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RELIGIOUS SURVIVAL OF HINDUS IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC MALAYSIAN ENVIRONMENT

The Hindu community is a minority group in Malaysia, living together with the majority of Muslim Malays. Following their migration to Malaysia during British colonisation, the Hindus have to endure various challenges. This study discusses the survival of Hindus in dealing with their religious concerns in the Malaysian Islamic environment. The issue that was identified and triggered critical concern among the scholars is the Islamisation agenda. A qualitative approach is employed to fulfil the objective of this study, which entails analysing works of literature. This study finds that the Islamization agenda discussed to be a major concern in the survival of the Hindu community is its apparent application from the government's Islamisation of policies, including the land allocation for temples and shrines and religious conversion. The findings also reveal that, despite the intimidation perceived by the Hindus on Islamisation, it has played a vital role in reforming their religion.

Keywords: *Hindus, survival, Islamisation agenda, government policies, reform, Malaysia.*

Introduction

Hinduism is among the religions followed in Malaysia. The arrival of Hinduism in Malaysia took place multiple times, and the earliest period happened since the third century through trading ventures and Hindu missionaries.[1] Nevertheless, the spread of Hinduism in Malaysia occurred notably by the migration of Indian people during the latter part of the nineteenth century with British colonisation. The enormous Indian migrations transpired from South India to serve the British to work in the plantations and labour sectors. There were many reasons for the preference of Indian migration, which was primarily from South India. The reasons were the close distance between India and Malaya, the comparable colonial power of ruling in the sub-continent of India by the British, and the South Indian population's impoverishment due to its traditional economy's failure.[2] Apart from these factors, the British preferred South Indian people because they were loyal, efficiently manageable, not as ambitious as their Northern Indian neighbours, and entirely dissimilar from

the Chinese.[3]

Another phase of Indian migration materialised with their migration from other continents of India and Sri Lanka. They came to serve in security, railway project, and clerical services. These Indians carried with them not just their ethnicity, culture, and language, but also their religion. Since the number of Indians essentially came from South India, the Saivite school of Saiva Siddhanta has dominated. Thus, almost all the researchers affirmed that this domination became the majority and famous school among the Hindus in Malaysia next to Vaishnavism.[4] Now, Hinduism in Malaysia is a minority religion practised by Malaysian and followed chiefly by the Indian community, a minority society. Following the Malaysian Statistical Department 2016[5], which declared that over the whole Malaysian population from 2014 until 2016, India's ethnic population has reported 7.0% and was the second-largest minority after the Chinese people. Based on the estimated population in 2020, the Indian population has decreased by 6.8% as shown in Table 1, confirming the community's status as a minority group.[6]

Table 1: Current Population Estimates, Malaysia, 2020

Bumiputera	Chinese	Indians	Others
69.6	22.6	6.8	1.0

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia, "Current population estimates, Malaysia, 2020".

Since the migration of Indians during British colonialism, they have suffered misfortunes either in economic, educational, or social atmospheres.[7] These challenges are still prevalent among Malaysian Indians. Referring to Malaysian Indian Blueprint 2017, the Indians have low income, leading to poverty due to the economic challenge. In the education domain, 9% of Indians aged between 20-24 have low education accomplishment, which indicates their education level only takes place up to lower secondary school than Malays 5% and Chinese 5%. The Indian pupils also experience dropout either in primary or secondary school. Also, various social concerns among Indians are still widespread, such as family issues, including domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, criminal activities, and suicide.[8]

In the context of religious survival that is the principal concern of this article, many writings considered the Hindu community's challenges in general without particularising any denominations. For example, Lee (1988) reviewed the dilemma encountered by non-Muslims in Malaysia, including the Hindus prompted by Islamic revivalism in Malaysia.[9] The issue was highlighted during the time of 1970s until the 1980s. The results indicated two crucial issues perceived as Muslim domination over non-Muslims: land allocation for religious buildings and language issues. The former was closely related to the Hindus, whereas the latter was linked to the Christians.[10] Similarly, Lal

