

Article

Iranian Islamic Revolution and the Transformation of Islamist Discourse in Southern India: 1979–1992

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Abstract: By focusing on the publications of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) in the Malayalam language, this article argues that the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution (IIR) marked a rupture from the disenchantments of the 1947 partition of British India and Cold War-centered politics for the Islamists of Kerala. This rupture from the colonial past and a Western-inspired intellectual climate had resonances in the discourse on Islam in Kerala. The Iranian revolution not only imported the idea of Islamism or revolution but also a renewed interest in democracy, modernity and the idea of “Islamist political” to the southwest coast of India. In an attempt to write an intellectual history of emotions related to the IIR, this paper argues that in the case of Islamists, there was a strong tendency to break from the intellectual discourse of the nation-state and begin afresh in politics, and the moment of 1979 provided what they sought for long.

Keywords: Iranian Revolution; Jamaat-e-Islami Hind; modernity; Islam; South Asian Muslim; Islamism



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1. The Impact of the Revolution

The Iranian Revolution had a wide political, cultural and intellectual impact all over the world. It has been argued that Michael Foucault’s influential formulations or critique of liberalism were in no fewer terms influenced by the “discovery of spirituality” in the Iranian Revolution (Alan Beaulieu 2010). Alan Beaulieu moves away from understanding Foucault’s supposedly journalistic impressions of the Iranian Revolution as Orientalist and instead sees it as crucial to his theoretical development. In the section below, I attempt to show how crucial the Iranian Revolution was for the intellectual development and the emotions of Islamism on the southwest coast of India from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. The period was chosen to indicate the early phase of the changing impressions of the Iranian Revolution, and I have focused on the periodicals and writings related to one Islamist Organization in Kerala. The choice of Jamaat-e-Islami as the case study also enables one to have a comparative perspective of a larger South Asian region with its presence in three countries of South Asia. While for Foucault, the IIR provided “the possibility of spiritualization of tradition”, the long impact of IIR on Islamist ideological thought and the emotional world was also furthering a “spiritualization of politics”, which I explain in non-Orientalist terms, similar to Foucault Islamists who welcomed the revolution with enthusiasm and reversed their position in a few years’ time. However, the ideological impact the revolution had on Islamist discourse and emotion cannot be overlooked.

Beaulieu critiques Foucault for failing to recognize the “authoritarian” and despotic character of the revolution (Beaulieu 2010, p. 805). However, we can see such a failure with the Islamists, whom very soon we will see battling for an Islamic democracy against “Khomeini’s authoritarianism”. Similar to Foucault, while being critical of the later developments, Islamists remained committed to the idea of revolution. While in Foucault the search was for a “revolutionary form of spirituality”, the Islamists were looking for a “spiritual” twist to the “modern revolutions”.

Jean Peter Hartung has drawn attention to the “apocalyptic mood” present in the Muslim world in 1979. Hartung also demonstrates the “hybridity” in Abul Ala Maududi’s

training and writing (Hartung 2014, p. 5). Hartung uses Daniel Brown's "the prism of modernity" to understand the modern reformulation of Islam—as an ideology, in Maududi's case—while keeping the Quran as the "ultimate authority" (Hartung 2014). In the following section, I look at the importance of the 1979 moment for JIH of Kerala in reformulating Islam within the prism of modernity and the contingent trajectories of the reception of the revolution.

2. JIH and the Idea of Revolution

In his significant contribution to the study of Islam in the contemporary world, Muhammad Qasim Zaman says that John L. Esposito, in his book *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*, crucially missed the impact of the Iranian Revolution in South Asian regions and amongst the Sunni Ulama (Zaman 2002, p. 254). Simon Wolfgang Fuchs recently filled the gap with his study on the "1979 moment" for the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan (Fuchs 2021). He examines travelogues and JI publications dealing with the responses to the 1979 moment. While the responses varied from admiration to skepticism, the travelogues indicated an increasing tendency to directly experience what they perceived as the realization of an Islamic Utopia in person. While Fuchs focuses on the Pakistan experience where the state showed the promise of a rapid transformation into Islamic ways—much to the delight of Islamists—the politics of Islamists in India and especially in its southern states had different concerns as "Muslim citizens" of the Indian Union. However, many aspirations expressed in the JIH publications in Malayalam were remarkably similar to Fuchs's findings of the travelogues in Urdu. In this paper, I examine how different contexts of India and Pakistan defined, shaped, and inspired Islamism into an "aspiration for coherence" while retaining its heterogeneity.

