, and to some extent, the departure from its earlier Islamist vision on Islamic State.

The Islamist Phase

Based on the Political theology of *Hākimiyya* and the conception of *Jāhiliyya* as interpreted by Maudūdi, Islamism in India has been renowned for its more dogmatic position, radical and exclusive objection towards what was assumed as *Jāhiliyya*. Not only the British Colonial Administration, but the national independent governance and secular political sphere were considered as manifestations of *Jāhiliyya*, thus deserves no meaningful interference with. This fundamental premise was the guiding principle directed early trajectories of Jamaat-e Islami. The notion of boycott was the dominant trend towards the Public life, be it civil, political, legal or educational. JI had boycotted every aspect of public life as manifestation of *Jāhiliyya* and the early radical Islamist ideological phase of JI could be understood as a history of troublesome interference with modern democratic secular polity.

Hence, JI had boycotted public elections for a long period on the pretext that Indian Democratic Polity is established on the theory of Popular sovereignty, which is in direct conflict with the very fundamentals of Islam(ism). The legal system was also boycotted since Allah is the only legitimate lawgiver, and any legal injunction not based on the

fundamentals of *Sharī‘a*²² is void and act of polytheism. The secular educational institutions were considered as slaughterhouses of humanity where the human being as an obedient slave to the God is being slaughtered and an absolutely different secular being is born out. The civil service and other areas of public administration were also stayed away from. During the early years, a number of JI associates resigned government jobs and civil administrative positions. Nevertheless, though JI had left these notions of boycott in practice, the Article 8:6 of JI constitution still reads: “It shall be incumbent on every member that he or she should....relinquish any key-post which he/she holds under and ungodly governmental system, or the membership of its legislature or a judicial office under its judicial system” (Constitution 2017). The boycott of secular polity, its courts, administrative service, and even civil jobs were manifestation of *Jāhiliyya* and non-Islam, to which Islam and the revolutionary Islamist vanguard should be in constant struggle with. We will be exploring how the early theories on political (dis)engagements has been manifested in the early literature of JI and in the writings of Al-Maudūdi. Also, we will attempt to explore how these theories were translated into the policies and programs of JI, in its early stages.

From the beginning of eighties, the radical ideological Islamism had to give way for moderated understandings, in which the earlier policies of non-cooperation and boycott were recognized as sterile and to be diluted. The earlier statements were reinterpreted as the product of the specific context, when the ideological propagation of Islam was to be carried out without any reluctance. Though, no open confession was done as the earlier positions were wrong, it was reinterpreted as the approaches, policies and strategies were to be constantly renovated, while dealing with the *Ṭāghūt* (Karakunn 1988, 43-45). The above cited constitutional article which advise to relinquish any key-post in non-divine system is

²² *Sharī‘a* was understood as the Legal terrain granted by the God through revelation, for the administration of individual, familial, social and political life. Early Islamism perceived it in its very legal sense, in contrast to the non-legalist, Maqāṣidi conceptualizations of new/Post-Islamists.

yet to be officially amended in the constitution, for which the *shūra* and *Majlis-e Numā‘indagān* (Central Representative Council) had reached into a consensus to some extent, which resulted in a ‘crack’ in JI’s body and resignation of 34 *Rukns* from the party, alleging that the proclaimed ideology and goals of Islamic movement are long forgotten (Muslim Mirror 2017).²³ Hence, the Post-Islamist phase is manifested not in boycott, but active participation within the secular polity. We will be surveying in the coming pages how this transition occurred and what are the major actors shaped the trajectories of (Post) Islamisms.

From Islamism to Post-Islamism: Confronting the New Republic.

In its internal organization, JI was considered by many as a democratic organization. Though highly centralized in the process of decision making, JI observed democratic means to elect office bearers and leaders, from the inception. SS Husaini, the current Vice President of JI identify this notion of internal democracy as unique to JI among other Muslim groups, organizations and Sufi brotherhoods. According to him, the leadership of conventional Muslim organizations is being revolved around within the noble family of *Sayyids and Pīrs* and inherited from father to son in most cases (Husaini 2017, 11). Maudūdi was elected by the majority of those who attended the founding conference in Lahore, and later submitted his resignation from the position of *Amīr* of JI Pakistan due to medical conditions, which was a very uncommon occurrence in the history of Muslim congregations in India (T. Mohamed 2006, 226). Iqtidar observed that Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan is the most internally democratic national party among the major political parties in Pakistan (H. Iqtidar 2011, 59). In Kerala, the noble *Sayyid Shihāb* family monopolize the leadership of Muslim League State Committee, the most powerful competing Muslim political entity with JI, from seventies (IUML 2017).

²³ Interview with a recent *Rukn* (First level membership of JI) applicant.

Though democratic internally, it is ironic that Jamaat was the last Muslim group to participate in democratic process and public elections in India, not only as a contesting actor, but also as a voter and citizen. The self-imposed isolation from democratic secular public sphere was based on a specific dogmatic reading of JI's early literature, including Maudūdi's works, a significant portion of Jamaat's intellectuals and leaders were subscribed to. It is observed that Maudūdi's views on democracy, secularism and participating in public elections and taking part in the public administration were far from dogmatic, nor simple as conceived by many of his followers (I. Ahmad 2006). Rather, it is a complex, evolving radically in response to the changing sociopolitical contexts.

From JI's earlier stages, Indian Islamists were considering the idea of democracy and the notion of popular sovereignty is contrary to the very concept of Islam and *Hākimiyya*. Hence, they have attempted to avoid any engagement with the state and its machineries as much as possible, especially at the early phases. Nevertheless, JI had transformed gradually throughout the time to a position of complete acceptance of the rule of the game. Yet, the pragmatic transformations witnessed especially in the earlier decades were not resulted from critical ideological interventions occurred within the organization. On the contrary, the persistence of ideology was celebrated and the exposure of Islamic ideology to the change was denied. Any argument that JI had ideologically reformulated was faced with blatant resistance. JI's reconsideration of earlier statements was interpreted in terms of policy changes, not theoretical reconsiderations, the way in which the transformations of political Islamism were mediated. Though JI officials acknowledged the fact of fundamental transformation occurred to JI in private; on the contrary, the consistency of the Ideology was reinstated in public. Irfan Ahmad narrates a story of JI's national leader from Rampur that "he would accept the "massive" change privately but he would not say the same from an *ijlās*, a public platform" (Ahmad 2010, 1).

The major time frame in this ‘massive’ and pragmatic transition is the period from 1960s to 1985, as Irfan Ahmad observed. From the beginning of Sixties, the cadres and leaders were discussing in abundance on the strategies towards the involvement in Indian Democracy and Electoral process. During the period from the Independence to 1960, the all dominant position was complete boycott of the secular polity, electoral process, courts and civil service. In a 1961 *shūra* resolution, JI permitted participation in Indian democratic process in theory, with the objective to Islamize the nation (Ahmad 2010, 220). However, after a long one and half decade, JI had utilized the voting right for the first time in 1977. The involvement in the electoral process at this instance was part of the protest against dictatorial policies of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister declared the infamous state of emergency in which JI was outlawed and a number of leaders were arrested. In this specific occasion, the objective behind the participation in the electoral process was not islamization of India, rather, the restoration of Democracy , fundamental human rights, constitutional civil rights and freedom which were suspended during the Emergency.

Shihab Pookkottoor, the young member of Kerala *shūra* narrates the steady development of JI in terms of involvement in the electoral process. JI had boycotted the first public election in India held in 1952 (Pookkoottur 2017, 82). As an organization with a political outlook, not only they had boycotted the election, but campaigned among the Muslims not to participate in the process. In this regard, Abullaith Işlāhi Nadwi²⁴ had stated: “In whatever form you participate in elections, you are flouting the commandments and guidance of Sharī‘a at every step” (Ahmad 2010, 197). The boycott was based on a specific reading of Islamic texts, Islamist literature available at that time and the conceptions of *Jāhiliyya*, *Hākimiyya* and *Tāghūt* as conceived by a large section of Islamists. This specific reading can be discerned in the early writings, correspondence and articles published by JI Leaders throughout a number of periodicals and the official issues of Prabodhanam itself.

²⁴ Abullaith Işlāhi Nadwi is the First Amir of JI Hind after the Independence and partition.

In one of the personal correspondence between by KC Abdulla Maulavi²⁵ and T.K. Abdulla²⁶ prior to the latter's affiliation to JI, KC argues that Muslims are not supposed to accept any partial governing position and shouldn't be part of *Ṭāghūti* government in which *Ḥākimiyya* is not implemented. He was interpreting the *Qur'ānic* story of the prophet Yousuf who was appointed as an official in the '*Ṭāghūti* government' of Egyptian Pharaoh, in favor of an argument that prophet Yousuf accepted not the partial governance, but the whole administration in which he had implemented the *Sharī'a*! (T. K. Abdulla 2017, 112). However, some other scholars attempted to present contrasting views within the organization, in the sessions of central *shūra*. Keralite Scholar T. Mohammed was one of them, whose objections to the official position were received with responses which were in fact repetition of dogmatic interpretation of Maudūdi's concepts on *Ḥākimiyya* as TK Abdulla himself lately acknowledged (T. K. Abdulla 2017, 112-113).

As stated earlier, JI consultative bodies started serious discussions over approaching and participating in Public Elections from 1960s, with the objective of *Iqāmat al-dīn* (Pookkoottur 2017, 82). Subcommittees were formed to study the democratic and electoral process and to formulate a vision for JI in electoral participation (Pookkoottur 2017, 82). It was recommended that it is *Harām*, non-permissible to participate if the objective is to sustain an un-godly system, but will be legitimate if the participation is aimed to Islamize the Indian Constitution (Ahmad 2010, 201). However, the party continued its policies of boycott and non-participation for its members in 1967 general elections in which Communist Parties were came to power in Kerala and Bengal (Pookkoottur 2017, 82).

The 1967 election signified the beginning of the end of an era, the characteristics of which is the totalized control of Congress over Indian democratic polity. Diversified political currents such as Communists, regionalists, right wing Hindutva powers began to emerge as

²⁵ KC Abdulla Maulavi is the Second Amir of Jamaat-e Islami Kerala Chapter, a prolific writer and scholar among Keralite Islamists.

²⁶ TK Abdulla is one of the long time central Shūra member of Jamaat-e Islami and the Third Amir of Keralite Chapter.

new political forces in the country. In 1975, Allahabad High court questioned the electoral victory of Indira Gandhi as it is corrupted. In order to face this situation, the Prime Minister Indira had to declare state of emergency for the first time in the history, in which fundamental civil and political rights were suspended and press freedom was severely curtailed (Metcalf 2006, 252-255). A Number of political and religious parties were banned and activists were sent to prison, and JI leaders were among them.

The election in 1977 was therefore, of great importance for Indian Republic. It was first time in this election JI cadres participated in the electoral process to vote against the ruling party who imposed emergency and curtailed democratic and civil rights (Pookkottur 2017, 82). However, after the emergency lifted, JI still continued the policy of Boycott though the members convention convened in Bhopal in 1978 concluded that Election and Democratic Process can be utilized as a way to achieve the goal of *Iqāmat al-dīn*. During the period from 1981-86, JI electoral policies were emphasizing on the integrity of the individual candidate in terms of personal ethics and morality and the Non-communal attitude towards Muslims as a community. In 1985, the *shūra* discussed the emergence of Fascist Hindutva and Hindu communalism and progressed towards a policy of participating in the electoral process in favor of Secular Forces and against the onslaught of Hindutva. The commitment to secular fabric of India, personal morality and non-indulgence in corruption were the criteria to vote in favor of any individual candidate (Pookkottur 2017, 83).

The *shūra* of 1985 (Feb 15-20) convened that JI can directly contest in local body elections, since local governing bodies don't involve in the process of legislation (out of divine law), hence doesn't pose any challenge to *ḥākimiyya* (Pookkottur 2017, 83). The decision remained in papers until it was initially practiced after the *shūra* approval in 2005 (Sep 17-20) (Pookkottur 2017, 83).²⁷ The professed objective behind this decision is to produce

²⁷ The *shūra* has decided in its meeting in 2005 Sep 17-20: "The propagation of JI is for the whole humanity. Justice should be established and the injustice shouldn't be allowed to prevail. JI intends the fundamental

committed, non-corrupted, ethical and reliable persons who are able to serve the people, not islamization of India, nor *Iqāmat al-dīn* (Pookkoottur 2017, 83). These pragmatic transformations were accompanied with attempts for finding out renovated theoretical positions for political Islam, which should act as foundation for an emerging project of Post-Islamism. The pragmatic destinations of Political Islamism at this juncture compelled some segments within JI to openly criticize the founding narratives of Islamism, and to abandon the earlier positions and postulations forever.

As stated earlier, JI members were permitted to contest the elections in 2005 at the first time in history, as the *shūra* concluded that it is in favor of the interests of Islam and Muslims and the general public. In the constituencies where JI had no candidate, the party will support those who take an anti-fascist position and holds high individual moral and ethical positions. (Pookkoottur 2017, 83-84).

Depending on the above decision, JI had officially contested in Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states Local body election by formulating regional alliances. Since the local body elections in Kerala were held just before the *shūra* resolution, a very few exceptional strongholds seats were exceptionally considered for examining the political base of JI (Pookkoottur 2017, 84). In the following local body election held in 2010, regional alliances and people's fronts were formulated in Kerala where JI had considerable popular support to contest in the election with marginalized social groups, environmentalists and radical and fringe protest groups, the result of which was not in favor and not up to the expectation.

rights; right for living, property and the honor to be preserved. Fascism, poverty, inequality, ignorance, social stratification needs to be annihilated....”

Outside the electoral process and power-party politics, JI had initiated formation of a civil society movement (FDCA) earlier in 1993²⁸ for the preservation of harmony between different religious communities. The objective behind the formation of FDCA was to resist Hindutva upheaval after the demolition of Babri Masjid, and the subsequent communal tensions. JI realized that the remedy to the Hindutva uprising is not the Islamic State, nor the rhetoric of idealistic *Hākimiyya*, rather the unification of secular forces and the expansion of struggle against the major enemy into civil society. Many renowned figures from media, judiciary and cultural sphere were supporting JI's move and the movement contributed in creating awareness mostly in the human right abuses done by the state and the atrocities of violent Hindutva organizations (Shakir 2017, 148-149).

In 2006 Kerala Legislative Assembly Election, JI supported Left Democratic Front.²⁹ On the time of global war on terror and imperial policies of Bush Administration, JI had tempted for Islamist-leftist unity against global imperialism and found in the Left front an honest ally for this cause (Pookkoottur 2017, 84). A newsletter issued by JI during this period reads: "Jamaat-e Islami took the current global context and the policies taken by parties and governments towards global imperialism in consideration. It is necessary to resist capitalist invasions under the direction of USA. We understand that the leftists were against Iraq Invasion, American Policies towards Iranian Nuclear Program and they have supported Latin American anti imperial protests". "On the national level, they lead a visible anti-fascist politics". "However, in the constituencies where fascist candidates have greater possibility to win, JI will vote for the most reliable secular candidate without any consideration of party/front affiliation" (Pookkoottur 2017, 84).

During this period, a youth movement was formed by JI, which raised forgotten slogans of radical left in a time the official left almost transformed into a ruling class political party

²⁸ FDCA (Forum for Democracy and Communal Amity), a civil society movement founded during the time when JI was banned subsequent to the demolition of Babri Masjid.

²⁹ LDF is a coalition of leftist and socialist political parties in Kerala, led by CPI-M (Communist Party of India – Marxist)

compromised its ideological commitments, as conceived by young Islamists. However, leftists were considered as an ally and slogans of Islamist-Leftist unity against Imperialism and Fascism were constantly raised. The global context of war on terror and the US invasion of Iraq also contributed in proliferating a sense of unity with Leftist forces, to combat Imperialism, right wing Hindutva and the liberal economic policies of Congress led UPA government.

The rhetoric of Islamist-Leftist unity was a Keralite peculiarity. It is due to the very fact that democratic leftist movements are not a considerable actor in the political canvas of greater India, other than in three states; West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. In other parts of the country, another sort of political solidarity was being formulated among the Muslims, Dalits, and Adivasi groups (aborigines). In this context, MPJ was formed in AP and Maharashtra and AIUDF in Assam, the later intervened in the electoral politics directly but the former concentrated in the segment of civil society activism (Pookkoottur 2017, 85). The politics of oppressed class /caste solidarity upheld by MPJ and AIUDF expanded its scope and facilitated formation of a new political party in 2011.