(2006) emphasised his concern on Islamisation in Malaysia as a challenge to the Hindus, related to conversion and temple demolition issues.[11] Moreover, Karmveer Singh (2013) claimed that the Hindus also encountered demolition of temples and burial grounds, forced religious conversion, rejection of birth certificate application, and national identity document concerns.[12] The researcher suggests that those challenges were faced by each denomination in Hinduism, specifically in this study, the Hindu Saivites community as it is the major denomination followed by the Malaysian Hindus. Based on the prior literature stated, in religion, land allocation for temples and shrines and religious conversion became the most pressing impediments to the Hindus.

The Hindu Saivites community's challenges within the religious viewpoint were not notable during the colonisation. During colonial times, the estate owners encouraged Indian workers to build shrines and temples in plantations to administer their religious rites and customs. The reason is to ensure that labour recruiting goes easily and that labourers are more productive because the temple was essential for the Hindus.[13] The weight of temples to the Hindus is echoed in an old Tamil saying stated: "*kovil illa uril kudiirrukka vendam*" or "do not live in a place where there is no temple".[14] Hence, the temple operates as a station of performing rituals and worship, and it serves as a political and social representation.[15] Therefore, many small shrines or temples were present in the plantations. Similarly, the Hindus who settle down in urban areas also establish temples in their place.

Nonetheless, following the Malaysian independence and today, the Hindu communities, especially the Saivites in Malaysia, survive to ensure their religious continuance. Many Hindus believe that these hurdles endanger their religion and conclude that they undergo discriminatory treatment from the government. The issue that triggered vital concern among the Hindus is the Islamisation agenda, which materialise in multiple forms. These forms are government policies, particularly regarding land allocation for temples and shrines and religious conversion. Thus, this study discusses at how the issues are perceived as a danger to Hindus and how they react. Apart from being viewed as a threat, this study also demonstrates that Islamic revivalism somehow became a driving factor for the Hindus particularly Saivites, to revive their religion.

Islamization through Government Policies

The revival of Islam in Malaysia in the early 1970s was motivated by the Islamic world consciousness as well as the opposition of the political party between United Malay National Organization (UMNO) and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) on the issue of the establishment of Malaysia as an Islamic state.[16] The rise of Islam in Malaysia has boosted Muslims' consciousness to enliven Islam in life and create Malaysia's Islamic character. Thus, the Islamic

consciousness within this revival of Islam was to maintain religious rituals and practices and instil Islamic values in every aspect of personal life and public institutions.

It is imperative to demonstrate the scholars' terms in defining the Islamic consciousness phenomenon. Some of the words that scholars often use are "resurgence" and "revivalism".[17] Chandra Muzaffar preferred the word "resurgence" to describe this phenomenon instead of "revivalism" because, according to him, the term "revivalism" refers to a process of going back in time.[18] His preference was because "resurgence" implies that the Islamic consciousness exists within the Muslim community themselves. This situation does not infer something unique. Instead, it suggests something has happened in the past, and now it is a sequence of that process. Besides, according to Chandra Muzaffar,[19] the word "resurgence" typifies the concept of challenge, and it imposes a threat to those who have other world views and those of groups other than Islam.

Despite the differences in how the terms are used to describe the phenomena of Islamic emergence, some scholars accepted "resurgence" and "revivalism" interchangeably.[20] While the term "revivalism" refers to the attempt to restructure the past in a form fit to new social interests, the term "resurgence" is another word used interchangeably with "revivalism".[21] Thus, based on the discussion, these two words, "resurgence" and "revivalism", have not much contrast in meaning to describe the phenomenon of the rise of Islam, and both words can be used in a replaceable way. The differences in terminology in explaining this phenomenon occur in particular development phases, evident in the subsequent analysis.