Fuchs shows that none other than the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, Abul Ala Maududi himself, endorsed the 1979 moment in excitement as "Islamic" while also urging all Muslims to support the revolution (Fuchs 2021, p. 334). It was politically tricky for Maududi, who received Saudi Arabia's most valued prize in the name of King Faizal in January of the same year (Zaman 2002, p. 167). While one could see an attempt by the Sunni Islamic power center to woo back the influential ideologue of the contemporary times into its fold with the award from the 1979 influence, the followers of JIH were quick to share and develop Maududi's admiration for the revolution not only in Pakistan but in India as well. In the case of Pakistan and India, traveling back and forth between India and Iran, Iranian leaders addressed the JIH gatherings and conferences in India.

On the first anniversary of the IIR, a delegation of JIH visited Iran at the invitation of the new government. From the report of JIH's mouthpiece in Malayalam *Prabodhanam*, it appeared that there prevailed high excitement and curiosity amongst the Islamists on how the revolution has changed Iran. *Prabodhanam*, in its 8 March 1980 issue, reported the return of the JIH delegation from Iran (*Prabodhanam* 1980b). The delegation JIH included JIH national secretaries Moulana Hamid Ali, Moulana Hamid Hussain, and JIH's English Magazine *Radiance*'s editor, A.H. Rizvi. The supreme leader of the JIH or the national Ameer, Moulana Muhammad Yousuf, attended the anniversary program as a representative of *Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami*—another Islamic, mostly Sunni conglomeration of ulama in the conference. However, Moulana Muhammad Yousuf cut short his visit to Iran as he had to attend another conference organized by the Kerala unit of JIH. *Prabodhanam* did not mention whether Moulana Muhammad Yousuf spoke about his experience of the visit to the Kerala conference. However, it gave importance to Moulana Hamid Ali's address to a gathering in Delhi specifically to share the experience of his visit (*Prabodhanam* 1980d).

One of the notable exchanges of ideas occurred when a senior member of the Iranian establishment, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, attended and addressed JIH's sixth national conference. In the meeting, he released a translation of the Quran into Bangla (*Prabodhanam* 1981). One can observe that while JIH in India after independence has focused on translations of the Quran and enriched the vernacular with Islamic literature in Urdu, Bangla, and Malayalam, the 1979 moment gave a distinct flavor to its propagation of religion in

the sub-continent. The JIH, formed in 1945, faced an emotional vacuum in the wake of the partition of the sub-continent with the exit of the British in 1947. The emotional vacuum went to revamp their foundational statist ideologies of religion.

However, the 1979 moment reignited the “prism of modernity”, where JIH was able to present the Quran and its ideology within a new framework of liberation. This concern found expression in the address of Syed Khamenei. The report on his speech published in March 1980 in *Prabodhanam* in Malayalam was titled “Quran—A text/book (*Grantham*) for liberation or *vimochanam*” (*Prabodhanam* 1981). The idea of *vimochanam* fit well into the colonial history of the Mappila Muslim peasant insurgency against the Hindu landlords and the British state (*Panikkar* 1989; *Ansari* 2005). However, while the pre-1979 emphasis of JIH on the Quran was on the aspects of state power, the term “liberation” was a new addition. The idea of liberation had the potential to appeal to the other lower sections of the communities in Kerala who participated in the caste egalitarian movements in twentieth-century British India.

Khamenei, in his speech, claimed that the Quran was the inspiration for their opposition against the Shah, and this strong basis made even Americans hesitant to help the Shah. Both Western ideas and Eastern socialism are antagonistic to Islam, Khamenei added. However, Khamenei’s idea of Islam as a religion that freed “Arabs from the shackles of slavery and made them free citizens” was crucial to *Prabodhanam* (*Prabodhanam* 1981). While there was revolutionary rhetoric against the United States explicitly and implicitly against the Soviets in Khamenei’s speech, it promised an alternative with new rhetoric of freedom, justice, and fearlessness based on faith. There was another immediate domestic context to JIH’s attempt to relate to the idea of liberation and freedom against tyranny. JIH was one of the organizations banned in the 1977 political emergency (the constitutional rights were withdrawn, and many leaders were arrested) in India (*Prabodhanam* 1992). The political atmosphere of the early 1980s was particularly resonant, with slogans and rhetoric against the immediate tyranny they survived.