In the 15th Central Election of 2009, JI published its 'Peoples Manifesto' to put forward party's political demands in front of the general public and political society though didn't contest the election directly (M. Islam 2015, 119). Apart from this, a three-fold national policy was formulated, which emphasized the importance of resisting reemergence of right wing Hindutva. Where there is direct contest between Congress and Leftists or regional parties, the latter will be supported, thus a pressure group is being formed inside the parliament. The representation of Muslims and other oppressed minorities are to be increased to elevate their status to be in proportionate to their population (Pookkoottur 2017, 85). Hence, JI voted for communist parties in 90% of constituencies of Kerala (Pookkoottur 2017, 85) (Sajid 2009).

As indicated, a new political party was established in 2011 titled Welfare Party of India by JI with support from a number of Dalit activists, religious leaders, public intellectuals, Human right activists and Political dissents left prominent political parties earlier. The imprints of JI's Political positions were visible in the four major priorities/values Welfare party upholds. Value based Politics, Democracy , pluralism and Inclusiveness, Cultural Federalism and the idea of a Welfare State were the four fundamental ideals WPI holds on (WPI 2017). The objective of the party is to strive for a value based welfare state governed by the principles of Justice, Freedom and Equality, a mixture and hybrid form of conservative democracy , socialist values and liberal and human rights conceptions (WPI 2017). “The party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India and to the principles of Socialism, Secularism and Democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India” (WPI 2017).

Hence, this is an important, instrumental positioning in the transformation of Islamism to a full-fledged Post-Islamist experience in the political arena. The principles of divine sovereignty were abandoned and the sovereignty of the state and people is reinstated in the constitution of a party, of which JI was behind its creation and wholeheartedly supported it. But how the support for a *Ṭāghūti* system doesn't uphold *Hākimiyya* have been explained by the scholars, intellectuals and public activists of JI? It is far from unambiguous and there is no official and precise position developed yet, however, there are two major opinion groups in this regard.

1. India is witnessing onslaught of right wing communal politics and fascism, which jeopardize the very existence of Islam and Muslims, not to mention the future of *Iqāmat al-dīn*. Therefore, WPI was formed to facilitate the social and political context, in which the revolutionary activities for *Iqāmat al-dīn* is constitutionally permitted. Hence, it is a strategic move in the path of the high objective of the Establishment of the *al-dīn*.

2. However, some others criticized this strategic option theory. It is the time to rethink the early statements of JI and to produce a new Islamist theory based on the practice and historical struggle Islamists were into, during the period from Indian Independence. Hence, WPI should be the mass movement for a joint action for the immediate and possible political goals envisaged by the theory of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīa*.³⁰ The protagonists of this segment attempted to elevate the Post-Islamist transformation from a condition to a project, to theorize the transformative Islamism with an overt critique of the earlier statements, positions and postulations of Islamic movement.

The constant changes and transformations were justified as these positions were taken in favor of the interests of Islamic movement, Muslim community and welfare of the general public, with taking the text and context in full consideration (Pookkoottur 2017, 82). This position was the development of the earlier stance put forth by Sheikh Mohamed Karakkunn and other JI leaders, who argued that any transformation occurred is not in the foundational ideas, but in the policies, strategies and the approaches an Islamic movement is bound to take in relation to different contexts while dealing with *Tāghūt* (Karakkunn 1988) (TK 2012).

The Post-Islamist Arguments for Secularism

After the long transformative journeys throughout, JI had reached in a position to accept not only the electoral and democratic process, but celebrated Secularism, the onetime ardent enemy of Islamism. Secularism and the Indian constitution were now considered as the only refuge for Muslims and other minorities from the arbitrariness of violent Hindutva forces. Volumes of Prabodhanam from 1990s are filled with an abundance of articles defending and redefining secularism and renouncing communalism. Apparently, it was the opposite

³⁰ This classification is based on my personal observation of social media discussions among JI cadres in closed Facebook groups.

trajectory in contrast to the neighboring Pakistan as JI India was “making appeals to the state to enforce secularism to protect the minority Muslims” (H. Iqtidar 2011, 55) (Ahmad 2010).

Maudūdi in his early writings opened harsh criticism on Secularism as the creed of Modern Civilization and one of the three modern calamities, the other two are Democracy and Nationalism. Secularism confined the obedience of God into personal life and theorized that the worldly affairs are to be organized according to “our own wishes and expediency”. The Modern calamities were established on the basis of materialist morality, which is in effect negation of the very notion of morality and ethics. The root cause of the misfortune humanity faces today is these three materialist foundations, on which modern civilization is established on (Al-Maudūdi 2000).

Apparently, JI opposed secularism in Independent India following Maudūdi and the copies of *Our Message*³¹ were translated into various languages and distributed in large numbers. Nevertheless, soon JI leaders and scholars were ready to accept the secular fabric, by reinterpreting it and differentiating the Indian Variant of Secularism from its western counterpart. While Şadrudīn Işlāhī responded to the allegations of Congress, Nehru and Tahir Mahmood, on the conception of JI towards Secularism, he was keen to differentiate between two secularisms. Secularism in the sense that government shouldn't prefer any religion over other, nor indiscriminate followers of any specific religion is welcomed by JI. ‘We oppose’, as interpreted, western anti-religious secularism which preserves antagonistic relation with religion and its followers (Jafar 2005, 222-226).

As part of inventing an Indian variant of Secularism, Nationalist leaders and scholars such as MK Gandhi and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan³² were cited in JI's official publications

³¹ *Our Message* is a speech delivered by Maudūdi addressing the Muslims who were about to immigrate to Pakistan. The book was republished under the new name ‘*Secularism, Democracy, Nationalism; A Theoretical Analysis*’

³² S. Radhakrishnan is a renowned author and was elected as the second President of India.

frequently. It is argued that Indian Secularism doesn't carry antireligious sensibilities of its western counterpart and of the westernized leftist Indian intelligentsia. Gandhi was frequently been quoted by JI authors as he stated: "Those who argue that Religion has no relation to the Politics, don't recognize the real meaning of religion". In the same sense, Dr. Radhakrishnan was cited in an article published in the 1972 Special edition of Prabodhanam: "The fact that India is a secular nation doesn't mean we reject the relevance of religion. Nor that means secularism transformed to a religion and declared its authority over religious affairs. Our vision on secularism is not to grant any priority to any of the religions and no privileges to be granted to one over others" (S. H. Santapuram 1972). Hence, in the context of majority arbitrariness and the proliferation of Hindutva politics which posed serious threats on the existence of Muslim community, JI had to be in the forefront of defending Secularism as the only constitutional refuge (Ahmad 2010).

In contrast to JI in India, Islamic Socialism and Leftist organizations were the worst enemies of 'Islamic Movement' In the neighboring Pakistan (H. Iqtidar 2011, 55-56). The 'secularization' of Political Islam in India was primarily due to the position of Indian Muslims as a vulnerable minority. Further, a large number of early socialists joined JI and brought their socialist sensibilities into Islamic Movement, especially in Kerala. As narrated by JI leaders, one of the early social groups who joined JI in abundance at the beginning were beedi workers³³, majority of them were associated to communist parties earlier (Karakkunn 2012). From the beginning of 21st century, while the war on terror and imperialist policies were produced Islamophobic public sense, slogans of Islamist-Leftist unity were in the hike. Solidarity's campaigns, slogans and rhetoric have been viewed as replica of early radical socialists of eighties. In addition, the WikiLeaks cable on Muslim Politics in Kerala shed lights on the commonalities of Islamists and Communists rhetoric emerged in response to Anti-terrorism war (Wikileaks 2006).

³³ Beedi workers are those who work in the industry of Beedi, a sort of mini-cigar, filled with tobacco flakes.

Secular Courts and man-made laws in Post-Islamist Phase.

In the Islamist phase, courts were manifested as the personification of *Ṭāghūt* at its most violent form as we have observed, since its very basis are man-made laws. T. Mohamed, an early Islamist scholar and intellectual from Kerala equates secular courts with the idols worshipped by polytheists: “Idols, non-divine governments and courts and forbidden (secular) educational institutions are within the definition of *Ṭāghūt*” (Mohamed 1979, 67). Since the secular courts were considered as *Ṭāghūt*, it was quite intelligible that why JI didn't contest the case in the court of law, while JI leaders were arrested in 1954. The justification for such a position derived from perceiving judiciary as the embodiment of popular legislation which is in contrast to the notion of *Hākimiyya* (Ahmad 2010, 197).

The story of Miyan Tufail, the second *Amīr* of JI Pakistan and one of the attendees of Lahore Conference in which JI was established is fascinating. He was a lawyer and was leading a lifestyle, which is not in congruence with what the traditional scholarship expects from a pious young individual. When he decided to join JI in the founding conference and stood up for taking the procedural oath, many of the scholar members objected due to the fact that he was a lawyer by profession and didn't have a beard! At last, he had to promise in front of the attendees that he will resign from his current job and will seek another '*ḥalāl*' profession which is not in contradiction with the sovereignty of God (T. Mohamed 2006, 118-119)

However, the realities were not in favor of the idealist, utopian theorizations of Political Islamism, but pressured itself to take a position of accepting the courts. While JI was outlawed in 1992 by the then Congress Government, JI had to open legal battle against the government of India in which they were successful in lifting the ban on its activities. The political pressure from within and without the Muslim community, emergence of Hindutva in the power, Saffronization of Police and Administration, Series of Human right abuses against Muslim minorities all together lead JI to take constructive steps forward to fight for the Muslim and other minorities using the machineries of judiciary.

In 2007, Justicia was founded in Kerala under the patronage of JI as an NGO for lawyers, with the objective to stand for a free and unprejudiced judicial system. Justicia aims to stand against the corruption in legislative, executive and judiciary and to provide legal assistance for Dalits and minority Muslims, where required. In the national level, another NGO was formed namely QUILL Foundation in 2015, directed by KK Suhail, the former national president of SIO. It's "core work revolves around pertinent issues of human rights, justice, and equity, faced by the underprivileged sections of the people of India, especially Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, women, sexual minorities and differently abled persons" (Foundation 2017). The motto of the Foundation is "back to constitution", and holds the Indian constitution, and its preamble and foundational rights as the reference for resisting arbitrary practices of state, judicial system, army and security forces (Kayamkulam 2008).

Through the long interference with the Indian state, administration and judiciary, it would be right to summarize that JI had realized it is essential to combat Anti Muslim right wing forces and the unfair treatment of minorities, not through the rhetoric of Islamic state and its dogmatic interpretations of early Islamist literature. Rather, pragmatic steps need to be initiated and Secular democratic constitution is to be defended as it is the only refuge in the specific socio-political and community settings of India.

[Employment and Education.](#)

On November 2006, a high level committee lead by Rejinder Sachar commissioned by UPA Government presented a report on the social, educational and economic status of Muslims in India. The report substantiated that the conditions of Muslims in India are worse than any religious community, caste or caste groups and constitute only 2.5% of Indian Bureaucracy (Aslam 2011) (Sachar 2006). The most creative response within the Muslim community to the report was from JI, and the then leadership established an NGO namely Human Welfare foundation to up bring Muslims from their pathetic employment, education and economic

conditions and to increase Muslim visibility and presence in the secular public sphere. Numerous educational institutions, hospitals, community centers were established under HWF. Apart from HWF, Vision 2017 and 2027, JI had also contributed in establishing a number of education institutions, the objective of which is to produce capable high bureaucrats and civil administrators from the Muslim community.

In 2011, Solidarity and SIO launched strikes and agitations against the injustice and discrimination done to the Northern Malabar region by the consecutive Kerala Governments. Malabar accommodates 42% of total Kerala population and the ratio of Muslims are proportionately higher than in South. The campaign questioned the under representation and discrimination faced by Malabar region in general and Muslims in particular in the spheres of Health, Education, Infrastructure, social welfare and Revenue administration (Kuruppu 2011) (Correspondent 2011). Reminding the historic *Nivarthana* Agitation of 1932,³⁴ which questioned the non-proportionate representation of backward communities in Colonial Administration, Solidarity took the title of Malabar *Nivathana* Agitation, for its continuous campaigns against discrimination and underrepresentation.

It is ironic that JI was opposing employment and education in secular institutions earlier and now strives for proportionate representation for Muslims in secular education, bureaucracy and public sphere. Maudūdi was (in)famously and repeatedly quoted by supporters and critics alike, while he made the statement: “I would be more proud to serve as a peon under the Islamic system of *Al-Jamaat* than to acquire the position of President and Prime Minister in a non-Muslim system” (Muhammedali 2003, 18). The statement was made in 1942, and could be interpreted as a response and personification of anger towards colonial administration. However, his advice to Indian Muslims during the partition was not so different. While addressing party members in Madras in 1947, prior to partition, he had

³⁴ Nivarthana Agitation of 1932 – Ezhavas, Christian and Muslims demanded proportionated representation in the Legislature, which was suppressed by the then colonial Administration. Agitators formed Joint Political Front which called for abstaining from the voting, and therefore renowned as Abstention Movement.

stated: “Demands of proportionate representation in assemblies, raising a hue and cry about elections, struggle for employment opportunities or cries of demands for community rights will not only be useless...Thus we have to prepare general opinion on a large scale among Muslims so that as a community they adopt complete indifference towards power and administration” (Al-Maudūdi 2009, 31-32).

Similar statements by Maudūdi and other early leaders were accepted as guiding principles for JI in India, when dealing with the Secular public sphere, administration, bureaucracy and education institutions. The tendency of boycott had in fact originated in the Colonial India, and was entertaining large popular support especially among Muslims. The caliphate committees formed in Malabar under the patronage of MK Gandhi and Congress during the late colonial period were among those Muslim groups propagated boycott of British Administration. The committees translated Anticolonial fatwas of Abul Kalām Azād³⁵ and other scholars and pamphlets and distributed throughout the masjids, as part of mobilizing the religious Muslims against British Administration. The contents and nature of fatwas were varied, however, it forbade assisting British Military, accepting government employment and tax payment to British Administration (Kunju 2015, 255-256). These non-cooperation initiatives by Keralite Muslims were began concurrently with MK Gandhi’s nationwide non-cooperation movement of 1920.

As we have argued in the second chapter, the ideological pre assumptions of Indian Islamism were formulated during the colonial period and Islamism was failed to instigate a break with its pre-partitioned chapter, rather continued the trajectory as it is. If the fury towards Colonial policies inside and outside India were the reason behind Muslim Non-cooperation in Civil and Military administration, JI continued the policy of Non-cooperation in Indian republic for significantly long period. It had forbidden its members from entering

³⁵ Muslim Scholar, Leader of Indian National Congress and the First Education Minister on India. Azād was the first Muslim Scholar who coined the term Hukumat-e Ilahi, though he was affiliated to National movement.

to contest to any of the legislative assemblies, since it personifies *Tāghūt* and the system is not based on the *Hākimiyya* of the God. Even civil administrative positions were discouraged to apply for, for the members of Jamaat-e Islami, based on Article 8:6 of JI constitution (Constitution 2017).

In the biography of Maudūdi, T. Mohammed narrated the story of Miān Ṭufail Muḥammad, who had left the career of a barrister to join JI. The author traces another story of a JI associate who resigned from the job of Police officer and resorted to cooking, for his daily earning (T. Mohamed 2006, 118-119). Hāji ṣāhib³⁶ was reportedly stated : “Today’s Muslims wholeheartedly serve in the administration of the enemies of God. Further, they grieve that if they were not welcomed in Government administration. Surprisingly, this happens at the very moment they claim that they are Muslims, ie those who had submitted to the God only” (Sullami 2013). One of the early volumes of Prabodhanam sums up: “Hence, it is obvious that this will be greatly harmful, if the desire and candidacy is for employment opportunity in a non-Islamic government” (Prabodhanam 1951).