The emergence of Islamic revivalism during the early 1970s was led by young Malays, particularly urban middle-class youths. The University of Malaya has become a platform where Islamic revivalism began to rise, involving the students from the Malay Language Association of Malayan University and Islamic Student Association of Malayan University which by then National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students (PKPIM) and Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) were launched.[22] These Islamic movements garnered much influence from overseas movements and scholars such as Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Enlivening Islam occurred among the local university students and secured support from the Malaysian students abroad through several Islamic societies, specifically in England, Scotland, and Ireland.[23] Through this period, the Islamic way of life's enforcement was evident in urban regions among the Malay youths and professionals through Islamic dress code encouragement. It is manifested in the forms of wearing the scarf for females and robe and turban for males. The presence of literature and speeches concentrating on Islam also was abundant.[24]

The revival of Islam continued for the 1980s through the leaders' role in incorporating Islamic ingredients within government policies such as

economic, political, social, and education. One of the factors contributing to this development was a political rivalry between UMNO and PAS.[25] Following of feeling threatened for its position by the PAS strategy towards structuring an Islamic state added with the pressure from the Islamic organisations, UMNO has responded and came up with its kind of Islamic plan to appease the Malay Muslim majority. While UMNO offered a balanced Islam that supported the development, PAS proposed an Islamic community that live based on Islamic jurisprudence. Other than portraying PAS as radical and critical, UMNO has also addressed three commitments. Firstly, the government promised the right of freedom to non-Muslims that Muslims should recognise and appreciate. Secondly, the government would implement the laws constraining the activities of the Islamic extremist group. Lastly, the government would provide a policy that incorporates Islam, such as Islamic institutions, education, and law.[26] However, non-Muslims perceived UMNO's approach in opposing PAS's radicalism through its framework of Islamisation as a conciliation rather than a ban of extremism.[27]

Islamisation under the ruling party of UMNO motivated dramatic growth. Transforming Malaysia into Islamisation experienced notable advancement under Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed (now entitled Tun). He rendered binding commitment by the UMNO's co-option of Anwar Ibrahim from ABIM in 1982, which boosted Islamisation within the UMNO's ruling party during that time.[28] Throughout Mahathir's power, Islamic development was active, symbolising the Malaysian government supported the Islamisation plan. After the 1980s, the progress of the Islamisation programme in 1982 remained outstanding. Subsequently, it involved an apparent engagement from the government in multiple sectors. For instance, in the financial industry, the support came from Islamic banking and pawnshop scheme (1981-83), in education domain, it occurred through the establishments of Islamic University and Islamic curricula public schools, the International Islamic University Malaysia in 1983 and International of Islamic Thought and Civilisation in 1987 and various Islamic administrative organisations.[29]

As mentioned, the Islamic resurgence or revivalism prompted a positive outlook, but it also posed a threat to people who viewed it differently. Islamic revivalism has caused fear among non-Muslims in Malaysia because it was considered a threat.[30] Although Islamic resurgence submitted universal values, the movement also created the extremist group of several Muslims who tended to regard non-Muslims as infidels (*kafir*).[31] Some of them chose to cut off relationships with non- Muslims, and some attacked the institutions of non-Muslims. Their actions were based on their belief that fighting non-Muslims would guarantee them heaven.[32] Hence, the attacking Hindu temples transpired. The most well-known one was the Kerling incident that followed on 19 August 1978, which involved the Muslim extremists' attack of the Kerling Subramaniar temple. This incident became a starting point in forming

a negative opinion about Muslims and Islam, in which the incident had created an anxious feeling among non-Muslims over Muslim violation on the land of non-Muslims.[33]

Considering how Islamic revivalism is perceived as a threat to non-Muslims, particularly the Hindu Saivites, impacts government policies. During the 1980s, Islamic revivalism developed considerably through the government's policies engaging the educational institution, banking, financing and others. Although the policies triggered some apprehension among non-Muslims on its institutions' Islamic labellings,[34] the most alarming issue that was perceived as a threat to the Hindus was the land possession for temples and shrines and the case of conversion.[35]