While domestically, the 1970s was a decade of the worst tyranny JIH faced, the same decade was also remembered in the 1980s with the hopes of an “Islamic Freedom”. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s reign and the emergency she declared—“tyranny”—ended with democratic protests followed by an election in India (*Kaviraj* 1986). This feeling of success made the triumph of IIR emotionally close to the Islamists of the early 1980s. The publications of JIH, which were crucial to its organizational structure, were banned in every language during the emergency. Most JIH activists who were either writers or readers of these publications were deprived of the intimate political emotion of reading their literature (*Yasir* 1992). However, a section of leaders somehow continued reading by using underground publications and other tactics during the emergency (*Karakunnu* 1992). JIH as an organization had heavily invested in publications and translations to vernacular, almost as central to their organizational activity. The feelings of deprivation of not engaging with the publications was an emotion closely connected with their concepts of religiosity and piety, as their literature carried Quran translations, studies, and moral stories from the classical Islamic texts. The overwhelming emotions over the success IIR provided an emotional reversal in this context.

Translating the revolution was another activity *Prabodhanam* undertook in the early decade of the revolution. There were translations from both international English and Arabic magazines and newspapers. In a translation published from an account that appeared in a magazine from Qum city, “Shaheed”, *Prabodhanam* carried a report card of the IIR in 8 months (*Prabodhanam* 1980a). *Prabodhanam*, while saying the original report in Arabic is too long, decided to highlight a few achievements of the revolution, which included the increase in minimum wages of workers, reduction in the prices of houses and land, the free distribution of water and electricity, the confiscation of the properties of old elites, and the stopping of oil trade with Israel, the Philippines, and South Africa. *Prabodhanam*, while being a local magazine in Malayalam, had earlier translated many political reports from

Arabic, and the importance it gave to global affairs was immense. The IIR added further to this global political focus of *Prabodhanam*.

The emotions towards democracy of the young generations, who read *Prabodhanam* and are rooted in local politics such as emergency, were shaped by global events, including the IIR. The election results in Iran were also reported with much enthusiasm. The victory of the Islamic Republican Party was categorized as “stunning” (*Prabodhanam* 1980c). The magazine was concerned with the future of the revolution; on 24 May 1980, a response was written to *Prabodhanam* with the title, “Is the Islamic revolution on the brink of destruction?” At the same time, *Prabodhanam* also started serializing the ideologue of IIR Ali Shariati’s writings. Shariati’s books published in Malayalam with the official support of the Iran government were also notable. The books of Shariati and Morteza Motahhari influenced a generation of Muslim youth after the 1970s. It provided them with a new framework and a new language to engage with Marxism and existentialism, which were trends in Kerala’s wider public sphere. The news of Iran making an “Islamic cinema” was reported in the 1980 June issue of *Prabodhanam* with much enthusiasm (*Prabodhanam* 1980f).

In July 1980, it was reported that a Sunni masjid was established in Tehran (*Prabodhanam* 1980g). However, soon global Sunni disenchantments were as well reflected in the responses to IIR in Malayalam. A notable example was seen in a biography of Ayatollah Khomeini written in Malayalam by V. Abdul Kabir, who was also once an editor of *Prabodhanam*. While comprehensively looking at the life of Khomeini, Kabir ended with anxiety and skepticism over the “democratic commitment” of the new Iranian government by citing the example of their “unjust support to Syrian Tyranny” where the Asad regime and the Islamists were at loggerheads (Kabir 1983). In sum, the emotions reflected in the early 1980s were marked with admiration on the realization of Utopia; however, soon, the disenchantments were apparent following the reports in Islamist Arab media. Meanwhile, the clout of Khomeini as a leader and symbol of revolution did not diminish until his death in 1989. *Prabodhanam* had many reports in the 1980s suggesting a “Khomeini wave” in countries such as Indonesia (*Prabodhanam* 1980e).

