RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES ON CLASSIFICATION OF HEALING PRACTICES AMONG MUSLIMS IN KERALA
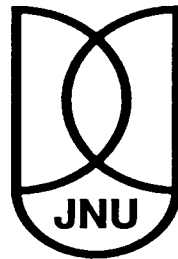
Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

AHAMMADU ZIRAJUDDEEN

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI 110067
2013

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067

Centre for the Study of Social Systems
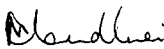*School of Social Sciences*

Tel. : 26704408

Date 29 July, 2013

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation entitled 'Religious Discourses on Classification of Healing Practices among Muslims in Kerala' submitted by me in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.
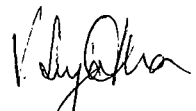
Ahammadu Zirajuddeen

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Maitrayee Chaudhuri

Chairperson
C' airperson
CSSS/SSS
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

Prof. V. Sujatha

Supervisor
Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences.
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Expelled Group of Zakariyya Swalahi

'Official' Position of *Kerala Nadwathul Mujahideen* (KNM)

Intellectual Roots of Ideological Shifts: Role of Gulf *salafism* and Egyptian *salafism*

Medical Perception and Discourses on Muslims' 'Renaissance' in Kerala

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Background of Study

Islamic legal-moral tradition contains a graded scheme for the classification of rituals and practices into *wajib* (mandatory), *mandub* (recommended), *mubah* (permitted), *makruh* (disapproved), and *haram* (forbidden). Such a classificatory scheme makes the believer conscious of questions like, who belongs to the tradition, into which set a given practice falls? Is a particular practice innovation in religion? Or is it a controversial practice? Is it a legitimate practice? If it is permitted, then how it should be practiced and how it should not be? The scriptures always tend to relate to practices in various ways- inspiring (*Sunnah*), recommending, prescribing, authorizing, prohibiting, and compelling- by which practices have been classified. For instance, five times prayer is compulsory; idol worship is prohibited whose categorization is undisputed.

However, there are some 'controversial practices' whose legitimacy is always in question and healing practices have been included in this disputed category. Controversial practices are 'contested' in public sectarian discourses which have a particular history to be unraveled. Among Muslims in Kerala, healing practices under the common name of *'urukku* and *mantram'* are subject to passionate debates and those discourses are complex in nature.

Religious legitimacy of practices has been internalized through these discourses namely, the way it has been taught, written, spoken, and debated about. These are the authorization practices that operate through educational and emerging religious institutions responsible for religious 'truth'. The discourses hence have the power to redefine and pattern practices and rituals in various ways. As Johan Rasanayagam (2006), who studied the healing practices in Uzbekistan, says the religious healers emphasized that they were working according to the religious knowledge ('good healer') that was different from the incorrect form ('bad healing'). Some shamans claimed spirit healing as 'Islamic' and included some Islamic rituals while some healing *mullahs* used spirits for healing. Here, a distinction between '*un-Islamic*' shamans and '*Islamic*' religious healers was always maintained. The reassessment of the practices arose after the *Islamization* movements in

Uzbekistan, soon after its independence from the USSR.

But, the question with a domain such as healing is, to what extent the discourses could define the practices of the believers. Healing is a unique domain where rules and norms become flexible because of the need to alleviate suffering. In this regard, J. B Flueckiger (2006: xi-xii) has understood healing in an Islamic setting as being 'crossroads' and as reflecting the flexibility of Islam. F. Faucett (1902), who was the District Collector in Malabar in British period reports about some Nayar Hindus who went to a Muslim *pir* for healing which indicate the possibility of 'negotiation' in healing space. So, it is interesting to ask, in what ways healing practices respond to the discourses. This dissertation is an attempt to first understand the practices and the discourses about them.

Although many of the healing rituals have been practiced from the pre-Islamic period till now,[1] what is significant is that they have become categories of discourses and debates in which ideas about correct and false Islam are discussed[2]. For instance, a group of scholars who belong to a *Sunni* organization in Kerala write in their book titled '*ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa:* on the validity of sacred *mantram* or sacred chanting[3]:

> "*Look at the arguments of these 'progressive' reformists. They say, diseases get treated only through English medicine, not by drinking Quran, they even say it is a sin, and they interpret the texts for the same. Actually they are misinterpreting the texts; they don't know their actual meaning. Actually mantram is allowed in Islam, authenticated through textual sources. But we have to be cautious when we practice mantram, because, mantram is conditional. One great scholar, Hafiz Ibnu Hajaru-Asqalani writes in his book: Mantram is allowed if three conditions were met, and another scholar Qurtubi writes: mantram is classified into three, only one of them is allowed, the rest are prohibited (Fathul Bari 10/240, 10/242). Those who doubtfully see this 'right path' as 'false' should realize the truth*" (*Nervazhiyude Padam*, 2007: 191-196, emphasis added)

We have to note here that in the context of healing practices, the speeches, writings and

---

1 Some of the Hadith traditions refer to the presence of religious healing from the pre-Islamic times (see hadith chapters on: chapter on the prohibition of healing with words (in Arabic, *babu-nahy-ani-ruqi*).

2 For example. see K. K C Baqavi's book in Malayalam '*Nattacharam: Thettum shariyum*' (Local Rituals: Correct and False).

3 English translations of Malayalam terms are free translation by the researcher.

2

sermons seem '*dialogical*' defending or offending them. But, there are many limitations for the existing literatures on the religious discourses between sects. Most of the scholarly literatures on the sectarian debates on the traditional practices recognize simple dichotomies, and stereotypical categories. For instance, in north Indian context, *Barelwis* are understood as the repositories of traditional practices, while *Deobandies* described as reformists who want to purify Islam (Alam, 2008). For instance, one Islamist scholar writes in the North Indian context:

> "*At the popular level, Indian Islam represents a mosaic of demonic superstitious and syncretic beliefs. They are specific to microscopic Muslim communities and are generally the exception rather than the rule. They were challenged by fundamentalist, orthodox and modernist movements alike in 19th and 20th centuries. They have completely ceased to exist in the Westernized upper class and nearly so in the orthodox lower middle classes. These masses, especially in the rural areas, are yielding to popular Hinduism's pull of absorption, largely through participation in Hindu festivals. But religious reform has been bringing a purification of Islamic rituals and behavior*". (Quoted by Ahamd, 1981:9)

Here, he understood the popular Islam as the unique feature of the rural societies and as the implications of Hindu influence and gives an historical foundation for the 'reform' and 'purification'. But the extensive study of the publications on debates and discourses offers a complex classificatory scheme at social level.

In this context, a number of questions came to our mind and we decided to study the complex realities of modes of religious discourse on classification of healing in relation to my hometown, Kerala. Why *urukku* and *mantram* have been debated in Muslim public discourses? Why have they been always defended or opposed? What is the debate about them? How they have been classified? Who have the authority to debate on them? Do the practices get altered due the discourses around them?

(II) The Context: The Socio-Historical profile of Muslims in Kerala

Islamic Expansion in Kerala

A brief presentation of the context and its subjects, on the basis of which the paper tries to understand a sociological problem, would be necessary. The study is on a particular aspect

3

of socio-religious life of Muslims in Kerala, that is, religious discourse on classification of healing practices. In what follows, I shall give a brief account of the socio-historical profile of Muslims in Kerala.

Most of the historians opine that Islam reached Kerala much before it arrived in other parts of India through the trade relation between Arabia and Kerala which had started before the time of Prophet Muhammad (Miller, 1976: 39-41). But there is no direct epigraphic or literary evidence to support this early origin. To many historians, its origin dates back to 12th or 13th century (Gangadharamenon, 2004) and the solid accounts of Muslim community presence dates only from 14th century. For instance, the accounts of North African traveller Ibnu Batuta refers to the elements of Arabic and Islamic culture among Muslims in Kerala out of their cultural encounter with merchants/*Ulama* from Arabian Peninsula, Persian Gulf region, and East African regions, most of whom where the followers of *shafi* school of jurisprudence (Dale,1990). However, writings on the social history of Kerala Muslim communities recognize one common fact that they have spread out of a peaceful expansion of Islam through a well-established trade routes in the parts of Africa, India and South East Asia due to Kerala's geographical importance in international trade.

Apart from traders, Arabian missionaries, who were based in Kodungallore, a coastal town in north Kerala, played a major role in the spread of Islam in the Kerala region. The missionaries like Malik bin Dinar travelled throughout Kerala and spread their missionary activities, and building mosques and Muslim centres from north to south which gained its momentum in 8th and 9th centuries (Maqdoom Zainuddin, 2001 (1583)). The Sufi missionary activities, widespread in other parts of South Asia, are not much evident in the South Indian Islamic history. However, the pious Mappila poems like *Muhyuddin Mala* and *Nafeesathmala,* which commemorate the 12th century Muslim saints *Al-jilani* and *Al-rifai,* and the available evidence of Sufi presence in Tamil Nadu in 13th century indicate that Sufi missionaries might have entered Kerala after 12th century (Miller, 1976: 53).

Beside exogenous factors just mentioned above, there are some significant endogenous features which helped the spread of Islam in Kerala through *mass conversion.* The local Hindu rulers and the common Hindu community gave due respect to the foreign Muslim trading groups who were essential for the economy of their lands thanks to the latter's trade and commerce through ports. Moreover, the local converts to Islam were given same honor

4

and prestige notwithstanding of their caste identities and the conversion to Islam was preferred by some rulers. The Zamorines of Calicut (title in which the rulers of Calicut were known) even enticed the lower caste families from fishermen communities to convert to Islam in order to have adequate sailors for his navy (Kunji, 2008: 64-70). As 16th century Portuguese commercial agent Duarte Barbosa and Zainuddin Maqdoom noted (Dale, 1990) the rigid caste system and severe social restrictions on caste lines prevailed in Kerala pushed the lower caste groups towards conversion to Islam as a tool of social mobility.

So, in the sociological perspective, the north-south division between Indian Muslims seems to be visible in their socio cultural features due to the South's distance from North Indian culture on the one hand and, on the other, its direct relations with the Arabian countries from the initial years of Islam and from pre-Islam. In the religious domain, the issue of the difference could be observed and analyzed from various standpoints of Islamic thought. Kerala is having the relation of Islamic missionaries from Yeman who followed the *Shafi* School of jurisprudence whereas the rest of India adheres to the Hanafi School[4].

Religion and Social Structure

Rolland E. Miller (1976) has written extensively on religion and culture, and the social structure of Muslims in Kerala in his book 'Mappila Muslims of Kerala'. According to him, Muslims show intensity of religious devotion and piety and they are conscious about their compliance to the 'true' and 'accepted' Islamic principles. It is important to note here the kind of religiosity the subjects of this study have which indicates the crucial role of religious discourses in their social life. Place of religion in the social fabric makes us think on how the passion towards the 'correct' model of religion is achieved.

At the same time, Miller (ibid. 246) adds that Muslims are the strong believers of inscribed religious laws and regulations, but their social customs and practices include more than the provisions of the *sharia* laws. The cultural processes of assimilation and accommodation can be observed from the features of local traditions inherent to their socio-religious life. For instance, the architecture of earlier mosques in Kerala was that of Jain style of Hindu temples and in the *nercca* ritual and *Dargahs* there can be viewed various Hindu rites like the use of *nilavilakku* (particular lamp found in temples) (Dale and Menon, 1978). The *marumakkatthayam* system (Matriliny) found among Muslims in

---

4 Founder of Hanifa School of jurisprudence, lived in 699-765 AD.

northern Malabar is not authorized by the Islamic law and not found in any other parts of Islamic world or among north Indian Muslims. It is assumed that the matriliny might have been adopted from Hindu *Nayars* through conversion. Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese commercial agent who lived in the Malabar Coast in the first two decades of 16th century reported about two groups of Muslims at that period of time. He noted that the Arab foreign traders accepted indigenous culture while the native indigenous people who were known as Mappilas were influenced by local Hindus in many of their cultural features especially due to intermarriage and religious conversion (Dale, 1990).

Muslims in Kerala have developed a new hybrid language of Arabic and Malayalam, (Malayalam written in Arabic script with more additions of words and letters) which is known as *Arabi-malayalam,* used in various literary and religious books like *Quissa pattukal* (songs stories), *padappattukal* (war stories), *charithams* (histories) and *malappattuakal* (devotional songs) (Kunji, 1993: 163-197).

Emergent Religio-Political formation

The socio-religious life and social structure of Muslims in Kerala underwent shifts and transformations due to different political developments from 18th century onwards such as the emergence of British colonialism, modern education, emergence of various socio-cultural religious reform movements. One offshoot of these political transformations is the formation of a number of religious sects and groups with distinct ideological positions. It is important to understand the formation of *sectarian* identities to grasp the religious discourses. Here I give a brief account of the major sects and groups of Muslims in Kerala emerged out of theological, organizational and political differences, which is necessary to locate and contextualize the religious discourses on classification of healing practices presented in the subsequent chapters.

Majority Muslims in Kerala are Sunnis, the followers of *Ashari* school of theology and *Shafi* school of jurisprudence and their religious-cultural life is defined by Sufi traditions that is '*sharia+tariqa*' (the esoteric and exoteric reading of ritual). The reformist groups such as Mujahids, *Jamate-Islami,* and *Tabligh-jamat* are also crucial presence in the religious map. In the chapters to follow, we engage with religious discourses, primarily between the two prominent religious groups, Mujahids and Sunnis who are the key participants in the public debates on various theological matters.

6

Though all groups belong to the 'universal' *Sunni* tradition (in the categorization of world Muslims into 'shias and 'Sunnis) now, in Kerala, only those who represent the popular Mappila religious beliefs and practices are identified as *Sunnis*. They follow *Shafite* School of jurisprudence and *Ahari* School of theology and maintain Sufi ways of accommodation and innovation of new modes of expressing religiosity. The major Sunni religious organizations are *Samastha Kerala Jamiath-ul-ulema,* popularly known as 'E K group' in the name of late E.K Aboobackar Musliyar who was its founding leader. Other Sunni groups are *Samastha- Kerala Jamiath- ul-ulama* (the faction separated from its mother organization in 1980s due to some differences) popularly known as 'A P groups' in the name of its founder and supremo A.P Aboobackar Musliyar. The third one is *Dakshina Kerala Jamiyyath- ul- Muallimeen* which is the south Kerala *Sunni* organization. Another small *Sunni* group is *Samasthana Kerala Jamiathul-ulema* formed their own organization. It is interesting to note that some splinter organizations emerged out of theological and organizational differences such as whether laud speaker can be used in the *Khutuba* (Friday sermon). *Samasthana* group argued that use of loud speaker for the performance of *khutuba* is *incorrect* because the original voice of *khateeb* (person who performs it) gets amplified.

The reformist groups (as they are known in the academic and scholarly literatures) among Muslims in Kerala are called Mujahids or Wahabis who are opposed to the *Sunni* ideology. They question the religious laws in the form of *Madhab* and *taqleed*[5] and *tareeqah* in the form of Sufi orders. Now Mujahids are split between an official group of *T. P Abdullakkoya madani* and a splinter group of *Hussain Madavoor* following the Mujahid split in 2002 on the basis of organizational problems. The official group is known as KNM (*Kerala Nadwatul Mujahideen*) and the splinter group is known as ISM (*Ithihadu-Shubbanil-Mujahideen*). Even though the split was on organizational issues, it reflected on their ideological positions on various practices, especially on healing practices. Official group has undergone another split recently in 2013 on the issues related with religious authenticity of healing practices. A scholar named Zakariyya Swalahi is the leading figure of the expelled group who now make campaigns to claim the original Mujahid identity. *Jamaate-e-Islami* also forms a specific religious group with reformist ideas in religious

---

[5] *Taqlid* refers to the legal practice of imitating or adhering to the juridical rulings of the past without knowing its proofs (*dalil*) whereas its opposite *ijtihad* is the practice of the individual engaging in personal interpretation of the Quran and *Sunnah.* It is part of scholarly disputes on the question of whether the door of *ijtihad* was closed or not. While some scholars have argued that the gate was closed, others believe that *ijtihad* has been consistently practiced historically and still has to be practiced (Deblong-Bas, 2004: 105).

affairs with more political orientations.

Looking into the genealogy of the reform movements, it started in Kerala from 1920s in an organizational form called 'aikyasangam' (united group) in Kodungallore (a place in Trichure district) that became the cradle of reformism in its initial years. The wind of religious reform blew from the South Kerala in the person of Wakkom Muahammad Abdul Kadar Maulavi (1873-1932). The earlier reformers were Sayyid Sanaulla Makti Tangal (1912) of Ponnani, Chalilakat Kunhahaamed Haji of Tirurangadi (1920), and Sheikh Muhammad Hamadani Tangal of Vaikkam (1922) (Miller, 1976: 270).

As Filippo Osello and Caroline Osello (2008) pointed out, this phenomenon of new sectarian associations have to be understood from the local specific historical context of Kerala and the larger pan Islamic transnational movements. Formation of multiple religious sects and groups on ideological standpoints has led to public debates and discourses on the prevalent social and religious practices such as visiting tombs of saints, *taqlid*, and healing practices of *Urukku* and *Mantram*. The debates centre on what among the healing practices are superstitious. It is interesting to note that religion tries to segregate true and valid belief from superstition. Such an engagement of classification of day to day practices with a view to ascertaining whether they are consistent with the basic/original theological core of Islam is of sociological significance in understanding religion as a system of knowledge.

The campaigns of Islamic associations is Kerala are centred around what constitutes 'anti-Islamic' and 'un-Islamic' practices, namely *shirk* (antinomy of monotheism) and *bida* (innovation of new things in to the original doctrine). There is so much of divergence of interpretation between these groups that the entry of a Sunni follower into the Mujahid camp or vice versa is termed as 'conversion' (Osello and Osello, 2008). Public debates, books and magazines of both Sunni and Mujahid factions can tell the story of fierce debates and conflicts over the legal validity of the practices in Islamic theology.

The religious organizations continue to be divided and sub divided on the basis of religious and political differences. Debates and discourses are inherent to all religious organizations at inter and intra group levels. All groups have their own religious schools (Madrasa), colleges and universities, to train the students in debate and oration. It is a tradition of emotional relation in terms of religious instruction through the religious educational systems of *Othupalli* (home for recitation and learning), *Waaz* (religious preaching) and *Dars* (religious seminaries). Now there emerged new platforms through

8

which the sectarian debates and discourses are disseminated to the public such as TV channels, on line programs, public classes using LCDs and projectors, websites and so on.

The subjects taught in most of the Madrasas consist are *Thafsir* (Quranic exigencies), Hadith (Tradition) *Thajweed* (cantillation), *Fiqh* (religious jurisprudence), *Usool ul fiqh* (theories of jurisprudence), *Swarf* (conjugation grammar), *Nahv* (syntax), *ilmu- al kalam* (philosophy), *thasawuf* (Gnostic and Sufi studies), *ilmu-Al adab* (Arabic literature), *ilmu-Al Manthiq* (logistics or dialectics)[6] *Riyaziyath* (mathematics), *falakiyath* (astronomy) (Madappalli, 2010)[7]. The Madrasa syllabus differs according to its ideological orientation and the organization to which it belongs. For instance, Mujahid Madrasa does not teach *falakiyyath* (astronomy) and Sufi philosophy since they are ideologically against those kinds of knowledge. On the other hand, Sunni madrasas do not include text books written by Ibnu-Thaymiyya or Ibnu-Qayyim because they are renown *salafi* (another term for Mujahids) scholars.

As for the social structure, *Imams*, who lead the daily five-time prayers, *Katheebs* who lead the Friday prayers and *qhadhis*, who holds the jurisdiction over particular areas, are key figures in the ritual life of Muslims in Kerala. Most significant among them is '*mollaka*' or '*mullah*' who leads prayers in the local mosques and performs various rituals such as making amulets and leading the funerary prayers. Apart from them, there are *thangals* or *sayyids,* whose lineage is traced to the prophet Muhammad and who act as consultants for various psycho-physical problems for both Hindus and Muslims. They are the only social group who enjoy special social status on the basis of birth. The charismatic leaders like *thangals*, *maulvis,* and *musliyars* have significant role in the social formation of Muslims in Kerala.

Each period of history brings its own experience of religious discourse which patterns the rituals in particular locations. For instance, there was a fierce religious debate referred to as '*Ponnani-Kondotty kaitharkkam*' (debate between Ponnani and Kondotty) in 1835 between two regions of Ponnani and Kondotti on specific religious practices. *Ulemas* from both the regions argued about the authenticity of the Sufi practices of a leader, Kondotty *thangal,* who had come from Bombay and started a Sufi *Khanqa* in the place Kondotty.

---

6   *Ilmu- Al-Mantiq* is a discipline specially taught for the skill in argumentation. In Malayalam it can be translated as '*tharkkashastram*' (Science of debate)

7   Madappalli, Muhammad (2010), 'Knowledge and Power among Muslims in Kerala', Unpublished MPhil dissertation, CSSS/SSS/JNU

Ponnani *ulema* argued that these rituals were un-Islamic leading to a prolonged series of arguments and counter-arguments that continued for years (Zainuddin, 2012: 90-98).

The key argument of this thesis is that religion/religiosity is more complex than can be understood by binary categories about sources of knowledge. For instance, the use of 'scripturalists' to refer to the reformists is misleading, because, all the groups in the argument state their uncompromising allegiance to the texts. The term 'innovators' (*bidai*) has been used by all to criticize the 'other', which means, the title of 'tradition' has been claimed by all the groups to identify themselves the most authentic and hence valid interpretation. Sunnis refer to them as '*ahle-sunnathi wal-jamaa*' (group of tradition and ideal community) and even the term '*Sunni*' has come from '*Sunnah*' (tradition). Every group regards itself as 'orthodox' in relation to the 'other' whom they regard as 'heterodox'. All *suunis* are not the supporters of *urukku* and *mantram* and all *non-Sunnis* like *mujahids* and *Jamaatis* (those who follow *jama-te-islami*) are not against *urukku* and *mantram*. There are intra-group variations on taking positions on every practice at the lived experience of Islam.

Before going to the specific healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram* through which we present the debates and classificatory scheme of debating Islamic sects, we engage few key writers on the study of Islamic religion. This will help us to examine how the far existing frameworks in sociology and social anthropology of Islam are helpful to explain the developments among Muslims in Kerala.

III. Muslims and Rituals: An Overview of Major theories and Approaches

Which approach is applicable to study practices among Muslims? Does a Muslim behave as an individual actor? How does he respond to the social situations of which he is part? How the texts and practices are related to each other regarding practices? How rituals are patterned, how do they change? What are the dimensions of power and authority in patterning rituals? And what are the limitations of Western frameworks to study Islam and Muslim societies? These are some important questions that have been considered and reconsidered by number of sociologists and anthropologists especially after Clifford Geertz (1968) brought Islam into the attention of anthropology.

Sociologists and anthropologists have attempted to study the ritual diversities of Muslim societies through different approaches. Some of them have done it through exclusive analytical binaries like orthodox and non-orthodox, oriental and occidental, Little and Great traditions of Islam, textual cities and ritual villages, *Sharia* in town and mysticism in countryside, elite *ulema* and the local and segmentary tribal, and so on. These binaries have also been criticized. In what follows, I present an overview of the major studies on various dimensions of practices of Muslims looked from different theoretical approaches of ritual, religion, social change and so on. We have selected the literatures expecting that this overview may give a good introduction to the theme of my paper, that is, 'Religious Discourse on Classification of healing practices'. We elaborate extensively on two authors, Clifford Geertz and Talal Asad who, for me, represent the two different major theoretical trends that would tell us about the shifts and breaks in the anthropology of religion and rituals among Muslims. This overview of approaches shows how Islam and Muslim societies have been defined by sociological and anthropological studies.

Clifford Geertz: Islam as 'Cultural System'

It seems better to briefly explain Geertz's methodological standpoints before getting into his studies. While writing an obituary on Geertz after his death, Sherry B Ortner (2007), one of his best known students, says, Geertz has taken philosophical interest in the Weberian way of thinking, that sees human beings as "suspended in the webs of meaning that they themselves have spun". He shifted from the anthropological conception of culture as the provider of the ordered forms for human organism to the question of how specific cultures, in their specific symbolic formations, provide their members with specific systems of meaning and order within which to live their lives. From various systems of meaning, none was more central than religion for him. To understand the religion as cultural system, he used the method of *'thick description'* which can be defined in Ortner's words "to get at the meanings that shape and inform all of social life. It is also about how we may and must go about uncovering such meaning, namely reading social life as if it were a text, or as a text, to be interpreted, on analogy, with the interpretation of literary texts" (Ortner, 2007). Using Geertz's own words (1974), we cannot perceive what informants perceive, rather, we can perceive what they perceive 'with' or 'by means of' or 'through', which he calls the concept of 'experience near'.