The possession of land's issue for places of worship is not a brand-new business to non-Muslims. This issue has been proceeding from decades ago until now, which has been reported through the mass media. The government is seen to hardly approved the allocation of land for religious buildings such as shrines, temples, and churches.[36] Nonetheless, this situation was distinctive during British colonisation, where non-Muslims, particularly Hindus, were immediately given the land for temple or shrine building. Furthermore, it was straightforward in the 1950s to 1960s even though land acquisition faced a little difficulty due to rapid urbanisation. Nevertheless, the Islamisation process in the 1970s onwards made it even harder to acquire the government's land.[37] This shrine restriction initially emerged in 1983 at a conference of chief ministers in Johor Bahru, in which two reasons had been justified for the shrine demolition. Firstly, the shrines were perceived as interference for the urban project construction, and secondly, the shrines could be enlarged to become temples, and the devotees would claim land possession. However, the second reason was related to the government authority, whereby the land possession claim was more complicated than the relocation of shrines.[38]

The issue of land possession persisted in the following years. In 1998, a tragedy between Hindu Indians and Muslim Indians occurred in Kampung Rawa Penang. The land distribution quandary triggered it among the Muslim Indians due to the Babri masjid's video clip's destruction in 1992 in India.[39] The incident worsened when the temple's ringing bell interrupted the Muslim's Friday prayer in Kampung Rawa, creating an intense dispute between the Hindu and Muslim Indians.[40] Thus, in solving the problem, the government had demanded the relocation of the temple. Tolerated the government's demand, the management committee agreed, and finally, the temple was relocated to another place. This incident prompted a perception among the Hindus that the government always supported and favoured Muslims over non-Muslims and symbolised their defeat in that conflict.[41] Several incidents which showed that Muslims always had domination, particularly on the land allocation for worship places, form the basis of the indictment. In this particular incident of Kampung Rawa, it was evident that the temple was demanded to be relocated

instead of the mosque.

In reality, the Kampung Rawa Temple issue has gone through several discussion stages among local authorities, specifically the MPPP (Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang), the mosque committee, members of the temple committee, and also the ministers.[42] The Muslim community first resisted the construction of the Kampung Rawa temple because it was initially merely a family shrine, but it was restored, and the MPPP did not approve the development. Moreover, the temple's expansion was close to the mosque and then disrupted the mosque's activities with bells' sound, which added to the Muslim community's discontent. To avoid racial discord from being extreme, the local authorities and the government's intervention eventually decided to move the temple to a new place.[43]

The demolition of the Hindu temples triggered relentless tension among the Hindu communities, and the issue of Islamisation in the 21st century is still regarded as a threat to non-Muslims, particularly the Hindu Indians.[44] It is asserted that the government intends that the shrine or temple's land does not have a title.[45] Thus, it is deemed illegal, and also another reason is that the ground or the road will be used to develop highways and skyscraper buildings. It is further claimed that it is arduous to ask the authorities to understand the trees' sacred values or places where the temple's deities reside.[46] Being a minority, these people have to acknowledge their disadvantages to most Malay people and Malaysia's official religion, Islam, which takes more privileges than they enjoy.

In 2007, the demolition of the Mariamman temple in Padang Jawa Selangor caused frustration among the Hindus again. Hence, the Hindu Rights Action Front (HINDRAF) has highlighted this issue and claimed that the Malaysian government was suppressing the Hindus community.[47] The consistent perception of the Hindus towards the government for discrimination and oppression of the Hindus has garnered the attention of the president of MIC, Tan Sri Vigneswaran, in 2018. The MIC's president declared no discrimination of the Hindus in Malaysia, where they were free to practice their religion. It was apparent with Kuil Sri Mahamariamman Dhevasthanam in Batu Caves. He added, no statue of Murugan's deity other than Malaysia's is more prominent than in Batu Caves, even in India.[48] Corresponding to the disagreement of Hindu discrimination pointed out by the former MIC president, the temples demolished either because of their location on government land or private land were not merely knockdown. On the other hand, the government has replaced it with other lands to construct or relocate the temples, such as the temple's case in Bandar Seri Alam Masai Johor in 2018 by which the land was restored with the new one by the Johore's state government.[49]