3. The Critique of the Revolution and Modernity

Once recovered from the surprise, *Prabodhanam* and Islamists continued their critical engagement with the revolution. T.K.M. Iqbal in *Prabodhanam* consistently wrote on the changing aspects of the revolution in Iran. Iqbal’s article published in *Prabodhanam* titled “Iran: Problem with approaches” was one such detailed critique expressing a rupture from the early 1980s euphoria (Iqbal 1987). For Iqbal and the Islamists, the Iranian Revolution signified a post-colonial break from the past. For them, Shah was part of the old regime which, to quote his words, was “a monstrous mirror image of many dictators of the Muslim world who sold their country to colonialism.” Iqbal’s language is similar to a nationalist post-colonial critique. This similarity between nationalist movements and Islamists who were having a global political aspiration is a crucial change here. Dipesh Chakrabarty has identified the break in post-colonial tradition with the importance given to race in the discourse of post-colonial thinkers and politics (Chakrabarty 2005). The break was from the traditional anti-colonial critique in India mostly manifested with Nehru in the decolonial period. However, the shift in decolonial tradition in the seventies was aiming for a “deterritorialized”, post-colonial “world of solidarities”, Chakrabarty shows. Similarly, a deterritorialized Islamic revolution enabled JIH to firmly situate it in the larger decolonial tradition of South Asia.

Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr has discussed Maududi’s idea of revolution, where the Jamaat-e-Islami from very early on shared a non-Eurocentric idea of social revolution (Nasr 1996, p. 70); according to Nasr, “a step-by-step peaceful revolution” was Jamaat’s idea, and Maududi’s aim was to appropriate the concept of the revolution by “disarming his leftist rivals”. How did essentially reformist Jamaat respond to the idea of revolution and its aftermath? Nasr elaborates (Nasr 1996, p.71), but does not probe the details of the local responses of the Jamaat to the global Islamic event of revolution. Maududi’s emphasis on non-violence is a curious shift

from the tradition of the Islamic movement; however, before clearly expressing his Islamist theology, Maududi had a stint with a Gandhian variety of Indian national movements. Nasr mentions the biography written by Maududi of Gandhi, while Maududi turned to a critique of Gandhi later (Nasr 1996, p. 16). However, the emphasis on gradualist transformation which Maududi himself and the post-colonial Jamaat leaders emphasized in Kerala could have Gandhian antecedents. The decoloniality of Jamaat discourse should be located locally in the intellectual tradition of the anti-colonial Indian national movement as well as in the Sunni global response to Shia Islamic revolution. Humeira Iqtidar identifies the “decolonization” of political theory as a crucial goal of Maududi’s thought (Iqtidar 2021). My interest here is to understand the decolonial undercurrents in the critique and the reception of revolution among the Malayali Jamaat activists, the origins of which can be traced back to the Indian national movement and the decolonial global Islamist present at the same time.

With that critique of the dynasts such as Shah who “belonged to the colonial past”, Iqbal also speaks about revolution as a unique experience for the Islamists (Iqbal 1987). How he or *Prabodhanam* deal with the question of sectarianism is an important concern. By the 1980s, as Fuchs has shown, the Islamists could not bypass sectarianism and had to address the issues head-on. One of the reasons was the increasing antagonism against Shia supremacy in the Sunni Islamic world, and *Prabodhanam* could no longer keep the sectarian issues under the carpet. However, even in such a critique, the emotion of the Islamists was well captured in Iqbal’s writing. He says that the revolution, with its “Islamic ideological morale and fraternity”, had an undeniable Islamic content (Iqbal 1987). The Islamic content, according to him, had kept the “blind spots of Shia belief” at bay in the beginning. His concern also includes why the Islamists were not able to replicate the revolution in other countries, and he makes a nuanced argument that the specific Shi’ite religious and psychological aspects, which according to him are both the strength and weakness of Iran, need to be probed (Iqbal 1987).