Clifford Geertz's celebrated book *'Islam Observed: Religious Development in*

11

Morocco and Indonesia' (1968) is a comparative, historical study of religious change, applied to Islam in two different civilizations, the Indonesian and Moroccan. The study is a social and cultural interpretation based on his fieldwork in Java (1952-54), Bali and Sumatra (1957) and Morocco (1964-66). The book looks into the ways in which particular ideas, acts and institutions sustained and failed to sustain and how they defined the religious faith through different historical periods. For him, the faith is sustained in this world by *symbolic forms* and social arrangements and the content of religion is embodied in *images* and *metaphors* which its adherents use to perceive the reality. Hence, in other words, it can be said, the book is all about *'writing a social history of the imagination and its change'* added with the particularity of the situation (emphasis added).

He describes the unique features of two local contexts, Indonesia and Morocco and their differences along with so much of similarities of same religious affiliation which is Islam. The critical feature of Morocco is its cultural life is centered on *tribes* out of which the soul of Islamic civilization emerged. Keeping way from the urban religious scholars, Islam practiced among them was of saint worship, magical power and aggressive piety. Their religious life was inherently connected with *Marabouts*[8], the local holy men, who were considered as the descendants of prophet and the leaders of Sufi brotherhoods.

Unlike the tribal Morocco's cultural homogenization, moral consensus and the standardization of fundamental beliefs, Indonesia, primarily a *peasant* society, had *many forms of Islam*. Its cultural life was malleable, tentative, *syncretic* and diversified. With its Hindu-Buddhist orientation, Indonesia received Islam from India via trade, not by invasion, through coastal areas. So, peasantry absorbed Islamic concepts and practices into their previous Southeast Asian folk religion (which had already absorbed Indian cultural elements) believing in ghosts, gods, *jinns* and prophets together into a philosophical animism. Hence, the ways in which both societies did experience the *Islamization* process and the strategies and approaches used to cope with the crises arose out of it, were different. The crisis was the encounter between what had already existed there (syncretic culture) and what was received from texts and *scriptures*, which led them to seek for what is 'true Islam' and what is 'false'. We have to note here that Geertz uses binaries such as tribal Morocco which is segmentary and 'homogenous' where Indonesia is understood as

---

8Marabout is the French rendering of the Arabic word *murabit* which means tied, bound, fastened to God like a camel to the post, a ship to a pier or as *ribat*, another derivative, which means fortified sanctuary like a monk to monastery (Geertz, 1968: 43).

peasantry society which is 'heterogeneous'

Geertz elaborates extensively on his method of 'interpretative sociology' in his final chapter, 'the struggle for the real'. He argues the faith or what is to be believed has not changed much, rather, what changed is the way in which it was believed. Because, for him:

> "Religiousness (be it myths, rites, doctrines or whatever) or religious thought is dependent upon the utilization by individuals of socially available 'systems of significance', cultural constructs embodied in language, custom, art, and technology- that is to say, symbols which would not exist without collectively evolved, socially transmitted, and culturally objectified patterns of meaning" (Geertz, 1968: 19).

By tracing the history of the *traditional religion* or *classical styles*, he explains how gradually and variously the conceptions of divine and the ways in which society approached it became established in both countries. Here, to have a scientific understanding of religious phenomena, he reduces its diversity to a limited number of general types. Thus, he takes two historical metaphors from both countries *Sunan Kalidjaga* and *Sidi lahsen Lyusi*, a sixteenth century Javanese prince and the other, a seventeenth century half-Berber of Morocco. They are taken here as the images and symbols of their respective country's culture and history, particularly, they show how spirituality was conceptualized in classical time in two different cultures. Indonesia represented an elitist, esoteric and aesthetic ethos which was an amalgamation of Indic-Islamic. Religion, as a human phenomenon gave them the decisive structure of existence to which the events of everyday life were repeatedly adapted. There was not much difference between the world as experienced and the world as imagined which can be termed as a 'magical circle'.

He says that this magical circle broke during 15th and 16th centuries following the expansion of Islam through trading classes which was not adjustable to the Indic world view. It was against this *Indonesianized syncretisitc* folk tradition of medieval Islam that the *counter-tradition* of orthodox Islamic consciousness, based on Quranic, puritan, scholastic world view grew through the networks of *bazaar* (markets). (Emphasis added).

In Morocco, the established religious tradition was *maraboutism* whose existence was based on *baraka*, a kind of spiritual electricity or magical power. So, the sacred appeared

13

more as a benefaction, a special ability of particular individuals and the whole processes of social and cultural life were referred under the rubric of Sufism[9]. But later, the rise of *Alawite* dynasty represented the assertion of the legitimacy and supremacy of the genealogical view of *baraka* over the miraculous and that of hereditary charisma over the personal charisma. Wonder-working sainthood melted in the face of legalist, puritan *Alawites*.

There were particular institutional apparatuses for the meditation of Islam, which were important in the religious life of Morocco like *siyyid* complex[10] and *zawiyya* complex[11]. The rituals in the *zawiyya* ranged from the simple bead-telling repetition of the names of God, through blood sacrifice, to the more famous sort of rotating *dervish* performances-dancing with swords, playing with fire, charming snakes, mutual flagellation, a particular rite, the procedure or method which is known as *tariqa* (path or way) in Muslim idiom. All of these rituals flowed together, like a swelling stream into a single spiritual channel, *maraboutism*.

Hence, he finds, all the terms we use to refer to the forms of religious life like mysticism, worship and tradition, which are the ways in which the people in different localities have developed their conception of Islam, meant different things in two countries. On the Indonesian side, they were conceptualized as inwardness, imperturbability, patience, poise, sensibility, aestheticism, elitism, obsessive self-effacement, and the radical dissolution of individuality. In Morocco it meant activism, fervor, impetuosity, nerve, toughness, moralism, populism, the obsessive self-assertion, and the radical intensification of individuality. It can be well understood that Geertz develops a framework of understanding, to empirically discover the order of universe through the comparison with circumstantiality and particularism. The central task here is to find out the 'appropriate terms of comparison' and the 'appropriate frameworks' to study 'different *islams*'.

After elaborating the Indonesian and Moroccan spirituality in classical time, Geertz

---

9 Sufism is specificity of belief and practice, a distinct conception of religiousness. Sufism as an historical reality brought orthodox Islam into an effective relationship with the world, rendering it accessible to its adherents reconciling pantheism with legalism wherein it defined sacrifice, possession, exorcism and curing as Muslim rituals (ibid.48)
10 *siyyid* is a tribal phenomenon, a tribal mentality which includes the tomb and its paraphernalia where the saint is buried, and the living patrilineal descendants of him, and the cult by means of which the *baraka* embodied in the tomb, the saint and the descendants are made available for human purposes. It is a sacred genealogy and personal holiness (ibid.49).
11 *Zawiyya* derives from the root meaning 'corner' or 'nook', a kind of Sufi practice of retreating for the pious to gather in and carry out various sort of spiritual exercises. The term is also applied to the voluntary religious organization, the brotherhood, of which the particular lodge is, in a general sort of way an affiliate (ibid.51).

14

explains how these two forms of religion have undergone changes. He rejects the conventional strategies used for the 'scientific' explanation of the cultural change; they are, indexical[12], typological[13], the world-acculturative[14], and the world evolutionary[15] . All of them have limitations to understand the cultural change, because they describe only the results of change not the mechanisms of it. Rather, he prefers to focus on the way in which two countries got to where they are from where they were.

The classical religious styles of Indonesia and Morocco, - *Illuminationism* and *maraboutism-* which were their main-line traditions lost their hegemony once they had due to the attack from 'secularism' and 'sripturalism'. The shift was from "what shall I believe?" to "how shall I believe it?" a shift from 'religiousness' to 'religious-mindedness' as a logical response to the doubts. It was a transformation of religious symbols from an imagistic revelation of the divine, evidences of God, to an *ideological assertion* of the divine importance. (Emphasis added).

Three developments whose impact upon the classical culture have been most intense: the establishment of Western domination, the increasing influence of scholastic, legalistic, and doctrinal, that is to say, scriptural Islam, and the crystallization of an activist nation-state. The Dutch colonialism dissociated the traditional symbols of legitimacy and made religious faith closer to their self-definition, Muslims by circumstance became 'oppositional' Muslims, as a matter of politcal policy. Colonialism paved the way for the emergence of an identity-preserving 'willed' Islam. The scripturalism, which means a turn toward Quran, the Hadith and the *sharia*, together with the various standard commentaries as the only acceptable bases of religious authority, provided the content of such an Islam. The sripturalist reaction was not only against the European beliefs and practices but it was also against *maraboutism* and *illuminationism*, the classical styles of their religiosity. Later, by 1900, the movement became a defiant religious ideology and a rebellious political one.

The movement toward an Orthodox 'true' Islam of the book rather than that of the

---

12Indexical means using arbitrary indices of social advance such as literacy, per-capita income to measure society in question (ibid.57)

13Typological involves setting up ideal-types and stages like the stages of 'primitive', 'archaic', 'medieval', modern and the culture in question is put in series of stages arranged in a sequential order (ibid)

14 In world acculturation, change is understood in terms of borrowing from the West and the change is consequently measured by the degree to which values, ideas, and institution developed in the West have diffused to the society in question and taken root there (ibid.58)

15In evolutionary method, certain world historical trends such as 'increasing social differentiation' are postulated as intrinsic to human culture and society's movement is measured in terms of the degree to which these trends have managed against these historical trends (ibid. 58)

15

trance or the miracle started with the scholastic discourses in 19th century within 'santri' (Javanese religious students) and 'talibs' in morocco. The Santris crusaded for the adherence to the legal, moral, and ritual demands of Islamic scriptures and against the devotion to the local spirits, charms, and domestic rituals mainly practiced by the mass peasantry. It was through this santris (ulema of Indonesia), pilgrims to Mecca, establishment of religious boarding schools and the internal market system that the scriptural movement had started, and later, it formed into a sectarian community. All of them worked for the teaching of the 'original' and 'true' Islam to the local 'ignorants', mentioning the theological texts written in vernacular language. In this same century, after1880, there was a rise of Islamic Reform movements throughout the Muslim world- the attempt to establish the 'plain', 'original', 'uncorrupted', 'progressive' Islam of the days of the prophet and the rightly guided Caliphs[16]. In Middle East, the propagation of 'back-to-the-Quran' and 'on-to-modernity' was led by the revivalists like Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. It was a combination of radical fundamentalism and modernism, stepping backward in order to better leap forward, sometimes the veneration of the texts in order to justify the modernity.

Despite of having so much of similarities in the religious change in the wake of scriptural movements in Indonesia and Morocco, there were many differences due to some local reasons. On the one hand, Moroccan scholarly tradition was much more advanced than that of Indonesia. On the other, the most important reason behind the differences is the fact that Arabic language was mother tongue of Morocco whereas it was foreign language in Indonesia where even the recitation of Quran was in local accent and the textual interpretation was through the summaries of vernacular language. Indonesians could be pan-Islamicists but not pan-Arabists; Moroccans could be both without distinction between the two.

In Morocco, scripturalism, with its all opposition to maraboutism, came not as an intrusion to the existing spiritual balance; rather, it sought a move towards 'homogenization'. All the elements of maraboutism like the genealogization of charisma, saint worship and brotherhoods were brought into a single form of 'hereditary maraboutism', replacing the old synthesis.

Reform movements started at the end of 19th century by the Egyptian theologian

---

16 Caliph means the successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

Muhammad Abduh, usually known as 'Salafi movement' from as-salaf as-salih literally means 'the righteous ancestors'. They advocated the literalist interpretation of scriptures, questioning the post-Quranic commentaries, and rejecting Sufism which dominated all scholarly and popular discussions and debates. It was a battle between the scripturalism and maraboutism, which in turn lead into the formation of the organized religious schools as agencies for the production of scritptuaralist ideologies. They delivered their message in every setting from the city compartments to tribal tents, attacked the practices of amulets and wiped out sorcery arguing that Quran is the only source of baraka to be detected. It can also to be noted that, the salafi scritptuaralist movements which sought for the 'religious self-purification' led into the political self-assertion and the rise of nationalism in both modern Indonesia and Morocco from 1920s to 1960s. The nationalism was the product of a contract between the community of ulema, the scriptural scholars and monarchs in Morocco and elected president in Indonesia. The ulema recognized and legitimized the kingship as 'Islamic'. Thus, the nationalist movement was interpreted as the 'pan-Islamic movement'.

Geertz argued while analyzing culture, we must we view art, history, in our case, the religion, against the commonsense notions, to see how they grow out of these common sense notions, and go beyond them. Because, there is a dialectic between religion and the commonsense as there is between art, science and commonsense because, the commonsense is the total orientation towards life. In modern anthropology, this was a perspectival change from the concern with thought as an inner mental state to a concern with thought as utilization by individuals in the society of 'symbols'. Here, the focus is neither on subjective life as such nor on outward behavior, but on the socially available "systems of significance"- beliefs, rites, meaningful objects- in terms of which subjective life is ordered and outward behavior is guided. The main context in which religious symbols work is ritual, for which the sacred symbols give a world view, which influence his actions and personality. For instance, it is the festivals around a saint's tomb, the bead-telling in zawiyya that keep maraboutism going. Psychological, social, and cultural factors make men participate in the religious rituals and accept the metaphysical beliefs implicit in them when he feels inadequacies in the commonsense ideas in the face of complexities of experiences.

As for Geertz, the loss of power of the classical religious symbols to sustain the

religious faith- a process of the 'secularization of thought'- is the major reason behind the religious changes and its response was '*ideologization* of religion'. Thus, the growth of the positive science and the emergence of the 'struggle and tension between science and religion', in other words, 'the struggle for the real', made scripturalists[17] turn exclusively toward 'written sources'. This turn was at the expense of traditional practices to defend Islam vis-a-vis the new cultural setting of modern world by suitably *redefining* its beliefs and practices. Rather than the theological contribution, it is on these grounds of the *ideologization* of religion that they called themselves as the 'innovators' and 'traditionalists'. They devised two strategies: the absolute separation between the religious and the scientific domains and second; a consonance with science, saying that all are already mentioned in Quran by interpreting science. Thus, the doctrines are protected from the human experience while at the same time, the secular reason left free to operate with full sovereignty in its own world that would not pose any challenge to the scriptures. In Indonesia and Morocco, these strategies operated differently. The former, with its syncretic stream, accepted the complementary relation and the latter, with its religious perfectionism, isolated the purified Islamic faith from any human contamination. In the one case, science posed no threat to religion because it is seen as religious, in the other, there was no threat, because religion is seen as not science.

Dealing with the question of how religion shapes everyday rituals, he prescribed two forms of cultural pattern, *force* and its *scope*. The force is the thoroughness and the intensity of religious commitment according which religious belief takes superiority over all other domains and vice versa. By scope, he meant, the range of social context within which religious belief has direct relevance. For instance, an Indonesian for whom religion is personally important, will naturally be inclined to extend its influence to all other domains of his life, he would seek God's help in everything from physical pain and mental illnesses to the good results in exams. However, Geertz concludes, scripturalism could not become a living religious tradition in both countries amid the persistence of great 'dilemmas' emerged out of the theological rethinking of the scholastic tradition by the scriptuarslist puritans.

---

17 In both societies it is only scritpturalists who have responded keenly to the tension between the science and religion and participated in the 'struggle for the real'.

Talal Asad: Genealogy of Religion and Ritual

Talal Asad in his influential book *'Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam'* (1993) explores historically the development of 'religion' as a concept and practice in the West under the assumption that Western history has an overriding importance in the making of modern world[18]. He looks into the ways in which how Western concepts and practices of religion define forms of history making, taking the cultural hegemony of the West as his main object of inquiry. This point is approached through the dimensions of 'Genealogies', 'Archaisms', 'Translations', and 'Polemics'.

Looking into the genealogy of religion, he discusses the emergence of religion as a modern historical object, the two elements in the medieval Christianity which are not accepted by the modern religion and the productive role of physical pain and the virtue of the self-abasement in medieval Christianity to produce religious truth. He also addresses the aspects of the asymmetry between the Western and non-Western histories, the problems of anthropological translation, and the limitations happen when non-Christian religious tradition juxtaposed with the enlightenment doctrine of 'critical reason'.

Asad points out how power makes difference in history writing and anthropological categorization. For instance, instead of the 'tribal', 'primitive' categories, anthropology, especially the empiricists now use the term 'local people', widening the scope of 'human agency'. It means, the subjects are understood as attached to a place, rooted, circumscribed, limited, disoriented while those are not local are thought of either as 'displaced', 'uprooted', 'disoriented or more positively as 'unlimited', 'cosmopolitan', and 'universal' belonging to the whole world. Those who invoke the authority of the medieval Islamic texts, like Saudi theologians, are deemed as 'local', whereas, the Western writers who invoke the authority of the modern secular literature claim they are 'universal'. South Asian immigrants in Britain are described as 'uprooted'; English officials lived in British India were thought of as 'representative' of crown while the South Asians are its 'subjects'. Modern capitalist enterprises and modernizing nation states are the two most important powers that organize space today, defining what is local and what is not. For anthropology, local means those are 'locatable', who can be 'observed', reached and manipulated when required.

---

18 Asad suggests that the anthropologist wants to study the Muslim beliefs and practices, needs to understand how 'religion' has come to be formed in West. Since 'religion' is a Western category there is danger in employing it as a normal concept when translating Islamic traditions.

When a project or a text is translated form one site to another, from one agent to another, the versions of power are reproduced without getting the reproduction of the original identity. In historiography and ethnography, dominant power has worked through differentiating and classifying the practices. Here, Power is constructive not repressive having the ability to select the differences that serve its purposes and desires.

Asad says, in history making, to which anthropology is inserted, the project of modernization (understood here as Westernization) and its aim of material and moral progress with its notion of the 'progressive time' is the prime matter. The West has created a unique historicity as its own, a modern historicity- from "Greeks and Romans" and "Hebrews and early Christians" through "Latin Christiandom", "the renaissance" and "the reformation" to the "universal civilization" of modern Europeans- which has certain intentions, practices, and discourses in systematic ways to be unmasked. So, one assumption is clear: 'to make history, the agent must create the future, remake herself and help others to do so'. Therefore, Islamic revolution in Iran is not history making because it is an attempt to "resist the future" or "to turn back the clock of history".

It is often said that Renaissance "discovered man", but actually it was a psychological reconstruction of the European individuality according to which a common human nature was thus rendered to all human beings who exist in different stages of maturity and enlightenment. The problem of Christian theology might have virtually faded due to higher criticism, but some of its ideas remain in 'secular' disciplines, formed in pursuit of a new universality. So, the anthropologists who studied religious beliefs and practices or cultural changes saw themselves as dealing with non-modern lives and thought that they have to situate the objects of modern disciplines in non-modern social totality. The right basis for comparison was assumed as the 'unity of human experience' and at the same time 'variety' and 'difference' was also insisted to make comparison worthwhile. Thus, to understand better the local people anthropology has understood the West as something more than a *threadbare ideology*. So, Asad said, to understand the process of how it constructed its structures, projects and desires, including religion which is an essential part of that construction, we must grasp its peculiar historicity. He dealt with these fragments of Western history which has been approached as genealogies, archaisms, translations, and polemics.

Explaining the 'construction of religion as an anthropological category', he

problematizes the anthropological definition of religion by assigning it to a particular history of knowledge and power, that is the history of Christianity, by which the modern world was constructed. He says there have been changes in the anthropological conception of religion. From the 19th century evolutionary thought of it as an early, 'primitive' human condition, it has got a distinctive space of human practice and belief in 20th century, from the age old conception of it as the archaic form of 'scientific thinking'. The definition of religion as separate from politics, law and science- space in which varieties of power and reason articulated in modern life- is a modern Western norm, a product of post-reformation history. Then he examines how the theories of religion have separated religion conceptually from the domain of power. He takes a universal definition of religion offered by Clifford Geertz's 'Religion as a Cultural system' (1966) to check it.

Asad says Geertz has defined religion as "a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing the conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic". Here, Geertz defines symbol as "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception of meaning". Asad finds problem with this definition because symbol is not an object that serves as a *vehicle* for a conception, *it itself the conception*. Here Geertz has been criticized for this understanding of symbols as vehicles (means) which give meaning to social actors because, as Asad says, symbols are themselves the conceptions of meaning not 'vehicles' of it.

Geertz has also said that religious symbols produce two kinds of dispositions, moods and motivations[19]. But, Asad says, religious symbols, even when failing to produce moods and motivation, are still religious, independent of its 'effectiveness'. So the questions arise here are: What are the conditions in which religious symbols can actually produce religious dispositions? Or how does power (religious) create (religious) truth?

To answer these questions, he looks into the relation between the power and truth in the Christian thought such as the doctrine of St. Augustine on Donatist heresy. The doctrine indicated that *disciplina, coercion* and *punishment*, imposed by God had important role in the firm handling of human being against the denial of the Christian teaching. Here, it is

---

19 For Geertz, motivations are made meaningful with reference to the ends towards which they are conceived to conduce whereas moods are made meaningful with reference to the conditions from which they are conceived to spring (Geertz 1966, p.97).

21

TH22744

not mere religious 'symbols' which bring dispositions (as Geertz has argued), but it is power, ranging from the laws, sanctions to the social institutions such as church, and human bodies like prayer and penance, which imposed the conditions for the realization of the 'truth'. So, particular discourses are systematically excluded while some are praised and included drawn into a narrative of sacred truth.

Asad argues Geertz does not consider how the *authorizing process and authorizing discourses* represent the practice and utterance or disposition and he does not look into how they redefine the religious spaces. In middle ages, such *discourses of authentication* of the 'acceptance' and 'rejection' of particular religious practices had worked as a 'model of truth'. With the help of institutional power, all practices were subjected to a unified, single authenticating authority which could classify and distinguish what is 'true religion' and 'authorized practice and doctrine' and what is 'false' one. For this definition, authoritative discourses, and the teachings and practices of church were the final assessment. In 17th century, when Roman church was fragmented and various religious wars were fought, a universal definition[20] of religion was produced for the new order. Later, it came to be termed by anthropologists as the 'Natural Religion' in terms of beliefs, practices and ethics which was assumed to exist in all societies. From being attached to the specific processes of power and knowledge which have a Christian history, 'religion' now is abstracted and universalized by the anthropologists. So, without regard to the *discursive process of authorization*, the 'meaning' cannot be insisted, because, it is those discourses which exist beyond the observed practices, that give the religious meaning to the events and practices. The connection between religious theory and practice is that of power- of disciplines that create religion, of interpreting true meanings, of forbidding certain utterances and practices and authorizing others. (Emphasis added)

For Geertz, the fact that all humans need for a general order of existence which is fulfilled by symbols, is the basic requirement for a practice to be qualified as 'religious'. But, it actually meant that human beings always have a deep anxiety of disorder. Asad says Geertz's argument seems to imply that religious belief is independent of the worldly conditions that produce actually the acceptance of the authority which operated differently in different periods of history. Geertz's theory of 'individuals move back and forth between commonsense world and religious world', which is consistent with the phenomenological

---

20 For the details of Christian church's attempts to find a new definition of religion in 17th century, see Lord Herbert in Willey (1934, quoted by Asad, p.40).

perspective, treats religious symbols as 'sui generis. It denotes a paradox because; in reality, the commonsense and religion always differ from one group to another as one culture from another according to which the commonsense world also changes.

So, Asad says, rather than assuming rituals and practices as generating religious conviction, as Geertz has conceptualized them, the manner in which it is played out could tell us how religious faith is attained. Then, we must examine not only the sacred performance itself but also the disciplinary activities, institutional forms of knowledge and practice within which dispositions are formed and sustained and through which the ways of attaining truth are marked out. He argues, there are different kinds of practices and discourses inherent to the field in which religious representations acquire identity and truthfulness. So, their possibility and authoritative status have to be explained as products of historically distinctive disciplines and forces.

Asad examines the genealogy of the concept of *ritual* in anthropology to identify some conceptual preconditions for our contemporary understanding of religion. By making a historical inquiry into the developments in the medieval, early modern and modern periods, he thinks, changes in the institutional structures and organization of self have made ritual in its contemporary sense for modern anthropology.