Based on the discussion on temple demolition and relocation, although it was denied by an Indian such as the previous MIC president on the discrimination of government towards the Hindus and despite the allocation

of a new place by the government for temple relocation, the perception of government's favouritism on Muslim and Islam still prevalent. Non-Muslims, particularly the Hindus, perceive the process of Islamisation as a threat to their religion. This statement can be supported by the different conditions between Malaysia and Singapore in temple demolition to make way for development, as highlighted by Sinha.[50] While temple demolition in Malaysia was seen as an intimidation to the Hindus, temple demolition in Singapore was accepted willingly by the Hindu as the need for progress. The difference existed due to the rise of Islamisation that has been developed in Malaysia. It transpired almost in all aspects of life than Singapore. In contrast to Malaysia, Singapore is claimed to guarantee religious freedom to all citizens without discrimination as a secular state.[51] Additionally, as mentioned in the Malaysian Indian Blueprint 2017, the Hindus, as a minority group in Malaysia, while maintaining their religion, has to support the government's rules and legislation and be aware of Muslim Malaysian Malays' sensitivity.[52] Furthermore, in Malaysia, non-Malays and non-Muslims regard government as a foundation to the Malay Muslim's privilege, elevating the conflict between Malays and non-Malays.[53]

Other than the friction of temple demolition, another highlighted issue that became a concern to the Hindus was the conversion matter.[54] The Hindus' issue with Islam or Christianity existed in the 1970s when there was an influence from Islam and Christianity.[55] The primary motive for converting Hindus to Islam was for marrying Malay lady in which converting to Islam is compulsory in Islamic law. In the 1980s, several cases were identified to involve the Hindus conversion. Nevertheless, the Hindu leaders did not blame the Islamic authority because the problem arose due to the lack of religious knowledge of Hinduism among the Hindus, particularly the youths.[56] The next issue that transpired from the situation was that they found it challenging to convert to their previous religion due to intricate modes and restrictions from the Islamic authority. Accordingly, the only option left was to follow Hinduism privately.

In the past, the problem highlighted took place because of the lack of religious knowledge. However, conversion in the 21st century is seen as oppression from the Islamic authority, which could be observed from several Malaysian cases on the Hindus conversion to Islam. A series of issues claimed to be a forced conversion of Indian Hindus by the Sharia court in Malaysia. For instance, in 2000, a Hindu mother, S. Banggarma, alleged that state religious authorities converted her into Islam without her knowledge at seven while at a welfare home. S. Banggarma got to know it when she intended to register her marriage. Nevertheless, she could not do so as her marriage was administered according to Hindu rites. Thus, she encountered difficulties in recording her children birth certificates.[57]

Besides, in 2005 another case arose involving M Moorthy Mohamad Abdullah, the first Malaysian who climbed Mount Everest in 1997. Moorthy

converted to Islam in 2004 without his wife and family's knowledge, and he died on 20 December 2005. The legal battle started when the Sharia court ordered Kuala Lumpur Hospital to release his body to the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Council (MAIWP) for burial. According to Muslim rite, it was supposed to happen even though his wife has claimed that Moorthy never embraced Islam.[58] Then, in 2008, a claimed forced conversion occurred once again, engaging an Indian teenager. First, he was converted to Islam by his friend and was taken to the religious department and later received a conversion certificate. He then wanted to quit Islam when he was 19 years old, but he faced a difficult legal battle in the Sharia court because the act went against Islamic teaching.[59]