As far as Modern Westernized Education is concerned, Maudūdi was an ardent critique of the system. While addressing the students of Amritsar Islamiya College, he said: “In fact, I consider your mother college slaughterhouse(s) rather than houses of education. In my view, you have been slaughtered here and the educational degrees you are about to receive are indeed death certificates.” (Ahmad 2010, 75) (Al-Maudūdi 1991). In more than one instances, Abullaith Iṣlāhi responded to the students who did seek his advice on joining AMU and other secular institutions that “I don’t have the courage to give you permission to study there” (Ahmad 2010, 75). The son of another *Amīr*, Moḥammad Yūsuf was not allowed to study in Aligarh, hence approached his father to permit joining *Nadwatul ‘Ulamā*, Lucknow. The response by Moḥammad Yūsuf was Nadwa “is another type of Slaughterhouse” (Ahmad 2010, 76). Hence, both the westernized Education system and the

³⁶ Haji M.K Mohamed Ali Sahib, known as Haji sahib among the associates of JI was the first Amir of JI Kerala Chapter.

traditional, rather reformist Islamic educational institutions were yet to be Islamized, as Maudūdi and his followers believed and preached. Traditional as well as modern institutions are personifications of *Jāhiliyya*, though in different ways. There is a need to develop a new curricula and new institutions which is purely based on Islamic ethics and ideals, which should liberate the students from the slaughterhouses of secularism and traditionalism. Kerala JI had some attempts to Islamize the educational system from the beginning and a short survey of new experiments of Keralite JI in this field will result an apparent disappointment in Islamizing the education. The innovative educational experiments were ended in Post-Islamist refuge in modern westernized curricula and institutions once again, with marginal religious education fused with the official one.

Historically, the emergence of modernity produced religious schools and colleges in India, such as *Dār al-‘ulūm*, Deoband and *Nadwatul ‘Ulamā*, Lucknow (Jumail 2015, 578-583). In Kerala, modernization in religious education had also fostered JI’s efforts to utilize the modern educational methods in order to Islamize the Education. It had witnessed new and numerous experiments during ‘Islamist’ and ‘Post-Islamist Phase’ until completely accepting the modern educational system and institutions as the refuge, which one can’t escape from. Surveying the historical transformation of the premier institution of *Al-jāmi‘a Al-Islāmiya*, located at the village of *Santapuram* would provide interesting insights in to the evolution of Educational Philosophy of Keralite Islamists.

The first important endeavor from JI is to initiate religious primary schools in its strongholds, titled *Al-Madrassa Al-Islāmiya* (Musafir 2016). Some of these primary schools were later upgraded and elevated to the status of Colleges, and *Islāmiya College Santapuram* was one of these prime institutions. It was established in 1955 under the early leadership of JI, with a vision of fusing Islamic education with modern social sciences. Once completed the 11th Grade, students were granted two certificates, one in social sciences (BSSc - Bachelor of Social Sciences) and the other in religious studies (FD - *Al-*

faqīhu Fi-ddīn, Religious Jurist).³⁷ However, the certificates were devoid of recognition from any accredited university in the country and therefore, graduates were not able to pursue job seeking in government sector.

From 1970s, another experiment of Arts and Islamic Course was developed in *Islāmiya* Colleges. The difference from the earlier FD was students were able to obtain degrees from Humanities/Commerce while pursuing their education in religious studies. The objective behind AIC was to produce Muslim Scholars capable of representing Islam in public sphere, could be entered in to secular bureaucracy while practicing Islamic *Da'wa* and activism.

Though a large number of students were graduated on AIC in *Al-jāmi'a* and other affiliated colleges, a very few were working in the field of *Da'wa* and Islamist activism. The big majority of graduates were either employed in government or private sector or migrated to GCC countries. Hence, search for a new program which will produce dedicated scholars and full time Islamic activists ended up in initiating revised *Sharī'a* and *Uṣūluddīn* courses. This new development coincided with declaration of *Islāmiya* College into Islamic University, *Al-jāmi'a Al-Islāmiya*. The course was offered for those who had completed secondary education (10th Standard), and students were banned from appearing for open public examinations to obtain government accredited degree as before. Those who attended exams in secrecy were expelled from the University.³⁸

The harsh criticism, and at times strikes from the student community and the pressure from JI associates made the leadership to revise its decisions. Soon, students are not only permitted to obtain recognized degrees in Humanities from various universities inside Kerala, but it became compulsory! This new move produced a large number of graduates

³⁷ Interview with an Alumnus of Islamiya College, who studied during 1960-1966

³⁸ Interview with an Alumnus attended Al Jamia during the transition period.

well-versed in religious sciences to pursue their higher education in well recognized central and international universities.³⁹

Conversely, there are institutes under JI or associated Islamiya Colleges, which grant bachelor degree in alternative social sciences, the significance of which need not to be ignored. Such educational institutes provide multi-disciplinary learning environment, the curricula of which fused Sociology with research in Social theories, Islamic Social Sciences, Critical theory and Hermeneutics. These were attempts to infuse post-colonial, post-modernist and post-secular theories into the conventional social sciences.⁴⁰

Jamaat-e Islāmi's Educational experiments were relying on the presumption that both the Secular and Religious institutions were running based on *Jāhiliyya*. Thus, JI's new experiments, the attempts to fuse modern social sciences with religious education were intended to liberate the secular youth and the traditional religious scholar from *Jāhiliyya* outlooks. The fate of historical struggle JI fought to develop such an alternative philosophy of Education was failure and the earlier uncompromising policies were to give way for new Post-Islamist pragmatic trajectories. Hence, the young Islamists' campaigns were for more participation in the secular educational arena, not for proliferating an alternative educational philosophy.

One of the reasons behind the failure of the Islamist strategies and the Post-Islamist reversion to the mainstream is the sense of belonging normal Muslims, '*ulamā*, community organizations were preserving towards the new republic in contrast to the Colonial Administration. The politics of Boycott were having some currency during the colonial era, but not in the Post-colonial democratic period. The conceptualizations of *Hākimiyya* and the rhetoric of Islamic state didn't influence the Muslim community much, due to the specificities of a minority context. Conversely, the pressure from the Muslim public and

³⁹ Interview with an Alumnus attended Al Jamia during the transition period.

⁴⁰ Interview with a native of Kutiady, where the Ibn Khaldun Institute of Social Sciences situates

‘ulamā and the pragmatism learned through the experience transformed JI. JI had to proceed with new strategies, Policy reformulations and radical reversions altogether ended in the Post-Islamist phase witnessed in later periods.

Conclusion

JIs political trajectories from early exclusivist radical Islamist positions to the Post-Islamist acceptance of secular democracy, courts, legal system, secular institutions and public sphere is fascinating. Nevertheless; it lacked theoretical substantiation in terms of critical ideological intervention and self-criticism for most of its history. No Islamist intellectual within JI contributed with a critical position either to explain or to critique JI’s transformative positions till the end of twentieth century. The consultative body of *shūra* sanctioned time bound decisions, based on majority opinion and the organization gone forward with it. As Irfan Ahmad rightly pointed out, the organizational structure and the institution of *shūra* had very significant role in transforming the Islamism in India to a Post-Islamist phenomenon.

In 1950s, it was the boycott and non-allegiance to the *Tāghūti* system, Secularism, Courts and public education was the hallmark of JI. From 1960s, the *shūra* theoretically sanctioned participation in electoral and democratic process, if the objective is to Islamize the nation. However, while the constitutional civil rights and fundamental human rights were curtailed during the period of emergency in 1977, JI decided to vote in election for first time; not for Islamizing the society, but to defend basic civil and political rights. From mid-eighties, it was the Hindutva upheaval and the emergence of right wing nationalism were the main concerns shaped JIs political positions. Later in 90s and the beginning of 21st century, a unity of Islamist-leftist politics was about to develop specifically in Kerala. However, when the Indian Public sphere was fully dominated by Hindutva forces and moderate nationalists and leftists were failed to combat Fascism, another experiment of Muslim-Dalit unity and an independent political party which fuses Ambedkarite Politics and cultural federalism

established under the initiatives of JI. At this juncture, a few segments within the student activists and JI leadership came forward to provide a radical critique of the earlier positions and statements of Indian Islamism. Ideas of cultural federalism /multi culturalism were upheld, and oppressed class /caste unity and solidarity were celebrated to combat Hindutva rhetoric of cultural unity and the ideals of Integral Humanism.

Maudūdi had foreseen that the Muslim community leaders and the self-styled saviors at the time of partition, would be considered as nightmares and the root cause of all their misfortune in future, in the Independent Secular India. The then religious and nationalist groups will have annihilated automatically and the thoughts, slogans and concepts of that era will be considered as obsolete and counterfeit currency! (Al-Maudūdi 2009, 11-12). Muslim organizations and movements will have to reconsider their earlier statements and to make the changes in the policies and strategies according to the new circumstances, as far as Maudūdi is concerned (Al-Maudūdi 2009, 12). He considered Muslim League's call for democracy and a separate nation state for Muslims at the same time as composite stupidity.

Apparently, Maudūdi's advise to reevaluate the earlier strategies were neglected by JI itself, and those who argued for complete restructuring of organization were to leave the party (Ahmad 2010, 192) or at least to be marginalized (Beegum 2017). They continued relying upon a political theology formulated during the period of decolonial struggle as a response to the concrete realities and specificities of colonial administration. In this sense, JI was deeply Maudūdist as critics always described, more than Maudūdi himself was. Party's relationship with the founder and the views crystallized during colonial period, which led to the formation of JI was not based on critical dialectical engagements, but the Guru syndrome ruled the whole organizational culture as we shed light on in the Chapter two. However, during the course of time, the pragmatist considerations has to compel JI to reconsider its earlier statements, positions, strategies and policies in favor of transforming itself into a new post-Islamist endeavor.

However, from the commencement of twenty first century, a new current of open criticism and encounters with the very foundations of early Islamism were to be witnessed, by the initiatives of some segments within Political Islam. Students, reformist leaders and radical activists were attempting to provide a critique of the founding narratives of Indian Islamism, accompanied with novel political experiments including establishment of a new political party with a vision of oppressed class/caste solidarity, which challenged the very dogmatic interpretations of Islamist notions such as *Hākimiyya*, *Jāhiliyya* and boycotting *Tāghūt*. Also, broader engagement and involvement in secular public sphere and judiciary accompanied with a crucial amendment in JI constitution, could be recognized as attempts to elevate the condition of Post-Islamism to a conscious project, “to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social and political domains”⁴¹

⁴¹ Bayat recognized Post-Islamism both as a condition and a project; the former is while “Islamism is compelled to reinvent itself, “but does so at the cost of a qualitative shift”. However, it is also a project, when it consciously attempts “to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political and intellectual domains” (Bayat 2005)

Chapter 4 – The Question of Gender and Transformative Islamism

Irfan Ahmad argued that JI's changing discourse on women and the self-criticism initiated by Islamists towards Maudūdi's 'neo-patriarchy' "gestures a move towards Islamic Feminism" in North Indian context (Ahmad 2008). In this chapter, we will look into the similar transformation in the question of women occurred among Keralite Islamists, and the different ways they have challenged early Islamist conceptions embodied in the writings of Maudūdi, other senior Indian and Keralite *'ulamā*. I will try to explore how the prevailed social milieu in North India necessitated early Islamist vision on women as an individual and member of society and comparatively restricted role she had in it. In what context, the significantly different Keralite experience produced new challenges and arguments against the conventional North Indian Islamist vision on Women's role in family and social life and in which ways these were translated into theory and practice. Practically, how the Islamist youth trespassed the traditional conceptions and its extensions on the prohibition of intermingling of genders? How the new Islamist vision qualify itself to be described as Post-Islamist in relation to the Islamist position expounded by Maudūdi and other North Indian *'ulamā* associated to JI.

From Modern Women to Purdah

It goes without saying that Maudūdi was a prolific writer in Urdu and started his journalistic career when he was very young. We have shed light on his teen age journalism in chapter two as he was appointed together with his brother Abul Khair Maudūdi as an editor for the periodical of *Tāj* (T. Mohamed 2006, 25). When Maudūdi was at his age of eleven, Abul Khair encouraged him to translate one of the very provocative, yet celebrated book of renowned Islamic Modernist Qāsim Amīn, titled *Al-Mar'a Al-jadīda* (T. Mohamed 2006).⁴² This seems to be ironic since Maudūdi had chosen for himself, a very opposite trajectory in

⁴² Qasim Amin had expressed more radical Islamic Feminist ideas in his *Tahrīr Al- Mar'a*

the questions of gender and women's status in Islam later. Qāsim Amīn was recognized as one of the early Arab Feminists who argued for women's equal rights in social life, while Maudūdi was depicted as the warrior of conventional wisdom and South Asian gender practices. His later work on Women's status in Islam titled '*Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*' has been an object of harsh criticism by many, including his Islamist disciples. Various quotes from *Purdah* has been accused of being misogynistic, sexist and obsessed with protection of chastity, and some of his views invited great controversy. Along with other Muslim scholars, Maudūdi was criticized for not speaking of women's human rights at all, or talking on rights for chastity only, as the only required human right for women is the right for chastity (Hassan 2017).

If we take Maudūdi's own words seriously, his journey from translating *Al-Mar'a Al-jadīda* at his eleven to authoring '*Purdah*' when he formulated the conception of the social system of Islam, is a journey from hypocrisy to Islam, appreciating his final destination as the only possible interpretation of Islam in gender practices and social relations. Thus, Maudūdi portrayed; any argument for more freedom for women from what sanctioned by the Patriarchy of '*Purdah Zone*', more liberal understanding of women's status in Islam, positions towards her active engagement in social and political sphere are to be equated with Hypocrisy and utter ignorance on the basic tenets and the objectives of Islamic Social system. In the first part of this chapter, we will elaborate Maudūdi's position towards women's status in Islam, and how his conventionalist positions were radically challenged by his male and female followers of Keralite Islamism in theory and practice, to formulate a Post-islamist Islamic feminist⁴³ trajectory for Islamic movement therein.

⁴³ Islamic feminism was defined by Margot Badran as "feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm" which is, for Badran, more radical than Muslim's secular feminism. (Badran 2002) Ahmad used it; "as shorthand to capture transformative current in the Islamist movement on the women question" (Ahmad 2008)

The Purdah Zone - Observation of Purdah in North India and Pakistan

The Northern parts of Indian subcontinent “including Pakistan on the west through eastern Uttar Pradesh, plus Bangladesh” was described by David Mandelbaum as the ‘Purdah Zone’, in which the seclusion of women and the prohibition of intermixing of the genders were strictly observed by several religious and ethnic groups (Chowdury 1993, Ch. 3) (Mandelbaum 2003, 128). The system of Purdah which literally means veil and curtain refers to separating the living space for male and female and strict dress code for women inside and outside the house, which may require covering the face and whole body. The practice is being extended to restrict her voice (*āwāz kā Purdāh*) and the visibility (*Nazar Kā Purdāh*), in effect the intermingling of genders is avoided as much as possible. The system of Purdah creates separate worlds for male and female and private and public spaces were organized with strict access codes for both genders. Many social norms such as early marriage and dowry are associated with this practice which entailed sharp division of labor between the genders, in which males are responsible for earning a living outside the house. Apparently, females are in charge of child rearing and other domestic tasks. Women’s education, work, involvement in social and political sphere, access to public institutions are restricted and the behavior inside and outside the home are fashioned by the conventional wisdom prevailing in the social system of Purdah (Chowdury 1993, Ch. 3).

The purdah norms were not being observed exclusively by Muslims in North India. On the contrary, women of other religious and caste groups, especially the elites and upper class women were observing the strict code of veiling in the same sense Muslim women do. Prathibha Patil, the 12th President of India was caught in a controversy while she had expressed her opinion on the Purdah observed by North Indian women that “Women have always been respected in the Indian culture. The Purdah system was introduced to protect them from the Muslim invaders” signifying that observance of Purdah is not exclusively a Muslim experience (Express 2007). In a wider context, Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia had also

argued that the norms of Purdah and the segregation of women from men were in fact infiltrated to Muslims from Byzantines, during the caliphate of Walīd II, in Tenth Century (بیغوفیتش 1997، 32) .