The Definition of ritual has underdone changes over different periods, in medieval period it was conceptualized as religious and, in early 20th century it was seen as a cultural phenomenon and now it is a type of routine, repetitive behavior[21]. He says it's essential 'symbolic' character, which connects it more to social structure not to religion, is entirely modern. Anthropologists have incorporated a Christian theological preoccupation to establish authoritatively the meanings of representations[22] offered by the indigenous discourses. In Christianity, it is the Church that reserves the authority to interpret the meanings of scriptural representations while the indigenous societies lack that authoritative exegesis and are uncertain to interpret them. So, the ethnographers looked for the properties of symbolism in objects, acts, or utterances before interpreting them, who by themselves identified and classified symbols. This is a shift from a *script* (text to be read

---

21 For the reference of the changes in the definitions, he takes *Encyclopedia Britanica*, Published in Edinburgh in 1771, and 1910 entries, and Oxford English Dictionary of 17th C (ibid. 57-58).

22 For instance, Malinowski has dealt with the meanings to the magical attempts with the natural environment, whereas Radcliffe Brown (its effects that maintained the continuity of social structure), Edmund Leach (cultural categories by which messages are communicated), Victor Turner (Religious experiences that transcend the cultural and social categories) regarded ritual as essentially a species of representational behavior (ibid. 60).

and performed) where ritual was directed at the apt performance according to the rules and prescriptions by those in authority, to an *action* (a social fact to be observed and inscribed).

The Christian monastic program[23] in the early middle ages is a clear example of the disciplined formation of self on the basis of the proper performance of already inscribed liturgy which had no any distinction between outer behavior and inner motive, and between social rituals and individual sentiments. Following the Renaissance, there was a process of reconstruction of self by which a distance was always kept between the public forms of behavior and the private form of thought and feeling because, a radical reconceptualization of the 'appropriate behavior' was made.

Asad then examines how the anthropological distinction between 'feelings' and 'emotion' as private (domain of body), and 'ritual' as public (domain of collectivity) came into being. This distinction has been the dominant assumption in the study of ritual in modern anthropology[24]. He concludes by saying, for the participant, ritual is a reenactment of a profound 'truth'. He argued all that is required is to understand with sympathy and respect as well as the openness to the sources, what rituals, for instance Islamic ritual, portray and symbolize. All that he wanted to argue is:

"is it possible that the transformation of rites from discipline to symbol, from practicing distinctive virtues (passions) to representing by means of practices, has been one of the preconditions for the larger conceptual transformation of heterogeneous life (acting and being acted upon) into readable text?" (Asad, 1993: 79).

Looking into 'archaisms', Asad attempts to understand the ways in which particular rituals in the Medieval Latin Christianity[25] depended on the physical pain and how their transformation changed the discipline in different periods. He investigates into the

---

23 The rule of the Saint Benedict was established as sole program for the proper government of a monastic community and the Christian formation of its members. Although most Christians did not participate in such programs, the disciplined formation of Christian self was possible only through such communities (ibid. 62)

24 For example Tambiah (1979, p.113-124) makes distinction between ordinary communicational behavior which expresses feelings directly, e.g. Crying denotes distress and communicates that information to the interacting persons. But ritualized, conventionalized behavior is constructed in order to communicate certain attitudes related to the ongoing institutionalized intercourse, quoted by Asad (p.73).

25 By medieval Christianity, he meant, primarily Latin Christendom in Italy, northern Spain, France, Rhineland, the Low Countries, and England.

practices of 12th century judicial torture[26] in Western Europe and the sacramental penance of Medieval Christianity. These are connected with the formation of a particular kind of politics, religious ritual, knowledge production and a particular kind of subjectivity, authorized and employed by the church. It show how the power- the most direct, physical effect of it- works to produce truthful discourses and makes subjects respond to authority. When the practice of appealing to supernatural in all doubtful cases through the ordeal transformed in to the rational procedures of Roman law, the church recognized the previous practice as superstition. Here, Asad refers to Michael Foucault who has discussed this issue of shifting strategies of power in relation to the body in his book 'Discipline and Punish'. Foucault said the investigation as an authoritarian search for a truth appropriated itself the right to establish the truth by regulating bodies. What is important here is, rather than the beliefs of the individuals who involved in the processes, the power structure had the key role which worked through very different legal-moral structures.

Penance was another Christian institution of inflicting pain on the body in search for truth if the subjects had committed sins (transgression) like heresy or fornication and a confession was required from them to save them from the pain in the life after death. The offender had to confess before the assembled congregation and had to beg them humbly for their prayers to reconcile him to the truth. Sometimes he may be excluded from the community as 'polluted' and readmitted after many rounds of penances and an escape from it was sometimes sought in suicide. It was not the threat by the priest, but the subject's will to receive pain to avoid it in the life after world and the presentation of oneself as 'sick' in need of help (the metaphor of penance as medicine for the sick soul) which sustained the authority relationship between the priest (like a physician who treats his sickness) and the penitent.

From 6th to 12th centuries, the only possible way of religious life was monastic life and the only monastic code was the ascetic discipline laid down by St. Benedict, called the 'Benedictine centuries'. The important idea of the Benedictine principle was the practice of penance, such as fasting would erase the marks inscribed by sin. Here he acknowledges Foucault's (1982) work on monastic asceticism. Foucault said the Benedictine rule consisted of the 'technology of the self', which played a crucial part in distinctive

---

26 Judicial torture is the application of pain to the body of the accused of witness, in order to extract a confession. It was treated as the early *inquisitorial* procedure in the history of Western criminal laws which are contrasted with the duel, ordeal, and sacred oath, the primitive forms of *accusatorial* procedure. Most widespread were the ordeal of branding, that of boiling water, and that of cold water (ibid.84).

production of truth. For a Christian monk, humility (the virtue opposed to the sin of pride) was the basic means of spiritual progress. It meant the complete obedience (for which Foucault used 'subjectivation') to the authority and discipline of abbot in an institutional setting of organized community life, making the individual a 'monastic body'. The discourses about the sins through preaching, publishing literature defined and formed specific types of Christian consciousness, a formation of disciplined religious consciousness. Even in modern times, pain is regarded as an evil, but it continues to be theorized as rationally justifiable in warfare, criminology and medical experimentations. So, the rationality of all kinds of 'paining bodies' was understood as according to their justification in terms of their instrumental adequacy.

Asad analyzes religion in terms of the disciplinary practices and the ways in which the religious discourses regulate, inform, and construct the religious selves rather than going through the conventional duality of ideology and social structure. He examines two kinds of power process: formations of the self and the manipulations of (or resistances to) others. He examines the conditions within which the obedient wills (will to obey), desires and choices for humility are created through a program of communal living. He does not mean power as interpersonal as opposed to being institutional; rather, his attention is on the aspects of volitional power which were constructed by the Christian monastic project.

For him, the ritual has to be treated as the 'vehicle' of power and as a medium of persuasion, which can be seen as a shift from the major trends in the modern British, French and American anthropology which understood ritual as a domain of the symbolic and a form of communication not as instrumental. The Christian monastery has to be understood as different from other total institutions of hospitals or prisons as said by Goffman (1961), because, the obedience was a *virtue* of a Christian monk and the main element of his religious dispositions, not the *order* or strategy among inmates. Those rites aimed to construct and reorganize the historically distinctive emotions such as desire, humility, and remorse which were not seen as the behavioral features of the subordinate social status but as the central Christian virtues of obedience to God. Therefore, the correct dispositions necessary for the disciplined life was created after creating the appropriate psychological conditions.

The discipline of monastic life was inscribed in the rule, for instance, the Benedictine rule. It connoted a divinely oriented knowledge embodied in the physical and spiritual

practice within an organized community under the absolute authority of an abbot whose duty was to apply measures to attain Christian virtues. The 'Rule' (not symbols) thus acted once as the central 'text' of a program of life and the abbots were authoritative interpreters with continuous observation and periodic corrections. He concludes by arguing that:

> "*In various epochs and societies, the domains of life are variously articulated as appropriate to it. How these articulations are constructed and policed, and what happen when they are changed (forcibly or otherwise) are questions for anthropological inquiry. Unless we try to reconstruct the historical conditions in which different projects and motivations are formed*", we shall not move ahead in understanding agency* (Asad, 1993: 167).

He also looks into the process by which culture was transformed into the notion of a 'text' like an inscribed discourse. He found that the way language became dominated in the perspective of social anthropology is one crucial reason behind that change. Thus, he critically analyzed the discussions on the practice of 'cultural translation' in British anthropology, focusing on Ernest Gellner's text 'Concepts and Society'. Gellner looks into the ways in which the functionalist anthropologists dealt with the problems of interpreting and translating the discourses of alien societies. Asad says Gellner fails to consider the problem of cultural translation when it is considered in the wider relationship of unequal societies. He says, those who translate from other cultures must look for the coherence in discourses. He then deals with one of the most crucial problem with the translations of ethnographers, which Gellner misses to say, the inequality of languages.

The translation process is governed by the institutionally defined power relations between languages and the modes of life concerned. The languages of the third world countries are seen as 'weaker' in relation to the Western languages. Thus, weaker languages undergo to the forcible transformation according to Western languages, especially to English than the other way round because, there are political and economic inequalities between these two societies. The translation only address a very specific Western audience who wait to read about another mode of life and to manipulate the text according to the established conditions in their own society, reinforced by the notion of 'culture as text'. When 'eliciting the implicit meaning in the native minds' (*as Geertz has done in Islam observed*) which is the object of the ethnographic translation, the

27

ethnographer becomes the real authority in determining the subject's implicit meaning; it does not become the actual meaning. The ethnographer gets only what the native is capable to share in 'scientific ways' in some 'ideal situations'. The text constructed this way as 'scientific text' cannot normally be contested by those native people. (Emphasis added)

Asad also deals with the question of how *reasoning* has been seen in one Islamic country Saudi Arabia through the European Enlightenment notion of reason, mainly through Immanuel Kant's famous essay "An answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?". He says anthropologists will have to consider each tradition in its own terms to compare with others. For instance, anthropologist has to understand the ways of reasoning, characteristic of given tradition just like the Enlightenment assumptions are specific to only one tradition (even if it has largely shaped our modern world). Kant defines reason as the ability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another while obeying the prevailing authority. Thus, Kant makes a distinction between the public use of reason and its private use, which means, *argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey.*

As the constitution of modern sovereign state required, in 17th and 18th centuries, religion was forcibly redefined as belief, and the religious belief, sentiment and identity began to be seen as personal matters which belong to the newly emerging space of private life (as opposed to the public). As it was recognized by the modern historians, public power was conceded to the constitution of modern state and public truth to natural science. But the formation of the state power in the contemporary Middle East has a very different genealogy. In Middle East, there is no public criticism in Kantian sense and the religious criticism is not confined to the private domain. But according to the European definition of reason, Saudi Arabia has been seen as 'irrational' and 'fundamentalist' due to its complete reliance on Islamic law and the interpretation of *ulama*.

Actually, *ulama* are making a definition of the orthodoxy- a reordering of the knowledge that govern the 'correct' form of Islamic practices by which the long-established practices, such as the veneration of saint's tombs, were judged to be 'un-Islamic' by the Wahhabi[27] reformers of Arabia and then forcibly eliminated. Greater vigilance has been given to ensure the 'proper Islamic' practice by Saudi *ulema* to

---

27 Muhammad Ibnu Abdul Wahhab was a Saudi theologian and founder of Wahhabi movement (1703-1792), established first Saudi state with his pact with Muhammad bin Saud and continue the power sharing agreement between the two families (Haj, 2009: 30-66)

strengthen one's faith in only one God. It means the orthodox criticism in Saudi seeks to construct a relation of the discursive dominance with the help of traditional reasoning. Orthodox discourses are not against changes, but it is very difficult to secure them amid radical changes in the society. There are many reasons behind the aspirations for the orthodoxy because Islamic moral-legal system rests on the basis of classification of behaviors and practices which has to be authenticated by *ulema*. The criticism of *ulema* in Saudi has to be understood through a different concept of *nasiha*[28] (advice) to the government which is believed as an obligation to every Muslim. So, even in a 'non-liberal' state like Saudi Arabia, there is a an open and institutionalized tradition of social criticism which finds expression in many ways like *khutuba* (Friday sermon) and *nasiha*, practiced in different ways. The tradition of public criticism in Saudi, considered as a *duty* upon Muslims to criticize political authority, stands in sharp contrast to the enlightenment view of public criticism as a *right* which is optional. While giving the Government its full right to rule according to the *sharia*, its actual performance can be criticized for the failures in meeting *sharia's* standards.

As one of the Friday sermon in a Saudi mosque notes, (which Asad takes as another example of the public criticism in Saudi) the relation between a creature and the creator is that of servant-master (*abd-rabb*), which requires unconditional obedience, unlike the Christian figure of kinship (God as father or son). We have to note from here, the Western articulation of liberalism derives from the concept of 'individual to be his own master' which cannot be translated to Middle East. The *Khatib* (preacher) affirmed the absolute authority of God and obedience to the exemplary practice (*sunna*) and to reject everything which is alternative to this[29]. The sermon continued to say that this bond was not only an abstract relation between an individual believer and a transcendental power but also between the community and its founding texts and authorized practices; the community always needs 'correction' to avoid divine punishment in this world and the next. If the matter affects the whole community, like a 'false institutionalized practice' (*like healing practices*), the *nasiha* has to be made public, in an open theological argument. So, the

---

28 Nasiha is a concept of central importance in Islamic moral theology. It means advice that is given for someone's good, honestly and faithfully as an expression of good intention on the part of adviser. It carries the sense of offering moral advice to an erring fellow Muslim which is an obligation and virtue of all Muslims (ibid.214). What is important here is the fact that *nasiha* has to be taken from qualified persons like *ulema* which give them the authority to criticize any practice and bring a 'correct' form of it.

29 The *salafi's* opposition to the traditional practices such as saint veneration and healing is based on this doctrine of uncompromising obedience to the only one God and rejection of asking for help from other than God. I would deal with this issue in the next chapter on 'why *urukku* and *mantram* are debated?'

29

translation of the modern Western categories into the legal discourses of non-Western has a discursive power to compel them with the help of local modernists to abandon their old practices and redefine it and adopt a new one. So, the concept of a single universal rationality and critical reason can be understood as one face of power which takes its political form in translating the liberal conception and practice of 'good society' into every corner of the non-Western world. (Emphasis added)

The assumption that modern liberal politics precludes any commitment to the moral norms or ideology is mistaken because, the concepts of 'civil rights' and 'human rights' which the modern politics employs to lead nation state, have ideological underpinnings of a specific Christian history. The assumption that, secular arguments are rationally superior to religious ones because religious convictions are more rigid, have no evidence to say like that. This assumption come from three notions, which are 'natural science as the model for what is rational', 'rationality is held to be a secular culture and the success of modern medicine and technology as the guarantee of truth', and finally the assertion that 'modern culture is superior to non-modern cultures'. Throughout the book, Asad tried to say, one ought to be looking for the institutional conditions for the production of various social knowledge. The questions which have to solved, thus are, what was regarded as worth recording about 'other' beliefs and customs? By whom was it recorded? In which social project were the records used? (Asad, 1986).

Approaching Islam as *Discursive Tradition*

In another article 'The Idea of An Anthropology of Islam' (1986), Talal Asad writes particularly on the method to study Islam and Muslims societies. He criticizes the trend of seeing Muslim history as the reflection of the Christian history in which the connection between religion and power is simply overturned. He says there is everywhere Muslims who say that what other people take to be Islam is not really Islam at all. Here, a Muslim's belief about the belief and practices of others are part of his beliefs which necessitates searching for an alternative approach to study Islam and Muslim societies.

Criticizing the dichotomous understanding of Geertz, he says, narratives about culturally distinctive actors must try to translate and represent the historically situated *discourses* of such actors as responses to the discourses of others. It is wrong to represent 'types of Islam' as being associated with the types of social structure (as Geertz has done).

30

Rather, he argues:

"Islam as the object of anthropological understanding should be approached as a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it) and the production of appropriate knowledges ". (Asad, 1986)

He says, this discursive tradition includes and relates itself to the founding texts of Quran and Hadith. He understood Islam neither as a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs and morals. Rather, he says, it is a tradition, with no essential difference between 'classical' and 'modern'. A tradition involves of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners to follow the correct form of a given practice, precisely because it is established and has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to the past (when the practice was instituted and from which the knowledge of its proper performance has been transmitted) and a future (why it should be modified or abandoned), through a present (how it is linked with other practices, institutions, and social conditions). The practitioner's conceptions of what is 'correct' performance are crucial for tradition. Therefore, the discourses in which the teaching is done and the correct practice is defined and learned are intrinsic to all Islamic practices. There is a notion of 'correct model' to which all practices ought to follow, which is conveyed in authoritative principles in Islamic traditions. A practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam as it taught to Muslims. Therefore, the statement and teaching of any practice is its authenticity.

He argues, in contrast to the Orientalist division of 'orthodoxy and heterodoxy', wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, sustain, or adjust correct practices and to condemn, exclude, undermine or replace the incorrect ones, there is a domain of orthodoxy. So, anthropologists have to look into the ways in which these powers are exercised, the conditions that make them possible, and also, the resistance they encounter. The arguments and debates over the form and significance of any practice are, therefore, a *natural* part of any Islamic tradition. And the process of trying to win over someone on a traditional practice, using reason and arguments, not to demolish him, is *necessary* part of Islamic discursive traditions. It does not mean that 'the tradition is in crises' as Geertz explained in 'Islam Observed'. Thus, Asad argues, anthropologists have to find out the kinds of

reasoning and the motives for arguing by discovering the central modality of power and resistance it encounters. The variety of traditional Islamic practices in different times and places indicate that, there were different kinds of reasoning that different social and historical conditions had and have been experiencing.

In another review article (1983), Asad reiterates this point; Islamic religious, legal and political ideologies are part of changing institutions and of discourses which are contested and re-constituted. To understand it, one must focus on the religious discourses within a specific historical situation and not on a supposedly original Islamic ideology, which cannot be considered in isolation.

El-Zein: Dissolution of Islam

Abdul Hamid el-Zein (1977), an Egyptian anthropologist, challenged the universality of Islam, opposing the existence of either Islam or religion as fixed and autonomous category, rather; for him, Islam dissolves as well. He argued against the anthropological construction of folk-elite dichotomy. However he also overlooks the underlying coherence in the social life of Muslims amid seemingly various diversities. Criticizing Geertz, Zein says, the culture becomes the central concept in Geertz's understanding of human existence even if he sees human phenomena as simultaneously organic, psychological, social, and cultural. When Geertz analyses culture as social, and intersubjective world, it becomes a positive science, because, it deals with the symbols as empirical expressions of thought, by which he develops a method of the 'analysis of the meaningful structure of experience' or the 'scientific phenomenology of culture'. For instance, Geertz imposes the social 'constraint' of the 'tradition' for Islam as culturally shared meaning. It is this method of 'scientific phenomenology of culture' that Geertz applies to analyze the diverse cultural expressions of Islam in Morocco and Indonesia. Here, the creators of symbols become passive carriers of meaning, while the detached scientific consciousness takes over the active role. Zein says, focusing on the daily lived experiences of the local Islams, Geertz has left the study of theological interpretation to the Islamists, underestimating the importance of texts in their lives. Talal Asad (1986) criticizes Zein's contention that "there are diverse forms of Islam, each equally real", by saying that, Zein seems to assert an underlying unconscious logic. Here, Asad says, Zein slips from an anthropological contextualism into a Levi-Struassian universalism (Asad, 1986).

Eickelman: Islam as an Ideology

Dale F Eickelman is also an important figure to be mentioned here, who has engaged with the methodological issues while studying rituals of Muslims. He says, the main challenge for the study of Islam in the local contexts is to describe and analyze how the universalist principles of Islam have been realized in various social and historical contexts. He criticizes Geertz for treating 'classical styles' as constant and dominant factors shaping the interpretation of Islamic texts. Eickelman also challenges the dichotomy of 'great' and 'little' traditions. He sought to interconnect the textual traditions with the diverse socio-cultural and historical contexts (Woodward, 1988). Following the Webarian method, he tried to grasp the social and historical phenomena, defined by the subjective meanings, through his study on *maraboutism* in Morocco. He takes individual as his basic unit of analysis, and religion as an ideology, who can manipulate symbols in order to realize his social goals and interests, resting on five aspects: God's will, reason, propriety, obligation, and compulsion. They all render a coherent and meaningful social action. As El-Zein (1977) says, the paradox with this approach is that religion as an ideology of God's will, as understood by the Moroccans, dissolves history with the premise of eternity.

Woodward: Complex Typology of Text and Practice

Mark R Woodward (1988) looked into the relationship between the textual Islam and the popular Muslim piety by studying *slametan* in central Java. It is a ritual meal at which Arabic prayers are recited and food is offered to the Prophet Muhammad, saints, ancestors who are implored to shower blessings on the community. He argues that the *slametan* ritual is rooted in the essentialist texts whose pre-Islamic elements are interpreted in Islamic terms, so religion must be understood in relation with the larger Muslim tradition. His argument stands as a critique to Geertz, for whom Javanese religion is the synthesis of animism, Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam, in which, animism is predominant, underestimating the role of texts in the religious life. Woodward says, legalistic tradition and mystical piety are not mutually exclusive categories in Java, rather it coexist in the lives of individual. The functions of *slametan* parallel those of liturgical prayer though many of its components are drawn from Javanese ritual traditions. In totality, it exemplifies the use of esoteric Sufi concepts as a social as well as religious ideal. It is because of this link with the texts that *slametan* has been redefined by the *Islamization* process. In Java, Islam has profound impact on culture, and the religious debates are between different

Muslim groups committed to different modes of Muslim piety not between Muslims, Hindus and animists. *Kejawan* Muslims believe that their practices were 'true Islam' while *santri* groups believe theirs was true and *kejawan* is false Islam.

Woodward provides a typology to understand the complexity of textual tradition and the various factors influencing the formation of local 'Islams'. One is *universalist* Islam, which includes the foundational texts of Quran and Hadith together with rituals including *hajj, salat, id* festivals, and fast of *Ramadan* which are specifically referred by the universaist texts. The second category is *essentialist* Islam which includes the system of discourse which extends beyond the borders of local Muslim boundaries like the *dhikr* rites of Sufi orders, and the rituals at tombs of saints. *Received Islam* is that portion of universalist and essentialist categories present in specific local contexts, determined by the local culture and the nature of local interpretation of the essentialist materials. They may be changed according to new knowledge on the basis of new discourses and interpretations of texts like the changes happened to the Indonesian local practices after the new textual interpretations of reformists in early 20th century. And finally, the *Local Islam* is the set of oral, written, and ritual texts that are unknown of their area of origin, derived from the interaction of local culture and received Islam, like the Hindu cultural elements in the Islamic rituals in India. So, to understand the ritual varieties at local level, he says:

> "*more attention has to be paid to the ways in which received Islam are interpreted in local context and to the historical, economic, political and religious factors influencing the communication of texts, rituals and ideas within larger Muslim world*" (Woodward, 1988).

Another scholar Daniel Martin Varisco through his book 'Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation' (2005), explains how Islam has been misrepresented in the anthropological studies taking two works, Geertz's 'Islam Observed' and Gellner's 'Muslim Society'. He proposes (2005, p.140) that, to make an ethnographic work on Muslims one has pay attention to how beliefs and ideas are put into practice; not how they are supposed to be or should be, but how they get unfolded in an observable manner in one small place at one particular time. While looking into field, anthropologist must also go to the broader comparative understanding of how every given human act relates to the potential of specifically human interactions.

Akbar Ahmad: Towards Islamic Anthropology

Some Anthropologists like Akbar S Ahmad (1984, 1987) and Richard Tapper (1995) tried to understand Muslim societies through a new paradigm of 'Islamic Anthropology'. Akbar S Ahmad, through his book 'Toward Islamic Anthropology: Definition, Dogma and Directions' (1987), argues, the analytical models, devised by the Western Anthropologists, to explain society combining theory and empirical inquiry like social structure, kinship and political organization, magic, belief and religion, have limitation to understand the Muslim society. Thus he defines Islamic anthropology as "the study of Muslim groups by scholars committed to the universalistic principles of Islam-humanity, knowledge and tolerance-relating micro village tribal studies in particular to larger historical and ideological frames of Islam. Islam is understood not as theology but sociology" so that not precluding non-Muslims (Ahmad, 1987: 56).