Several examples of cases mentioned that have been brought to the Sharia court's jurisdiction were perceived by the Hindus as favouring Islam when the verdict favoured Islam. Moreover, they also encountered a struggle finding a Sharia lawyer to represent them, as quoted from A. Sivanesan, a lawyer saying: "Civil lawyers cannot represent such clients in the Sharia court when only sharia-compliant lawyers may serve. Few sharia lawyers are sympathetic as most feel they would be going against Islam if they were to take up conversion cases".[60] Nevertheless, in 2016 as reported in Free Malaysia Today, the Muslim legal group has offered to solve 7000 Hindus who were reported to have been wrongly registered as Muslims.[61] Zainul Rijal Abu Bakar, the president of Muslim Lawyers Association of Malaysia (PPMM) statement, said: "PPMM offers sharia legal services, and it is true that there were non-Muslims who had been forced to convert or their conversion to Islam was not done in line with Islamic laws".[62] Nevertheless, there was a shocking case of conversion that has been presented in the Malaysian Federal court in 2018. The case involved a Hindu lady named Indira Gandi who fought for her children religious status after being converted to Islam by her husband in 2009 following his conversion to becoming a Muslim. On 29 January 2018, the Malaysian Federal court has decided that the children's conversion was null and void.[63]

The challenges in religion faced by the Hindus, particularly to temples and shrines demolition and relocation still become the unsolved puzzle, as highlighted in the Malaysian Indian Blueprint 2017. Following the discussion, it is apparent that the issue has originated in the 1970s as Islamisation developed.[64] It lasted throughout the next era until this twenty-first century. Further, in the context of Sharia court's managing religious conversion, there has seen a slight change through a case that occurred in 2018. Hence, this could be a relief to the Hindu communities.

Hindu Saivite's Reform

Following the above discussion, it is apparent that the Hindus in Malaysia have faced challenges in various aspects, particularly in religion, since Malaysian independence, and it continues until the present day. Many scholars[65] have pointed out dissatisfaction by the Hindus over their marginalisation as a minority group in Malaysia. Although most of the literature highlights the contradictory part of the challenges, it has positively affected the Hindus to reform their religion to preserve their religious institution.

Essentially, Hindu reform in Malaysia has begun since the British colonisation. Since the early 1900s, there was awareness among the Sri Lankan Tamils, Chettiyar, and educated Indians in Malaya towards Hinduism.[66] This awareness was caused by India's reformation movement in 1815, such as the Amitya movement. The struggle of this reformist in India to protect Hinduism has urged the Indians in Malaysia to maintain and learn Hinduism. With India's nationalism revival in the 1930s, the Indians in Malaysia were fascinated with India's sense of nationalism and independence. The basis for forming this pre-independence Hindu reform was driven by India's reformist movements to ensure that popular Hinduism follows scriptural Hinduism. For instance, Tamil Reform Association (TRA) formation in 1931 was determined to eliminate a few practices such as fire-walking, animal sacrifices, and kavadi bearing[67]. Nonetheless, as stressed by Ampalavanar, the movement failed because it did not get the state's support to eliminate those practices.[68] Following the TRA, several organisations that received influence from the Indian state reformist movements were established throughout the 20th century, specifically the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vivekananda Society. Due to its universalistic and tolerant viewpoints, these movements attracted the Hindu believers, thus, overcoming the Hindus' sectarian disputes. Nevertheless, following the post-wartime, these movements were weakened and replaced by other movements that strived to revive the Hindu philosophy in the conventional direction.[69]

The rise of Hindu reform after the period of post-war was a response to specific concerns, including a lack of religious awareness among the second generation of the Indian youth, insignificant ritual practices, Hindu community disunity due to unsystematic Hinduism, and the possibility of Indian youth being proselytised by other religions.[70] As a response to manage these concerns, several attempts were made, such as the organisation of Saivism's classes, the invitation of religious leaders from South India to conduct lectures, and the support for orthodox Hindu festivals.[71] Saiva Siddhanta of Southern India gained popularity among the Hindus due to its close connection with the Tamil lineage.[72]

