



## **KUDIPPAKA” – IN KANNUR POLITICS AN INVESTIGATION?**

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### **Abstract**

*Kudippaka : The word “ Kudippaka ” denotes family feud ie, hatred between two families. In medieval days the atrocities or murder committed by any on the member of another family might lead to kudippaka between these families. In such cases the members belonging to a family who declared kudippaka against another family as a revenge for any serious reasons like murder had the right to eliminate not only the elder male members but also their children. This would continue on both sides as long as the Kudippaka between them existed. Kudippaka may be recalled that the politics of Kannur, unlike other parts of Kerala and even that of the neighbouring districts in Malabar, has a strong dose of violence in it. This violent clashes, at one time between the CPI(M) and Congress and now intermittently occurring between CPI(M) and BJP resulting in wanton killing of party workers on both sides, remain a standing testimony to this contention.*

**Key Word :** *Kudippaka – Violence – Theyyam – Caste – Party Village*



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### **Introduction :**

The present series of political annihilation started in Kannur with the murder of an RSS worker, a Brahmin in 1969. By the 1st of March, 2015 the number of killings in this area reached 221. The latest in the list is CPM worker who was murdered at Chittariparamba, near Koothuparamba on 26.02.2015. 90% of those who get killed in the political feud belong to the Thiyya community. Though there are areas where other communities are majority, these

areas are never affected by the political turbulence. This shows that the political parties, irrespective of their ideologies and colour of the flags, see Thiyya youth as the ones destined to get killed for settling their rivalries. Kannur is known as the land of revolutions. This is an area where farmers, labourers, village teachers and people doing various other jobs live together. This people belonging to the lower strata of the society have a feeling of being marginalised. Hence they have been fighting their rights and to be part of the main stream for several decades. The eastern region of Kannur has the least spiritual and religious influences. The most important or lone deity in the area is 'Parassinikadavu Muthappan' for whom the main offering is local liquor and fish. The people here celebrate death consuming liquor and cracking jokes. Religious leaders have the least sway here. Political leaders literally set the agenda even in their daily life. Kannur has a rich legacy of temple art 'Theyyam' and belligerent deities (ugramurties). The concept of Theyyam idols – Wayanad Kulavan, Kathivannur Veeran, Muthappanete – have their origins from common people who were martyrs in the fight against feudalism. The temples or 'Theyyakavu-s' can be described the first martyr memorials. Militancy which is a part of the local culture and the Communist ideology which came in from eastern Europe during the British rule blended together and made the area with a large downtrodden segment, ideal for the growth of Communism. The movement has become a part of the local culture. Perhaps this is the reason why communism is kept a live here even after the movement withered away in the East European countries. 'Theyya Kavus', places of sacred worship, have now become the spots from where political viciousness get triggered. Temple festivals have become the time for the starting of violence with 'devotees' grouping together on the basis of political affiliations. Festivals which were once sites platform for peaceful co-existence have become the areas of rivalry now. Festivals and Theyyam processions are now controlled by the political sects and are often used to settle score with the weaker rival in each area. This is how disturbances erupt initially in the region 90% of those who get killed in the political feud belong to the Thiyya community. Though there are areas where other communities are majority, these areas are never affected by the political turbulence. This shows that the political parties, irrespective of their ideologies and colour of the flags, see Thiyya youth as the ones destined to get killed for settling their rivalries.

### **History of Political Violence in Kannur**

The analysis of how and why this rivalry originated and became deep rooted in Kannur is a point to be looked into. The problem started with the Beedi workers in undivided Kannur losing their jobs and plunging into poverty. The political manipulations that followed paved