He says, a Muslim is a part of the *Ummah* (community of world Muslims), which provides him social identity, so he belongs in part to his immediate group, in part to the larger *Ummah*. For instance, rules of marriage and inheritance are pre-determined for the Muslim groups in contrast to the West, where man is an individual first and last. There is only one Islam, but there are many Muslim societies, so, we must place the multitude of Muslim societies within the framework of one universal Islam. He provides taxonomy to understand them. They are, tribal segmentary Islam (e.g. Morocco), Cantonment model (Ottoman), Great river-Islamic civilizations (Egypt), Islam under Western Imperialism (South Asia), and Re-emergent Islam (Pakistan). He proposed that an 'ideal type' should be created on the basis of an early Islamic model to understand the difference between 'ideal' and 'actual' Muslim societies.

Richard Tapper (1995), looking into the relation of 'Islamic anthropology' to the 'anthropology of Islam', understands Islamic anthropology as "doing anthropology inspired by the methods drawn in some way from Islam, Islamic approaches to the study of anthropological texts, rather than anthropological approaches to the study of Islamic texts". He says Islamic anthropology is a critique of Western idea of knowledge and social science because; Western discourse is secular and sees religion as a human creation. This Western view and the original Christian view of Islam means that the West cannot understand Muslim civilization. In response to this, Islamic anthropology proposed that social sciences should be *Islamized*, they have to be appropriated to Islam, so that Muslim societies can be

studied on the assumption that God created nature; and that society is based on the divine laws by constructing an ideal picture of Islamic social structure with Islam as ideology.

Sociology of Muslims in India

A sociological study of rituals among *Indian* Muslims poses different Methodological questions, theoretically and empirically. As it appears from the sociological and anthropological trends while studying Muslims, especially Indian Muslims, there are different vantage points they have been looked through. As Imtiaz Ahamad (1983) has asked what is dependent and independent variable in the two variables of 'Indian' and 'Muslims'? Then there comes another set of questions, if they are 'Indians' as analytical category how they engage with other religious communities, most importantly the Hindus? Or if they are taken as 'Muslims", how do they engage with their co-religionists worldwide and 'universal Islam'? How can we treat the elements of 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' in the religious practices, as exclusive dichotomy or altogether?

Imtiaz Ahmad, in his book titled 'Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India (1981), tries to deal with these methodological questions. He says even if Islam is an extremely reified religious tradition and its doctrines and practices are supposed to be universal, the day-to-day practices of Muslims are found varied from place to place. So, there is a considerable divergence between the 'formal' and the 'actual' religious beliefs and practices of Muslims in different parts of the world. His book explored to the nature of this 'actual' religious beliefs of Muslims in India, because, for him, Islamic belief in India has acquired an *indigenous* flavor. Citing the inability of religious scriptures to adapt these local varieties, he says, sociology should not be concerned with the theological and philosophical tenets but it has to look into the actual life of the people, taking Islam as 'practiced faith'. In other words, it is not the 'book view' but the 'field view' has to be explored. He asks one question, the sociological and anthropological studies show the wide presence of folk-beliefs and syncretic elements in the rituals and practices among Muslims India, so, whether those folk beliefs and syncretic elements should be treated as a part and parcel of Islam in India?

Ahmad (1975) proposed that there are several levels which exist in the religious system of Muslims in India. One of them is the set of beliefs and practices traditionally described as belonging to the scritptural Islam derived from the texts. At the second level

there are beliefs and practices which are not derived from the texts and sometimes opposed to them but regarded by Muslims who hold them as part of their religious system. And at the third level, there are beliefs and behavior patterns described by sociologists and social anthropologists as pragmatic or practical religion which contain non-philosophical elements, such as the supernatural theories of disease causation, propitiation of Muslim saints, spirit possession and evil eye. Since most of these elements are antithetical to other two levels, these are observed secretly.

Ahmad says Islam which was introduced to India was quite different from its original heartland, diluted through the conversion with many pre-conversion beliefs and customs. So, the religious tradition in India should comprise of distinct elements: one is the ultimate 'formal' of Islamic texts and the other is 'local' validated by custom. Islam adopted the indigenous elements by inscribing Islamic content to it in which Sufism played a major role. Practiced Islam is more pluralist which cannot be given a unified definition of what is truly orthodox or 'true Islamic'. Each community carries its own definition of true Islam and they practice it.

There can be cited number of ethnographic studies in Indian context taking this approach. For instance, Mattison Mines (1981), who studied the *Islamization* process among Tamil Muslims, finds them adopting a midway position between Tamil culture and Muslim values. They perform practices which are orthodox to them but actually they are local beliefs and practices like *urs*, saint worship, and *maulid-u-nabi*. Lina M Fruzzutti (1981) who studied the life cycle rituals among Bengali Muslims found them adhering simultaneously to the fundamental orthodox principles of Islam and to a Bengali culture (*dehar achar*) without creating any contradictions between two spheres like tying amulet (*maduli* in Bengali) to the new births. Some social scientists have studied Muslim rituals in India taking 'Hindu-Muslim syncretism' as their main approach. J J Joy Burman (1996) takes saint veneration as an example for syncretism. He says the cultural roots in India are of re-conciliation rather than refutation, cooperation rather than confrontation. There have been 'ritual borrowing' between Hindus and Muslims which can be seen in many practices such as '*dhikr*' and the 'curing saints' facilitated by the Sufi tradition in India. Muslim *pirs* have adopted a medium of cultural communication by accepting the prevailing symbols which given birth to 'religious-secular-mythical blend', placing Islamic tradition in Hindu framework. The cultural roots which are syncretic are different in Eastern, Western and

Southern India according to its own historical particularities. (Emphasis added).

IV. Present Study

Research Problem

The dissertation focuses on religious discourses around healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram,* in other words, we are looking at the classificatory schemes that emerge from public debate on valid or true Islamic practice. Here, we would pay attention to the relationship between religious texts and its interpretations, practices, social organization and the discourses.

The discourses produce a standardized interpretation of rites, doctrines and practices which define what is to be done and what is not. They make actors conscious about seeking the borderline between correct and incorrect form of practices, a moral ambiguity regarding the religious legitimacy of practices[30]. Discourses are produced and reproduced time and again through public sermons, religious gatherings, Quran classes and publications which in turn define, redefine and transform the practices. But there are selected practices over which the debates are going on like *taqleed, maulid, mala* to name a few, while some are out of contestations like basic forms of *swalah, hajj* and *zakath.* The *urukku* and *mantram* are included in the former, and are 'objects' of discourses among Muslims in Kerala.

Healing rituals also have to be located in different terrain. As they are related to health and illness, unlike other practices such as life cycle rituals, the patient sufferers would always try to heal the illness by consulting all possible sources on adopting plural remedies. Our selection of *urukku* and *mantram* is, thus, intentional, out of curiosity to study how *healing practices* are interpreted in religious discourses. For me, healing practices are different categories. It is interesting to know how different Muslim groups in Kerala, for whom the position on those practices are different, say about them and practice them. Hence, we make an effort to look into the ways in which the practices of *urukku* and *mantram* become the objects of religious discourses in Kerala. There are many healing practices prevalent among Muslims in Kerala, such as *uzhinjuvangal, pinjanamezhuttu* and so on. I have selected *urukku* and *mantham* only, because all other healing practices are subsumed under the name "*urukkum mantravum*" (urukku and *mantram*) in debates. So,

---

30 For the details on the social consciousness of the 'correct' form of practices, see Faisal (2010) on 'Rites of Passage among Muslims in Kerala: Text and Practice (unpublished PhD thesis CSSS/SSS/JNU), pp.164-232

the phase of '*urukkum mantravum*' is a prism through which we engage with the process of authorization and the classificatory scheme of practices among Kerala Muslims.

The research questions are:

1) Why *urukku* and *mantram* have become the objects of religious discourses?

2) What kind of debate are *urukku* and *mantram* subject to? Who have the authority to debate and classify the practices?

3) What is the classificatory scheme the discourses produce? What are the 'models' of healing produced by the discourses?

4) How do the practices respond to those discourses at the level of practice? Or what are the changes and transformations in the ritual practices in relation to the discourses about them?

Key Words

Mantram: Its word meaning is sacred word or chanting of sacred verse. Generally, prayer has an important position in Muslims' religious life. They are encouraged to chant prayers at different circumstances. But there are some informal prayers people resorted to in times of crisis in order to seek divine help at the moment (El-Tom, 1985, Javaheri, 2006) Healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram* derive from the belief in the power of Quran, god's names and other divine inscriptions to cure diseases/ protect from evil forces and to enable the user to achieve the desired goals in life.

The fundamental theological texts like Quran or Hadith do not suggest any particular way of healing practices or appropriate words for the healing. Rather; the religious texts only reveal the fact that sacred words like that of Quran or particular name of God can cure physical and spiritual illnesses. For instance, Quran says:

"We sent down the Quran which is a source of healing and mercy unto believers" (Chapter: *Bani Israel*, Verse: 82, as quoted by El-Tom, 1985)

However, healing practices have been performed in different patterns in different regions throughout the world. In Kerala it is known as '*mantram*' or '*manthrika Chikitsa*'.

39

Healing *dhikrs* (sacred words, mean chanting of Allah's name repeatedly) are prescribed in the texts. It may be a single word like telling god's name '*Ya Rahim*' (oh, Merciful) for specific number of times as for instance, thirty three times. Sometimes it is a sentence, or a passage or a whole chapter from the Quran. Sometimes, one word has to be repeated as prescribed by the healer. Which verse of the Quran or which *dhikr* are to be used as *mantram* are not specified in the Quran. Healers find it through reading the healing texts or through acquiring knowledge and technique from its experts. But, there is a framework, a set of ethical rules and techniques in which the healing practices have to take place, generated from the religious texts of Quran and Hadith. The negotiation between an original founding concept in relation to the given belief or practice is the crux of this work.

Some healers use the method of numbers (widely known as 'Ismu *Chikitsa*')[31] to diagnose the troubles and write down the numerical prescriptions which represent the names of Allah or particular verses from the Quran or Hadith. This treatment method is also known as '*Asma Chikitsa*' (treatment with names) or '*Twalsamath Chikitsa*' which is an independent healing profession with its own texts and experts. Detailed accounts of *urukku* and *mantram* will be presented in the next chapter.

Urukku: Particular verses of Quran or names selected by healers as prescription for ailments are regarded as sacred. Drinking the water inscribed with divine chant or wearing amulet with inscribed chants are also regarded as invoking divine power to cure illness. Some patients wear it around the neck or waist, or drink, or burn and inhale the smoke of the word, or bury or immerse in water. Usually, the written slip is wrapped tightly inside the iron or lead covering and then tied with a black cotton string, sometimes it is kept in purse or pant pocket which is called in Malayalam as *urukku*, *taviz* in Hindi and *tamima* in Arabic. Most of the healers suggest using the *mantram* to be kept inside the *urukku*. The healers may be men of religion or independent healers who vary in their reputation as to the instances of curing diseases.

---

31 Ismu *Chikitsa* is a healing method in which the Arabic letters of patient's and his or her mother or father's name are given numerical values and mathematically manipulated to find out the epidemiological factors. Islamic mystical traditions have identified significance and symbolism to the individual letters of the Arabic alphabet where the number becomes the mediator between the divine and the created world (see Flueckiger, 2006: 69)

Objectives:

This study has been designed to meet the following aims and objectives:

1) To examine major sociological and anthropological perspectives on Islam by way of improving on understanding of rituals among the Muslims in Kerala.

2) To describe the healing practices of *'urukku'* and *'mantram'* among Muslims in Kerala. It includes an account of who are the healers, who are the patients, for what illnesses they practice them, where they take place and the method of diagnosis and treatment, its rules and techniques.

3) To explain relationships between illnesses, religious belief systems and the local cultural elements which lead to religious discourses, and process of classification and authorization.

4) To explain the ways in which the healing practices are debated by religious groups and classified into various categories within the Islamic tradition.

5) To explain the process of categorization of Muslims into valid, invalid, true and 'false' Islam through the healing practices.

6) To explain the ways in which the healing practices have responded to the social discourses about them.

Method

The aim of this study is to go beyond the analytical binaries of anthropology. Thus, it would pay attention to the connection between the religious texts, history, social organization, and local cultural elements to understand the discourses. MPhil dissertation in our Centre is expected to review literature and is not based on field studies. But this dissertation is not a mere survey of literature. We have collected and read about 60 to70 primary texts in Malayalam, and Arabic in order to cull out and present relevant debates. We have documented and organized the issues of debate gleaned from primary texts that consisted of books, magazines, pamphlets, CDs, conference proceedings and public

41

speeches in order to highlight how healing practices occupy the center stage of Islamic identity. These discourses have not been analyzed as objects in themselves in available secondary literature on Islam in Kerala. We have selected debates only on *urukku* and *mantram* practices and we have organized the themes in the order of the priority in the discourses in contemporary Kerala.

From various forms of literatures and texts on religious life and practices we would focus only on the *discourses* about *urukku* and *mantrham,* in other words, my sole focus is on what is *said* and written about them by diverse religious groups. This will be a preliminary step towards a full-fledged field study.

CHAPTER II

URUKKU AND *MANTRAM:* PATIENTS, HEALERS, AND HEALING SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF MUSLIM SOCIETIES

I. Introduction to Chapter

This chapter is the descriptive account of the different types of healing practices which come under the discursive category of *urukku* and *mantram* among Muslims in Kerala. Here we provide an account of all practices which are implied by the term '*urukkum mantravum*' (*urukku* and *mantram*) in the context of religious discourses. In the later section, we also give a description of the practices from various Muslim healing places. The purpose here is to present various ways in which *urukku* and *mantram* have been practiced before moving to the next chapter on the religious discourses and classifications about them.

The first section of this chapter is the description of the *urukku* and *mantram* healing practices as described in the ritual texts. There are many healing books published in Malayalam and translated to Malayalam from Arabic which contain the ritual instructions pertaining to the tradition of *mantra chikitsa* (healing with spells). It is necessary to set out the healing practices as prescribed in the texts. If we have to understand the 'controversies' around them in contemporary reformist discourses in Kerala Muslim society, it is necessary to know the details of the practices.

We also try to present the cosmology and interconnections between different domains of the universe, namely, the terrestrial, extra-terrestrial contained in this cosmology. We then present some key ethnographic works on Islamic healing practices in India in order to map the field reality in relation to the textual injunctions. Lastly we also highlight how these studies understand the efficacy of healing practices. So, the first section discusses the rules and techniques involved in this kind of healing system, types of illnesses and the methods employed for the diagnosis and treatment from the book view. The second part is the field view of the Muslim healing systems. It talks about the healers, patients, illnesses and treatment methods. Here, we show the ways in which the healing practices are related with Islamic theology and the local cultural elements.

II. Brief Note on Healing texts

Most of the healing texts authored in and translated to Malayalam start with the common understanding that the tradition of *twalsamat* or *mantra chikitsa* has become the amalgamation of 'original' and 'fake' healers and those books were intended to clarify the 'correct' forms of 'Islamic' healing. The healing texts such as *Manbau-usulil-Hikmah* (sources of essentials of wisdom) authored by the medieval scholar Al-Buni[32], and 'Baqawi, Mustafa' authored by a local Malayali religious scholar Musthafa Baqavi (2012) deal with the healing system of *urukku* and *mantram* known in many titles such as '*Ismu chikitsa*' or '*mantra chikitsa*', or '*twalsamathu chikitsa*'.

One of the most extensive Arabic sources of the practice is the well-known work of North African occultist Muhyu-Din-Abul-Abbas al-Buni (d.1225). Several books were written on this healing tradition by Islamic scholars during the 13th century especially in Persia and North Africa. Imam Buni's '*Manbau-Usulil-Hikmah*' is one of them. Written in the 13th century, this book has been translated into different languages though it has been opposed and banned in some countries (Cammann, 1969). My source here is the Malayalam translation of this 'controversial' book published in 2010 which is available only in Sunni book houses in Kerala and is read carefully by Mujahids (ideological opponents of Sunnis) to refute the practices. When the selected practices in religion are debated, the texts written on them also undergo scrutiney, authorization, and classification and hence these texts do not have a universal acceptance. These texts listed above often become the subjects of debates on the acceptance of *urukku* and *mantram* as 'Islamic' (accepted) and 'un-Islamic' (rejected).

III. Rules, techniques, and procedures of *urukku* and *mantram*

As Musthafa Baqavi, who is now a healer in the Calicut region points out in his book[33], the spiritual illness of pious persons could be cured through the recitation of some selected '*surahs*' (chapters) from Quran. But for the serious cases in which the demons have completely possessed the patient, some other measures are also required to exorcise them. This complex method of diagnosis of illness and the prescription of *mantram* is called

---

[32] Al-Buni (d.1225) is an Algerian Sufi writer on esoteric value of letters and numerical squares. His works on the healing practices are considered as source materials among healers. Many of these elements are first found in his works which included Hellenistic, Jewish, and other pre-Islamic magical practices and began to appear in Islamic talismanic objects (Encyclopaedia of Medieval Islamic Civilization, 2006:795)

[33] Baqawi, Mustafa (2012: 14)

'twalsamath chikitsa' (healing with *twalsam*) or *ismu chikitsa* (healing with sacred names).

This kind of healing system is numerical which appears to be *mystical* in nature and it requires special training with a *sheikh* (master) or an *usthad* (teacher). Many healers are trained in *ismu chikitsa* system and, healer follows the method of diagnosis and prescription of teachers from whom he has got the *ijazath* (permission) to practice. Each healer is known for a special capacity which distinguishes him as healer of specific illnesses. Some are known for their ability to set right crisis such as extortion and theft, while others are known for their ability to find out lost objects and so on.

Instructions for healers, presented in different textual traditions, show some common preconditions and methods necessary for the practice of *urukku* and *mantram*. The following is an attempt to give those common features inherent to the kinds of illnesses, method of diagnosis, conditions necessary to be a healer, method of healing, kinds of prescriptions as given in the texts.

The healing texts read the practices as follows. A teacher or a Guru is essential to learn and to practice *mantra chikitsa*. The Islamic healing would be efficacious only with an *ijazat* (permission) given by any Guru[34]. The author points out that this kind of knowledge cannot be learned rather; God 'reveals' it to some 'selected' persons who operate in 'another world'. It has been believed that lay people cannot understand most of them. To prove this he quotes some Quranic verses such as 'Allah gives the soul to some of his subjects' and 'he is the most generous and merciful'[35].

Al-Buni says this healing system is intricately interwoven into seven other fields of knowledge. They are numerology and, weighted tabulation of multiple cosmic variables, values of letters, four elements of nature (*prakrtam*) and the metals which embody those elements of natures, the knowledge of astrology and the twelve signs of Zodiac, awareness · about the auspicious and inauspicious times, and that about the appropriate names (*ismu*), prayers (*dua*) and spells (*mantram*) to be prescribed for different illnesses. It also includes the knowledge about the positions of different stars and the planetary bodies, different angels (*malak*) who represent those planets, the mathematical manipulation of numbers, method of invocation of the angels and *jinns*[36] for the assistance, and the different uses of

---

[34] Baqawi, Mustafa (2012: 9).
[35] Al-Buni (2010: 130)
[36] According to the Islamic beliefs, *jinn* is a special category of God's creatures. While man was created from clay, *jinns*

45

God's names (*Asmau-ul-Husna*) and appropriate chanting words (*dhikr*), moreover, the necessary preconditions while performing these healing practices[37]. Some texts necessitate the knowledge about foretelling (*ilmu-ul-firasa*) by which one can predict other's character and his fate by looking the features of his face[38].

It should be noted here that all these fields of knowledge and beliefs around them are controversial and debated through the process of authorization of knowledge in the Islamic tradition. The ways in which they are debated and classified in the theological debate will be presented in the next chapter.

Preconditions of Healer

There is a code of conduct that the healer has to follow stringently, especially at the time of practice. He has to eat only the halal food (permitted food items in Islam) and avoid the haram (forbidden things) and non-vegetarian foods. He should eat less and sleep less, respect the holy names and verses while using them for healing. He should make sure that the impure men and women such as the women in their menstrual cycles and men who did not take bath after the impurity of mating are not present in the healing room. The healer should not use this knowledge to harm other human beings and should apply it for the goodness of others. He has to maintain cleanliness and use perfumed oils and scent. Moreover, he has to pray only to Allah and rely on Quran and Hadith for every action, and maintain the common everyday rituals of a Muslim. Religious knowledge is always helpful in healing practices[39]. The healer should have firm belief in the efficacy of his action; any doubt in its result might cause failure. He has to practice it without hurry and may repeat it twice or thrice until he gets the result without being disillusioned[40].

We may find much of contrasting statements in the healing books themselves. While the texts encourage 'good works' and prohibit 'bad works' they also prescribe methods to do the bad works such as to harm others. It is also interesting to note how the code of conduct is followed by the healers in different Islamic healing sites at practicing level in order to make their practice 'Islamic' and the challenges they face when they deviate from

---

are created of fire. Further explanation about jinn is to come in the second section from the Sudhir Kakar's (1981) work 'Shamans, Mystics and Doctors.

[37] Al-Buni (2010: 12-13).

[38] Baqawi, Mustafa (2012: 9)

[39] Al-Buni (2010: 241-242).

[40] Baqawi, Mustafa (2012: 11)

it. The accounts presented above such as the code of conduct cannot be found in the 'essential' Islamic tradition of Quran and Hadith. They have to be understood, rather, as 'esoteric knowledge' for which they are considered as controversial. However, the next chapter would present how these rites and beliefs are interpreted in the light of Islamic mainline traditions and claimed as 'Islamic' in the context of organizational identity.

Selection of Appropriate Time to Practice

Healing texts say there are good and bad hours (*muhoortham*). Good practices (which are intended to bring about good effects for somebody like healing of discomfort or winning any fortune) have to be done on auspicious hours while there are inauspicious hours to practice bad things (such as to harm others). The first *saat* (set of hours) of Sunday, Monday, Thursday, and Friday are appropriate hours for good actions. If the healer misses this prescribed period, then the next auspicious time is 8th hour of the same days[41]. Each hour has its own *ruhanies* [42]who can serve the healer according to his directions if healer calls them on appropriate time.

The Zodiac signs (*rasi*) of Aries, cancer, Virgo, Sagittarius, Capricorn, and pieces are good for doing auspicious matters and the remaining signs (Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Aquarius, Taurus, and Gemini) are for inauspicious things. The lines which have the nature of soil and water are instructed for the good things whereas those which have the nature of fire and wind have to be used for doing bad actions[43].

Alphabets, Nature and Time

According to healing texts there are four elements of nature (*anasir*) which represent the seven planets (*sabu-ul-sayyarah*) and its metals. The 28 alphabets in Arabic language are grouped into four and each group has 7 alphabets. Each group of alphabets represent one elements of nature. They are water, soil, fire, and wind which have another climatic features dryness, heat, dampness, and cold. The first groups in the hierarchy of letters have been considered as more effective in healing compared to the following groups. Each group of letters in the '*abjad*' system have its own nature according which they can be graded in a hierarchy. The hierarchy can be shown as thus:

---

[41] Here, hour means planet hour which is not like clock hour. They are one twelfth part of each day and night-time (Mommersteeg, Geert 1988).

[42] *Ruhani* is an Arabic word which means the supernatural beings such as *jinns* and *malaks* (angels).

[43] Al-Buni (2010: 6)

Table (1): Group of alphabets and their nature:

Status of the Group in the hierarchy	Groups of alphabet and their nature			
	Water	wind	soil	Fire
martaba	*dal*	*jeem*	*ba*	*alif*
darja	*Ha*	*ra*	*vav*	*ha*
daqeeqa	*Lam*	*kaf*	*ya*	*twa*
thaniya	*Ain*	*sin*	*nun*	*mim*
thalitha	*Ra*	*qa*	*swa*	*fa*
rabia	*Kha*	*tha*	*ta*	*shin*
khamisa	*Ghain*	*la*	*lwa*	*dha*

(*Al-Buni*, 2010: 173)

To know how this table works, if we measure, for instance, the numerical value of holy name '*la-twi-f*', according to this table, its first alphabet *lam* is *daqeeqath* which is in the nature of water, *twa* is *daqeeqath* group which is in the fire nature and *fa* is in *thalitha* group and its nature is fire again, so, the dominating nature of the *ismu* (name) *latwif* is fire. The healing practice, thus, should be done according to the requirements of fire nature. There should be a correspondence between the natures of the holy word and that of the purpose of healing. For instance, if the healing is aimed to bring good effects and its dominating nature (the nature of the healing action) is cold and dryness, they are not suitable to each other. Then, the alphabets have to undergo further numerical operations which are called 'the calculation of *basth* and *takseer*'. If he alphabets arrived through these calculations is similar to nature of the healing action the healer can start his practice[44].