Maudūdi had given a specific Islamic flavor to the practice of Purdah observed by the religious and ethnic groups in South Asia. Further, he had interpreted the foundational references of Islam in favor of a monolithic social system in which the Purdah was observed in its extreme form, congruent with the norms of ‘Purdah Zone’. The social milieu in which Purdah is not observed is not at all Islamic, as far as he is concerned. In effect, the social norms dominated in Purdah zone is the only qualified Islam, to be called Islamic! We will be elaborating how Maudūdi invented the tradition of Purdah from the classical texts of Islam and how these conceptualizations shaped the trajectories of Political Islam in India. In addition, how the Keralite Islam, which is out of the geographic territory of Purdah Zone, constantly struggled with the rhetoric of Purdah in its extreme form as propagated in North from the beginning, and how some elements within the Islamic movement therein transformed into a more feministic approach compared to other JI fractions in other parts of India.

[Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam.](#)

After converting to Islamism⁴⁴, Maudūdi had ‘invented’ a tradition, a social system of Islam in which women’s role as an individual and a member of society was defined in its strict manner congruent to the prevailing system of Purdah and the then conventional understanding of gender roles. Following the vast majority of North Indian Muslim scholarship, Maudūdi was in favor of the practice of Purdah and women’s as less involvement in social life as little as possible (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 125).

⁴⁴ Irfan Ahmad briefly illustrates Maudūdi’s transformation from Nationalism to Islamism through communalism (Ahmad 2010)

According to him, women differ from men naturally, mentally, intellectually and physically, which necessitate their prime role to be inside the family. Family as a social institution should be governed by man and it is the duty of women and other family members to obey their 'ruler' (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 104). Further, gender segregation should be strictly followed in social life. He stated: "Woman's sphere of activity should be segregated from that of man's. They should be entrusted with separate responsibilities in the social life according to their respective natures and mental and physical abilities. And their mutual relationships should be so organized that they co-operate with each other within the lawful limits, and do not transgress these limits to interfere with the duties of the opposite sex." (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 104).

Though the positions articulated by him was replica of the arguments of conventional *'ulamā* and in accordance with traditional practices of North Indian Muslims, Maudūdi found it as the middle way between Ultra liberalism of Western modernity which grants unlimited freedom to women on one hand and the rigid 'conservatism' of traditional society, which barred her from his divinely proclaimed rights. In fact, the views expressed by Maudūdi in his 'Purdah' and elsewhere⁴⁵ place him on the far right side of ardent conservatives, who argued for undue restriction on woman as an individual and a member of society. Even among the passionate advocates of traditionalists, Maudūdi's positions towards women's agency and free movement could be considered as more rigid and restrictive. While transforming himself from Secular Nationalism to Communalism to Islamism, Maudūdi should definitely had detached from his leaning towards Qāsim Amīn and other Liberal views, in favor of social conservatism and conventional positions of traditional *'ulamā*, the political struggle he pursued and the antipathy towards colonial powers and their social system should have played its role in transforming Maudūdi. Apparently, the organization founded by him is yet to get rid of the consequences of

⁴⁵ Maudūdi expressed similar views in his commentary of Qur'ān, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*

following conventional wisdom in the question of gender and the new Islamists had to continue the struggle within the organization for transforming its gender positions and priorities.

In the earlier part of the book *Purdah*, Maudūdi illustrate how the ancient Greek and Romans dehumanized women throughout their history. The imaginary female creation of Pandora in Greek mythology signifies how the women sub-humanized and represented as evil in the Greek Minds. The Impact of Pandora was present in the Greek social system as Maudūdi argued (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 7). He had attempted to connect the rise and fall of civilizations with the right positioning of women in the society. Greek were energetic and advancing in an age when their women observed *Purdah*, and the intermingling between women and men were minimal inside and outside the house (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 7). In the same sense, the Greek glory disappeared, when they were overwhelmed by egotism and sexual perversion (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 8). The same logic was applied to Romans and while their social traditions and family bonds were strong, they were at the rise and brightness. When they were overwhelmed by the animal passions and sexual perversion, the fall of civilization was the result (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 7-10).

In this context, the moral purpose of Christianity was to provide an ethical dimension to the human relations. However, it had taken the cause to the very extreme and portrayed the women as the root cause of sin. Sexual relation itself is considered as dirty and objectionable. At most, sexuality is a necessary evil even it was established on marriage. Celibacy and spinsterhood were celebrated and recognized as the criterion for nobility (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 10-11). It was this inhuman and unnatural Christian Moral Philosophy and practices, European Modernity revolted against, in which the conception of morality itself was challenged which caused the destruction of family life.

For Maudūdi, the practice of Purdah and the social system associated with it as he interpreted is the only moderate way between these extremes of Christian religiosity and Liberal Modernity. He had delineated clear boundaries of a society which observe Purdah and thus qualified to be called an Islamic Society.

Observing of Purdah / The *Hijāb* in Maudūdi's conception

The conception of *Hijāb* /Purdah for Maudūdi is not merely related to the juristic question of the male or female believer's clothing and the associated norms prescribed by the foundational references of religion. Rather, it is a set of social norms associated to the social system of Islam without which the application of Islam in social and political sphere will be meaningless. In effect, the social system of Purdah observed by Muslims and Non-Muslims of South Asia from centuries were 'Islamized', rather conceived as the only Islamic way of societal living.

Therefore, the free movement of women, her right over her own body and intellect, and free interaction with '*non-mahram*' males were not tolerated. While explaining the two 'immoral extreme' positions related to Women's status, Maudūdi accuse the Liberal/Western/Feminist positions in which "her rise to "prominence" starts the degeneration of mankind in general" and she was "reduced to the position of the Devil's agent" (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 5). Forgetting his own criticism on traditionalist's vision over women as "an embodiment of sin", Maudūdi argued the modern positions pertains to the liberation of women transformed her into a position of 'Devil's agent' (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 5).

As regards the family, Maudūdi endorsed patriarchal notions and the well-disciplined family relations. He believed that the notion of gender equality and the 'excessive freedom' she had obtained in modern times in fact contributed in the destruction of the foundations of "family life which is the very basis of civilization" (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 6). "Man should have the position of a governor in the family" (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 104) and the conceptions of

equality between the genders within the family targets only the destruction of the institution of the family. Though, he is advised not to abuse this authority and the privilege of the position of ‘ruler’ inside the family. “The relation between the ruler and the ruled turns into that of the master and his slave” is not acceptable! (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 98). Since he is the protector and in charge of family, “it is obligatory on his wife and children to obey him”

Naturally, man is more powerful, superior and entitled to rule the womenfolk. “Activity” in itself is naturally superior to “passivity” and femininity. This superiority is not due to any merit in masculinity against any demerit in femininity. It is rather due to the fact of possessing natural qualities of dominance, power and authority” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 87). Hence, “women has been made queen of the house” in the social organization of Islam. “Earning a living for the family is the responsibility of the husband, while her duty is to keep and run the house with his earnings” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 94). Subsequently, her status before and after marriage is defined as ruled either by husband or the “responsible man in the family”. She has no choice of herself even in marriage and can’t marry someone she likes, against the desires of the “responsible people of her family” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 97).

As an ardent advocate of the social system of Purdah, Maudūdi was against the practice of *ikhtilāf*, free intermingling of genders. “Free intermingling of the sexes brings in its wake a flood of obscenity, licentiousness and sexual perversion, which ruin the morals of the whole community” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 6). In order to prevent *ikhtilāf*, Women’s sphere of activity should be segregated from that of man’s. They should be entrusted with separate responsibilities in the social life according to their respective natures and mental and physical abilities” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 104). *Ikhtilāf* will lead the society into moral bankruptcy and adultery and sexual perversion will prevail. It is not just the adultery to be prohibited, but its preliminaries and the environment which may lead to moral impoverishment, hence the social system of Purdah is necessary. “Enjoying the beauty of the other woman with the eyes, relishing the sweetness of her voice with the ears, drawing

pleasure of the tongue by conversing with her, and turning of the feet over and over again to visit her street, all are the preliminaries of adultery, nay, adultery itself” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 106). “The voice is another agent of the evil spirit. There are countless mischiefs which are caused and spread by the voice” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 107).

Furthermore, he had endorsed the traditional norms of the natural division of Job between genders, in which man is supposed to earn the bread for the family, and therefore the education he ought to obtain needs to be in a way to assist him in fulfilling his role as breadwinner of the family. In the same sense, women’s primary responsibility is looking after the domestic life and bringing up the children, which necessitates their education should have designed to prepare her for these duties (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 79). “From the Islamic point of view, the right sort of education for woman is that which prepares her to become a good wife, good mother and good housekeeper” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 99-100). The underlying assumption behind this position was man biologically possess natural qualities of dominance, power and authority, hence they are entitled to rule the womenfolk (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 87).

Maudūdi had interpreted Islam and its social organization in a way several restrictions were put to the free movement of women. He had supported the juristic view that “she has been exempted from all outdoor religious obligations” hence the congregational prayer and *Jihād* are not obligatory for her. He had gone further to forbid women from joining the funeral prayer. She shouldn’t be allowed to travel without in company with a *mahram* man. Since several prophetic traditions grants undisputable evidences for women’s attendance in Mosque, Maudūdi had produced counterarguments by putting several restrictions on this specific practice, resorting to the *uṣūli* theory of *Takhṣīṣ al-‘āmm*. One of these restrictions was that she should be permitted only during night time, since observing Purdah will be easy in night! (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 134). Hence, the prophetic traditions encouraging women to attend *‘Eīd* congregations were to be interpreted as exception; “The lawgiver waived the

first condition for joining in the daily prayers, that is the prohibition to join the day-time” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 135). “In short, Islam has not approved that woman should move out of her house without a genuine need” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 95). If she had to go out for genuine reason, “nor should she walk in a manner as may invite the attention of others...She should not speak to them without necessity, and if she has to speak, she should not speak in a sweet and soft voice” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 131).

As regards the ruling on *libās*, vast majority of Muslim jurists hold the opinion that women should cover her body except face and palms. For Maudūdi, these parts could be revealed in front of *maḥrams*, father, brother and other close male relatives only! As regards *Non-maḥram* males, she should cover the whole body and “has been prohibited to display her fineries before all other men”. The juristic opinions of majority *‘ulamā* which permits revealing face and hand before non-maḥram males was rejected by Maudūdi. “On the contrary, no one has supported the view that the face and the hands should be displayed on purpose” ” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 125). While interpreting the *āya* of *hijāb*, he had emphasized that “all the commentators [Emphasize added] of the Qur’ān have given this same meaning to this verse” ” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 125). For Maudūdi, there is only one legitimate juristic opinion on the *libās* of woman which enjoins covering the whole body including face and hand. After quoting a number of classical scholars, Maudūdi concludes “These quotations clearly show that right from the time of the companions of the holy prophet down to the eighth century (AH) the one and the same meaning has been attached to this verse, that we have given above” [Emphasize added] (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 127).

However, to what extent the then prevailing reformist position on the rights of women and the equality between genders will be tolerated religiously? For Maudūdi, though he had expressed JI associates’ right to criticize his theological and juristic opinions, their position on more freedom for women were merely hypocrisy. It is hypocrisy when they argue that Islam permits equal rights for men and women, when they object polygamy, states slavery

is not Islamic or Purdah is a non-Islamic practice. Western and Islamic civilizations are entirely different in objective and social organization, the fact which Reformist Muslims are not able to cope with it, as far as Maudūdi is concerned. “The ethics underlying Purdah is radically opposite to the western ethics” ” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 50). Those who oppose Purdah in orient, should possess the same philosophy of life, if not practicing a mere hypocrisy” (Al-Maudūdi n.d., 50).

Hence, the prevalent social system of Purdah was defining the trajectories of Maudūdi and other Muslim *‘ulamā* associated to Jamaat-e Islami especially in North Indian context. Some prominent *‘ulamā* of JI were more stringent than Maudūdi in observing Purdah. When Manṣūr Nu‘māni resigned from JI, one of the justifications to leave JI was Maudūdi’s compromise with the injunctions of Purdah in his family life, a position which is more vocal on the influences of the social norms of Purdah Zone on the early trajectories of political Islam (Nasr 1994, 30).

The specificity of Keralite Islamism

Though Maudūdi and other North Indian *‘ulamā* associated to JI were propagating a very strict position towards women’s role in family and social life, Islamists in South India were fundamentally different from the inception. Kerala and South India are regions outside the Purdah Zone, and the social organizations of family is more flexible and the stringent Purdah rules are not applicable to Keralite social milieu, could be the major reason in producing such a variant of Islamist feminine politics.

North Indian Islamism followed Maudūdi’s path and defined its directions in accordance with local norms of Purdah Zone. The following story is evident on how significantly the purdah norms were appreciated by JI’s early associates. In the beginning of 1950s, JI was in an illusion imagining a possible Islamic revolution in India in the same way communists took power in other parts of the world. JI had considered itself as a revolutionary block,

possibility of reaching power to them is much plausible hence the revolutionary zeal was at its height. In this situation, an article was published in *Zindagi* magazine elaborating the benefits of Islamic Rule in India, juxtaposing it to the communist rule. One of the crucial advantage from Islamic rule was its prohibition of intermixing of genders, as per the article, which shows how importantly JI had viewed traditional purdah norms for Islamic social system (Ahmad 2008).

As the North Indian *'ulamā* were great supporters of the system of Purdah, founding members of JI were not different. Manṣūr Nu'māni was one of those who ardently supported the rigorous observation of Purdah as indicated above. It was the 'light' observation of Purdah by the family of Maudūdi was one of the reason he submitted resignation from JI, which signifies that a number of *'ulamā* associated JI were strict followers of Purdah injunctions to a degree Maudūdi was considered lenient and liberal in the matters of traditional norms (Nasr 1994, 31). In a personal talk, an *Al-Jāmi'a* lecturer from the state of Bihar had expressed his dissatisfaction towards a number of new intellectual leaders of Jamaat, such as *Najātullāh Ṣiddīqi* and *'Ināyatullāh Ṣubḥāni* that they are too lenient in the matters of Purdah as *ikhtilāf al-muḥarram*, the prohibited intermixing of genders are common in their private gatherings and functions.⁴⁶

However, the South Indian experience was different. The Purdah system observed among Muslims and Hindus alike in many parts of North was not practiced as strictly in South India, and specifically in Kerala. There are no *zenana* and *mardana* areas separating women's and men's prime areas in Keralite households.⁴⁷ Women from any religious groups were not covering their face before strangers nor the relatives of husband. In short, Purdah was not being practiced in South India, except among very few minority groups (Jacobson 2004).

⁴⁶ Personal Interview with a Rukn of Jamā'at, a lecturer at Al Jamia.

⁴⁷ *Zenana* refer to the inner apartments of the house where women lives, which is the South Asian equivalent of *Harem*. The outer apartments pertain to men and guests are called *Mardana*.

The practice of *Burqah*, covering the face before strangers were not at all visible in Kerala, especially before the advent of what has been termed as new fundamentalism and *Wahābi* literalism in the end of twentieth century (NV 2016). One reason for this was the early advancement of Muslim reformism, at the end of nineteenth and at the beginning of Twentieth Century which was absent in North India. Muslim Reformism flourished under the initiatives of Makthi Thangal, Chalilakath, Vakkam Maulavi and other scholars, which lead to the formation of *Kerala Muslim Aikyasangham* in 1922, the movement which was to be understood as the father of organized reformist activities. As part of Reformist practices, Muslim girls began to start schooling and In 1927, First girls school was established in Calicut under the patronage of Beethatha alias Muthbee, which still known as Beevi's school (Rashad 2015, 551). However, it was in 1964 a Muslim girl completed higher secondary education (Millar 1976, 202).

In 1948, Farook College was established, under the patronage of Maulavi Abuṣṣabāh, a reformist scholar affiliated to *Aikya Sangham*. From 1959, Muslim girl students were able to admit to the college, after the administration secured the community consensus to an extent, in favor of Women education (Millar 1976, 205). Long before in 19th century, Makthi Thangal had encouraged mixed education in secular institutions (Sajna 2015, 572). In 1924, *Aikyasamgham* were also demanding for Women's right for education, though it was conceived by a considerable part of the community as anti-religious (Sajna 2015, 573). Keralite Muslim women were into Journalism also right from 1930s. In 1938, social reformist M. Haleema Beevi started a monthly magazine by the title *Muslim Women* and later in 1946 another Magazine *Bharatachandrika*. A Women's conference was also held in 1938 in the city of Thiruvalla (Sajna 2015, 573).