the path for permanent animosity. The Mangalore based Ganesh Beedi Company had a large manufacturing base in Kannur. Income from Beedi making was what met the basic demands of the local population and what controlled the economy of the region. This was the only income of a large number of families. The owners of the Ganesh Beedi Company were members of Janasangh which was controlled by the RSS. They probably had a definite political agenda because of their affiliations. The first ministry in Kerala after the State reorganisation which was the first Communist ministry to come to power through a democratic election process led by E M S Namboothiripad, it brought in to existence the Beedi Cigar Act in 1968. This assured fair service conditions to the workers in this industry. The Beedi workers started agitation demanding facilities specified in the Act. This prompted the Ganesh Beedi Company management to close down their units in Kerala. Though the management made a profit of crores of rupees, they were not willing to give benefits to the workers. They wanted the workers to remain in the un organized sector so that they could manipulate them at will. Beedi from Kannur area was great demand as they were rated as the best. The company could not get this quality from their workers in Mangalore. Hence they wanted to resume their production here without adhering to the provisions of the Act. Their strategy was set up for three units – Deepak, Lakshmi and Gurukripa – managed by workers for manufacturing beedi and supplying the product. The company provided raw materials and an assured market by buying the finished products. For this they used the workers who had an RSS orientation. A number of workers who had revolted to get back their lost jobs and rights. They proceeded to the Ganesh Beedi Company headquarters at Mangalore under the leadership of A K G, C Kannan and O Bharathan for agitation. But this had no effect on the management which continued to use contract labourers who were mostly aligned to RSS. It is the clash between the traditional beedi workers who lost their livelihood and the contract labourers that started political violence in Kannur. The advent of the co-operative movement in Kerala helped to revive the Beedi industry. The Communist party played a pivotal role in organising co-operative societies of beedi workers to provide income to the workers and revive the industry. This in turn helped strengthen the communist movement in this area.

The main problem in Kannur, as in other places as well, is the unemployment of the youth and the helplessness associated with it. Thought it is more than fifty eight years after the organisation of the State, the region a part of North Kerala, still remain a neglected. Where neglect can be seen in every area. Unemployment is a universal phenomenon and not unique to Kannur. But the political parties manipulated the frustration of the unemployment youth and organised them under their flags. They use these youths to settle their political

differences and to strengthen their bases in the region. The lapse on the part of the authorities in maintaining the law and order situation in the area has contributed to a very large extent in worsening the situation. The police officials in Kannur seldom investigate the cases of political violence with determination. They satisfy themselves with a list provided by the concerned political organ which commits the crime and list them as accused without proper investigation. The youth who get listed as accused are often innocent workers of the respective political outfit. Once they are in the list of accused, their life gets miserable and they get bound to the respective outfit. The rival organ makes a note of this youth and his life is always at risk. An organisation which loses one of its workers enquires about it on its own and arrives at conclusion as to who executed the crime and implement their verdict which is often annihilation. The series continues without a break. This is mainly due to the inefficiency of the police in delivering justice. The police anarchy is mainly due to the fact that they literally get no protection from the Governments in power. Attempts on lives of police officials who tried to enforce discipline here are many. Recently a revolver was snatched from a Sub Inspector of Police by a member of political organ. What happened at Panoor recently is an example of Police inaction or inefficiency. A medical shop and a Ration store were ransacked by hooligans. Goods were loaded into trucks and carried away. All this happened in front of the police force that stood as silent spectators and probably enjoyed the scene. Country bombs are manufactured in many places at Kannur by all political and religious out fits for anti social use. Police and other intelligence agencies are well aware of this. Manufacturing is usually done in un occupied houses and the training for this is given by retired service personnel who get paid for it. Destructive politics in Kannur has many facets. It has reached such a stage that even the political leaderships and genuine workers are unable to bridle the menace as the Goonda raj have taken over the control overshadowing all established outfits.

The latest victim of the ruthless political violence is the CPM worker from Chittariparamba. He is the fifth person to be murdered since December 1, 2013. Killings to settle score seems to have no respite here. The death toll keeps rising as the perpetrators settle scores. The society gradually loses its sensitivity. The five months starting from September 1 last year the day when RSS leader was brutally murdered at Kizhakke Kathirur, saw a spate of sporadic violence in different parts in the district that were considered 'normal' in line with the infamous history of political hostility. But taking stock of the incidents would present a scary picture splattered with blood all over. Kannur is a place of riots for the past few months, subdued but dreadful and almost routine. The gangs start their attacks when sun

sets. Hurls bombs at houses and offices, throw stones at reading rooms, set them on fire and hack members and sympathizers of rival parties. But they seem to be on guard not to inflict lethal injuries that might lead to death. As per the data with the police, 183 persons were injured in political clashes in the district from September 2014 to the end of January this year. Six months saw four deaths in political fireceness. Many people were injured. More than 150 houses were damaged in bomb attacks, arson and in stone pelting. Many party officers, reading rooms and libraries were attacked during this period, as a token of revenge. Nearly hundred vehicles, including cars, auto rickshaws and motor bikes were set on fire on the cover of night. The statistics show steady increase in political clashes since September 1, last year with the total number of registered cases going up from 13 to 39 in January this year. The total number of injured persons in political violence rose to 50 from 14 in September last. ‘More than 400 of our workers were injured in attacks by the CPM in five months’ alleges RSS leader Valsan Thillankery ‘ The RSS –BJP workers killed -, five of our mates lost limbs, 75 houses and shops got damaged in bomb attacks. More than 50 vehicles including autos were set on fire. ‘The CPM district committee alleges that the attacks on their workers got multiplied after the BJP government assumed office at the centre. They allege that the police and the administration were playing fiddle to the RSS and BJP by not taking strict action against these criminals. A top police officer said ‘I have been working here for quite a long time and the violence seems to have changed mode, from direct confrontation in broad day light to clandestine operations on the cover of night. Houses, vehicles and offices are attacked at night and the culprits escape from the scene. The cycle continues. ‘The police have only a limited role here. The problems are more social in nature and deep rooted. It needs to be addressed at a different level People and political parties should take a vow to break this chain of violence and bring in lasting peace’, he said.