During that period of after post-war, the Indian middle class was actively engaged with the movements and centred within the urban area. In the 1950s, Malaysia Hindu Sangam was established to protect Hinduism

matters with its members consisting of professionals, civil servants, teachers, and businessmen.[73] In solving the religious conversion among the Malaysian Indian Hindus, Malaysia Hindu Sangam plays its role by organising various programs to deliver the Hindu teachings to reduce the other religious followers among the Hindus.[74] Although this association did not focus on one sector philosophy, it represented the entire Hindu community where it could be a platform for the Hindu community to express their wishes. Through this association, Hindu Saivism was also represented, Malaysia Hindu Sangam is recognised to serve all the temples in Malaysia, Hindu religious organisations, and the Hindu community.[75]

In the 1970s, there was an issue that concerned the Hindus. The proselytisation of Indians to Islam and Christianity triggered the urge to establish the Saiva Siddhanta Mandram. This association was involved in spreading the teaching of Saivism in Malaysia.[76] The founder of Saiva Siddhanta Mandram, Mr. Thiruvasagam, has connected with the founder of Saiva Siddhanta Church of Sri Lanka, Thava Thiru Sivaya Subramaniya Swami. Under his guidance, Mr. Thiruvasagam decided to spread the teachings in Malaysia. He aimed to get the religious handouts from Shaiva Siddhanta Church's branch in Hawaii and distribute them in Malaysia. Then, after several meetings with Thava Thiru Sivaya Subramaniya Swami, who visited Malaysia, Saiva Siddhanta Mandram was officially established on 16 July 1982. However, not long after that, Saiva Siddhanta Mandram separated itself from Saiva Siddhanta Church due to confounding between these two associations. Despite that disconnection, there were still direct followers of Saiva Siddhanta Church in Malaysia in which this association was not registered. This association's followers would hold a meeting once or twice a year in addressing religious issues.[77]

As Islamic revivalism commenced in the 1970s, the Hindu reform also continued. At this stage, Islamic revivalism was considered the critical factor for the Hindu revitalisation, though it was regarded as a menace.[78] In the 1970s, the transformation process could be seen through the process known as Sanskritization, though it was possibly developed earlier than that time. The Sanskritization adopted the little tradition into great tradition ritual institutions involving the deities, rituals, and local festivals being replaced by Sanskritic form.[79] For instance, in 1974, it witnessed a conference held by the Hindus representations of *Muṉiswaraṉ* temples within Malaysia, which declared the status of *Muṉiswaraṉ* to be raised to God Śiva. Therefore, animal sacrifices and other non-Agamic practices were banned from *Muṉiswaraṉ* temples.[80]

From its positive stand, Islamic revivalism, which brought Islamic consciousness among Muslims in observing Islamic teachings, theology, and ritual worship, has influenced the Hindus too, in their interest in their religion.[81] The Hindus have re-examined and made adjustments to their religious activities. Firstly, the observation of the worship rituals was made according to the religious text. It was evident through the phasing out of animal

sacrifices practices in worship rituals that the Hindus commonly carried out in the temples. Secondly, observing strict rules in personal food consumption as the festival's preparation allowed them to show their devoutness and agreement with others. Thirdly, the growing interest in joining the religious festivals and ritual worship conducted in temples. Next, the Hindu religious tenets were based on religious texts in an actual life event such as birth, death, and marriage.[82]

The Hindus also have shown a prominent interest in learning their religion by studying Tamil to understand the religious hymns contained in their religious texts. They have also acquired teaching and guidance from the well-known gurus from India and Malaysia. These gurus have been developing their teachings through pamphlets writing and audiovisual publication. Furthermore, their teaching on scriptures has been delivered in a relevant way and is more comfortable to be understood by the Hindu masses. Therefore, it has generated an escalating interest among Hindus to attend religious festivals and ritual worships. Moreover, it has shifted towards the perspective of Hindus to seek pure Hindu religious teachings and eliminate non-Agamic rituals and practices from the Hindu religious institution.[83] Some of the changes mentioned already took place either during colonisation or post colonisation, yet with the advent of Islamic revivalism, those transformations became more actively attended.