For selecting the auspicious time for healing, the position of the planets and the metals which represent those planets have to be considered. The group of seven planets (*sabau-ul-*

---

[44] Ibid. 175

sayyarah) includes *Shams* (Sun), *Qamar* (Moon), *mirriq* (Mars), *atwarid* (Mercury), *Mushtari* (Jupiter), *sahrat* (Venus), *suhal* (Saturn) and each has its own time (auspicious time) and appropriate metals. These days have their own zodiac signs such as the signs of *medam* (Aries), *edawam* (Taurus), *mithunam* (Gemini), *karkkidakam* (Cancer), *chingam* (Leo) etc.

Number '7' played prominent part in the medieval Islamic symbolism. Muslims believed that universe contained seven heavens, seven seas, and earth is divided into seven climes, which are strongly influenced by seven planets and seven angles presided over each day of the week. All of these are believed to be present in the squares. So, numbers and squares are believed to be the 'effective symbols' of universe which are believed to have the protective power (Cammann, 1969).

The planets and their appropriate days and their metals are presented (according to the serial order of days) in the following table.

Table (2): Planets, Days, and their metals:

Corresponding Planets	Days	Metal to be used	Nature
Sun	Sunday	Gold	Hot and dry
Moon	Monday	Silver	Hot and wet
Mars	Tuesday	Iron	Hot and dry
Mercury	Wednesday	Mercury	Mixed
Jupiter	Thursday	Lead	Cold and wet
Venus	Friday	Copper	Hot and dry
Saturn	Saturday	Black iron	Cold and dry

(*Al-Buni*, 2010: 18-19)

The best of all auspicious hours is Sunday and the healing action has to be done on the best of all metals; that is gold, whereas Monday is a good day but only when it corresponds to the good planet. *Tuesday* is a bad day which influences more on wars, fights and problems. Wednesday is mixed with auspicious and inauspicious hours while Thursday is a good day. The Saturday is the worst day which is the most appropriate day to do the 'worst'

healing practices (intended to harm others or to bring about bad effects for somebody).

Use of Appropriate Metals

According to the healing texts, healing practice has to be performed using appropriate metal as given in table (2), but if the instructed metal is not available or if the patient could not afford it then it may be substituted by an alternative which is also listed in the healing texts. For instance, the metal of gold can be substituted by goat's skin added with saffron and if the alternative substance also is not available then the ritual can be done with the yellow silk. If the appropriate planet for the particular healing action's nature is *Qamar* (moon), it has to be done using silver as its medium but it is liable to be substituted by the stone whose nature is heat and wetness or by the clean iron. The iron's substitute is the red stone or red-coloured silk and the substitute metal of mercury (metal of the *atarid* (Mercury), the planet of Wednesday) is the skin of deer or rabbit or the black stone from sea. Goat's skin can substitute iron which is the metal of *Mushrari* (Jupiter) the planet of Thursday and the wax substance can be used as alternative for the copper which is the metal of *suharat* (Venus), the planet of Friday. The substance made of soil or those which have the nature of water can be used as medium as alternative for black lead which is the metal of *suhal* (Saturn) the planet of Saturday.

Even though one can use every object according the nature of the particular action, the impure objects (*najas*) in the Islamic jurisprudence are strictly prohibited such as the skin of dog and pig which cannot be cleaned at all. Other impure objects can be used after making it pure through washing them. Because, the healer is expected to respect the holy names, letters, holy verses and the tables which represent those verses and names by not writing them on impure objects.

Here we understand that healing practices are based on core religious principles as prescribed in the religious texts. At the same time, they have certain magical elements that are regarded as antithetical to Islamic religion. Mujahids in Kerala argue, for instance, that magical squares used for healing assumed the relation between terrestrial and extra-terrestrial beings and were brought into Islamic belief system from un-Islamic Greek, Hellenistic, and Jewish traditions.

50

Method of Tabulation

The healer has to use different types of tables according to respective planets. Each of the seven planets and each Arabic letter has its own table. Each table has its own 'efficacy' and power which depends on the 'effectiveness' of letters and numbers included in it.

The practice of using number squares to represent seven planets (the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn) was the later development in the Islamic history. As Al-Buni mentioned, these planets were believed to have influence on the lives in earth (Cammann, 1969). Healing texts prescribe a particular way in which table has to be written:

Table (3): Planets and Tabulation patterns:

Days	Corresponding Planets	Pattern of Table	Purpose of action
Sunday	Sun	*Musaddas*[45] (table with 36 cells, pattern of cell division is 6X6)	Auspicious matters only
Monday	Moon	*Muttassa* (72 cells, cell division is 9X9)	Auspicious matters
Tuesday	Mars	*Mukhammas* (25 cells, cell division 5X5)	inauspicious matters
Wednesday	Mercury	*Murabba* (16 cells, 8X8)	For all actions
Thursday	Jupiter	*Musamman* (64 cells, 4X4)	For all actions
Friday	Venus	*Musabba* (49 cells, 7X7)	For auspicious matters
Saturday	Saturn	*Musallas* (9 cells, 3X3)	Inauspicious matters

(Al-Buni 2010: 84-85)

The healer has to be selective in using tables for good and bad things. Mercury's table

---

[45] Particular titles have been used here to refer to the pattern of tabulation. It seems the titles might have been appropriated to Arabic from Greek and Indian tradition (Commann, 1969). Here, *Mukhammas* derived from Arabic word '*khamis*' which means 'five', *musabba* from '*saba*' which means 'seven', *musallas* from '*thalith*' which means 'three'.

murabba (having 16 cells) should be used only for the auspicious matters whereas the Saturn's table (Saturday, with 9 cells) has to be used only for the inauspicious matters. Mars's table *Mukhammas* (with 25 cells, the planet of Tuesday) can also be used for the inauspicious matters. When the tables are prepared the healer has to be aware to use only *Musallas* and *Mukhammas* if the nature of the action is Saturn and Mars (planets for the 'bad' practice).

If the total number is too small to include in the table, its value has to be multiplied. For instance, the numerical value of the names *huva* (meaning Him) or *ahad* (the one) is less than 15 which is the minimum number of the smallest table of '3X3'. So, it should be multiplied in two ways, either with the number of cells in the table or with the number of letters in the name, to include in the appropriate table[46].

Healing texts such as Al-Buni's '*manba*' prescribe particular tables for particular healing purposes. For instance, the '3X3' table can be prescribed for the easy delivery of complicated pregnancy cases, for solving the disputes and litigation, whereas the '4X4 table' is for influencing or attracting people[47]. The '5X5' table is to harm others and to heal the illnesses and the '7X7' can be used for the alleviation of the evil eye and to cancel the sorcery done against the patient. To heal possessed patients, the healer has to write the particular table on the patient's hands and recite the appropriate *Qasmu* (special spell) 45 times in appropriate time with appropriate *bukhoor* (fumigation). Then, the patient would become unconscious. In his unconsciousness, the healer can speak to the possessed demon and expel him from the patient's body. There are many practices of sorcery performed against the enemies and to harm others. The healing texts have also included the methods and techniques of the sorcery. For instance, if one wants to make his enemy sick, he has to fill the lime inside a fish and cover it like the covering of a dead body and bury it like a dead body. Before burying it he should write the orders for the superhuman beings.

After the healing session is over, the written table (inside an amulet or in a paper) has to be disposed according to the nature of the table[48] (fire, water, wind, earth). If the table's nature is *agni* (fire) it has to be immersed in fire, if it is soil it has to be buried inside the earth where people generally do go. The table of wind nature has to be hung in the wind

---

[46] Al-Buni (2010: 130-31)

[47] For ethnographic account of the use of tables to attract people, see Mommersteeg's (1988) ' Islamic love amulet' in West Africa.

[48] The table has nature according to the corresponding time and planet of the practice.

and the water nature should be immersed in the water or buried near water source according to the instructions of the healer[49].

In the context of Kerala, certain rites such as burying the object six feet under the ground has been opposed by Sunnis (who are the conventional defenders of the healing practices) themselves. This shows the classificatory scheme of practices is not based on supporters and offenders.

Explaining the relationship between squares, numbers, alphabets and the extra-terrestrial beings, Schyler Cammann (1969) says, these squares were considered as small models of universe, as symbolic representation of life, being renewed through contact with the divine at the centre of the cosmos. The middle number in the square was considered as the symbol of God (Allah) and sometimes the middle cells are left blank. When the middle number is multiplied with the base number of square it becomes the constant sum of all the rows and columns so it was believed to symbolize Allah regulating the universe containing all within his unity. So, the numbers, as the symbols of universe with its sustainer, were considered as the actual possessors of universal power. And it was for this reason that the squares with numbers are thought to be mysterious and magical and used to make talismans and charms. Here, we have to note that this kind of thought has been always questioned and disputed within Muslims in all parts of world throughout the history of the healing tradition.

Invocation of *malak* and *jinn*

The healer should know how to influence the *khadims* (Arabic word, literary meaning is service-man, here it is superhuman service man like angel and jinn) and the angels (*malak*) and how to invoke them for the healing purposes. Different techniques necessary for the invocation of the *khadims* and angels have been given by the texts. Thus, he has to call them by saying the words of *Qasmu* (literal meaning is taking the solemn oath, in healing, it means requesting the superhuman beings such as *jinn* and *malak* to serve the healer). After chanting the *Qasmu* he has to name the particular *malak* or *jinn* he wishes to invite to his service[50]. The invocation is the specification of the particular *malak* and a statement of the particular service he seeks, and the name of the person for whom the healing has been practiced. All of them have to be written in a particular sequence by finding out the

---

[49] Ibid.180
[50] Ibid.45

53

numerical values of all those names through the numerical operations.

It also includes another important requirement. In order to get the superhuman assistance the healer has to enter into the state of 'khalwat' (sitting alone in an isolated place for the meditation) for 21days and nights. While sitting for the meditation he has to wear the same dress he had worn at the time of healing (the white silk cloth perfumed with musk is best to attract the *malak*). The place of meditation should be clean and neat and has to be fumigated with good smelling *bukhoor*. The mediator should recite the above mentioned *Qasmu* 147 times each for the day and night. The whole day has to be divided into 7 parts and on each part he has to recite it 21 times day and night, so the total recitation of a day would be 294 times. Followed by each *Qasmu* recitation, the healer has to say: "oh the leader of the angels, please fulfil my purposes". A particular diet has been prescribed for the *khalwat* days. All non-vegetarian and the food materials provided by animals such as egg and milk have to be avoided. When the angel appears on the 21st day, the healer has to be firm even if he could experience fearful events; rather, he has to respect him by standing up[51].

All that has been said before is the method of invocating the *malak*. If the superhuman being he calls for the help is *jinn*, he is required to sit for *khalwath* (meditation) for 14 days during which the same diet has to be observed. The prescribed *bukhoor* is camphor only. The *Qasmu* recitation is 63 times daily, dividing the day into 3 parts, 21 times recitations on each part and the same has to be repeated on night also. When the *jinn* appear on the 14th day, he should not stand up; but listen to what he says[52].

One can write the *Qasmu* in number and letter but the choice of number is always better since the number has been considered as the *soul* of the superhuman *khadims* (service-men) and it is always powerful than letter which is their *body*. Usually, the hakims use numbers to represent the letters according to the *abjad* system. For example, the two letters of *swad* and *ya* means 100 (the numerical value of *swad* is 90 and that of *ya* is 10). The letters of high value would be preferred to those of low value while writing the *Qasmu*. It is to be noticed that if one uses number in one step of healing action then all steps should be in number. For instance the healer who used number to write the name of the patient has to write the *Qasmu* in number for the invocation of superhuman beings. If it

---

[51] Ibid.51-52
[52] Ibid.53

is letter then all should be in letter without the mixture of number and letter[53].

The practice of invocation and seeking of superhuman help in the human affairs is the most controversial issue in the contemporary theological debate in Kerala. Each religious organization has its own position on the religious validity of this practice and thus, classifies it as 'permissible' and 'non-permissible' with conditions provided by the group. The pattern of such debate and the mode of classification will be presented in next chapter.

Bukhoor (fumigation)

Bukhoor (fumigation or emitting smoke) is a necessary requirement of the ritual setting of healing. If the practice is for goodness it has to be 'protected' by using fragrance such as perfume, scent or the musk whereas for the practice for the 'bad results', the background should be bad smelling smoke. The 'bad work' should not be practised in the healer's own home since there is a possibility to have its effects on him also. There are appropriate *bukhoors* (smoke emission to have good or bad smell) for each one of the seven planets (*sabau-al-sayyarah*):

Table: (4) Planets and *Bukhoors*:

Planets	*Bukhoors* (smelling fumigation)
Sun	The gum frankincense, sandalwood, cedar tree, pepper, musk, black-cumin etc.
Moon	Ambar, flowering plant of Nerium, seed of fenugreek, and Musk etc.
Mars	Ginger, and all dry and hot objects
Mercury	Arabic gum frankincense which can be substituted by salt.
Jupiter	Anbar, white gum frankincense, and the Olive seeds
Venus	Iron powder, nerium pulverized in the rose water, and the core of the perfume woods etc.
Saturn	Camphor, seeds of jute, asafoetida, etc. And all the bad-smelling objects whose nature is dry and cold.

(Al-Buni, 2010: 55-56)

---

[53] Ibid.63

Healer has to use *bukhoor*, appropriate to the planet of that healing action, which is necessary for all hours (*saath*) of the planet.

Role of *Dhikr* (chanting) in Healing

There are certain sacred words prescribed for specific healing effects. The *dhikr* to be recited with the given conditions are called '*riyaza*' whereas there are many *dhikrs* which can be recited without any conditions. For instance, some *dhikr* has to be recited at particular times, or only in *khalwat* (sole meditation) or only at night, while another has to be recited under fasting. For some *dhikr* to be more effective, especially the *dhikr* of meditation, one has to get its permission (*ijazath*) from master (guru or sheikh) for recitation. However, one can recite other normal *dhikr* individually without any permission like the *dhikr* of '*asmau-ul-Husna*' (the beautiful names of Allah) which has been called as '*aurad*' .The chapters of *fatiha, vaqia, jinn,* and the verses of '*ayathu-ul-kursi*' are the selected healing words from Quran. If one has got his will fulfilled out of his chanting, it is better to keep chanting forever without stopping it.

These are some general instructions required for healing with the holy names (*ismu*), verses (*ayah*) and words (*dhikr*) that anyone can try without the prescriptions of a professional healer. These healing names or verse or words could be written in their numerical notation or with the letters according to the prescribed mathematical rules of 'table making' on a piece of paper and wear it (then it becomes *urukku*) for recovery from illness. For instance, the table of the holy name '*Allahu*' can be written in a table with 3X3 format:

Table: (5) Tabulation of the holy name 'Allah':

21	20	25
26	22	17
19	24	23

(Al-Buni, 2010, p.113)

Because, according to the '*abjad*' system, each Arabic alphabet has a numerical value. For instance, when the values of the letters in the name of '*Allahu*' is added, the total numerical value would be '66' (*alif* = 1, two *lam* = 60, and *ha* = 5). If one writes this table in a paper

56

at an appropriate hour and wears it as *urukku* in the body, it is the prescription for the high fever[54]. There are many other names and words, especially the names of *'asmau-ul-husna'* (the beautiful names of Allah such as the name of *'aziz'*), used for their own healing effects which can be written in their own appropriate pattern of table at their auspicious hours and worn as *urukku*. For instance, wearing the table of the name *'Al-salam'* (meaning is peace or safety) writing it inside an *urukku* he will be safe from all illnesses and problems like accidents, especially for those who are scared or feared of anything[55]. There should be correspondence between the numerical value attached to the sum of the letters in the name recited and the numerical value attached to the sum of the letters of the name or verse written in the *urukku*.

IV. Patients, Healers, and Healing System in Muslim Healing Sites

In the following section, we present ethnographic studies of Islamic healing places in order to give an idea of how these rituals are put into operation and to understand how their efficacy is understood in Social Science literature.

Healing system and Classificatory Scheme of *Pir* at Patteshah Dargah

Looking into the healing system of a Muslim spiritual healer at Patteshah dargah of Delhi, Sudhir Kakar (1982) reveals that the system of knowledge that underlies this therapeutic tradition classifies healing knowledge into two kinds. All the healing practices come under the domain of 'soul knowledge' (*ilm-ruhani*) are classified into two branches, namely, '*white* magic' (*ulwi, rahmani*) and the '*black*' arts (*saitani, sihr, jadu*). Despite of the Quranic condemnation of the magical practices- "whoever goes to a magician and asks about mysteries and believes what he says, verily is displeased with Muhammad and his religion"- there are many sorcerers who practice the healing activities of casting out demons in addition to their '*proper*' occult practices. By commanding the jinn and demons these practitioners cause anything to take place, to establish friendship and to break it between two persons, to increase wealth, and to gain any wishes. So, he says, the healing practices of *Baba* of Patteshah constitute only a small part of the vast domain of the 'soul knowledge' where Sufi mystical tradition is at one end and the occult practitioners are at the '*other*' end (Kakar, 1982: 32-33). (Emphasis is mine). Here, practices are

---

[54] Al-Buni (2010: 105-118)
[55] Ibid. 119

conceptualized as two oppositional ends such as the exclusive religious domains (in Durkheimian sense) of 'sacred' and 'profane', in other words, Islamic and non-Islamic healing systems.

The healer classifies the profession he is involved into 'healer' and 'sorcerer'. He claims that even if he knows sorcery he keeps away from the 'black' domain and remains in the 'white' practice. The sorcerer should be pure in mind and body, honest and always truthful. Before commencing the ritual, he has to sit in a secluded place for some days repeating some names during which his diet is strictly controlled depending upon whether he is repeating the terrible (*jalali*) or the amiable (*jamali*) names of Allah. After many repetitions of the specific invocation to summon the jinn, and at the end of the week, the demons and *jinns* will arrive. So, the stress on the purity of body and mind, the specific dietary instructions, the temporary seclusion, the chanting of the names and invocations which seem very much like mantra in yoga show the close affinity of the sorcery ritual to the mystical practices of Sufi*sm* (ibid.33).

Here, we have to note various points. We can see the existing notion of the classification of the healing system into 'accepted' and 'rejected' inside the religious discourses. The healers always have a feeling of classification of their practices and each claim they belong to the accepted category in the religion (that is 'white' and 'sacred' type of healing). We have also to note the conditions and requirements provided by the *pir* are that of sorcery (which is black and 'profane') while the same methods such as the invocation of *jinn* were conceptualized as that of a 'healer' (sacred and accepted) by the authors in the first section of this chapter. However, the type of healing which is Islamic and 'white' for the *pir* at Patteshah might be un-Islamic for another Muslim such as a reformer. These field accounts indicate the reality of the complex classificatory scheme of 'some controversial' practices among Muslims. Here, Kakar does not go into the question of why and how they have always been conceptualized in Islam through these exclusive domains of 'sacred' and 'profane'.

We can see same rules and techniques prescribed in the healing texts as practiced in the healing sites which show that there is some coherence of the healing systems in various locations. Kakar found that Islamic healer has to know the appropriate Quranic verses (*ayat*) and the names of Allah (out of his ninety nine names) to be used for specific illnesses. For instance, the name of '*al-Qadir*' is used to remove distress and anxiety. He

should be trained in the preparation of talismans, use of invocation with mystical squares-binary, ternary, quaternary, of fire, of water, of air. The healer should have the command on the numerical value of the names and verses, which are derived from a complicated system that links the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet to the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the seven planets and the four elements, and the proper combination of a particular invocation with the particular mystical square. Then he has to know the effective way the talismans should be used: whether it needs to be worn as a charm around the neck (*taviz*) or tied as amulet, whether it is to be burnt and patient fumigate its smoke or to be dissolved in water and drunk, or to be bound up in cotton, soaked in perfumed oil and burnt as the wick of a lamp. If there is a case of possession, the healer needs to know the art of controlling the *jinn* by drawing various magical circles and figures and the various herbs that have to be burn in the ritual exorcism. This knowledge is valid only if transmitted through a *murshid* (master) or a Guru only and cannot be learnt by one-self (Kakar, 1982: 35).

The Healer of Patteshah Dargah observes that one gets the 'soul force' only after years of serving of a guru and devotion to God. But once one receives this 'soul force' and the connection between him and God becomes established, he only needs to concentrate to get that 'private knowledge' flowing to him. So, before treating each patient, the healer takes Allah's name, closes his eyes and tries to see his guru. The guru will then appear before him and suggest the course of action; this is a secret relation between guru and the disciple. The Pir says, persons like him and his guru would not die, the power of their soul would remain after their death and the death is only a physical disappearance for them (ibid. 36). The requirements of a successful healer, in *Baba's* words, depend on the person of the healer than on the knowledge and techniques he employs. The healer has to develop certain qualities to be a successful 'wooer of the nature', purity of mind and body, truthfulness, and a detachment from the worldliness. Baba who was Kakar's informant clarified that it was *vishwas* (trust and confidence) a healer inspired which was the basis of all these practices.

As for the people who approach the healers, Sudhir Kakar divides them into two groups: patients and supplicants (Kakar, 1982: 40). Patients are those with specific neurotic symptoms and supplicants refer to those who seek divine help to cope with difficult situations such as court cases. In the healer's understanding, however, they are three kinds of seekers: those who are possessed by *bala* (demon), those who are merely threatened by any demon such as the cases of marital disharmony, and those who seek his spiritual offices

59

rather than his healing powers. On the other hand, Sudhir Kakar regards first category (*bala* possession) as 'anxiety neurosis', second category of *bala* threat as 'hysterical conversion', and the third as mere supplicants. These categorical differentiations are not clear in the practice as they appear in theory. Kakar explains the kind of relation between the healer and the patients in these healing sites by saying that the Baba's reputation as the specialist healer of 'possession illness' has been spread by the satisfied patients through word of mouth (ibid.42).

Kakar says most of his clientele were poor, belonged to the lower social strata from all parts of Delhi and from the neighbouring states also (Kakar, 1982: 17). The narrative of the pir showed that demons played major role in his aetiology. Kakar wants to call this explanation as 'demonological framework' or 'demonological world view' (ibid. 23) According to Baba, Islam recognized three classes of beings 'higher' than men. They are *faristha* (angels), *shaitans* (satanic beings or devils) and the jinn (demons or spirits) who are made of fire and the most common and likely to be encountered in the daily life such as causing illness and serving to heal them.

The healer gives his own explanations of the cause of the illnesses he has dealt with. He says there are many 'magical' rites and practices to enslave these superhuman categories (like *jinn*, *saitan* and angel). The power of *jinns* is great which is hidden from the human beings. He said there were two kinds of them; believers who are benevolent while many of them are destructive and amoral beings. Sometimes they possess one's body and drink his blood for two reasons: either because a sorcerer who has a demon in his 'hand' may send it against his enemy or against the enemy of someone who has consulted him or a demon, while roaming around, fancies someone as his victim. These demons, according to Baba, are everywhere, invisible to everyone except to the men of knowledge (*ilm*) and no one is safe from them. However, they prefer the young unmarried girls, who were the majority of his patients, because, the "virgin's blood is fresh which get strengthened only after her marriage" (ibid. 24-26).

Baba diagnosed the illnesses by asking the patient his standard question that "what you see in your dreams?" Kakar describes one incident of his diagnosis and prescription. Once, Baba asked for the bottle of water that the patient had brought and closed his eyes for some meditative moments and silently recited the required Quranic verses and blew in the water intermittently. After preparing the sacred water he directed them (patient and relatives) to

60

drink it daily and to come back next week to have another bottle. Sometimes, he used sugar to blow the prayer, especially to heal the possession or *jhara* which involves similar ritual of blowing on the patient's face instead of water and sugar (Kakar, 1982: 50). He also provided talismans in the cases of 'threat by *balas* (demons). If the case was family quarrels or strife among married couples, some 'blown sugar' was given along with the talisman and the partner was supposed to mix it in the spouse's tea (ibid.51).