In such a situation of reformist practices, JI Kerala was fundamentally different from its North Indian counterpart in the notions of Purdah, as in many issues. Though a large number of Maudūdi's books were translated into Malayalam by JI Kerala, they have

abstained from translating '*Purdah and the Status of Women*', though it is one of the major scholarly contributions of Maudūdi. It is ironic that the book was translated by a traditional sufi group hostile towards JI and Maudūdi, as an evidence of JI's deviation from Islamic teachings related to women's position in Islam. However, this doesn't mean that Keralite Muslim social practices were liberal, rather; on the contrary, comparatively flexible gender roles were established, both among Muslims and others. Keralite Islamism's conception on the gender roles were therefore, a moderate position between Purdah zone's norms and traditions on one side and Liberal Muslim gender experience emerged in later stages on the other.

JI Kerala and Organization of Women.

JI was the first Muslim organization opened primary membership for female associates in the subcontinent (Ahmad 2008). However, In congruence with Purdah Zone's traditional norms and Maudūdi's scholarly discourse, the first generation JI had not imagined any socio political role for women. The first constitution of JI is evident on this, which defines female associate's organizational role as strictly as inside the house as below:

- “To invite their family and contact persons for renewal of faith or acceptance of faith.
- Try to inculcate in their children the light of faith and Islamic values and practices.
- If their husband, son or father and brother were in the JI, they should encourage them by their steadfast co-operation in seeking the Islamic objective.
- If they were indulging in Jāhiliyya, earning haraam, try to reform them, abstaining in their bad acts. They should disobey their un-Islamic orders without the fear of consequences” (J. Ali 2010)

Hence, Maudūdi was not against the organization of women, but wanted female activism to be inside the home as much as possible. His earlier criticism towards Muslim League was that “there was no difference between the Congress and the League in their respective

stances towards gender issues. Both held anti- *Shari'a* approach to women....unveiled women were the 'candles of the party' in the meetings of the League" (Ahmad 2008)

However, JI Kerala's initial organization of women were more related to Kerala's reformist tradition than North Indian Deobandi traditionalism. Originally, JI Kerala was organized in the form of *Jam'iyya Al-Mustarshidin*, founded in 1943. While JI Hind's founding meeting were attended by a house full of male scholars, two women attended the founding meeting of *Jam'iyya Al-Mustarshidin*, held at the village of Edayur, which transformed itself into the Kerala chapter of Jamaat-e Islami later. In 1950s, the number of women associates of JI Kerala was seven (K. Salwa 2017, 231-232). Women's local units were formed after 1968, as per the four years program of 1968. In the state conference held in 1969, segregated women's conference was organized, the practice continued until 1998 Hira Conference (Rahmathunnisa 2017, 226). During this period, the norms of *Ikhtilāf* and *Hayā* were observed among Keralite Islamists to a degree avoiding direct conflict with North Indian practices.

Post-Islamist Transformations - Organizational Change

As indicated earlier, JIs official view towards women's contribution in the social life was governed by the laws of preventing *Ikhtilāf* and promoting the notion of *hayā*', predicated upon the long tradition of *Fiqh* entrenched in the Indian Muslim community life on one hand and the influence of Maudūdi on the movement on the other. Therefore, the student's body of JI which is designed to work inside the University campus is organized separately for males and females by the title respectively SIO and GIO.⁴⁸ Not only for adult students, but the children organization were also overwhelmed by the segregation mentality. *Balasangham* (Boys Forum) and *Balikasmajam* (Girls Forum) formed, respectively under the supervision of SIO and GIO separately for girls and Boys (Mian 2017, 247). However, two children bodies were merged in 2007 into a unified Teen India. Though Solidarity

⁴⁸ SIO and GIO reads as Students Islamic Organization and Girls Islamic Organization respectively

Youth Movement formed for organizing youth, women were not given primary membership into it, due to the concerns related to Intermixing of genders, and they were advised to organize themselves with women *halqas*. This was occurred while Solidarity offered its membership for even non-Muslim young male, if agreed with the common minimum program uphold by Solidarity.

Madhyamam is one of the most widely read Muslim news daily published by JI. Until very recently, they have followed non employment policy for females, partly due to the association of some JI leaders to the strict juristic religiosity. One of the senior editor was asked about the employment ban and responded as ‘still our scholars and leaders are entangled within ultra-legalist religiosity and no argument will convince them’.⁴⁹ Also, though JI and associate organizations were active in organizing demonstrations in various socio political issues, females were not allowed to participate in, until the formation of WPI, a political party with involvement of a considerable number of non-Muslim political activists.

Notions of prohibited *Ikhtilāf* were visible in the proceedings of 1983 State Conference held in Malappuram. Contrary to the Keralite religious organizations, women attended the conference but were not granted permission to address the male public. Instead, they were having a separate hall in which a special women conference organized. Men were barred from entering to the women’s hall but they were “able to listen to the proceedings of women’s conference held in the special hall arranged for Ladies, but from behind the curtain” Prabodhanam (Editor 1983, 18). The male journalists were even barred entry to the women conference hall, as reported by Indian Express. “Male public including journalists were barred entry to the women conference hall, but they were able to listen to the proceedings through microphones” (Editor 1983, 18). It continues, as ‘Non Muslim guests were given full freedom except in Women’s hall (Prabodhanam 1983, 192).

⁴⁹ Interview with an ex-employee of Madhyamam daily

However, the participation of women with strict *Hijāb* and segregated curtains were even considered by many traditionalists as *Ikhtilāf al-muḥarram*, the forbidden intermixing of genders (Prabodhanam 1983, 192). In this sense, *Da'wat* Nagar conference was a significant incident in the history of Muslim women's in Kerala, if we consider the fact that largest traditionalist religious organizations in Kerala still not granting primary membership to its female followers.⁵⁰

During nineties and beginning of twenty first century, the notions of supervision, male guardianship, Segregation and *Hayā* were prone to severe resistance from women Islamists especially the students and young female activists. Emergence of liberal Islamism within the movement and its intrusion to the leadership had contributed ideological and organizational support for the new gender conceptions which challenge the very 'Islamic social system' envisaged by Maudūdi and other early Islamist scholars.

The beginning of such an open encounter was In 1998 Hira Conference, when female Islamists began to address the male public, rejecting the laws and norms prohibiting intermixing of genders, which is in direct contradiction with the practices of its North Indian Counterpart.⁵¹ Among Keralite Muslims, female scholars were given podium to address the public in KNM conferences during 1950s, which was very uncommon for the then Muslim Public and conventional scholarship (Sajna 2015, 575). However, the visibility of female speakers and organizers within Muslim reformist movements was vanishing in the later period. Women speakers were not permitted to address the male public, but they were called for a separated and segregated women's conferences in congruence with the norms of *Purdah*, until 1998 Hira Conference.

⁵⁰ Big majority of Keralite Muslims are followers of local traditionalist Sunni Islam, the major three fractions of which still deny primary membership for women.

⁵¹ The speech delivered EC Ayisha, an earlier leader of JI women's fraction and the current Vice President of Welfare Party of India Kerala chapter, was transcribed in the Prabodhanam Special Edition, named *Hirasmruthi* (Ayisha 2000, 56).

As part of the deployment of segregation, many girls schools and dormitories were established from 1960s in order to conserve the purity of ‘Islamic Social life’ among the women, ‘the mighty fortress of Islamic Culture’⁵², who are vulnerable to the dangerous secular educational practices. In 1984, GIO was formed for students and youths under the age of 30 with a male advisor/organizer, entirely segregating itself from the male student’s organization SIO (Mian 2017, 246). Till the end of the twentieth century, Islamist women’s activities, especially that of students and girls were strictly under the supervision of male leadership, and they were rigidly separated from students/youth male activists to avoid ‘forbidden *Ikhtilāf*’.

However, the notions of guardianship and supervision had to give way for more independent activism by women and female students. The supervisory position of JI male leader over women’s activities were ended in 2011, while an organizational amendment enacted. An independent decision making body for women was created as part of the amendment, which needs to be elected by women activists themselves (Rahmathunnisa 2017). In 2010 January 24, Safa Nagar Women’s conference organized, a landmark in Muslim women activism and Keralite history itself. The conference was independently organized by women volunteers of JI, the theme of which was ‘*Women for Social Revolution*’. The Safa conference, being the first grand gathering independently organized by female activists generated a sense of self-reliance among female Islamists and ended ‘male supervisory complex’ forever (K. Salwa 2017).

Another greater achievement by Islamists women in Kerala was their participation, rather intrusion into the governance of Masjid’s. Masjids in Kerala are governed by bodies called *Mahall* Committee, in which women are not participated, except in a very few *Mahalls* where JI had strong influence. Women’s representation in *Mahall* Committees is one of the priorities before JI women’s wing (Rahmathunnisa 2017, 230). The very position challenges

⁵² Maudūdi had described religious womenfolk as the mighty fortress of Islamic Culture, preserving the new generations from the intrusions of Western and other alien cultures.

the patriarchal gender settings entrenched in the Muslim societal life in Kerala on one side and the remnants of Purdah Zone's influence of segregated religious wisdom on the organizational locales on the other.

In addition to the above, heterogeneous 'Islamic Feminist'⁵³ practices were experimented by women activists, challenging the very foundation of the remnants of Maudūdi's 'Islamic Social System', and its diluted Keralite version. The challenges to the traditional Islamist wisdom on the question of gender segregation were manifested in many ways, of which a brief illustration is given below.

Though male and female students were organized separately in line with the organizational structure of JI, secular universities/colleges were not in a position to accept the segregation mentality nor the student associates were. Hence, students' activities were organized jointly between males and females inside secular campuses, while the segregation norms were strictly followed in the colleges, university campuses under JI, and the local units operated under the supervision of local JI units. This transgression of local organizational norms were done while JI educational institutions were keen to preserve stringent segregation measure in which SIO and GIO activities were separately done, and in most cases with strict access codes for opposite genders.

Positions of SIO, Solidarity and GIO were developed into a situation transgressing local purdah and segregation norms and the commandments of JI leadership, through jointly organizing seminars, events, book talks and film festivals.⁵⁴ While Solidarity offered membership and active involvement of non-Muslim male activists, as mentioned above, the doors in front of female membership were closed in accordance with local organizational

⁵³ Islamic feminism was defined by Margot Badran as "feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm (Badran 2002). Here, the term meant for any transformative outlook towards the question of women originated within the larger Islamic movement, which question the proclamations of traditional Islamic wisdom dominated in the Purdah Zone.

⁵⁴ Youth spring was an example, in which GIO and Solidarity leadership were jointly organized the week long programs during the months of April, May from 2013 – An Interview with an organizer of the event, former solidarity leader.

segregation norms (K. Ashraf 2017). However, in 2013, a week long Youth Spring festival was celebrated with active participation of female Islamist activists from GIO and JI Women's Fraction. In the following years, Solidarity, SIO and GIO jointly organized yearly film festivals, in which alternative feature and documentary movies with a dissonant political positions from all over the world were screened to the viewers.⁵⁵ An academic camp with the title *Taşmīm* was jointly organized by SIO and GIO, for the final year students of Islamic Colleges in which both male and female students were attended and speakers and interlocutors were from both sides (SIO Kerala 2017).

Further, while Welfare Party, the political organization founded by the initiatives of JI formed a separate organization for its youth and students affiliates, the segregation between male and female were to be vanished completely. Male and female activists joined together to work for Democracy , Social Justice and Fraternity, and female activists were among the leadership and cadres alike (Journo 2017).

In the academic circle, a number of Islamist activists, public intellectuals and at times GIO itself were dare enough not to conceal their leanings towards global Muslim secular feminists not to mention Islamic feminists. GIO had conducted a commemorating session while Fāṭīma Mernāssi, the Moroccan feminist passed away, which in turn raised controversies within the movement, since the very positions legitimated by GIO leaders and activists in the event were in fact in direct contradiction with even liberal Islamists gender sensibilities, not to mention original Maudūdīst positions (Husain 2016). Further, while the 'Qur'ān and Women' of Āmina wadūd, the American Feminist who lead *Jumu'a* prayer for the first time in Muslim History was translated into Malayalam, Islamists were in the forefront of celebrating the work and a large number of positive reviews were published in Prabodhanam, Campus alive, the official organ of SIO and other portals and periodicals (Fayiza 2012).

⁵⁵ Interview with an organizer, former leader of Solidarity

At the organizational level, the most important event in the history of JI women's activism was her entry to the top decision making body of JI, *Shūra* in 2011. Later in 2015, one of the female *Shūra* members were appointed as Secretary of JI main body, an act which is unfamiliar to Muslim organizations in Kerala. This positioning was in fact cultivation of long withstanding struggles within and without the movement, which challenged notions of segregation, conventional interpretation of *hayā'* and male supervisory complex entrenched in the organizational culture.

Post-Islamist Feminist Tendencies.

We have observed that Keralite Islamism didn't subscribe to the traditional orthodoxy of Maudūdi and the Islamic Sociality of Purdah zone strictly. Though reformist tendencies were in action and produced significant results within the community, a large section of Muslims were following traditional norms of Purdah (a diluted Keralite version), backed by '*ulamā'*. Islamists conception on women's involvement in social life was extension of reformist Islam, though, the influence of Maudūdi and traditional Keralite Islam was not to be denied at all, and the norms of *Ikhtilāf and hayā'* were the dominant factors defined and directed Women's organization, movement and involvement in social life. However, comparatively at a later stage, a collective of trends and notions which could be described as Post-Islamist feminist tendencies were emerged by the initiatives of a number of Islamist intellectuals, authors and Post-Islamist activists, a few of them are energetic Islamist activists and others departed the Islamic movement and resorted in liberal Islam. These trends were manifested mainly in ideological interference by Islamist Intellectuals on one side and the Liberalization of Islamic Practices within the movement together with the attempts for local re-articulation of Liberal Muslim feminism on the other.

Ideological Interference / Juristic Reform

In this part, we will focus on the efforts of Islamist authors and public intellectuals in producing a variant of Post-Islamist feminism, which attempted to offer an ardent critique

of Maudūdi's 'Islamic Social System' and Purdah norms through volumes of Prabodhanam. As the official mouthpiece of JI, Prabodhanam had taken the question of Women's involvement, upbringing, *Tarbiya*, and her rights as an Individual and social being seriously from the outset. However, Until the end of 1970s, Prabodhanam's women polemics could be either relates to Women's *Tarbiya*.; Upbringing of women in a way Muslim traditionalism requires or Apologia for Muslim traditional conception on women, in congruence with Maudūdi's larger conceptions of Purdah, and dominated traditional understanding of Women's role within the family and restrictively outside the family (Jameela 1965) (Pannikkottoor 1965) (Nadwi 1965).

However, from the mid of 1980s, a reformist Salafi trend intruded to the Islamist circle, thanks to the increased migration and subsequent import of many forms of Salafism, and Prabodhanam had to respond to please the reformist Salafi sensibilities. Many articles authored by reformist scholars such as Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī, Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwī, 'Abd Al-Halīm Abūshuqqa, were either translated to Malayalam or frequently referred to it (Qaradawi 1987). Murtaza Mutahhari, Faḥmī Huwaidi were also translated as part of the project of a new 'perestroika' for Muslim Women (Huwaidi 1991) (Mutahhari 1990). Legal reformist voices from secular background were also found resonance in Islamist circles, and Ṭāhir Maḥmūd, the famous Indian Legal theorist's articles advocating for juristic reformism appeared in the issues of Prabodhanam (Mahmud 1987).

By the time moving, more essential voices for women's liberation were also welcomed among the cadres of JI. 'Abd Al-Halīm Abūshuqqa's '*Tahrīr al-mar'a*' was frequently referred to, and a summary of arguments were published in the forms of independent articles.⁵⁶ Abūshuqqa was one of the early voices among traditional Islamists advocated for more freedom for women from a position of Salafi textualism. Based on the arguments put

⁵⁶ Abu Shuqa's *Tahrīr al-mar'a fī 'aṣr al-risāla* was first of its kind, an attempt to reread Muslim practices pertains to women, in the light of purely textual sources, Qur'ān and prophetic traditions in Bukhari and Muslim.

by Abūshuqqa, Dr. Salam Vaniyambalam, a *Shūra* member of JI authored series of articles in Prabodhanam during 1997 June and July (D. A. Vaniyambalam 1997) (Vaniyambalam 1997). In 1998 and 1999, an Indian Muslim feminist activist Dr. Şafiyya Iqbāl had written a series of articles calling for a more radical liberation by reinstating a textual and Qur'ānic rereading of Muslim Women's conditions, through more than a dozen issues of Prabodhanam, which could be considered as the first of its kind from a perspective of Indian Muslim women, published in Malayalam Muslim organs (Iqbal 1998, 1999).