In less than ten years after the revolution, one can observe in Iqbal an attempt of the Islamists to critically engage with their immediate past. In his view, Islamists had the realization that it was not an easy task to convert the “romantic militancy of revolution” to a “rough reality”, and by 1988, perhaps as a result of the global events between the Sunni nations and Iran, he makes the statement that “we never had the idiotic understanding of Iran moving towards a complete Islamic system”. However, the Islamist hopes for the revolution were defined by the declaration of “Islam as the foundation of a new nation”. That a political revolution needs to be followed by a moral revolution is the Islamist argument and the critique of the revolution which Iqbal conveys in his writing. However, the crucial divergence here is the idea of the Iranian revolutionary state, and governance outlined by Islamists and specifically by the founder Abul Ala Maududi, rooted in a Sunni jurisprudential as well as a political paradigm. While not explicitly identifying the latter concept as Sunni or Islamist, Iqbal does critique the idea of “imamiyyah” as a form of dictatorship (Iqbal 1987). Here, the critique develops from a “modern democratic point of view”, which Islamists also found incompatible with the idea of Islam a while ago. For the Sunni Islamists, negotiating the questions of redefining modern democracy while at the same time critiquing the Shia adoption of the democratic system was a tightrope walk.

As Irfan Ahmad has pointed out, for JIH by the 1980s, Islam was redefined as compatible with democracy (Ahmad 2009). For Iqbal, the idea of pristine democratic Islam was watered down and looked ugly in Iran by the mixture with Imamate. Curiously, Iqbal also makes a defense of Western-educated, scientifically thinking, and pragmatic leaders who were increasingly marginalized in Iran (Iqbal 1987). While Iqbal’s changing position about revolution was immediately related to the Iran–Iraq war, where the Sunni ulama took an anti-war position and critiqued Iran’s assertions as belligerent, there were domestic concerns which bothered him. A rival student youth movement was flexing its muscles in the Islamist rhetorical sphere with a fascination with the idea of revolution. The rivalry of the organization with mainstream Islamists of the same origin had been accurately described by Irfan Ahmad as a “clash within” in the North Indian context (Ahmad 2009,

p. 138). In the Southern Indian example, the rivalry was fiercer and the debates of IIR had a polarizing impact on the existing clash.

Prabodhanam also translated and carried the letter of Iranian dissident Mehdi Bazargan critiquing Khomeini's war policies (Bazargan 1987). It is worth probing how Mehdi Bazargan's idea of democracy and constitutionalism found an unlikely admirer among the Islamists of Southern India. Saeed Barzin has significantly identified Bazargan as an important "modern Muslim thinker", with his advocacy of constitutional and democratic politics, as a "representative of liberal Islamic thought" (Barzin 1994). A closer look at Bazargan's ideas and JIH's changing relationship with modern democracy and electoral politics is worth attempting.

With ethnographic insights from the Northern Indian State, Uttar Pradesh, Irfan Ahmad's intervention in the relations between democracy and Islamism is useful for understanding JIH's changing positions regarding IIR. In this context, one can note that translating and publishing Bazargan in Malayalam was not a coincidence in light of JIH's own ideological transformations. According to Irfan Ahmad, even in 2002, the debate on whether democracy is forbidden was alive within JIH. He points out that with the major electoral triumph of Hindu Nationalist and anti-Muslim politics of BJP in India, there was a call for a vital shift in terms of their policies on democracy (Ahmad 2009). While there was resistance from inside the organization in the early 2000s to hobnobbing with democracy, eventually JIH formed and launched its own political party. While the threat of Hindu nationalism was real, the JIH hope of forming a political party of its own while realizing the near-impossibility of a large-scale electoral dividend was inspired equally by the global Islamist examples. One can note this as an example of the continuing politicization of Islamist politics in the post-globalized world.

However, one can probe further how the conversation around IIR shaped the early discourse on democracy and Islamism. Irfan Ahmad argues that the democratic process in India, which did not prevent JIH from participating in electoral politics, did slowly transform their ideas on democracy and secularism (Ahmad 2009, p. 228). Ahmad argues that JIH's shift towards softening their stand—beginning in 1961—towards democracy was aimed to win the "Muslim masses" or the "Muslim public" who did not follow JIH's detachment policies from the secular democratic institutions (Ahmad 2009, p. 229).

There was harsher critique of the revolution from outside the "reformist" groups as well. JIH's relationship (although which evolved being critical) with the Iranian Revolution and the revolutionary ideas had come under critique from their opponents such as the various Salafi groups in Kerala (Sunnivoice.net 2014; Nerpatham.com 2017). The Salafi groups were particularly antagonistic of the translation of Ali Shariati.