Flexibility and Negotiation of Authorization: Accounts of a female Healer

Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger's book *'In Amma's Healing Room'* (2006) is an ethnographic study of the 'Islamic' healing practices in a South Indian context, Hyderabad. Amma, the healer, is a middle aged woman, who identifies herself as a *piranima* (wife of a *pir*, a Sufi teacher) who meets almost fifty to sixty patients daily and writes *taviz* for them (amulets with Quranic verses, numbers and names of God written on them) (Flueckiger, 2006: 5). She claimed that her healing was based on the Quran and the success of her healing is guaranteed for the illness caused by superhuman agents. During one of the conversations with the author, Amma identified her practice as 'religious' while classifying some 'other' practices as *kala ilm* (black knowledge) that could be used to harm others (ibid. 60). Amma maintains that even if the numerically based diagnostic calculations can be done by anyone, it is her spiritual *charisma* that makes her a successful healer. Patients tell their stories to Amma who provides comfort, creates meaningful relationships and sends patients with new confidence.

The patients who came to Amma were from different religious communities; Muslims, Hindus and Christians. In healing room, the boundaries of religious differences collapse where the patients share a common cosmology that articulates healing as a spiritual idiom in which spiritual beings intervene in the physical and social world to cause illness. The author's conclusion from her fieldwork is that the healing site is one in which Hindu and Muslim tradition still intersect and common ritual grammar. Religious identities, cosmologies and theologies are not openly articulated to be debated in this healing context. Even if Amma's healing site acted as crossroad of religious identities, some religious taboos were observed. For instance, menstruating and post-partum women were not allowed to enter the healing room; a traditional Hindu and Muslim custom to enter the sacred spaces. Amma, the healer, had also suffered, since she was unable to practice healing during her periods. All kinds of impurity including the ritual impurity were the

blockades for the spiritual healing to 'work'.

However, some of them, especially the female patients, admitted that they come to Amma from great distance because of her uniqueness as a *female* healer. And it is an interesting fact to note that the female patients were more in number. Men usually came to see Amma on Sundays (when they were off work) and their problems, more often, were related to housing, business, marriage alliance rather than that of physical and mental health.

As Flueckiger observes, the healing room and its crowded courtyard was a domestic and public space where the experiences and the stories of the illness and its healing success were shared. Listening to the stories of others who share a particular patient's case and to Amma's healing success was also part of the healing system. It helped establish her healing authority and construct a world view within which such healing becomes possible and nurture a particular relationship between the healer and the patient.

Illnesses brought to Amma's Healing Room

Amma diagnosed and prescribed for many physical and non-physical illnesses. She called those illnesses as *saitani* (caused by the devil) which can only be treated by spiritual healing whereas the purely physical illnesses can be healed by any allopathic doctor. She has attended the illnesses caused by the impingement of spiritual forces on the physical world. *Saitani* illnesses may affect mind, body, or spirit. According to her, the diseases like cancer, heart troubles, typhoid and polio are out of this category over which she has no control. For this category of illnesses which is out of her 'control', she recommended specific doctors, from obstetricians to optometrists by name and phone numbers (ibid. 64).

The complaints brought the patients most often to Amma's healing room were infertility, high fevers of children, disobedient children (including teenage sons who "do not work but just wander around all day"), colicky babies and stubborn young children, babies who are failing to thrive, abusive husbands, trouble making marriage relationships of daughters, stolen objects, runaway goats, trouble making neighbours or failing business and so on. Some of them complained of 'vague restlessness' or general trouble such as 'inability to sleep well' (ibid. 64-65). Most of the possession and visionary patients were on teenage and adult stage.

The narratives given by the relatives of the possessed showed that they had come to the healing room with prior diagnosis in their mind. For instance, father of an eighteen year old Hindu girl who was possessed explained the whole background stories behind her illness. He explained that a female pregnant neighbour with whom his daughter had kept intimate relationship was murdered burnt with kerosene and her soul had entered to his daughter and trying to take her away (ibid.109). The other important part of the patients' narratives which was included most often, was the description of the dreams ("seeing things"), especially if they were fearful dreams.

For the possession cases she did not perform the numerical calculation. She simply declared the possession as "*saitani*" and went directly to the treatment. The main treatment of the possession was to make the patient speak in their voice or that of the 'possessed entity'. Some of the patients were hit by the bamboo stick to reveal 'their name' and to leave the person. The naming of the possessed *jinn* or any other beings was the beginning of the treatment (ibid. 110). The possession cases offered most dramatic scenes and all those who were present in the courtyard could experience her healing success and her spiritual authority right in front of them.

Some cases were seen as '*pagalpan*' (mental illness or "*not right in the head*") over which she had little control (as stated by her) since they were not caused by the devils or *jinns* (ibid.112). Even if some patients forcefully insisted that Amma must '*do something*' and were reluctant to leave, she referred them to the neighbouring allopathic doctors or psychiatrists. She explained that "both spiritual and non-spiritual illnesses were fated in God's hands but she has been given the authority to intervene only in cases caused by the spiritual intervention in the physical world" (ibid. 113).

The author finds an interesting bias in the healing system in favour of the seeker. In the cases of failing relationship, between husband and wife or between parents and children or between two neighbours the healers of this kind always take the side of the complainant who consult them. Amma solved many such problems by writing *tavizes* and *falitas* to shut others' mouth without hearing the story of the 'offending' party who might have another story to reveal. She did not consider these practices, intended to bring about some harmful effect on another person whom she has never seen, as 'black knowledge' even if she repeatedly insisted that while she knew the mechanics of 'black knowledge' she would never use it (ibid.119). Flueckiger makes it clear that most of the practitioners in the

Islamic spiritual healing distinguish and classify between 'black' and 'light' knowledge (*kala* and *nuri ilm*), that is, the knowledge that can be used for healing and for destruction. But, the narratives of the healing site show that the same healing practices might be experienced as 'light' from one perspective and 'black' from another point of view.

Childhood diseases such as "*crying for days and not sleeping*" were the most physically visible illnesses brought to her. Many of them were already taken to allopathic doctors before coming to Amma, especially if it was high fever. Most often, she diagnosed the sick children whose parents were uncertain about causes, whether it was physical or spiritual as *evil eye* affected on child or mother and prescribed *utara* and *falita*. The misbehaviour of children or '*ghumna phirna*' (wandering around all day), unwillingness to work, missing, runaway, or kidnapped children were also the common complaints of parents who usually came without the children for which *falita* was prescribed to call them back (ibid.124-126). For the cases such as failing businesses, personal *taviz* was given to wear and *falita* to burn and drink and 'something' to keep in the store. Sometimes, the 'business *taviz*' was also given along with it.

The trouble faced by families such as chronic illnesses, continuous financial strains, troublesome neighbours generally called for the house exorcism for the whole family. Solutions were in the direction of shutting the mouth of the arguing neighbour making the intruder run away. To achieve such effects, clients were instructed to place the charged ritual 'object' in the house of the offending person or to make them have it.

Some patients came to her regularly to 'maintain good health' and for the treatment of the long-standing and chronic problem. The author could see an educated Christian woman visiting Amma regularly for 8 years for the treatment of her chronic head shake. She used to bring incense sticks, rock salt, and bottles of water with her over which Amma blown her *dua*. Sometimes the patient brought a bag of soil to get Amma's blessings before she sprinkled it in her home and her school where she worked. Another time, she brought saucers on which Amma wrote 'something' and the patient drunk the water after washing the ink to heal her chronic illness (ibid.106-107). Other chronic problems brought to her were *becaini* (general restlessness), experienced as "*hands and feet are pulling*" and *susti* (weakness). Various prescriptions such as *nahavan* or *utara* or *dhuan* were prescribed (ibid.126-127).

64

Diagnoses and Prescriptions

Amma's diagnoses and prescriptions were based on a written aithmetical calculation. She wrote her prescriptions on paper amulets or unleavened bread or saucers or the fresh gourds. A clipboard, an inkwell, scissors, and one ballpoint pen complete the healing paraphernalia on the healing table.

The primary method for the diagnosis was "abjad ka phal kholna" (opening the mystery of numbers) which is based on the belief that numbers influence the character of the things and numbers mediate between the Divine and the created world. Amma asked the patient's and his or her mother's name. Then the names' numerical values were totalled and added to the value of the lunar day of the week. The total number was divided by three or four (it depends on what gives a whole quotient), and his or her illness was diagnosed and appropriate prescription was made according to the final quotient got out of this complicated arithmetic. As I mentioned earlier, the healer did not make numerical calculations to diagnose 'some' diseases. For instance, she did not need to make complex calculation to diagnose possession and children's illnesses (ibid.70).

In Amma's own explanation, if, for instance, the patient whose name is Lakshmi (la-k-sh-mi) will get a numerical value of 400 when it is written in Arabic, the value of the letter lam is 30, kaph =20, shin= 300, mim =40 and the last is 10. These values get added up with the value of her mother's name and with the value of the planet of the day and the total would be divided by four. If the remainder is 'zero', she has nothing to worry, if it is 'one', there is some physical problem, the remainder 'two' denotes evil eye from any human being and the 'three' refers to evil eye from the supernatural being (ibid. 70-72). Beyond the mechanical method of abjad, Amma used her 'spiritual understanding' to diagnose which she regarded as a charismatic power of the expert healer. For instance, for most of the children's cases, she did not use abjad, rather; she diagnosed their illnesses by simply looking at them and taping their stomach like a doctor.

She also diagnosed and prescribed through the invocation of superhuman beings for assistance. Amma called upon a constellation of Allah's maukil (Arabic word which means deputy or vice-regent, someone to whom the power has been delegated) to be hazir (to be present) where she wants and to serve her healing by carrying out her commands. The angels and jinns (beings made of fire, visible only to specific known persons, who can be

useful and harmful to human beings) were the superhuman beings usually used by her as *maukils*. The ritual of calling upon supernatural powers especially the *jinns* conducted more often to reveal the absent things such as to find the goods that have disappeared and stolen money or jewellery. The healer gets these special abilities to relate to *jinns* only after days of meditation and concentration.

Her prescription was the written form of numbers which represent the God's names or particular verses from Quran. The written paper can be worn around the neck or rolled and burnt in oil or smashed with a sandal or hung in a doorway to flutter in the wind depending on the instructions of the healer. Those who wear or drink or burn, or bury the paper written with words or diagrams and tables do not know what they mean. The amulets worn around the neck or waist or hand are supposed to physically ward off the evil forces. Some patients were advised to burn the paper and inhale its smoke for the same purpose while others were instructed to immerse it in water and drink the water with the ink. The efficacy of amulets seems to depended on the spiritual authority of the healer rather than the semantic content in the paper. Flueckiger notes that she had seen the patients walking out of Amma's healing room with handfuls of papers folded in different ways along with the lists of directions for how to use it failing which the healing does not work (ibid.79-80).

She used amulets (in Hindi *taviz*) and *falita* (slips rolled up to use as wicks that are soaked in oil and burnt) as prescriptions. The paper slips filled with Arabic writing were made into amulets for general well-being and she gave special amulet for fever, and there were morning and evening *falita*. The patients were advised to use the written word by wearing it around neck or putting it inside pocket or to burn the amulet after putting the paper inside, or to drink the water after putting the paper in it, or to hide it under a rock or dresser, or smash it or to immerse it in the water or to burn it in the oil and its smoke to be inhaled (which she called *dhuan*). Very often she also used medicines made of herbs and plants along with her healing words and written objects.

Taviz (amulet) is a slip of paper with Quranic verses written on it or specific names of Allah or the tables represent them which got folded width wise into a narrow slip and again folded lengthwise in order to make it a tightly folded square of approximately one-half inch. Then this square got wrapped tightly in strips of plastic cut from the used plastic bags and then tied closed with a black cotton string which was cut to two-inch length. *Taviz* was shaped in this way to tie it to a woman's *magalsutra* (wedding necklace) or attached with

main house key which was perceived to bear power and auspiciousness. If there were already one *taviz* on the neck given by any other healer, she first cut it off to tie her own (ibid.79-80). There are particular taboo attached with the old tavizes. It should not be disposed of thoughtlessly or thrown anywhere but should be tied with tree to be hung or immersed in the water which is a common tradition of the disposal of the other religious items for Hindus as well (ibid.80).

Unlike *taviz* which was supposed to be worn, *falitas* were instructed to be burnt or soaked in water and its ink was drunk by them. *Falita* which has less writing on it comparing to *taviz* is believed to call upon specific *maukil* to heal the specific problem whose name was written on the top of *falita*. On the bottom, name of the offenders or the name of the person against whom the 'healing' is done, was written. The patient was also needed to declare his or her request to be accomplished as the *falita* is burning (ibid. 82-83).

For the healing of particular cases, such as the unfaithfulness of a husband toward his wife, Amma wrote Quranic verses, the names of God, and the number squares along with the name of the offending person or that of the offending group on *chapati* (unleavened bread). The patient, for instance the wife, should feed it to a dog so that the errand husband will be faithful to her like the dog is to those who feed it. If the dog has eaten that *chapati*, the patient had to come back to Amma once again to collect the eleven neem leaves on which the husband's name is written. The complaining wife has to put those neem leaves on burning coals and then add the rock salt over which Amma had attached her prayer. It was explained that the *chapati* is expected to strengthen the relationship between the patient and her husband whereas the neem leaves (which is very sour) are capable of souring the threatening relationship between her husband and the 'other' woman (ibid. 85-86). To treat the weak infants she prescribed *khadu*, which is a green gourd written with the *mantram* anointed with perfume and wrapped up with a new white cloth. This should be put next to baby for forty days so that the life force of the gourd will go into the baby and at the end of the forty days the lifeless gourd should be immersed in the water.

For the husbands who complained about their misbehaving wives, she wrote wife's name on a *taviz* and instructed the husband to put it under a rock while saying his wishes: *"may her (wife) mouth be closed; may she not fight with me"*. Once, she gave two *tavizes* to a husband who complained of the 'disobedience' of his wife, one to put in the pocket and

the other to tie with a rock and immerse in the water to make his wife 'obey' him properly (ibid. 117).

For the stronger problems stronger prescriptions were made and some of them were periodic prescriptions such as *Utara, Nahavan,* and *Bandis. Utara* literally means to take off, remove, and discard. The ingredients needed for *Utara* are one clay pot with cooked rice, 100 grams uncut raw liver, seven *bhilavan* seeds stuck onto iron nails that are stuck into lemons, a prescribed number and colour of flowers (vary according to the diagnosis), and a coconut. The practices were seen as most efficacious when they were performed on Sundays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays. *Utara* is expected to rid the patient of all kinds of evil eye by attracting it to another physical object. Since it had been prescribed by both Hindu and Muslim practitioners without using the written words, it was identified most often as 'Hindu' practice by the 'educated' Muslims (ibid. 88-89). It was explained that the particular ingredients were used to please the person of *saitan* who has cast the evil eye. The cut of meat would attract the evil eye away from the patient's body while lemons act as substitute for chickens and the coconuts are used in place of goat which pleases the person.

Bandis, literally means binding, is house exorcism, prescribed for those who experience chronic troubles and series of bad things one after another in the house and outside due to the 'problem' with the house. The healer sat on a cot and read some *mantras* for some time and moved from corner to corner of the house breaking up the floor in each corner and burying the lemons written with numbers and names of God, blown with her prayer and sprinkled, added with the scent. After the corner exorcism she moved to the doorway in front of which a hole was dug, and then a black chicken wrapped in white cloth soaked in perfume was buried alive along with several lemons. With the burial of chicken the house exorcism ritual was over (ibid).

The healing practices studied and presented so far show one common factor. They all fall into the Sufi tradition of Islam in India. Sufi traditions focused on honouring the founding saints of each Sufi orders (*silsila*, like *Qadiri, Chishti*, etc.), celebration of the death anniversaries of *murshids* (Sufi masters in the Master-disciple relationship through which the spiritual knowledge is transmitted) and made a distinction between inner and outer meanings of certain phenomena (esoteric and exoteric knowledge). The healer at Patteshah *dargah* in Sudhir Kakar's study also claims a line of *pirs* planetting from five hundred years ago, a professional lineage and a long apprenticeship with a distinguished

pir which all contributed to his own image as a gifted healer (Kakar, 1982: 19). One of the key arguments we are making is that healing traditions practised among Muslims have to be understood independent of Sufism in contemporary situations. Even if they are some similarities, the healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram* or '*ismu Chikitsa*' that we described in the first section are very much a part of mainstream Islam and not necessarily connected to Sufism at practicing level. The following section is intended to highlight how several popular healing practices are located within the mainstream Muslim institutions.

Healing practices and Classificatory Scheme of *Gayo* Muslims

John, R. Bowen (1993) discusses the healing practices of *Gayo* Muslims in Indonesia by terming them as 'powerful words'. He understood the *Gayo* healing practices as 'highly discursive' in the everyday sense of the term. Even if they are not included in the scholarly definitions of the religion, discussions of their Islamic character are very much part of the most *Gayo* villagers who depend on these practices for health and good crops (Bowen, 1993: 77-81). Practitioners of the spell believe that the power of spell comes from holy texts and from intercession of Prophets. The spell is addressed to a spiritual agent under the expectation that the spiritual agent will be persuaded or coerced by the words. Influenced by the discursive practices of 'speech events' on the Islamic character of these practices, they began to make complex classifications between spell and request (addressed to spirit), recitation and prayer (addressed only to God) (ibid. 82-83), and between 'religious' and 'magical' by the modernists (ibid.80). However, the *Gayo* men and women who employ spells perceive them as part of Islamic knowledge authenticated by *extra scriptural* sources whereas the spell which comes from harmful spirits such as devils is seen as 'black magic', opposed to the divine knowledge.

Healing Practices and formation of Muslim self-hood in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan

Based on his study of the healing practices of Uzbek Muslims, Johan Rasanayagam (2006) has observed that the movements which might be termed as modernist or revivalist which have challenged the rituals derived from the local tradition as 'non-Islamic' are at the forefront of the debates on the correct form of Islamic belief and practices in Uzbekistan. He says, through local practices, Muslims are trying to shape and reshape their Muslim self-hood and healing practices are one of those practices through which one seeks the correct form of Islam.

69

Nonetheless, thanks to the continual intervention of *ulama* in public religious life, a distinction between un-Islamic shamans and religious healers has always been maintained even if it has been blurred historically. Religious healers emphasize that they were working according to the religious knowledge (good healer) and state that they were different from the incorrect form (Bad healing). The scriptural interpretations hostile to the healers have become more influential and widespread in post-Soviet period through reformism and revivalism which made healers and practitioners review their practices. These are reflected in the healers' perceptions of their own actions and the patients' experiences as they are tended to emphasize the sanctity of healing and its affiliation to the god. All these historical developments in the religious discourse have brought forth a trend among practitioners and agents to place them under Islamic framework in order to bring the practices inside the fold of their religion.

Rasanayagam (2006) points out through this authorization process at micro level social groups have made their own interpretations to face others. This selection process has been no longer strategic and practical rather authoritative in nature to cope with the notion of correct form of being a Muslim. Even if the post- Soviet discourses on the 'universal ideals' of Islam could not necessarily help the formation of Muslim self-hood in Uzbekistan and could not alter the religious life of majority Muslims, they are seen reflected in the healing practices.

Popular and Domestic Healing rituals in Kerala

British Anthropologist Rolland E Miller notes that the formal religious life of Muslims of Kerela is centered on the mosque and its activities. Each mosque has the minimum staff of preacher (*khatib*), and *mukri* (locally known as *mollaka*), an all-purpose functionary, who gives the call to prayer and performs other services. These other services include exorcising disease and devils (Miller, 1978:233). *Mollaka* is approached for *urukku* and *mantram* to cure diseases especially of children and cattle to protect them from the evil eye (Faisal, 2010:190).

Miller says the Muslims of Kerala recite, memorize the Quran and its sanctity is as much in the form as the content (Miller, 1978:237). There are some other local versions of songs, ballads and hagiographies such as *malappattukal* or *padappattukal* (in Arabi Malayalam), *maulids* and *ratibs* (both are in Arabic language) recited for different

purposes. For instance, Faisal (2010:196) notes that during the period of pregnancy, the expectant mother recites *Nafeesat mala* and *badr mala* believing that it can help her for easy delivery. When she is about to give birth her relative approaches the *mollaka* of mosque. The *mollaka* provides a particular charm which is called '*pinjanamezhuttu*' (writing on the ceramic plate) in which certain passages of Quran are written on its surface and the water with the sacred words after washing it is drunk by the expectant mother.

Apart from mosques, the shrines of *awliya* (sing. *wali*, translated as saint) or *shuhada* (sing. *shaheed*, the martyr) are the most important religious site for most of Muslims in Kerala (especially the Sunnis)[56]. They visit shrines to have the *barakah* of the saint buried there; they make offerings and pray for their help in overcoming an illness or difficulty in conceiving a child or to ensure success in business or exams. Sometimes, they promise to hold a special feast if their wishes are granted or problems are solved. They believe that their prayer would be answered because of the saints' power as intermediaries (the practice of *tawassul*) to God or their own power given by the God (practice of *istigatha*)[57]. During their visit they mostly recite the first and the last three chapters of the Quran or surah *yaseen* and chant some *dhikr* and pray for transferring the reward of the recitation to the soul of the saint. It is believed that the reward of these rituals would reach the soul, the merit of which will be reflected upon the visitor also. Another practice related with the shrine is *nerchayakkal* (making a vow) in the name of buried saint or the martyrs such as the distribution of food or alms. Vows are made in the critical conditions such as the severe illness in order to alleviate the problems in life (Faisal, 2010:175)[58].

Miller describes this practice as the 'popular' healing practices of Muslims in Kerela Under the title of 'popular religious devotion'. For problems like lack of prosperity, sickness, childlessness, and disputes they turn to religious saints, dead or living. The famous tombs of famous saints like Syed Alavi of Mambram whose *dargah* is famous in Kerala, Kondotti shrine of Muhammad Shah Thangal and the Ponnani shrine of Makhdum Zein-ud-Din are the places of popular healing practices. Here, the patients and supplicants

---

56 Some of them like mujahids, jamate-Islami oppose the practices of shrine visit and they call it as '*jarapooja*' (worship of *jarams*) while sunnis oppose the term 'worship', rather; they call it as visit to have *barakah. Maqams* or *jarams* (as it is used among them like *dargah* in north India) are another site for the religious debates about what constitutes 'authentic Islam' which will be dealt in detail in the next chapter.

57 *Tawassul* (intercession) is the practice of praying to God by making someone of something like the saints as intermediaries on behalf of them whereas *istigatha* is the practice of asking something directly to someone like saints. Detailed elaboration and their role in the religious discourses and classification of healing practices 'would come in the next chapter.

58 Faisal K P (2010) in 'Rites of Passage among Muslims of Kerala', Unpublished PhD thesis, CSSS/SSS/JNU

visit, utter a prayer or make a vow at times of need.

Apart from this, any *mulla* could apply the power of Quran to the problem of patient but special *mantrams* were required for the exorcism of mental illnesses commonly attributed to the demonic powers and certain healers were regarded as capable to heal greater problems (ibid. 243). Miller also notes that the emergence of modern medical science has challenged the continuation of these practices but the throngs outside the homes of the respected healers indicated the strong faith in their powers (ibid. 243-244).

The religious positions such as *'sayyid'* who claims descent from the Prophet are given extra respect by the patients (Miller, Rolland E, 1978, p.243). Syed Alavi ibn Muhammad (who lived during AD1749-1843) who has been known as the greatest of saints in Kerela as *'Mampuram thangal'* is widely recognized for his miraculous deeds. Like *sayyids*, the other categories of religious men such as *Maulvis*, and *Musalyars* also benefit the healing legitimacy from the patients due to their position in the religious life. The men of religion, dead or alive, who write charms and read incantations, are believed to be the *inter-mediators,* capable to recommend to the God on behalf of supplicants. The inter-mediators vary in their reputation as to the instances of curing diseases. They first consult the doctors to cure the disorders but the reverse is also true (there are many who first consult the healers before doctors). When these two systems fail, Muslims may turn to other alternatives which lie out of the Islamic fold such as the non-Muslims healers. The contrasting element in the religion- healing network is the presence of female healers in great numbers unlike their negligible position as priests and clergymen among Muslim communities. Nevertheless, it has to be looked that whether most woman healer have been labeled as 'un-Islamic' unlike their male counterparts who get 'religious legitimacy'.