Rāshid al-Ghanūshi, Fahmī huwaidi, Hasan al-Turābi and Tariq Ramadan were few of those global figures whose essential reformist readings related to women's involvement in social life, were transmitted to Keralite Islamism. Their radical call for the liberation of women and complete equality with man in social life found resonance among Keralite Islamism and disseminated through the pages of Prabodhanam. Turābi's earlier 'moderate' reformist calls were translated in 90s, while Ghanūshi and Ramadan were welcomed only after 2000 (Al-Turabi 1996, 1997) (Al-Ghanūshi 2009). A part of '*Radical Reform*' was translated in Prabodhanam, before the whole book is published (T. Ramadan 2009).

Islamist public intellectuals and authors therefore transgressed the boundaries and challenged Maudūdi's conceptions on women's desired clothing, her free movement and her right on her own body. The position of 'male governor' in the family is questioned and the feminine condition is no more a passive one, nor should active masculinity govern over the former. Early Islamist conceptions on the non-permissibility of *Ikhtilāf* was challenged and complete equality between man and woman, with regards to education, employment and public service is argued for. Her equal status and eligibility in the governance and administration of the country is reinstated. In effect, a post-Islamist transformative Muslim feminist tradition was in the making, which by the backing of other factors, opened up diversified ways in front of Islamist activism.

Practicing Post-Islamism: Liberalization of Gender practices.

As we have observed above, an abundance of articles, books authored by a number of JI leaders and Islamist public intellectuals and the influence of global Islamic reformist trends advocating for complete equality with men had resulted in producing a new current within Keralite Islamism lenient towards Islamic Feminism. This new generation of male and female activists were at times in the forefront of Islamist activism in Kerala and later obtained entries to the Decision making bodies of JI and associate organizations. Their presence in the higher decision making bodies was influential in diversifying Islamist practices with regard to the question of gender. JI and associate organizations began to trespass the boundaries demarcated by Maudūdi, early Islamist scholarship and the practices fashioned by the conceptions of *ikhtilāf*, *hayā'*, male supervisory notions and Keralite Muslim traditionalism.

JI had initiated and organized a number of programs, projects, events, NGOs and media outlets in which public intellectuals, journalists, cultural and political activists were extended their support for the ventures. These ventures were designed in a way that public secular intellectuals can easily cooperate with. Madhyamam Daily and Media one television channel were of great importance while we narrate the history of Keralite Islamism, which were established in 1987 and 2013 respectively, the aim of both establishments were to protect the oppressed Muslim and other minority groups from the transgressions of government, media, the racist Hindutva and public administration.

Due to the very nature of the enterprises and by the virtue of new Islamist vision, the events, public platforms and media outlets organized by JI were not in congruence with the strict observance of Islamic Purdah norms as conceived by Keralite Islamists, shaped by Maudūdist conceptions and traditional Keralite Purdah rules. New generation activists utilized these events and organizations to liberalize Islamist practices in terms of women's involvement in social life and intermixing of genders, which were to be entirely rejected

earlier on Islamic standards. Hence, Solidarity began welcoming active female involvement, though they were denied primary membership, due to organizational constraints, which is out of their control.⁵⁷ Affiliate organizations of Solidarity were also opened up new paths, in challenging Purdah norms by organizing family gatherings, arts and cultural festivities in a manner certainly not in congruence with the desires of earlier generation and traditional norms, in which male and female artists challenged the very norms of segregation and Purdah.⁵⁸

Recently, a number of Solidarity affiliates organized a public event, representing Indian community during the recent diplomatic crisis in Qatar, in which all laws, norms and primary conceptions on *Ikhtilāf* and *hayā'* were disregarded. It was primarily a dance festival and a variety of genres such as Contemporary dance, South Indian classical (mixture of Bharatanatyam, Kuchiputi, Kathakali), North Indian (Punjabi Bankra Dance – Rajasthani classical), Cinematic, Arab traditional dance with Mappila folklore dances were fused together and both female and male dancers were intermixing performed.⁵⁹

If we closely observe such events, we may conclude that the underlying assumptions defining the process of liberalizing Islamist practices are as follows, which may directly contradict to the very essence of Islamic ethical reference.

1. The inferiority of Islamic ethical practices in relation to the secular public morality. Though Islamic injunctions were preserved to a larger degree in the insider events, secular, Hindutva elements are necessarily required for a public event, to please the audience as conceived by many Liberal Islamists.
2. The superiority of Hindutva savarnna art, culture and public sense and sheer non-attentiveness towards alternative and resisting art culture in the initiatives of

⁵⁷ Such organizational changes are required the approval of central decision making bodies of JI.

⁵⁸ Interview with a number of organizers of various events in 2017, organized in Qatar by solidarity affiliates.

⁵⁹ Interview with an organizer of the event.

Muslim, Dalits and other oppressed minority groups or black art with a vision of challenging inherently dominating structure of art.

Apart from the liberalization of Islamist practices, attempts for local re-articulation of Islamic Feminism expounded by Wadūd, Barlas, Mernissi and others can be observed. Not only women activists, but a number of male scholars, intellectuals, students and youth activists contributed in such an attempt for formulating a Post-Islamist feminist discourse in Kerala, which radically depart from Political Islamism. This re-articulation of Islamic Feminism shows proximity towards secular left liberalism and manifested in a Series of articles published Doolnews, Campusalive, Islaminteractive⁶⁰, Utharakalam, Wajd and other online portals. A typical attempt to re-articulate Islamic Feminism of global intellectuals in a local context can be found here in doolnews, by a female journalist from Madhyamam.⁶¹ In another occurrence, the autobiography of Fatima Mernissi, the Moroccan feminist was translated to Malayalam by a veteran Islamist author V.A Kabeer, who served as Editor of various Islamists publications, which contains harsh criticism of North African Purdah System (Mernissi 2014).

The significance of these attempts and public events is the fact that a large number of Islamist activists are in fact support the very conceptualizations prompted by global Liberal and feminist Muslim intelligentsia on one side and the local re-articulation of the feminist individualist liberal Muslim experiences on the other. Such influences resulted in transgressing the boundaries demarcated by Maudūdi and others for Islamic movement, and multifaceted alliances with diversified groups and entities were formulated in the initiatives of Liberal Islamists, which facilitated new modes of gender practices within the Islamic movement.

⁶⁰ Islaminteractive is an online portal, under the initiatives of liberal Muslim intellectuals.

⁶¹ <http://www.doolnews.com/women-in-muslim-worls-vp-rajeena-article-442.html>

Conclusion

To recapitulate the above, it is obvious that Purdah zone's cultural practices in the context of emerging struggle against western colonial power shaped Maudūdi to theorize a new invented monolithic Islamic Social System, in which women's free movement, her right over her own body, fundamental rights as an individual and social being were curtailed as much as possible and male guardianship prevalent in the then scholarly discourse was imposed on Muslim Women. Though Maudūdi made clear on many occasions that his juristic or theological positions should not be a burden over JI and its associate's freedom to choice, develop and communicate among the heterogeneous rich traditions of classical and Modern Islamic sciences, jurisprudence and theological positions, women's status as an individual and social being and the boundaries of her actions and self-manifestations were strictly demarcated. Any conception outside the clear boundaries imagined by Maudūdi were described as hypocrisy sometimes, and ignorance of the basics of 'Islamic Social System' at other instances.

The early founding fathers of JI, most of them were associated to the traditional Deobandi Islam had even stricter imaginations on women's self-manifestation as an individual and social being. Some of them were even outspoken to criticize Maudūdi for his 'shortcomings' in observing 'Purdah' and had to leave JI for the same reason!

However, early Muslim reformism in Kerala had given way for a more liberal understanding of gender roles, and JI kerala had to follow this 'moderate' reformist path from inception. Kerala and South India were out of the region called Purdah Zone and had comparatively liberal understating on the gender roles and self-manifestation of women. This doesn't mean that Maudūdi's and North Indian Scholarship's severe Purdah rules had no influence in defining the gender practices of JI Kerala, especially at the beginning. Also, the huge majority of Keralite traditional Muslims outside the reformist section were in favor

of North Indian Purdah Rules, though not in stricter sense. They were not associated themselves to the reformist trajectories of Keralite Islam, which had definitely influenced the way JI practiced gender organization in the Southern State.

However, at the end of twentieth century, an ideological current of reformist Salafism intruded into Keralite Islamism through migration, diversified ways of petrodollar funding and through the influence of global Islamic Renaissance. Reformist scholars such as Muḥammad Al-Ghazāli, Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwi, ‘Abd Al-Halīm Abūshuqqa were widely read and translated to local vernacular Malayalam. This reformism was founded on textualism and had been able to provide a textual reference for Post-Islamist Feminist tendencies to come later, which in future expanded its scope by relating itself to radical global Muslim feminist thought. A large number of male and female associates of JI were under the influence of the said Post-Islamist current which rejected the very basis of Maudūdi’s theory of ‘Monolithic Islamic Social System’ and embraced ‘Hypocrisy’ and ‘ignorance on the basics of Islamic sociality’ as could have imagined by Maudūdi and supporters.

Also, we have observed that the Post-Islamist feminist politics within Islamic movement was manifested in diversified ways. It had begun as a textual critique of prevailing gender practices and expanded itself to preclude specific prophetic traditions pertains to women’s role under the very influence of Muslim Liberal Feminism and the pretext of primary reference to the Qur’ān. Though JI and its associate organizations were under the influence of old Islamist Organizational setup, which based on the very conceptions of *Ikhtilāf al-muḥarram*, Liberal islamists were trying to trespass the boundaries of *Hijāb* demarcated by early Islamist scholarship and current North Indian leadership. Many alliances, joint events were organized and the established gender roles and rules were challenged, which were not possible within the organizational structure of JI earlier. While male and female student organization bodies of JI were separated into SIO and GIO to avoid *Ikhtilāf*, and female youth were denied primary membership in Solidarity, new Fraternity Movement established

for both male, female students and youth alike. The deep-rooted gender segregation had to fade away together with the formation of Fraternity Movement which witnessed an increased presence of female activists both as leaders and followers.

Furthermore, a number of previous islamist activists left the organization and contributed with a critique of organizational practices with regard to gender and women's self-manifestation. Global Muslim feminism resonated in Kerala, by the virtue of attempts for local re-articulation by the initiatives of a collective of researchers, journalists and public intellectuals. JI, at least a considerable number of its associates were able to benefit from these critique, in addition to the dissemination of Post-Islamist intellectual contributions all over the globe, which in turn resulted in producing a specific condition which may lead to a variant of Post-Islamist Gender practices in India.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

We have observed in the previous chapters that political Islam in India had witnessed a phenomenon of end of ideology, which contributed in diversifying the trends within, without as much of meaningful conversation and debates inside the movement. Absence of the self-critique and failure to revise the earlier statement facilitated the different ways Islamist activists imagined the priorities of Islamic movement, thus heterogeneous practices which seems contradictory to each other were present. Therefore, the Post-Islamist transformation in India is to be recognized more as a condition rather than a project, till the end of nineties. However, after the commencement of twenty first century, there were courageous attempts to initiate open criticism towards early assumptions of political Islam, which may suggest beginning of a Post-Islamist project, the objective of which is to discover the ideology of Islamism in a completely different socio-political and religious-cultural settings.

In chapter two, we have observed that the futility of Islamist ideology was due to the very context in which it was formulated, the colonial political-religious settings and its disparity to the different politico-religious environment in which JI Hind had to operate. Maudūdi and other visionaries of Islamic movement were in a position to provide a political and theoretical basis for Muslim community in the context of the struggle against colonialism. Thus, the Islamist ideology was formulated and the political sovereignty of God was upheld. Individual, social, religious and political worlds were bifurcated to Islam and *Jāhiliyya* and Islam was understood in terms of a modernized political ideology.

However, after India obtained independence from British colonialism and the formation of the modern Indian state with secularism, democracy and socialism as the constitutional cornerstones of Indian republic, Jamaat-e Islami had attempted to operate with an Islamic ideology formulated in completely different settings. Many insider voices for reconsidering

the theory and praxis of JI were marginalized, due to the very fact that the majority *‘ulamā* and activists conceived of JI more as a religious movement, rather than as a social organization emerged in a specific context. The ‘invented traditions’ of Islamism were considered as religious decrees. Subsequently, JI had to change in terms of practice as I showed, not guided by any critical ideological interference or reflections out of meaningful internal dialogues and debates. The organization weapon of *shūra* and its time bound decisions were instrumental in bringing change in to Jamaat-e Islami. The stagnancy of Islamic ideology and the failure to substantiate JI’s new practical trajectories produced a condition of departure from ideology, which facilitated various manifestations of Post-Islamism and diversified insider trends within.

In the following two chapters, two case studies were presented on how the deideologization of political Islam, the departure from original Islamic ideology formulated in colonial India shaped different trajectories in politics and gender relations. In the first part of chapter three, we have shed light on the context in which Maudūdi’s theory on *ḥākimiyya* emerged and why the conception of nation state obtained prominence in Islamist thought system. The nature of all-encompassing, totalitarian and interventionist modern state helped Maudūdi and other Islamist founding fathers to formulate a new conception of absolute sovereignty of god, the theory of *ḥākimiyya*, in which taking over the modern state apparatus was conceived as the only way out for Muslim societies from their terrible socio-political realities resulted from colonialism.

Not only the state is islamized, but the concept of religion itself was prone to radical transmutation under Maudūdi’s theorization. Religion was not that of rituals and individual spirituality, but transmuted into a totalizing entity resembling the modern state which rules over all the spheres of life. *Ḥākimiyya*; God’s absolute right to legislate in individual, social and political life, was the foundational stone of religion in Maudūdi’s conceptual

framework. The new theoretical pattern defined Islam as a political movement, a revolutionary vanguard for actualization of *ḥukūmat-e ilāhi* at global level.

Hence, the pre-assumptions of Islamist ideology, the theories of *ḥākimiyya* and the conception of continuous struggle between Islam and *jāhiliyya* defined the early political trajectories of JI in India, which resulted in the complete boycott of newly formulated state instruments, public elections and secular courts etc, on the pretext of upholding *ḥākimiyya* and rejecting *jāhiliyya* and *ṭāghūt*. Islamist politics had witnessed a radical, exclusivist rejection of national independent governance, secular political sphere, civil, legal or educational institutions. JI had boycotted public elections and judiciary for a long time as the Indian democratic polity and judicial system are established on the theory of popular sovereignty, which is polytheistic in JI's literal understanding of Maudūdi's theory of *ḥākimiyya*. Islamists cadres resigned from government jobs and civil administrative positions and secular educational institutions were considered as slaughterhouses of humanity and religion.

However, the radical exclusivist Islamist phase had to give way for gradual transformation as JI had begun to creatively involve in the democratic and electoral process during the period from 1960 and 1977. In 1960s, the organizational institution of *shūra* had sanctioned active participation in public election if it assists islamization of the society. However, for the first time in the history, JI had participated in public election in 1977 not for the islamization, but for reinstatement of fundamental human rights and democratic political rights, since the state of emergency declared by the then Congress government resulted in wide-ranging curbing of fundamental political rights. Thereafter, JI had actively involved in electoral politics for various reasons and concerns, be it unified political action against the emergence of right wing Hindutva forces in mid-eighties and early nineties, or for a possible Islamist-leftist unity in late nineties and at the beginning of twenty first century. Interestingly, no serious theoretical reconsiderations, nor meaningful insider debates

necessitated transformation of political Islam in its early stages till the end of twentieth century, but the practical trajectories compelled to find out new positions. Therefore, the Post-Islamism in India largely remained as a condition than a project till the end of twentieth century.