Ali Shariati was immensely popular in the Islamist circle, and many of his works were translated. Arash Davari has probed into the concept of decoloniality in the context of the Iranian Revolution and Ali Shariati's lectures. He discusses Ali Shariati's ideas of "postcolonial authoritarian rule" similar to Sukarno (Davari 2021). One could see a similar shift in the reception of IIR in JIH discourse where authoritarianism and decolonial democratic ideas become a point of crisis. Prathama Banerjee argues that "democracy, right from the start, was the constitutive question for modernity in India" (Banerjee 2021). She explains that the significance of democracy is related to the "anti-colonial struggle". While JIH as an organization could not place itself in the larger Indian National Movement or the legacy of the anti-colonial movement, its relationship with the past was defined by its own decolonial present and ideas of modernity. Therefore, in order to continue the discussion on democracy in this specific context, the experiences of modernity with IIR are also worth discussing.

4. The Afterlife of the 1970s—A Long Road to Tehran

While it was the birth of the revolution which shook the Islamist status quo and basic premises of their Utopia in the early 1980s, it was the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, and mourning officially conducted every year after that by the Iranian government,

that were crucial to the dreams of a new generation of Islamists. The death of Khomeini took place at a time when the Muslim community of India was in another crucial phase after the demolition of Babri Masjid. While the emergency of the 1970s did not impact the community as a whole, the aftermath of the demolition of Babri Masjid had a broader impact on Muslim communities regardless of their theological affiliations and sectarian practices. However, the demolition of Babri Masjid was not an unexpected event for the political leadership of Muslims, as they were increasingly becoming beleaguered with the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s. A delegation was invited from India to participate in the ceremonies following the death of Khomeini. The delegation included leaders of JIH and the Indian Union Muslim League as well. A travelogue was written after this journey by T.K. Muhammad Iqbal titled *Tehranil our pathikan* or *A Traveller in Tehran* (Iqbal 1993). Iqbal's travelogue is a specimen of the emotional impact of the feelings of revolution between 1979 and 1992. In this section, while reading this book closely, I attempt to differentiate between the feelings of disenchantment of the 1970s and the 1990s.

Islamic Publishing House, Kozhikode, introduced the travelogue by recollecting the emotions of 1979 in their preface. According to the publisher, the IIR was an “awesome event in History”. It further added that the revolution occurred when Muslims around the globe were “in the hangover of a cultural sleep”, and they were “enthralled” by the unfolding of the revolution. The preface particularly mentioned that with the end of the Cold War, the American unilateral hegemony was established, and here, post-revolution Iran had a major role to play. Iqbal undertook his one-week journey to Iran on 30 May 1992. Iqbal, in his introduction, acknowledged that what is expressed in the travelogue is a deeply personal and emotional account. For him, this writing was bringing together “unorganized thoughts and emotions supplemented with few facts and realities into the craft of a travelogue”. The curiosity regarding what happened in Iran and how revolutionary Iran was shaping up had not died down in the early nineties Kerala; instead, it had only increased in time, the introduction tells us.

Iqbal (born in 1961) belonged to the generation of young Islamists who were born after the partition, and visiting post-1979 Iran for him was a “dream came true”. Iqbal was among 138 Indians specially invited to take part in the commemoration of Khomeini's death in 1992. His delegation included 14 members who belonged to different Muslim political and social organizations. In the chartered flight sent by Iran, the “Islamic character” of the Iranians chanting salat in the name of Prophet Muhammad was a curious sight for the author. However, he soon qualifies what he felt like an impressive display of piety by saying that “later he has felt the excess salat and the ritualism associated with it”, resulting in a loss of piety.

The guests were provided accommodation in the Hotel Istiqlal—which Iqbal translated to Malayalis as “freedom”. As we saw earlier, the idea of freedom that charmed the JIH immediately after IIR could be seen recurring in this context. Iqbal explicitly reminds the reader that the hotel was renamed “freedom” after the revolution. In the 1980s, *Prabodhanam* reported the renaming of streets in Iran as a significant development. Iqbal was particularly impressed with the energy of young Iranian men and women, and he says the Iranians are no longer the sleepy Iranian caricatured by Muhammad Asad: “what else has changed them other than revolution!” he exclaimed. The hotels built by Shah were transformed into Islamic ways, and you no longer see the wine-drinking European in the hotel, replaced by black tea and Coca-Cola. However, for the completion of the revolution, Coca-Cola had to go. Further, he witnessed a prayer room and a Qibla marker in the hotel. Apart from these transformations, he noted, he was happy to see television in the hotel lobby, where even their visit was televised. He was highly impressed by what he calls the calm, quiet nature of Iranians and added that they are different from Pakistanis or North Indians who were too loud in public. He was also told that “most people in the city of Tehran travel by car”. He was also impressed by the visibility of women in the public sphere and their Islamic way of dressing (Iqbal 1993).