The foregoing account gives us an idea of how the textual protocols discussed in the first section are operationalized in actual healing encounters and popular practices in mainstream Islam. One issue here is whether this kind of healing is accepted as Islam proper. On the one hand, Flueckiger understood Amma's healing practice as the representation of a form of 'vernacular expressions of Islam', grown out of particular locality and on the other, Amma's ritual role as a female Muslim healer, practising in the public realm, as the representation of the negotiations and flexibilities of gender role in Indian Islam which she calls as 'Healing crossroads' (Flueckiger, 2006: xi). She says, vernacular Islam is shaped and voiced by the individuals in specific contexts and specific

relationships. For her, the healing practice is a site of potential fluidity, flexibility and innovation in a religious tradition that self identifies as universal and ideologically monolithic and healing is a form of knowledge and practice that are local and vernacular considered to be Islamic by those who practice them.

Kakar observes that the healer and the healing process are located at the *edge* of the society (Kakar, 1982: 39) where the religious restrictions and social taboos tend to be suspended for the duration of the healing encounter. For instance, the healing water blown with the Quranic verses and Allah's name by the hands of a Muslim did not matter for the Hindu patients of Baba of Patteshah dargah (high-caste Brahmins among them also), who observed the caste taboos in their daily life (ibid. 40). Kakar explains this phenomenon as the "the brotherhood of sickness indeed seems infinitely more inclusive than that of health" (Ibid). Frederick Barth has given the concept of 'Cosmologies in the making' (Barth, 1987) to refer to the processual and creative nature of interaction by which people combine and choose different and alternative knowledge systems in the case of need (as quoted by Johan Rasanayagam, 2006).

Faisal has also concluded (2010: 231) that since the majority Muslims in the state are the descents of Hindu converts to Islam, the religion and culture of Muslims in Kerala clung to the customs, beliefs, and practices of local tradition. The Sufi roots of their tradition which favored the syncretic culture have also accommodated various local practices into the Muslim culture. However, they are undergoing to the gradual process of *transformation* into a more universal form of Islam.

V. Efficacy in Healing Practices

Sudhir Kakar described the process of healing as a central individual and cultural pre-occupation and tried to explain how sacred healing works. He says the term 'shaman' is the term by which the healer in the non-Western context has been understood by the Western social science literatures as one who specialized in 'spirit illnesses' and goes into a voluntary and controlled trance during their diagnostic procedures. The shamans are understood either as a psychotic person suffering from the abnormalities such as arctic hysteria, anxiety hysteria and so on, or as religious specialist who connects his community to the sacred symbols and gives meaning to it and works as a mediator between supernatural and his community (ibid.89-90). Kakar says the image of shaman has

73

'improved' recently in the wake of the decolonization process which has redefined the Western image of the non-Western cultures. The category of Shaman has acquired a romanticized image as an exceptionally wise man who is the knower of another 'separate reality'. However, he says, this negative Western image bore little resemblance to the image of shaman he has experienced through his studies in India (ibid.91).

Kakar tried to locate the various healing traditions in the symbolic universe of Indian culture in which myths, and history enter into this therapy and the healer mobilizes it inside and outside of the patient. In this framework, the healers and their tradition have been understood through the "elaboration of the *interplay* between the individual and his society and culture and an exploration of Indian cultural psychology" using the analytical tools of psychoanalysis (ibid. 6, 10).

Kakar's explanation of this healing system is through the classification of mental illness into two exclusive domains; one is the 'demonological' word view in contrast to that of the 'psychological' framework. He says if one's framework is psychological, then a talk of *balas* (supernatural demons) or *saitans* is absurd and a little 'crazy' (ibid. 22-23). However, he attempts to search for a common understanding behind these two frameworks. He finds that the cleavage which exists between the different healing professions and different healers is not simply between 'traditional' and 'modern' or between 'Western' and 'Asian' or between the healers of different cultures. Rather, it is because of the different ideological orientation toward the bio-medical paradigm of illness. Somebody insist on empirical and rational therapeutic methods while others employ metaphysical and psychological or the social methods recognizing the *arationality*. This line of demarcation exists as dialectic in the healing professions. The development of each healing profession, for instance the *Ayurveda* has undergone to this dialectical process (ibid. 31).

He explained the efficacy of this kind of healing tradition as, the 'shared demonological framework' by the whole culture, where the patient, his relatives and friends are united on the aetiology of the illness and the means to cure it, makes the healing more efficient. The common public idiom of illness makes the communication between the patient, his family, the larger community and the healer more easier which enhances the cooperation most required for a therapy to be effective (ibid.42). It is Because, the seeking out of the healer in case of mental illness in India is a family and a collective affair and the healer in turn has to listen to the family and their version of the illness before he check the

patient (ibid. 43).

Arthur Kleinman (1982), a physician turned medical anthropologist, tried to understand healing by looking into how the illness or misfortune has perceived by different actors involved in the healing process. He suggested that each actor had an 'Explanatory Model (EM)' coming from his/her position. Thus, patients and the practitioners have their own EMs which include the questions such as what has happened and why? Why it has happened to him and why now? And what he should do about it? Kleinman argues these EMs are shaped by the cultural context which includes the social and economic organizations, and the dominant ideology of the society in which he becomes ill. Sometimes, the patient's EM may be moulded by others such as the 'cultural power of the healer' to make it fit to the prevailing discourse of the society (Kleinman, 1982: 121-124).

Anthropological studies try to grapple with the *efficacy* of the healing practices in several ways. Claude Levi-Strauss's paper on the 'effectiveness of symbols' (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 186-205) argues the healing ritual 'works' through the *'psychological manipulation'* through symbols and metaphors that underlay his illness. He says the 'shaman' provides the patient a language of symbols through verbal metaphors by which all of his illnesses get expressed. This is done through the relationship established between the shaman and the patient's conscious and unconscious mind through shaman's oratory. Shaman's narrative and chants create a metaphoric landscape where one's illness is represented through shared cultural understanding. It is the *effectiveness of symbols* which guarantees the harmonious relationship between myth (supplied by the haler) and action (performed by the patient) (ibid. 201).

He discusses the homologies (structural similarities) between physiology (body and internal organs), shaman's song and the shared myths (myth of the spirit world) through his elaboration of the *Cuna* birth process. The shaman intervenes in the process in the case of the failure of the normal processes. His arrival is with lot of preparations such as the fumigations of burnt coca-nibs, the invocations, and making of some sacred figures (ibid. 187). He says it was difficult to interpret this therapeutic method and its direct bearing on the illness (ibid. 191). The shamanistic cure lies on the borderline between the physical medicine and psychological therapies which seems to be the exact counterpart to the psychoanalytic cure; the psychoanalyst listens, whereas the shaman speaks (ibid. 198-199).

VI. Summary

The first section of this chapter has given an account of *urukku* and *mantram* in the textual format; its rules, techniques, methods and procedures through the healing texts published in Kerala. The exact operation of the healers, the seekers/patients and their problems, method of diagnosis and treatment, in short the field view was presented from ethnographic studies in different Muslim healing sites in the world. We ended with enquires into how effectiveness of healing practices is understood by anthropologists. These questions have been addressed by giving the ethnographic studies on such healing systems as they are practiced in different Muslim healing sites. At the end of the chapter a short description has been given on the ways in which such healing systems have been understood and explained by sociologists and anthropologists. The next chapter would explain the ways in which these practices are undergone to the religious discourses and classification in the context of Muslims in Kerala.

CHAPTER III

CLASSIFICATION OF HEALING PRACTICES IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES IN KERALA

I. Contextualizing Discourse: Religious Ideology of *Ahlu-sunnathi-wal-Jama'a*

In Islam, the way in which only one model of practice gets classified as 'correct' depends on a single true ideology, not many true ideologies. Islam, as understood and perceived by those who participate in the religious discourses in Kerala, has this single and true ideology, that is, *'ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa'*. The religious discourses on *urukku* and *mantram* in Kerala have to be understood against this background. Then, there comes the question 'who are the participants in the religious discourses of Kerala?

In the context of Muslims in Kerala, 'some' practices have always been 'controversial' and hence objects of discourse. The healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram* are such controversial categories. Objecting to them or defending them has even become a marker of *organizational* identity. The closure or persistence of healing practices is seen as critical for Islam and its existence by the contesting religious organizations. While one organization understands them as the deviation from the 'correct' Islam, another organization understands the controversy created against the practices as an attack on the correct Islam from within. So, organizational positions are the religious ideology, and the discourses are the strategies to substantiate these positions. The religious organizations, who are the participants of the discourse already have a true, correct model of religious ideology of Islam, which is *ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa'*. But, it is very important to note that, the question of which organizational ideology is in concordance with the given religious ideology of *ahlu-sunna* and which is at odds with it is the major issue in discourse.

The Prophet had predicted that his community would divide into several groups and only one group of believers would remain steadfast and not succumb to any false beliefs or misguided leaders and stay true to his message who eventually prevail (Commins, 2006: 16). Most of the authentic hadith[59] commentators have interpreted these prophetic words

---

[59] Hadith, literally means traditions, is the second source of Islamic law after Quran which includes the exemplary sayings, actions and the conduct of Prophet Muhammad. These traditions has been collected and compiled by his successors and now it has been written in hadith texts such as *Al-Bukhari*.

by identifying this steadfast group as '*ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa*', that is, the men of tradition and the ideal community. Each religious group who actively participate in the religious discourses claim they are the real *ahlu-Sunnah*. There is another *hadith* according which the Prophet had foretold that the most important danger to Islam would come from a community which would behave like Muslims and would be steadfast in their prayers, but in reality would spread confusion and splits among Muslims. Each group identifies this community with their ideological opponents (Alam, 2008)[60]. It is on the basis of this contested identity that the religious organizations work and stand for and they are organized along the 'modern' lines, with presidents, secretaries, logos, separate flags, annual working reports, and budget reports and so on. Each organization establishes schools, colleges, libraries, orphanages, publication departments and presses.

The term '*sunnat*' means the prophetic tradition, and '*jamaa*' refers to the great companions of Prophet who lived in the first centuries of Islam. All religious groups in Kerala claim that it is their ideology only which adhere to the original doctrine of '*sunnat*' and '*jama*' and they call their ideological opponents '*mubtadi*' (the innovators who have deviated from the righteous path of *sunnat* and *jamaa*) whereas they acknowledge themselves as 'Sunni' (followers of the tradition). But, who are '*Sunnis*' and who are '*mubtadis*' is a contested question which is the core issue and the rationale of religious discourses. Identifying only one group as '*ahlu-sunna*' and the rest as their 'other' is a one-sided understanding which is the way in which some scholars like Usha Sanyal has studied the religions groups among Muslims in India (Sanyal, 1996: 3). The binary approach to understand them through the dichotomous classification into traditionalists and modernists[61] also does not make much sense. Instead, the reality shows us a complex picture of classificatory scheme that does not yield to such a simple dichotomy which would become clear from the sections that follow.

---

[60] Alam (2008) has found the *barelwi* students (a north Indian Muslim group who are similar to Sunnis in Kerala in principles and ideology) citing this hadith to identify this 'dangerous' community about whom the Prophet had warned, with the present day *Deobandis*, their ideological opponents.

[61] See for instance, Bowen, John R (1993) 'Muslim through Discourse' wherein he understands the Gayo Muslim discourse as that of between 'modernists' (reformists) and 'traditionalists' (*Sunnis*). Geertz (1966) has also classified Muslims of Indonesia either as the men of 'scriptural' (reformists) or 'classical' (traditionalists of Indonesian culture). But the ideological publications of each religious group in Kerala assert they all were scripturalists and traditionalists. Every religious group is in competition to call themselves as '*ahlu-sunnati-wal-jama*' (men of tradition and the righteous ancestors).

Mujahids' claim for the true religious ideology

Mujahid groups in Kerala claim that they were the men of Quran and *Sunnah* and identify Sunnis, their ideological opponents, as the real innovators. They argue this fact could be proven if one understands the positions of both groups on the basis of scriptures. Mujahids also question the labelling of them as '*wahhabi*', because according to them, Mujahids do not blindly follow the ideas of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, the 19th century religious reformer. Rather; they claim, their ideology was that of *ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamah* [62]and their sources are Quran and *Sunnah* who take only the reformist ideas of ibnu-wahab[63]. They prefer either the term *salafi*, one who follows the ways of the first Muslim ancestors (*salaf*), or *muwahhid*, one who professes God's unity (Commins, 2006: vi).

Mujahids spread the idea that after the first few centuries of the Islamic history which were the best of all time, some new customs and superstitious rituals emerged and the original traditions were replaced by them. The *shia* sectarianism, the Sufi Islamic elements, and the perpetuation of the previous customs by the new converts to Islam were the main factors for the introduction of bad customs in Islam[64]. Later, the efforts to wipe out those *bidas*[65] (innovations) from the traditions were misunderstood as innovations which emerged to eradicate the tradition[66]. Those who strictly followed the original tradition as taught by the Prophet and his earlier companions without any deviation from any of its doctrines and rituals were known as '*salafu-assalih*'(the earlier good ancestors of Islam) or '*ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa*'. Therefore, Mujahids claim, the religious groups of *salafis* or Mujahids in contemporary Kerala are the 'real *Sunnis*' and they identify the present day Sunnis in Kerala as *bidaees* (innovators in *Sunnah*)[67]. According to Mujahids Muslim who disagreed with their definition of monotheism were misguided Muslims, outside of the pale of Islam.

---

[62] *Ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa* means the group of tradition and the ideal group of ancestors. This is the most contested term in the religious discourses in Kerala since both Mujahids and Sunnis claim they are the real men of *ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa* (for instance see Kunjeethu Mathani's '*ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa*' (1990) published by Mujahids and Nattika Moosa Musliyar's '*Ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jama*' published by Sunnis.

[63] Pannur, E K M (2010) '*wahabikalum* Mujahid*ukalum*' (wahabis and Mujahids), Kozhikkode, KNM publication.

[64] Madani, Kunjeethu (1990 :64)

[65] Bida literally means 'new'; in Islamic theology, it means every kind of innovation in the original tradition of Islam which is not part of the prophetic Sunnah, whether it is good or bad (*fathul-bari*, 13:253, Quoted by Madani, Kunjeethu, 1990:19).

[66] Madani, Kunjeethu (1990:7).

[67] Madani, Kunjeethu (1990:96), Mankada (2006:82-84).

Mujahids argue just as one should follow whatever the prophet had done, he should also avoid whatever the Prophet and his best companions had not done because all rituals which are not done by Prophet and his companions are innovations in the tradition, even if they were supposed to bring goodness. Prophet had said that if one brought new thing in his tradition which is not part of it, it had to be rejected[68]. So, according to Mujahids, the *Sunnis's* classification of *bida* as permitted, recognised and prohibited is incorrect, because, according to the religious texts and their exegeses, all innovations are liable to rejection and there is not at all a category of 'good innovation' as *Sunnis* argue.

Mujahid publications which claim the status of '*ahlu-sunna*' make it clear that it is the religious obligation of those who are on 'right path', to restore pure monotheistic worship and bring the community back from wrong track[69]. The deviators may be corrected forcefully if situation allows, otherwise, they have to use persuasion through writing, preaching, debating, and moral advice. The responsibility to lead the community into 'truth' is nothing but the inherent part of one's *iman* (faith). Mujahids argue since innovations and superstitious rituals are deeply rooted in the major sections of the community and the vested interested religious men and leaders are so powerful, this responsibility of moral reasoning seems a difficult task for the 'real' *Sunnis* (as claimed by Mujahids). But, all prophets and great ancestors had the same bitter experiences from their own community such as the Prophet Abraham was thrown into fire, Imam *shafi* was beaten up by the then kingdom, Ibnu-taimiyya was arrested and Muhammad ibnu-Abdul-Wahhab was misunderstood; and their only sin was they have invited people into 'right' path of unification of God[70]. So, all those who are firm on their faith should propagate it to others also, using the 'original scriptures' of Quran and *Sunnah* as his aids. Mujahids hence claim they were committed to save the people from the customs and practices which are supposed to lead them out of Islam[71].

Sunnis' understanding of true Islam

According to Sunnis, only the followers of *ashari* and *maturidi* theological schools, the two authentic streams of theology, could be considered as *ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa* which is

---

[68] Quoted by Madani (1990: 20).
[69] For the details on the objectives of Wahhabi mission to spread the call into the original monotheism, see David Commins (2006) 'The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia', and Natana J Delong Bas (2004) 'Wahhabi Islam'.
[70] Madani, Kunjeethu (1990:139).
[71] Abdul Hameed, (2001 :114)

the another term for the 'real Muslims'[72]. In other words, the term 'Muslim' means 'Sunni' and all other streams are fakes[73]. Sunnis claim the *ashari* and *maturidi* schools were the mainstream ways of majority Muslims which were formed during the period of Abbasid Empire to lead people into the original path of the Prophet and his first companions[74]. *Ashari* theological school was formed by Abul-hasan-al-Ashari (AD 873-935) and *Maturidi* School by Abu-Mansoor-al-Maturidi (AD 945) who compiled the real Islamic thoughts and beliefs in the light of texts and logic. They represented the Islamic struggle against strayed streams of thought such as *mutazila, mujassima,* and lastly the *wahhabism* who tried to interpret the religion according to the logic and reason only under the influence of Greek philosophy. The *mutazila* stream was declared as the official ideology of state and religion by some of the Abbasid *Khalifs* like Mamun (*khalifa* of Islamic empire during AD 813-833), Mutasim (833- 842), and Wasiq (842-847) who supported it with imperial power. Sunnis trace the origin of their ideological opponents in Kerala namely Mujahids to these new theological streams which got astray[75].

It is clear from the above that deviations from this right path of *ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa'* are innovations (*bida*). But, the definition of *bida* is a contested issue. Sunnis and Mujahids differ on what is meant by *bida* (innovation) in religion. According to Sunnis, *bida* in sharia has been divided into two types: '*Sunnah hasan'* or '*bida hasan'* (good tradition or good innovation) which is 'good ritual' and the other is '*Sunnah sayyiah'* or '*bida sayyiah'* (heretical innovation) which is the 'bad rituals' in society. A ritual becomes 'good' and authentic if it is based on the four sources of sharia (Quran, hadith, *ijma, qiyas*) whereas the 'bad' or 'un-Islamic' rituals are those which are at odds with the four sources of law[76].

So, for Sunnis, all rituals cannot be opposed *perse* only because it was not shown by Prophet and his companions, rather; every ritual which has base in sources of law is 'Islamic' and those which are against the sources are 'un-Islamic' that has to be rejected. For instance, negating healing practices such as *urukku* and *mantram* practices by Mujahids as 'un-Islamic' is *bida*. Sunnis argue the word '*bida'*, in the etymological sense, cannot be

---

[72] Darimi (2008:37), Saqafi (2012:9) in 'sunnath jamaa' (12th edition), Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009 :38).
[73] Saqafi (2012: 9).
[74] *Ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa: nervadiyude padam* (lesson of right path) (2007:13).
[75] Ibid. 16-22
[76] Faizy in '*Sunnath jamath: vishwasangalum acharangalum'* (*sunnath jama*: beliefs and rituals, 2009:3), Darimi (2008: 20-22), Saqafi (2012 :79), Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009 :18), Moosa Musliyar (2009 :72).

divided whereas it could be classified as '*good bida*' and '*bad bida*' in religion. As I have mentioned in the previous section, Mujahids oppose this division of *bida* into 'good' and 'bad', and they say '*bida' perse* has to be rejected. Sunnis argue the practices of *urukku* and *mantram*, *tawassul* and *istighatha* were performed and shown by the companions of prophet as Islamic, so, the followers of these exemplary traditions are the 'real' Sunni[77]. Thus we see how the healing practices we described in the previous chapter become the fountainhead of discourses about authentic or true Islam in contemporary Kerala and there is a large body of writings, CDs and web material on this issue. Clearly then healing practices have to be seen as the criterion in the politics of theological debate. Sunnis regard the 'enemies within' (Alam, 2008) as more dangerous to Muslim society than challenges from outside such as the fascist forces[78].

II. Strategies of Discourse

Scriptural Authenticity: The Basic Law of Religious Discourse

The fundamental nature of all religious discourses in the context of Muslims in Kerala is to 'enunciate' or vindicate the theme through the scriptural evidences from Quran and Hadith and their exegeses as proofs (*dalil*) and reference to support each argument. The validity of one argument or an 'effective statement' (whether written or spoken) depends on the authenticity of the verses quoted by the concerned group, which shows that religious discourses are primarily *textual*. There is a tendency to interpret the evidence brought by one group as 'misinterpretation' by the opposing group. Maliyekkal Sulaiman Saqafi, one of the Sunni authors, in the 12th edition of his book '*sunnat Jama'a*' (2012) instructs the readers, especially the activists of *sunnat jama*, to by heart at least one *dalil* (textual evidence) from each part of his book, as a 'weapon' to refute their ideological opponents. Defending and offending the practices through texts is part of the organizational identity to claim the status of *ahlu-sunnati-wal-jama'a*.

Given the fact that the basic nature of discourses is *textual*, the next question is, what kind of texts is recognized as evidence for the authenticity of a practice? The religious groups differ on the original sources of sharia law in Islam (that is, on what is the authentic text). While Mujahids give paramount importance to Quran and Sunnah (prophet's exemplary conduct and saying), Sunnis consider them as primary sources and consider *ijma*

---

[77] Faizy (2008: 251).
[78] Ibid. 275-276.

82

(scholarly consensus) and *Qiyas* (analogical reason) as the secondary sources. Mujahids accept only the hadiths (records of the sayings and deeds of Muhammad) which are consistent with the messages of Quran[79]. Hence, if a hadith (suppose a proof brought by Sunnis for the authenticity of *mantram* practice in the discourse) has a strong chain of transmitters but contradicted to the teachings of Quran, Mujahids tend to reject it. Here we observe different parameters are advanced for acceptance of knowledge or an interpretation as valid.

Sunnis believe that every Muslim must follow one of the established Schools of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) which include the *madhab* (school) of Imam shafi, Imam Hanafi, Imam Maliki, and Imam Hanbali[80]. For Sunnis, the door of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) is closed because a *mujtahid* (a person accepted as an original authority in Islamic law) requires a thorough knowledge of revealed texts, theology, legal theories, and high command in Arabic language to use his analogical reasoning to interpret the sharia which can be accorded only to these great law makers[81]. Sunnis believe that Quran and Prophetic tradition are not the compilation of laws because they do not refer to beliefs and practices directly. Rather; they are the sources from which laws have to be compiled thorough enquiry and research. The four Schools of thought recognized by Sunnis are considered the outcome of this approach. By contrast, Mujahids reject the mediation of the interpretative school and instruct Muslims to approach the texts directly and literally and see any interpretation as innovation[82].

Ideological Publications

Written works are most commonly used by the opposing organizations in these theological debates. As Usha Sanyal has found, the written and the printed word (she called it as the 'contestation in written form') has a crucial role in the crystallization of the religious movements among Muslims in India (Sanyal, 1996: 4). She says the printing presses have been used by the religious groups for the promulgation of the ideological doctrine and to

---

[79] Abdul Hameed, (2001: 63). See Delong Bas, Natana J (2004: 12) for the details of scholarly disputes on the *ijtihad* (independent research) and *taqlid* (imitation of past scholars).

[80] Faizy, Riaz (2009: 6), Darimi (2008: 8). As we mentioned in the first chapter, *Taqlid* refers to the legal practice of imitating or adhering to the juridical rulings of the past sholars without knowing its proofs (*dalil*) whereas its opposite *ijtihad* means the practice of the individual engaging in personal interpretation of the Quran and *Sunnah*. It is part of scholarly disputes on the question of whether the door of *ijtihad* was closed or not. While some scholars have argued that the gate was closed, others believe that *ijtihad* has been consistently practiced historically and still has to be practiced (Deblong-Bas, 2004: 105).

[81] Ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa (2007: 46-61).

[82] Darimi Abdul Hameed (2008) in 'Sunnathum Bidathum: oru Laghu Padanam (tradition and innovation: a study)

reach out to wider audiences. In so far as the religious debate was concerned, the 'printed word' has been the most important medium through which late 19th century Muslims argued with each other (ibid. 82-83).

Although it was only in the late 19th century that Muslims in Kerala had their first printing press, it could act as the effective medium of communication, especially for the spread of the reformist ideas (Faisal, 2010: 246). The books intended to contribute to the debate between the religious groups in Kerala use various techniques of enunciation. Some are in the question and answer format and the questions range from theological, ideological, and organizational to the form and method of religious rituals. Most of the question and answer books are the collection of the series of questions and their answers published over a period of time in the organizational magazines, many of which are popular[83]. Most of the questions are selected from the opponent groups' publications and the ideological statements therein and responses are directed to them.