Many took the subdued forms of violence and the absence of retaliatory attacks as an indication of decline of the culture of violence. But the brutal killing of the CPM worker at Chittariparamba on 26.02.2015 has once again set the alarm ringing.

### **Numbers Say It All**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Injured</b>
September	13	14
October	32	37
November	38	45
December	31	37
January	39	50
Total	153	183
<b>No. of deaths in political violence in six months- 4</b>		

Source: The Police special branch report Kannur

### **Major Findings**

When compared to the past, the CPM in Kannur is facing a serious erosion in its socio-political base and the political space thus created is mostly occupied by BJP. Political violence which has now become part of the political culture of the region is indicative of the deficit in democratic spaces and ideology in the political society of Kannur. The political violence has a class and caste dimension to it, as its victims are poor and belong to lower castes. It is true that as in other parts of the country and else were in Kerala, the Left is facing certain problems in Kannur also. It has definitely failed it carry any strong condition with the women movements, environmentalists, Adivasies, Dalits since the 1980's. Further the new middle class in Kerala has a negative attitude towards the previous right based struggles in which the Left has always taken a lead role. Besides, this class is under the false consciousness of pseudo ethics, which runs against the tactics and methods employed by the Left.

### **Suggestions**

In the case of suggestions the author focus on three important issues to solve the recurrence of political violence: exemplary punishment to the culprits, creation of awareness among party cadres and the general public against the culture of violence. And addressing the socioeconomic backwardness and unemployment of the region,. Interestingly, the lowest priority in on the initiative on the part of the political leadership. The study thus reveals that violence has become a part of the political culture of Kannur, though of late its intensity has been reduced. While the historical tradition and socio-economic backwardness of the region are crucial to this no less significant is the intense politicisation of the civil society. The latter point, in a sense, is a paradox, for, politicisation is always considered as a necessary condition for the health of a democratic polity. In other sense this is also viewed as essential to fight injustice. Put differently, politicisation is supposed to enhance the democratic spaces in a society. However, Kannur deviates from this general trend. One reason may be that it is a case of too much of politicisation and fierce competition for political power. Also, all these take place in an atmosphere where ideology is wearing out

### **Conclusion**

However the political morphology of the district today shows certain signs of change. One the one hand, the place is gripped by political violence unprecedented in Kerala, and on the other political Right (BJP) is trying to challenge the Left on its own political turf. In the background of these developments, the present study attempts to understand the origin and



growth of violent politics (CPM) in Kannur and the contemporary challenges it faces. Political hatred and revenge have become the accepted norm here. Political criminals have taken up on themselves the enforcement of jungle justice in the manner of an eye for an eye for an eye and a life for a life. Now every murder has become the starting point of a new one. It is high time that the intelligentsia intervene to bring Kannur back to normal.

An analysis of violence shows that political assassinations which began to 1968 gradually picked up momentum and reached its peak during 1989-2000 and then fell steeply since 2000. Partywise CPI(M) suffered the greatest loss. 39% of the victims were other the sympathizers or members of the party. This is 10% points less for BJP (20%) and 15% points less for the congress. The study shows that the victims of violence are youth mostly Hindus and that too belonging to lower/intermediate castes. For instance an analysis of the whereabouts of the victims shows that 18-38 age group has the highest causality rate -41.3%. On the contrary 49-58 age group has the least number of victims. This indicates the ominous threat to the society at large as it puts at risk the cream of the society with the highest productive potential. In another sense, this is also a great loss to the potential parties as, on the one hand, they are deprived of their most reliable members, and on the other this slows down the process of cadre recruitment since fresh blood would be reluctant to join the parties out of sheer fear.

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