Fuchs argues that due to Pakistan's Shia–Sunni sectarian concerns, the JIH's fascination with IIR gradually waned away. However, while being in an exclusively Sunni domain, the JIH in Kerala were not dragged into such sectarian questions locally. The responses to 1979 were varied throughout the 1980s. However, one could derive a consolidated picture of the impressions about the revolution in Iqbal's account. Iqbal's book suggests that unlike the case of Pakistan, 1979 remained an inspiration even in the early 1990s. In other words, one decade was not enough for the dream to die. Instead, Iqbal saw much allying with the views of the *Prabodhanam* in the previous decades, that the revolution was an ongoing and evolving process that bore good fruits of Islamic ideas of freedom and women's representation in public.

Iqbal's visit to Iran ends without much resentment or critique against the revolution, and it is largely a pro-revolutionary account. The appeal of both television and modernity to Iqbal is vital for many reasons. Television was not widespread in Kerala during the early 1990s when India had just opened its market to the world. Moreover, the ulama of Kerala heavily resisted the idea of television as "UnIslamic". However, television was not critiqued by Iqbal, unlike Coca-Cola. What is significant here is Iqbal's subsequent admiration for Iran's art and cinema, which were not well-received ideas for the Malayali Muslim religious mainstream. In his admiration and a consensus among his co-travelers on these aspects, one can notice an emotional transformation brought to their idea of tradition. The roots of this admiration were in the *Prabodhanam* of the 1980s, where it was appreciative of Islamizing cinema and gender representation in the public sphere. While acknowledging the tradition as necessary, he added that it has space in the more modern world.

Here, it is significant to add that there was a strong disenchantment with modernity and Western ideas in Islamism. While being "modern" themselves, this has created a tension within modernity where an Islamist emotional disenchantment with Western symbols is reflected (Zaman 2002, p. 172). However, Muhammad Qasim Zaman's understanding of Sunni Islamists as "largely rooted in modern and westernized political institutions", similar to that of Modernists of the Muslim world, is important in this Islamic modernization Iqbal witnessed in Iran (Zaman 2002, p. 8). Zaman rightly suggests that since the nineteenth century, Muslim modernists have "sought ways to make Islam compatible to the modern challenges" (Zaman 2002, p. 7). In the case of IIR, we see that by being Islamic and modern at the same time, Iqbal finds a way to quell his disenchantment with modernity. To explain further, Qasim Zaman draws attention to the argument of Roxanne L. Euben in understanding the attempt of Sayid Qutub "to 'reenchant' the world defined by disenchantment". Euben, in her book, argues that the Islamist attempt at "reenchantment" was not "anti-modernism" but an attempt "to redefine what it must mean to live in the modern world", precisely what IIR enabled Iqbal and JIH to do.

5. Conclusions

This article argued that the impact of the Iranian Islamic Revolution extended beyond geographical, lingual, and sectarian boundaries. It further elaborated that a study of the vernacular world of Islamism, away from Arabic, Urdu, and Persian, could unsettle as well as enhance the historiography of modern Islamic movements. While colonialism is a major reference point within the histories of South Asian Muslims, an exploration into the Malayalam-speaking region showed that the recent transformations of Islamism in intellectual, discursive, and emotional spheres occurred in the post-colonial environment. This rupture from the colonial is also evidenced by the importance of the Malayalam language—which was not a central administrative language of any Muslim empires or the large Islamic movements of Colonial South Asia—to the history of Islam in the modern world. The post-colonial transformations of Islamism demonstrate that non-Western experiences such as the revolution of 1979 had the potential to influence the conversations of Islamists and their conduct within the Muslim communities of southern India. While the Islamists of Southern India responded to the surprise of the 1979 moment with enthusiasm and grappled with the limitations of the post-revolutionary Utopia in the immediate years

after the revolution, many regional/local events, including the rise of Hindu nationalism, and the challenges of globalized modernity shaped the evolving relations with Islamism and the idea of revolution.

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