However, later in 2011 and as a cultivation of long withstanding struggles lead by reformist elements within the Islamic movement, JI had formed a new political party which fuses the unity of oppressed classes and castes, Amdekarite notions and cultural federalism to combat Hindutva rhetoric of Indian cultural unity, out of desperation from the capability of moderate nationalism and leftist secularism to protect the very fundamental rights of Muslims under the republic. This position and the progression of Islamist activism developed from the beginning of twenty first century could be recognized as the emergence of a project of Post-Islamism in India. Fragmented voices of criticism were emerged from the activists and intellectuals of the movement during this period. At some instances, Islamist leaders and authors of reformist leaning were supporting the very calls for radical reformations in the ideology of JI Hind.

In chapter four, we have observed that the social milieu in the Purdah Zone facilitated Maudūdi and other Islamist leaders to produce a ‘neo-patriarchy’, to invent a tradition of Islamic social system in which women’s individual and social rights were curtailed in line with the traditional wisdom dominant in north India. The Islamic movement in north India therefore produced severely restricted gender roles within the movement and women’s role was almost restricted to be within the family. Men were conceived as superior to women naturally, mentally, intellectually and physically and recognized the position he is supposed to assume within the household is of that ruler, to which the womenfolk are required to offer absolute obedience. Gender segregation and male supervisory notions were followed and purdah was strictly observed. Rather, the rise and fall of civilizations were interpreted in terms of their observance of purdah and ‘the right positioning of women’ in the society.

Notions of natural division of jobs were argued for and women's free movement, her right to involve in outdoor religious, cultural and political activities, her religious and political subjectivity and agency were questioned. The *libās* of female Muslim individual is interpreted in the most rigid manner and the different voices from the classical period were denied by Maudūdi. It is ironic that his career was started by translating 'Modern women' of *Qāsim Amīn*, while the later trajectories he had chosen for himself was in radical opposition to his earlier positions. Any unorthodox position towards the strict observance of traditional norms in purdah zones were considered as hypocrisy and ignorance of the basics of Islamic social and political system. The traditional norms of purdah zone in the context of political struggle against colonial powers produced the most rigid interpretation of gender roles, which defined the trajectories of Islamist movement in early periods especially in the north Indian context.

In the similar manner, fundamentally different social milieu in south India and specifically in Kerala produced another variant of gender relations within Islamist movement. Kerala was out of the region 'purdah zone' and witnessed a history of Muslim reformism inspired by the writings of Afghāni, Rashīd Riḍā and Muḥammad 'Abduh. The specificity of Keralite Islamism further manifested in the social milieu in which gender segregation, male supervisory notions and patriarchal social relations were not strong as in its north Indian counterpart. Neither Keralite households were separated into *zenana* and *mardana* (female and male areas/inner and outer spatial arrangements of the house), nor the practice of burqa was visible.

Therefore, the Islamist experience in Kerala was different from north India from the inception. At the founding meeting of JI Kerala, two women attended while approximately seventy plus male scholars were the attendees of 1941 founding conference of Lahore. This doesn't mean that the Keralite Islamist experience was not influenced by the notions of the prohibited intermixing of genders, glorification of *ḥayā* (shyness) and male supervisory

complexes. On the contrary, influences of Maudūdi's 'neo-patriarchy' in addition to the traditional Keralite Muslim norms; which is in contrast with reformist tradition, conditioned the ways Islamist imaginations of gender roles developed. In order to prevent *ikhtilāf*, several measures were taken and gender separated feeder organizations for children, students and youth were formulated. To an extent, women non-employment policies were incorporated in associate media organizations for a long period.

However, the pressure from the male and female activists alike inside the Islamist movement opened new possibilities in front of more inclusive gender roles. Gulf expatriation and the subsequent import of Salafi reformism influenced a number of Islamist intellectuals. Writings of Al-Ghazālī, Al-Qaradāwī, and Abūshuqqa were translated into local vernacular Malayalam. Literatures of Islamist revisionism such as the writings of Turābī, Huwaidi, Muṭāhhari, Shari'ati and others were celebrated among Islamist youth. Moreover, variants of secular and Muslim feminist ideas were intruded to the young cadres of Keralite Islamism, altogether questioned the very position of male ruler inside the family and gender supervisory notions within organizational structure. Organizational changes were to follow ideological interference which in turn facilitated various practical experiences challenged the very foundations of Maudūdi's 'neo-patriarchy' and the invented traditions of Islamic social system. However, these transformations were not occurred in time linear, but through continuously challenging and struggling with the conventional positions, the remnants of which still haunts the movement.

Many Islamisms, Many Post-Islamisms

Before ending this concluding chapter, it is imperative that we will elaborate how JI is not of a static monolithic stature, rather an umbrella movement accommodates heterogeneities in terms of political trends, religious scholarship and innovative theoretical positions. Though this project requires more exploration, which is impossible within the limited scope of this thesis, it is necessary to shed some light on the heterogeneities within the Islamic

movement, in order to appreciate the very features of Post-Islamist transformation occurred within Political Islam in India.

We have indicated that Maudūdi envisioned a movement encompassing all theological and juristic trends within Islam unified under the tree of *Iqāmat al-dīn*. The unification of the acting and thinking process of the cadres were also emphasized in JI's *tarbiyya* programs (Rahman 1983, 61). Weekly gatherings of cadres on local/unit level includes collective literature reading in addition to *Qur ān*, *Hadīth* classes, and one of the objective of such exercise is to unify the thinking process of Islamic activists (Rahman 1983, 61). This unification doesn't require unified way of thinking in juristic or theological matters, over which many traditions, scholarly opinions, schools of thought can legitimately be followed (Al-Maudūdi 2008, 50-51). However, unified political strategy and policies sanctioned by *Shūra* were formulated for specific time period of organizational calendar termed *Mīqāt*. The main objective for designing such a unified political strategy, policies and program is to unify the actions, way of thinking, and approaches of Islamist activists towards the current regional, national and international developments, from the basis of an Islamic perspective.

However, in the north Indian context, the majority of *'ulamā* joined JI at the beginning of the movement were of *Deobandi* orientation and therefore, were following specific theological and juristic scholastic positions within *Ahl al-sunna wal- jamā'a*. When the *'ulamā* class dominated decision making bodies of JI, they have pushed the organization to specific directions which eventually embraced particular theological, scholastic, sectarian and at times juristic views. The result was the transformation of JI from a movement with a pan Islamic agenda goes beyond the sectarian settings of Muslim *umma* into a party within a certain segment of Muslim society. Hence, in practice, JI was no longer welcoming traditional sufi Muslims, barelwis or shiites to be part of the larger struggle for *Iqāmat al-dīn* as Maudūdi and other Islamist forefathers desired.

The ambiguity on whether JI is a social movement or religious organization further intensified this position of excluding Muslims from ‘alien’ sects and groups. For Maudūdi and other activists Islamists, JI is a social movement, the main objective of which is to provide a new theoretical framework for the administration of the society, primarily. Hence, followers of various juristic and theological affiliation and conflicting sects and groups were invited to be part of the collective struggle for *Iqāmat al-dīn*. Even Shiites were welcomed to join JI without disowning their theological or juristic scholastic affiliations as we indicated earlier (Al-Maudūdi 2008, 50-51).

In Kerala, slightly different scenario was to happen. Most of the early associates of JI was from the reformist salafī group, who denounced affiliation to any of the four Sunni scholastic *madhhabs*, even in the day today rituals. Hence, the big majority Muslims of Kerala, who were having traditional Sufī orientation and scholastic affiliation were not at all welcomed, nor attracted to political Islamism. This was in contrast to other global Islamist movement such as *El-Nahḍa* as Rāshid Al-Ghanūshi identified traditional *Māliki* Islam as one of the cornerstone of Islamic movement in Tunisia (2012 الغنوشي). In south India, on the contrary, Islamists considered the traditional *Shāfiʿī* and sufi Islam as contaminated with polytheistic contents influenced by regional religious culture. Therefore, conventional Islam need to be reformed and purified from the intrusions of alien culture, and required to be Islamized again. The result was, as mentioned, a big majority of Muslim community had enough reasons not to trust in political Islam as manifestations of their political aspirations, which is one of the major reasons of the failure of Islamism as a political project in Kerala.

However, in theory, it was absolutely the opposite was conveyed. In 1983, the then *Amīr* of JI Kerala stated in a public conference: “Jamaat-e Islami is not an organization to support any of sectarian thought movements or juristic schools within Islam. It is for propagating and accomplishing the real Islam beyond sects and scholastic divisions. *Iqāmat al-dīn*, comprehensive establishment of religion (*dīn*) is its goal” (Abdulla 1983, 5). In the same

conference, the Secretary of JI have said: “Muslim community should avoid disputes over juristic or other insignificant religious differences, which may trigger disunity. JI call they should avoid *takfīr* in all forms, but unite together for greater cause of *iqāmat al-dīn* (S. Yusuf 1983, 49-51).

In the above citation, *iqāmat al-dīn*, the proclaimed goal of Jamaat-e Islami has been imagined beyond the sectarian understandings of Islam. Further, the conception of *iqāmat al-dīn* was in fact developed to encroach the drawn boundaries of traditional Islam, its institutions, *‘ulamā* and other segregated settings. We can see similar statements in abundance in the early literature of JI and in the early volumes of *prabodhanam*. In the first Conference of JI in which the party was formed, Maudūdi emphasized his intellectual freedom as a scholar will not be surrendered to JI, since his positions in various issues of jurisprudence and theology, will be based on his own free *ijtihād*, and JI shouldn’t impose any restriction on it. On the other way, being the leader/*amīr* of JI, Maudūdi’s scholarly views will not have any influence on the members as individuals, or JI as an organization, other than the dialectic scholarly relationship with possible critical reasoning. “Finally what I would like to clarify is that in jurisprudence and questions of philosophy and dialectics I have a specific school of thought...I neither want to impose my opinion on these issues on other Jamaati people of knowledge and research. Neither do I like that Jamaat place some restrictions on me, which deny me the freedom to carry out academic research” (Muhammedali 2003, 26)

In addition, considering JI as a specific sect/organization (*firqā*) among other Muslim sects and groups was construed by Maudūdi as a threat to the very concept of Islamic movement. He stated in the above conference: “This will change Jamaat very quickly into a *firqā* (sect) and all its time is exhausted in engaging and debating with Muslims instead of engaging practically in the field” (Muhammedali 2003, 16). Once the Jamaat is converted to a *firqā* “the proclaimed goal (of *Iqāmat al-dīn*) will be abandoned and the resources of Jamaat will

be utilized entirely in sectarian debates with other Muslim individuals and groups” (T. Mohamed 2006, 100).

Maudūdi further contributed in the formation of a concept of Islamic movement with members from most of the major Muslim sects, juristic and theological schools of Islam. Under the title of ‘Representation of all *maḍhabs*’, Maudūdi wrote: “Then, our attempt was to find out cadres from various sects and groups of Muslims. Individuals from all sects and *maḍhabs* joined Jamaat, from which *Ahl-e Hadīth*, Deobandis and barelwis are in abundance. Though any of the shiites did not join Jamaat as member, many of them are JI’s associatesThe establishment of Jamaat was based on the theory of uniting all sects and groups together to form an Islamic system” (Al-Maudūdi 2008, 50-51)

However, this condition of non-alliance to any of the sectarian, theological traditions was gradually disappeared and JI transformed to make itself as a movement/sub-sect within the larger *Ahl al-sunna wal- jamā‘a*, with Deobandi and salafi orientations respectively in north India and Kerala. Though Maudūdi did wish participation in abundance from various sects and groups, most of the ‘*ulamā* and activists joined JI from the beginning were from the Deobandi and *ahl-e hadīth* factions. In Kerala, the formation of *halqa* (Kerala chapter) was initiated by associates of earlier salafi reformist groups who followed the reformist propagations of Egyptian rational salafism of Rashīd Riḍā and Muḥammad ‘Abdu. Therefore, JI was identified by many as a sub sect of reformist salafism and the difference with other *islāḥi*/salafi factions are in terms of political ideologization of Islam, as they have not conceived Islam in political and ideological terms. The salafi propagation was exclusively against what they conceived polytheistic contents of regional traditional Islam, while JI activists considered salafi *da‘wath* as incomplete since it reduced Islam into the very spiritual and religious sphere.

In later stages, global geo political priorities of competing Muslim states, regional wars and sectarian tensions after the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and Arab spring also

contributed in the solidification of JI as a sub-sect within larger *Ahl al-sunna wal- jamā'a*, with salafi orientation. As we have indicated earlier, one of the 2015 issue of *Bodhanam*, the research journal published by JI was exclusively dedicated to discuss shiite-sunni differences in terms of theology and jurisprudence. Most of the articles in the volume written by renowned *'ulama* of Keralite Islamism, criticized for being literal repetition of the wahabi antagonism towards shiite Islam. The *Bodhanam* elaborated insignificant religious disputes over the position of Qur'ān, the companions of prophet and concluded the impossibility of shiite-sunni unity. Such positions were to be ridiculed at the very instance among Islamist cadres, if published before the deepening of shiite-sunni divisions in the Middle East, occurred after American invasion of Iraq and later, the Arab spring. The said issue/volume was manifestation of the sectarian identification, a larger part of Keralite Islamists were into, which was not at all possible before the sectarian segmentation the whole Muslim world experienced after the regional wars associated to American invasion to Afghanistan and Iraq, in which various Islamist parties were sided with geopolitical interests of various regional powers.⁶²

Olivier Roy was right when he observed that political Islam failed to overcome the tribal, sectarian and traditional segmentations of the society. At times, they have contributed to the flourishing of the segmentation and bringing back sectarianism to the forefront of society, like the case in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet troops (Roy 1994). In Kerala, it was the increased influence of deeply entrenched salafi reformism in the body of Islamism, gulf expatriation and the imported *wahābi* Islam, together with new global geo political settings after the Arab spring directed political Islam into specific sectarian directions, which resulted in the abandoning of the conception of Islamic movement beyond juristic and theological segmentations of Muslim society. Islamism, hence transmuted into a *firqā* (group/sect) with specific theological and juristic contents, which departs from the

⁶² A significant number of Islamist leaders and activists didn't conceal their anger towards the visible tone of sectarianism and racism against the Shiites in the said volume.

conception of Islamism as a collective struggle for *iqāmat al-dīn*, irrespective of its members' sectarian or scholastic affiliation.

The result was that the big majority of traditional Muslims who followed native cultural Islam were not attracted neither to JI nor to its political program for establishing 'Islamic system'. The constituency of Keralite Islamism have thus restrained to the minute segment of reformist salafism within the landscape of Kerala Muslims. This was one of the very earlier departure from Islamism, the concept of Islam as a political and revolutionary movement encompasses the whole Muslim community with all its theological, sectarian and scholastic diversity as envisaged by Maudūdi and early Islamism.

In contrast to the questions of religious and juristic relevance, unified policy and programs for specific *mīqāts* were designed in relation to the political behavior of Islamists. The objective of such a practice is to streamline the thinking process of the Islamist activists, to produce similar and unified responses towards national, regional and international issues. However, absence of a mechanism to solve the ideological and political dissonance in addition to the lack of a systemic political ideology which defines the actions of the followers within the movement, led JI to have more than one political, politico-religious trends. We will elaborate these insider trends representing diversely in veteran Islamists, radical students, young liberals and the new '*ulamā*' class, with their conflicting Islamist notions. Hence, though Maudūdi and early Islamism were craving for such a unified political program with heterogeneous religious positions with the involvement of activists with diversified sectarian affiliation, a large part of JI was ended into a specific religious group within *Ahl al-sunna wal- jamā'a* with conflicting political/apolitical groups and trends, which we may elaborate on the following lines.

[The moderate veterans and student radicals.](#)

From the diversified expressions of Islamism, the major mainstream manifest in the majority leadership and the larger part of Islamist masses. The general public and the

Muslim masses construe Islamism in the quietism of veteran JI leaders with the notions of anti-communalism and moderate Islam. Opposing to this moderate stream, there is a radically political students wing who asserts the very Muslim identity on one side, question the moderation of veteran Islamism and attempts to provide a radical critique of Indian polity and societal structure on the other. A considerable number of student activists suggest the theoretical platform of Ambedkarism as the solution to end the oppression and to dissolve the existing contradictions in the Indian caste-violent and discriminated society. It is the most pertinent way of dealing with Brahmanic Hindutva hegemony and various atrocities results from the cultural nationalism it endorses.⁶³ Further, they were successful in initiating and formulating new alliances with diversified political trends of oppressed communities including Dalit groups and Ambedkarite initiatives beyond policy directives from the parent organization.