Hindu reform can be seen through the activities conducted by Hindu religious organisations. Most Hindu religious organisations have existed before the country's independence, but the number and role were limited. It was only until 1990 and 2000; it garnered supportive growth.[84] One of the largest organisations is Malaysia Hindu Sangam which has been mentioned earlier. Malaysia Hindu Sangam's position is essential because it served as a government reference in Hindu religious affairs. In Hindu Saivite's reform, although Malaysia Hindu Sangam is general, there were activities performed by this organisation that focused on the spread of Saivism. The program's example was Thesiya Nalvar Vizla (four saints celebration program) conducted at the national level. The idea of this program was to celebrate the most important saints, especially in the Saivism sect. In this program, all over the nation could participate in religious talks by those with knowledge in Hinduism, especially the Saivism sect.[85] Such a program was administered to inspire the religious sense among Hindus. Malaysia Hindu Sangam has also held several forms of the conference. One of the conferences held was Thesiya Shaiva Vainava Maanadu (Saiva and Vaishnava conference at the national level) in 2009 to strengthen unity between the two main sects in Malaysia, namely Saivism and Vaishnavism.[86] Apart from Malaysia Hindu Sangam, Hindu organisations that mainly concentrate on Saivism or precisely Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, such as Malaysia Saiva Siddhanta Mandram, as mentioned, and Persatuan Saiva Narpani Malaysia. Even though these associations were not highlighted in the earlier studies and were not as prevalent as Malaysia Hindu Sangam, they were

also active in carrying out their activities. They published it on their Facebook and Youtube accounts.

Apart from the above-noted organisations, NGOs also attended initiatives that fight for the Hindu community's voice and non-Muslims in general. For instance, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST). This council was established in 1983, joined by representatives from non-Muslim religious leaders who initially aspired to address concerns about the government's Islamisation policy and other human rights and social issues. The council served as an advisory and liaison body for more open dialogue and collaboration.[87] A representative from the Hindu religion who participated in this council was the Malaysia Hindu Sangam.

Regarding land restriction and temple demolition, the Hindus had reacted calmly throughout the 1970s because they could not respond aggressively.[88] Thus, the Hindus just complied with the government's instruction and relocated their temple. During the 1990s, several temples were renovated to secure the placement of the temples. This action was needed for the Hindus to prove the existence of their community temple. Nevertheless, in the 21st century, it experienced a revolution when the rally organised by HINDRAF transpired in November 2007 to support the marginalised Hindus in Malaysia, which was supported by at least 30 registered Indian organisations and most Hindu religious organisations.[89] Following the rally, in August 2007, HINDRAF had sent eighteen points of memorandum to then Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.[90] The tenth point had foregrounded the issues of the demolition of the temple and burial sites. Since the rally and the memorandum communicated by HINDRAF, the Malaysian government is more prudent in fixing the issue of temples in which the government has offered the new place or land for the temple relocation.[91]

Conclusion

As a minority, the Hindus would consider the Malaysian Islamic environment's challenges, especially posed by Islamic revivalism through government policies, as a menace to their religion. The most pressing issues would be allocating land for the building of temples and shrines and religious conversion. Both issues have occurred since Islamic revivalism in Malaysia began in the 1970s and continued to appear until the twenty-first century. As a result, the Hindu community experienced various incidents involving the demolition of temples and the difficulty of applying for land to construct temples. Furthermore, some conversion cases which involved this community often favoured Islam. Hence, those incidents have provoked dissatisfaction among them. In overcoming these hurdles and guaranteeing their religious survival, several reforms were carried out in Hinduism and particularly in Saivism and it was apparent that it was

expressed through Hindu religious organisations and councils. Through these organisations, various programs have been organised to refresh the essence and understand the religion among Hindus. Further, all the predicaments they experienced were highlighted and communicated by these organisations.

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