While the mainstream of JI and the majority of leadership pursue a path of political struggle in alliance with mainstream political parties, and in most cases by building electoral alliances with leftists, the students are in radical opposition to it. Their strategy of political assertion is through self-empowerment and creating wider solidarity among other oppressed classes and castes in Indian society and polity, while rejecting the mainstream secular politics. Non-statist actors play a significant role as far as radical students are concerned. Practically, SIO is in solid alliance with student Ambedkarti in the central universities (BAPSA in JNU and with ASA in HCU for eg.), while Keralite Islamists were providing electoral supports for left fronts in most elections till the formation of Welfare party.⁶⁴

⁶³ Hindutva right wing political actors express the variant of Indian Nationalism they endorse as Cultural Nationalism, “which is a middle class, high caste project of cultural homogenization” with an objective to “create a unified and homogenized Hindu political entity” (Athreya 2016)

⁶⁴ JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) and HCU (Hyderabad Central University) are prestigious central universities located respectively in Delhi and Hyderabad. ASA (Ambedkar Students Association) and BAPSA (Birs Ambedkar Phule Students Association) are Ambedkarite student movements operates in JNU and HCU, and SIO is in solid politic alliance with both movements.

Jl enthusiastically reject what they term communal and emotional politics, indicating to the radical political manifestations of Muslim students, as expressed by S.S Husaini, the current Vice President of the party (Husaini. 2017). For Jl, the first priority is to avoid any remnants of communalism in their political program, while SIO consider communitarian identity politics as the legitimate and only successful strategy in front of the oppressed communities and backward castes (SIO-UoH 2017). Further, they reject communalism as an analytical category as SIO recognizes the term is being employed by mainstream secular political powers to malign any political assertive action by oppressed religious/caste societies in protest to the Brahminic right wing Hindutva hegemony. For the latter, the mainstream political positions of secular left is regarded as manifestations of “radical untouchability, graded touchability to the zones of Muslim political agency” and demonstrates “symptoms of brahminical purity in maintaining their distance from Muslim organizations (SIO-UoH 2017).

The communalism/nationalism dichotomy was in fact initiated in colonial India and Muslim political subjectivities were categorized as proponents of communalism. The struggle against British colonialism produced Hindu and Muslim nationalisms which consequently ended up in producing two separate nation states namely India and Pakistan. Maudūdi was against both nationalisms and offered another solution to the question of Hindu-Muslim co-existence in a unified India. It was nearly identical to a confederation of states with self-rule for linguistic and religious minorities. Maudūdi puts it as *salṭanat dar salṭanat*, or *shibh dār al-islām* (Beegum 2005). Whatever the case is, the formation of modern Indian state under the very basis of Indian nationalism resulted in considering any Muslim political position as remnants of communalism and hence a threat to the very political unity of nation (Tejani 2008). Earlier, Nehru had argued that Hindu communalists will be able to disguise their communal sensibilities as nationalism the benefit which Muslim ‘communalist’ will be bereft off (Gopal 1988).

In a personal talk with me, an enthusiastic SIO activist criticized JI as they have internalized the (Hindu)nationalist assumptions against communalism, though it was targeted the very existence of JI itself, as a political subject.⁶⁵ Hence, their programs and policies were intended to prove that JI is not communal element but a movement exemplify religious humanism. SS Husaini states it clearly. “The condition after the demolition of Babari masjid and several and never ending series of communal riots would have easily dragged the Muslim community into Muslim-Hindu communal conflicts. However, JI was able to hold Indian Muslims within creative and balanced thought which prevented from being communalized”. He continues: “To resist communalism and sectarianism is one of the main objectives in all policies and programs of JI, articulated after Independence. It is JI’s staunch position that communalism and sectarianism, whether it is of majority or minority (of Hindu or Muslim), should be resisted and ended. (Husaini 2017, 10).

In addition, students differed with the parent organization for being apologetic towards mainstream secular power blocks on one side and Hindutva Brahminic public sense on the other.⁶⁶ They were critiqued for internalizing the culturalist assumptions on the primacy of culture, religious identity in generating and sustaining conflicts in the society. Its recent programs, campaigns and conferences arranged for public were guided by this concept of the primacy of religion as the major factor behind the conflict and violence, on the expense of socio political realities and the power structure entrenched in a given society.⁶⁷

SS Husaini writes: “The truth is that our nation was not able to escape from the hatred and bloody violence occurred when religion interfered in politics. Hence, the question arose, as what is the role of religion in social and political life. JI had attempted to answer to this question throughout its history of seven decades” (Husaini 2017, 11-12). “JI’s attempts

⁶⁵ Interview with an SIO activist

⁶⁶ Interview with a number of Student Islamist activists.

⁶⁷ JI has conducted district wide conferences in the first quarter of 2017, on the title “Islam is Balanced/Moderate”. This was interpreted by radical elements inside and outside the Islamic movement as apologia for secular public sense, which equates Islam with terror. On another occasion, a state wide campaign to combat the allegations of Keralites joined IS was initiated under the title “IS is not Islam”.

were to disseminate humanist values of religion and to resist sectarianism and hatred in the name of religion. JI emphasized the significance of religious values in politics” (Husaini 2017, 12). JI formed Dharmik Janmorcha (Virtuous Peoples Front) and leaders of all religions are members of this groups, in order to combat communalism and the false exploitation of religion (Husaini 2017, 12). *Eid Milans* (Eid gatherings), symposiums, *Sadbhavana Munchs* (Goodwill forums) and campaigns are organized widely, for dialogues between various faith and peoples of religion and to combat communalism (Husaini 2017).

A large number of student activists rejected such positions of discarding communitarian identity politics with the pretext that such political positioning will trigger religious fanaticism and communalism. Rather, they continued creating new alliances with new political forces of diversified oppressed communities and castes and challenged the main stream secular notions of ‘communalism’ and ‘religious fanaticism’ inherent in ‘identity politics’.⁶⁸ The secular fear in addition to JI’s ‘uninformed anti communalism’ are attempts to reject the very political and constitutional rights for minorities, oppressed classes, castes and communities to formulate their own political subjectivities and conceive it illegitimate in the framework of Indian secular democracy .

The ‘ulamā and Young Liberals.

Though JI is not supposed to embrace any specific religious, sectarian reading of Islam as Maudūdi and other founding fathers of Indian Islamism envisioned, the constituency of Keralite JI was of reformist salafism from the outset, as we indicated. This fact doesn’t mean that a monolithic interpretation of Islamic references without any insider criticism was the only reality among Islamist cadres. Rather; many dissident voices were quite visible. These voices and liberal positions are important though they were conceived by the

⁶⁸ The term identity politics itself is rejected. In one of my personal talks with a student Islamist, he described the term as ‘their own (Secular leftists) wild concept of identity politics’

opponents of Islamism as hypocritical position formulated in an objective to conceal the very ‘fundamentalist’ and dogmatic nature of JI.⁶⁹

The new trend of religious liberalism emerged and solidified especially after the formation of Solidarity youth movement is therefore notable. The youth movement was founded by JI Kerala to organize young masses including those who are outside Islamist circle⁷⁰ irrespective of their religious affiliation. In the context of Indian Islamism, it was a revolutionary step to offer membership for non-Muslims by an Islamist organization, though very few of them answered in favor of the call. Solidarity was a search for a unified political struggle for liberation from fascist Hindutva on national level, and a platform for a wider solidarity against imperialist transgressions on international level, by formulating a joined platform in which Islamists, leftists, environmentalists and human right activists united together. The possibility of such a political experiment was conceived by Solidarity as renewed understanding of Islam guided by Post-Secular political experiments (K. Ashraf 2017). However, it was observed that Solidarity had failed to comprehend various nuances and subtle differences within the politics of environment, gender/sexuality and human rights activism in a caste/ class privileged settings of Indian polity; rather, uncritically followed mainstream narratives (K. Ashraf 2017).

The significance of the development of religious liberalism in line with new experiments of Solidarity politics was that it had challenged the salafi structure of JI. The dominant political, cultural and intellectual currents of secular humanism and left liberalism in Kerala intruded to a handful of young Islamists. As a result, the programs of Islamist youth were recognized as replica of the slogans of radical left and they were in a fantasy of Left-

⁶⁹ For Eg, see the article of Pinarayi Vijayan, CM of Kerala (Vijayan n.d.). <https://www.cpimkerala.org/article-jamayathe-islami-103.php>

⁷⁰ Though Solidarity Youth Movement was meant to be a mass movement, females were denied its primary membership due to the gender positions on segregation Keralite JI upholds, which is in fact product of Maududi’s conceptions, Keralite Muslim tradition and Gulf expatriation.

Islamist unity against Imperialist and Hindutva fascist powers.⁷¹ In this regard, it could be observed that religious liberalism in Kerala had two different aspects from liberal Islam at global level. Firstly, it has strong political affiliations towards leftist outfits and worked as agents of Left-Islamist Unity inside and outside the Islamic movement (Neelakandan 2008). Also, the Individual apolitical spirituality of Liberal Islam was sidelined in favor of a sort of Islamic political liberation theology. At times, the concept of spirituality itself is contested and was conceived as ‘innovative conceptualization’ alien to the Islamic thought system due to the influence of Indian vedic philosophy and Islamic Sufism.⁷² Jamaat-e Islami; for liberal Islamists, is an approach to the moral messages of prophets and religions and an attempt to formulate a liberation ideology out of it, which is not part of political Islam nor spiritual Islam (Shameem 2007). Further, they have upheld the religious and sectarian pluralism as one of the crucial theological position and the cornerstone of future Islamic Activism (V. M. Ashraf 2016). The possibility of many legitimate Islam(s), religious and cultural pluralism were celebrated by young authors of Keralite Islamism in contrast to their salafi counterparts within Islamism (Vazhakkad 2007).

On the contrary, reformist salafism within political Islam witnessed a ‘return to fundamentalism’ or emergence of ‘neo-fundamentalism’ in line with Roy’s observation on global Islamism (Roy 2005, 232). Migration to the gulf countries in vast numbers and subsequent petro dollar funding in diversified ways in addition to the opportunities of higher studies in Islamic theology and jurisprudence for religious students graduated from Islamic universities in Kerala resulted in the reawakening of a puritan and apolitical salafi Islam which attempted to resist liberal tendencies within Keralite Islamism, based on a position of salafi textualism. The former can be represented in the major part of Islamist youth as we have seen, while the later can be manifested in the class of *‘ulamā*, religious

⁷¹ In personal talks, number of Solidarity associates were stressing the importance of formulating joined struggle with the left against fascist onslaught, and the impossibility/inability of Muslims/Dalits and other oppressed communities to combat fascism alone.

⁷² This observation is based on personal talk with a state level leader of Solidarity, currently working in JI and Social Media discussions occurred in closed groups.

scholarship, by virtue of them, the salafi wahabi puritan practices and notions were intruded into political Islam. The neo fundamentalist vision of Islamic movement conceived Islamism of Maudūdi as the extension of Islamic reformism of *Ibn Taimiyya* and *Ibn ‘Abd al-wahāb*. The novel theoretical formulation of *ḥākimiyya* of Maudūdi was interpreted in lines with the interpretations of salafi scholars such as *Ibn bāz*, *Ibn ‘uthaimīn* and *‘Abd al-raḥmān ‘Abd al-khāliq* and others (Khaliq 2010). *Jamaat-e Islami* was reinstated as a religious movement within Larger *Ahl al-sunna wal- jamā‘a*, at the cost of Maudūdi’s vision of larger Islamic unity in which diversified juristic and theological groups can join together for the larger goal of *Iqāmat al-dīn* (Khaliq 1997) (Khaliq 1997) (Khaliq 2011). As indicated earlier, Bodhanam, the quarterly journal under JI had published four articles on the issue of shiite-sunni variances by Keralite Muslim scholars in it’s Jan-Mar 2015 issue, which was later harshly criticized by JI leaders themselves as manifestations of internal Islamophobia and replica of anti-shiite accusations of Saudi *‘ulamā*.

To recapitulate, Islamism in India is not a static entity, but an evolving movement with diversified insider trends critical to each other, which managed to unite together for a greater cause of *iqāmat al-dīn*, the features of which were also conceived differently by various actors. Essentialist readings of Islam and Islamism will therefore definitely fail to understand the very nature of the transformation occurred to Indian Islamism, and the various trajectories of Post-Islamism witnessed in Indian socio political and religious cultural settings.

The assumption that political Islam (and Islam per se) is a force resist any type of transformation or self-reform is widely circulated. Islamism and Islam are, it is assumed, singular monolithic manifestation of a civilization and culture attributed as violent, intolerant and resistive to change. The social and political behavior of Islamist is defined and directed by religious injunctions, which is by definition homogenous, universal, founded on divine revelation. Hence, it is not disposed to humane interference and

interpretation, unchangeable and therefore produce merely fixed meanings. Therefore, Islamists all over the world are likely to think and act in the similar way, which will produce a unified religious political discourse and a program, the mode of argument goes on. The orientalist and neo-orientalist discourses are very likely to see Islam and Islamism as homogenous, monolithic and resistive to change, which is incompatible and pose serious threats to western civilization and modernity (M. Islam 2015, 47)

However, scholars who problematize orientalism with post-modern and post-structural theoretical leanings will not be in agreement with essentializing Islam; rather, they locate it in its colonial/post colonial socio political and religious cultural context. They don't deny the very multiplicity within Islam, Muslim societies and political Islam (M. Islam 2015, 47-48). In the specific case of JI Hind, anthropologist Irfan Ahmed challenge the very presumption of Islamism as a monolithic entity "immutably locked into a dead end", but it is a phenomenon which is defined by changing socio political realities hence exposed to ever changing postulations and positions (Ahmad 2010). Tariq Ramadan talks on various manifestations of Islamism as a social and political project and several categories within, such as legalists, reformists, traditionalists and revolutionaries. All these categories can be again divided into those who believe in violence and those who are not (T. Ramadan 2016). In addition, researchers are increasingly coming forward to explore the diverse and changing faces of political Islam and its various political trajectories in different socio political contexts (Ayyoob 2008) (Bayat. 2013).

So as, Jamaat-e Islami in India. From the outset, it was not meant for a specific group of people who follow a particular juristic or theological understanding and school of thought. On the contrary, Maudūdi called upon Muslims from various sects, theological and juristic schools of thought, even shiites to join the 'Islamic Movement' for the purpose of *iqāmat al-dīn*, the high political objective of establishing religion. It was the social and political project which differentiated Islamists from other ordinary Muslim individuals and groups,

not any specific theological or juristic mode of thinking or acting. However, later trajectories of JI may prove otherwise, as we have seen earlier as specific theological and juristic influences imposed on JI had curtailed the very tolerance of the movement towards various Muslim sects and schools of thoughts.

While the religious, theological and juristic tolerance of JI exposed to dogmatic and monolithic interpretations, the social and political program which is supposed to be unified, found diversified expressions. The end of ideology and the deideologization of Islamism in India, and the continual absence of ideologues and intellectuals who were able to relate the very theoretical framework of Islamism to the changing socio political contexts lead to many and opposing expressions of political behavior among Islamists. The veteran Islamist way of thinking and interpreting the current political crisis differed substantially from the liberal young Islamists. Radical student wing had somewhat different political postulations from older generations, and initiated new political and theoretical alliances with emerging forces of Ambedkarites and other oppressed caste/class identity politics, through creative engagement in university politics. In opposition, the *'ulamā* class, had carried another notion of deideologizing Islamism and contributed in transforming it into a specific theological and juristic school. Due to this very fact of accommodating contrasting trends within, various observers see the movement differently. As Keppel observed, some view them as religious right wing, while others as the left, the sighs of oppressed (Keppel 2000).

Hence, not only Islamism, but Post-Islamism also is not of monolithic and dogmatic features, rather herald possibilities of many voices and conflicting trajectories within political Islam. Post-Islamism is not negation of political Islam nor the end or failure of Islamist activism, but a new phase in which new trajectories of various Muslim political subjectivities and renewed understandings were emerged and flourished.

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