Sometimes, whole volume is written to rebut the ideological opponent's arguments. So, before writing such a piece, one has to read almost all publications and watch all speeches made by the opposition on the topic in question. For instance, Abdul Hameed Faizy Ambalakkadavu's 'Istighatha: vimarshanangalkku marupadi (Istighatha: replies to the criticisms, 2008) is an ideological reply to the books, speeches, magazines, and madrasa text books of Mujahid organizations. Kunjeethu madani's book 'ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jama' (published by Mujahids in 1990) quote some of the Sunni arguments from their own books and responds by refuting them in the light of religious scriptures.

Annual Conferences and Organizational resolutions:

Every religious organization legitimizes certain social practices as 'religious' by passing resolutions in their conferences and committee meetings in order to defend. Some of the important resolutions have been reported by the media and defending or offending the respective practice becomes part of the concerned organization's identity. For instance, Mathrbhoomi, one of the leading Malayalam dailies of Kerala, reports one resolution

---

[83] For instance, see Abdul Hameed (2001) 'Prarthana, tawheed: Chodyangalkku marupadi' (Prayer and unity of God: answers to the questions), Calicut, Yuvatha Books. For the Sunni ideological book, see Faizy, Sadiq (2008) 'Islam: samshayangalkku marupadi' (Islam: answers to the doubtful questions), Malppuram, Noorul Ulema Publications. These two books are the collection of separate columns which were published in their own respective organizational magazines.

passed by *samastha kerala jamiathul ulema* (organization of Sunni clergies) in 1983 at Malappuram (city in northern Kerala):

> "*In this Malapparuam Sunni district conference, the samastha hereby reiterates the resolution passed in the previous conference that the practices such as calling the dead prophets or saints directly or indirectly by making them intermediaries, seeking their help in difficult situations, taking vow to donate chicken or goat on behalf of them, visiting their shrines for different purposes and making ziarath (visit) tour to such tombs, the healing practices of mantram, and blowing the mantram on urukku or water or thread with Quranic verses or prophetic words or with the holy asma (names), following the recognized Sufi orders such as Qadiriyya, Shaduliyya, and Rifaiyya, chanting of particular holy words, chanting of malas, maulids, and all of the recognized rituals prevailed among Muslim community so far have been recognized by the clergies of ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jama as 'religious rituals', so, they are 'Islamic'. And those who acknowledge them as 'shirk' (polytheism) are not Sunnis and they are not suitable to lead the religious rituals such as imam or khateeb, or khasis*" (*Mathrbhoomi* daily (7:3:1983).

Speeches, Debates, Constructive and Destructive refutations

Discourses among religious groups have been held in oral forms such as debates, panels (in Malayalam, *Vada pradi vadam*, in north India it is called *munazara*), and speeches. The debates as social events are often attended by large audiences (Sanyal, 1996: 94-95). The debates may continue for days, sometimes a week and sometimes they may end in violence. For instance, in '*famous Kuttichira debate*' Mujahids and Sunnis debated on the single topic '*istighatha*' for six days. Some of them were held under police protection due to the possibility of violence. In the debates, the object of debate is narrowed down into specific point and the arguments are made with the help of religious texts. The debate has its own rules. Before starting, two groups have to write down their argument in a paper which they are supposed to prove. They have to sign in a list of conditions and rules set by the two groups and the organizer of the debate. There would be a mediator to maintain the discipline and to run the proceedings such as keeping the time allowed to each speaker. A well-versed scholar (works as mediator as unbiased) would check the *kitabs* (texts) to confirm whenever the speaker quotes the scriptural evidence (*dalil*). Each speaker is required to prove his argument in the light of textual evidence, and he has to mention the

page number of the *kitab* he has quoted which is liable to inspection. He is also required to substantiate the relevance of the evidence and its correlation with the object debated. Each speaker is allocated a time limit which is controlled by the mediator. Sometimes two groups may speak from a same stage or from separate stages. It is a common incident that each group claim the 'success' at the end of debate and conduct 'welcome programs' to celebrate the success, sometimes, they celebrate the success in every anniversary[84].

The purpose of debates is to help people recognize and identify the 'truth' voluntarily after hearing both arguments on the basis of valid proofs from the religious texts. The debates and speeches are recorded in CDs and cassettes and sold in the 'market', uploaded in the social network sites and online media. It is interesting to see how new technologies are harnessed into this process of theological debate on authenticity. Studies show how this trend is true of several emerging sectarian and religious organizations, Hindu, Christian or Sikh.

In this regard, Charles Hirsckind (2006) has studied how the recorded cassette sermon or the practice of listening as an aural media could contribute to the revivalist Islamic movements in the Middle East. He says the cassette sermon is a popular Islamic media that has a deep influence on the formation of politics and religious community. It not only facilitates indoctrination but makes it doctrinaire discourses a habit of its massive audience (Hirschkind, 2006: 2). He says the audition is a listening practice which is a complex part of *ethical* and political project (ibid. 3-4) and it gives expression to the religious sensibility that deserves to be engaged in the study of Muslim societies. Hirschkind argues, from the early development of Islam, the sermon audition has been essential to the embodiment of practice with its ethical sensibilities and moral action. Rather than cognitional, this process is volitional dispositions which turn body toward moral conduct and 'right' actions (ibid.9). These kinds of practices define the discursive conditions of Muslim social life.

He says the practice of listening to the speeches articulates a fierce critique in the form of public discourse or public reason as a normative ethical project which is based on the questions of pious conduct, social sensibility, and religious piety (ibid.5). This has been called as 'soundscapes', that is, ways of configuring the social space through the use of Islamic media forms. According to him, these developments make us to think of the

---

[84] Pannoor, E K M (2010) *Vadapradivadangaliloode* (Going through the debates): Interview with A P Abdul Qadir Maulavi (the famous Mujahid debater), p. 9-16, 43-94.

inadequacies of the binaries such as moral/political, disciplinary/deliberative, emotion/reason that have shaped our normative understanding of public sphere. Here, the cassette sermons are infrastructural to the public reason like other agencies such as market, and formal institutes (ibid.9).

Pedagogical Practices

Since the elementary nature of discourse is *textual*, scholarship based on texts is the basis of religious authority and the fundamental qualification to participate in the discourses. The religious organizations representing different ideological positions in Kerala have their own learning centres, research institutes, seminaries, and colleges which training youngsters to produce centres to produce qualified debaters. Thus there is not only production of discourse but also an institutional basis for reproduction of discourses by the next generation. So we may expect the trend to continue.

The best known debaters from each side hold a degree (known as '*sanad*'), awarded by the respective colleges of their group. For instance, '*faizy*' is a religious degree awarded by a premium Sunni college, '*swalahi*' or '*sullami*' refers to the Muajahid degrees whereas jamate-Islami has '*umari*' degree. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, we can see most of the debaters have degree attached to their names. At times, there are 'conversions' from one group to another as well.

As Alam (2008) has argued, the pedagogical practices within the Madrasa help its students internalize the 'ideological identity' and the 'true Islam'[85]. He says, in Madrasas, specific texts were taught as tools to prove or refute the arguments. Madrasas also include the themes to refute the arguments of 'other' groups. For the students of Sunni madrasas, it is the Sunni understanding of Islam which is right and all other interpretations lead Muslims astray.

In Madrasas, the learning the texts goes hand in hand with training in oration and debate. Alam notes most of the Madrasas had speech practices, weekly debates as part of their syllabus because success depends not only on the textual learning, but also on the skill to argue a point of view. The discipline of '*Mantiq*[86]' is an important part of the syllabus

---

[85] Alam uses the term '*maslaki* identity' in the north Indian context which means path or way such as *Deobandi* identity or *Barelwi* identity and so on.

[86] Mantiq is an Arabic word, which means 'dialectics' or 'study of logic'. Most of its principles and theories were translated from Greek into Arabic during the period of Abbasids. Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and Ibnu-Sina (Avicenna)

in most of the higher religious learning centres of Kerala[87] which teaches the technique of 'argumentation logic'.

III. Discourses on Healing

Tawheed: Underlying Logic of all themes

It is interesting to see that the validity of *urukku* and *mantram* has become a central theme in the theological debates on the authentic Islamic practice in Kerala. Whether this practice violate the doctrine of *tawheed* (the oneness of God)[88] is the fundamental question in this regard because, the crucial doctrine of Islam is belief in the absolute monotheism. *Tawheed* is the dividing line between a Muslim and non-Muslim. Muslims believe that there is a possibility of getting ultimate salvation in the other world if *tawheed* is proper even if a person has committed sinful activities. 'God forgives any sin except that of associating another being with Him'. Since idolatry has such dire consequences, it became essential to separate various forms of idol worship in the popular practices (Commins, 2006:14). It was questioned by reformists in Islam that whether a person engaged in such practices like *urukku* could still be considered as Muslim since his action reflected the doctrinal contamination of *tawheed* (Delong-Bas, 2004: 8)[89].

In Kerala as elsewhere, religious discourses are rooted in the sectarian differences on the definition of *tawheed* and its antonym *shirk*[90] so that each group, for instance, Mujahids, can identify the issues on which the 'other communities' deviate. *Urukku* and *mantram* as practiced mostly among Sunnis and have hence become the objects of analysis and controversies. Each group has its own definition of *tawheed* and an ideological position on every social practice and belief that others' ideas on the same are *incorrect*.

---

have been considered as its founding fathers.

[87] The centres of the higher studies of religion in Kerala were known as '*Dars*' , a traditional learning centre, where a few students learned the texts from *mudarris* (teacher) in the mosques. Now they have been replaced by Arabic Colleges, Islamic institutions, research centres and universities (for details, see Faisal K P (2010). In north India, all the religious learning centres, both higher and lower, are known as 'madrasa'. But, in Kerala, this term has been used to refer the primary schools of religion only.

[88] The meaning of *tawheed* is 'unification of god' which derives from the primary doctrine of Islamic faith according to which to be a Muslim one has to be firm in that doctrine and say: "there is not God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger" (Qadir Maulavi P, 2012 :22). Delong-Bas defines it as 'the unity and utter uniqueness of God or absolute monotheism so that nothing and no one may be associated with or compared to God in any way' (Delong-Bas, Natana J, 2004: 56).

[89] She says this while she discusses the condition of the 18th century Muslims and the reasons behind the onset of reformism.

[90] *Shirk* is Arabic word for association of anyone or anything with Allah and/or his attributes (ibid. 61) which has been considered as unforgivable sin among Muslims. *Shirk* has been used as the polar opposite of *tawheed* in the discourses as '*tawheedum shirkum*' (*tawheed* and *shirk*).

Mujahids' division of *tawheed* into three parts

The genealogy of the Mujahid definition of *tawheed* can be traced back to the 13th century theologian, Ibnu Taymiyyah who divided the doctrine of *tawheed* into three parts: *tawheed* of *ruboobiyya* (unification in the lordship of Allah[91]), *tawheed* of *uloohiyya* (unification of Allah's worship), and *tawheed* of *asma* and *sifat* (unification of his names and attributes) (Delong-Bas, 2004: 57). It means the creatures owe Him exclusive worship and not associating any other being with him.

According to this theory of *tawheed*, all practices prevailed among Muslims so far such as visiting shrines, healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram*, and some practices of Sufi orders, had to be considered as *shirk* and deviation from *tawheed*. This theory declares all Muslims are monotheists of first part (*tawheed* of lordship) whereas they become polytheists of the second part (*tawheed* of worship) through their practices of shrine visit and seeking help from others such as saints or *pirs*. Any act or statement that indicates devotion to a being other than God is to associate another creator with Allah's power and that is tantamount to idolatry. Thus, anyone who serves or worships anyone or anything else, even the holy men or angels or *jinns* for any purpose has departed from Islam. Assigning Allah's characteristics to human beings, dead or alive (such as the act of calling upon dead saints for healing believing that they could see and hear everything) is the violation of Allah's uniqueness. Ibnu Taimiyya noted that the *mushriks* (polytheists) of Makah, whom the prophet had invited into *tawheed*, were monotheists in the unification of lordship and their only problem was the deviation from the *tawheed* of worship.

Ibnu Taymiyyah's ideology inspired the later reformists like Saudi theologian Muhammad Ibnu Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792) who founded the doctrine of 'Wahabism', Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1839-1897) and his disciple Muhammad Abduh (1819-1905), and Rashid Riza (1865-1935) who were the founders of the revivalist, reformist, and renewalist movements throughout the Muslim world. In Kerala Sunnis consider Vakkam Abdul Qadir

---

[91] According to Islamic belief, *Allah* is an Arabic word which represents the creator, the lord of all worlds who is all-powerful, all- sustaining power as it is referred in the Holy Quran. This term is used in the religious discourses of Kerala as such. The term 'Allah' has no plural and gender and it cannot be used as adjective or noun for any other objects. So, according to all religious groups in Kerala, no other term such as '*daivam*' (used to represent god in Malayalam), or god in English, or *Khuda* (urdu) cannot be used as translation to this term (Faizy, Sadiq, 2008:12).

89

Maulavi who was inspired by the Al-manar magazine published by the Egyptian reformer Rashid Riza as the founder of Mujahid ideology in Kerala[92].

Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab's seminal treatise *kitab al-Tawheed* (*The Book of God's Unity*) which has been considered as his 'monotheist manifesto' (Commins, 2006: 12-13, Delong-Bas, 2004: 51). This essay, as an exegetical discussion, deals with theological problems and the impact of one's actions and rituals on his standing as a true monotheist. After giving definition for monotheism and idolatry, he gives a list of practices which prevail among Muslims that constitute idolatry such as sorcery, soothsayers, breaking spells (reciting the Quran is permitted, other methods are not), divining evil omens and astrology. Among the most serious are worshipping, sacrificing to, slaughtering to, praying to, invoking, calling on (*istigatha*), seeking refuge in, seeking intercession by (*tawassul*), or attributing authority to anyone or anything other than Allah. For instance, the use of bewitchment to make people fall in love with other (*like the healing of marital problems*) is an action that demonstrates confidence in the power of someone (*the healer*) or something (the *material used for healing*) other than Allah to provide the outcome (Delong-Bas, 2004: 62, Emphasis is added).

Inspired from Ibnu Taymiyyah and Muhammad Ibnu Abdul Wahhab, Mujahids in Kerala define *tawheed* as "the unification of Allah in creating, sustaining, and in the deservedness of all kinds of prayers, unification of him in his names and his attributes and not to associate anything from the creatures with him and with any of his attributes"[93]. Disputes and contestations are on the second part of the definition, that is, unification of Allah exclusively in all kinds of *worship*. According to Mujahids any kind of deviation from these doctrinal necessities leads one into '*shirk*'[94], that cannot be forgiven even with the practice of Hajj[95] pilgrimage and *shirk* makes him out of the category of 'Muslim'[96]. They reiterate that it was on this issue that one third of the Quran was revealed and it was the prime concern of the all prophets' propagation because, *tawheed* is the foundation of Islam. And it is for this reason that all wars were fought in the Islamic history. For

---

[92] Darimi in *Ahlu-sunnathi-wal-Jama* (2008 :48)

[93] Nadwi, Sulaiman(2009: 4), Maulavi K.M (2012:21).

[94] *Shirk* literally means 'partnership'; in theology, it denotes the sin of associating something or somebody from the Allah's creature to him, that is, to frame a partnership to his names or his abilities. *Shirk* is the point of difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.

[95] Hajj is the fifth fundamental ritual in Islam. Muslims believe that the pilgrimage of Hajj would erase all sins one has committed so far except the sin of *shirk*.

[96] Nadwi, Sulaiman (2009:16).

Mujahids, although the Muslims community, especially Indian Muslims face many political, economic and social challenges, the disabilities happened to the doctrine of *tawheed* have to be met first since it is the foundation of Islam[97].

Tawheed as Indivisible Whole: Sunnis' Refutation of Mujahids

Sunnis strongly oppose the division of *tawheed* into parts and Mujahids' definition has been seen by them as innovation and illogical, because the oneness of divinity, lordship and attributes cannot be divided[98]. For Sunnis Islam has only one *tawheed,* not liable for separation into *tawheed* of lordship, deservedness of worship, and that of names and attributes. They say, the new definition is an attempt to exclude the practices prevailed so far such as *istighatha, tawassul,* tomb visit, and *urukku* and *mantram* from the religion and to label those who practice them as non-Muslims[99].

Sunnis define the doctrine of *tawheed* as the oneness of Allah in all kinds of worship (*uloohiyat*) that means to believe that there is not any partner to him in his *unique* names and attributes. The *uniqueness* of his qualities and powers is his eternality and self-sufficiency (*swamadiyyath*) that no one does have except Him. Some of His creatures like prophets and saints, even if they are dead, might have the same attributes such as the power to heal through supernatural way, but these powers are not eternal, independent and self-sufficient unlike Allah[100]. Only Allah is self-sufficient in all of his attributes like all-seeing, all-hearing, and all-knowing, and the acknowledgment of this reality is what meant by *tawheed*[101].

So, according to this definition, to recognize the power of others like that of healers and saints or to rely on them for the treatment or to seek their help in critical situation is not against the doctrine of *tawheed.* The healers and saints do not have the quality of swamadiyyat (eternality) in their powers like Allah. It is only the belief in the self-sufficiency, eternality, and independence of any other creature except Him which is *shirk.* It is the *belief* in the heart, not the context, which decides one's act of seeking help or relying on somebody as *shirk* or not[102]. Sunnis argue negation of this definition would lead

---

[97] Madani, Kunjeethu (2012: 222).
[98] Moosa Musliyar (2006: 96-97)
[99] Ibid. 99
[100] Darimi, Abdul Hameed (2008: 60).
[101] Saqafi (2012: 16-18)
[102] According to Mujahids, it is the context of asking others' help which classifies this action as *shirk* or not. For

one to say that the prophet's companions were *mushriks* because they had sought prophet's help in critical conditions, but they did not see him as God.

On definition of *Ibadat* (worship)

It is clear from the above discussion that "oneness of Allah in all kinds of *worship* is the important part of the doctrine of *tawheed* and Allah exclusively reserves its right". There comes another object of discourse; 'what is meant by the term (*ibadat*) 'worship' and what is not?' Sunnis and Mujahids ideologically differ on the definition of 'worship'.

Mujahids define *ibadat* as '*every action performed seeking advantages or fearing disadvantages beyond cause-effect relationship through non-material ways*'[103]. Mujahids argue the practice of seeking help from others through non-cause and effect relationship, asking for refuge, the ritual of *nercca*, sacrifice, all forms of piety, and the all kinds of supplication are included under the category of worship. These practices should not be performed to anyone or anything except to Allah. So, all kinds of prayers are worship, because Prophet Muhammad had said: "*prayer is the marrow of the worship*"[104] and the prayer is the soul of worship. Logically speaking, if is agreed that '*dua* (prayer) is the worship (*ibadath*)' then the next statement, 'the prayer to other than Allah is worship to them', is also substantiated[105]. So, prayer to or asking help from other than Allah is *shirk* and *kufr* (religious heresy). So, the Mujahid statement can be read as '*every prayer (dua) is nothing but the ibadath (worship) which is the exclusive right of Allah and that should not be made to anyone but him'*.

Mujahids argue while the textual sources acknowledge this fact, most of the Muslims in Kerala pray to other than Allah like 'praying' to the dead saints [106]to solve their problems or to heal their illnesses. For instance, the prayer of "*oh Ervadi sheikh, please heal my problem*" is nothing but a worship to him which is *shirk* and un-Islamic. Some of them pray to *jnns* and *malaks* (angels) to get 'something' done through their medium which

---

instance, asking through cause and effect relationship such as consulting a doctor is not *shirk* whereas when it is through non-material and beyond cause-effect relationship like seeking the help of *jinn* to heal the illness is *shirk*. Extensive analysis of this discourse would come in the sections of *istighatha, tawassul, ibadat*, and invocation of *jinn* and *malak*.

[103] Maulavi, P Abdul Qadir (2012: 13)

[104] Nadwi, Sulaiman (2009:16), Maulavi, P (2012:51), Sullami, Mayinkutty (2010 :8).

[105] Maulavi, Muahammad Amani (2012:58).

[106] Among Muslims in Kerala, the choice of the saint to pray for healing purposes, most often, is Abdul Qadir Jeelani, the medieval spiritual leader and the founder of *Qadiri* spiritual order, and the martyrs of *Badr*, the martyrs of the first holy in war in Islam or the medieval Indian spiritual leader, Kwaja Mueenudden chisti of Ajmer or the well-known spiritual leaders of Kerala like Mampuram thangal or Ibrahim Badsha of Ervadi in Tamil Nadu and so on.

is also a form of *shirk*. Because, the scriptural evidences make it clear that the persons whom they pray cannot answer those prayers, they do not hear and see them and the result is the sin of associating the saint with Allah and his powers[107].

Most of the Mujahid publications try to substantiate their argument by comparing the present day *Sunnis* of Kerela with the *mushriks* (one who commits *shirk*) of the prophet's time. They note, one can understand the real difference between *tawheed* and *shirk* by looking into the *jahiliyyath* (religious ignorance of Arabs at prophet's time) which was replaced by the establishment of *tawheed* by the Prophet[108]. This statement by Mujahids has to be understood in relation to the division of *tawheed* into two parts by Ibnu Taymiyya (as I mentioned in the *tawheed* section). The Arab idolaters of the Prophet's time had acknowledged that God was the Creator and Lord of all creations and they had performed the pilgrimage in Makah, yet they were prophet's worst enemies. All that did not suffice to make them Muslims, because they failed to believe in the exclusive right of Allah to be worshipped. The difference is they also prayed to their ancestors such as *Abraham* and *Ismael* to grant good things. They accepted mediators while praying to Allah, they practiced *urukku*, and *mantrham*, and they approached devils and some creatures to know the future. So, they believed in the 'half-*tawheed*' (the half is the oneness of lordship from the three given parts of *tawheed*) and deviated from another half (that is, oneness of worship). Mujahids contend this is the *tawheed* of Muslims in Kerala (half-*tawheed*) who 'pray' to other than Allah.

Having explained the condition of Makah *mushriks* in the early years of Islam in Arabia, the Mujahid publications want the readers to compare them with the current practices of Muslims in Kerala. *Shirk* has entered to them through different gateways which are the prayers to saints and the *dhikr* (chanting holy words) in the name of saints, making vows to them, taking the dead persons as mediators, the incorrect forms of healing, and approaching humans to know the absent things[109]. The Makah mushriks did pray to Allah in critical conditions and to their ancestors in normal situations, but the present day Muslims of Kerala pray to Allah in normal conditions while they pray to Allah's creatures such as *Jeelani* or Mampuram *thangal* more politely, from their deep heart, in the critical

---

[107] Nadwi, Sulaiman, (2009: 17-19).
[108] See Nadwi, Sulaiman (2009), Madani, Kunjeethu (1990, 2012), Maulavi, Muhammad Amani (2012), Abdul Hameed (2001).
[109] Madani, Kunjeethu (2010:69).

conditions of illnesses or to fulfil their important wishes[110]. This is nothing but the worship, because, learned scholars have defined worship as "extreme expression of politeness and obedience"[111]. Allah only deserves the worship failing which one commits *shirk*. While Christians pray to their Prophet Jesus, Muslims in Kerala pray to their saints through tomb veneration and bow to them with extreme respect which can be considered as worship[112].

One of the Mujahid's office bearers teases Sunnis by saying that Hindus, Christians, and Jews worship their dead persons and practice sorcery. If Muslims do the same practices then what distinguishes from other religious groups?[113] Mujahids allege that some Sunnis even visit temples like *kadampuzha* temple to submit their vows and stand in queue at temple courtyards for the healing of different illnesses such as the problem of infertility if they were not healed from the Muslims shrines[114].

Sunnis refute these arguments. They argue that visiting tombs to have *Baraka* of the saint for a purpose does not constitute worship (*ibadath*). Actually, what Sunnis practice is respecting them as Allah instructed to do so, not worshipping them as 'gods' and not according them the divine powers. These practices cannot be considered as *shirk* because, expression of respect is not worship[115]. Sunnis define *ibadat* as '*the extreme form of obedience and politeness*'[116]. Obedience becomes extreme when one believes in the independent power of the person (that is divinity) whom he respects. Actually, Sunnis do not believe in the independent and self-sufficient powers of saints because only Allah has the independent powers and attributes, so it does not become the category of worship and *shirk*[117]. It is important to note here the crux of the debate on worship also is one between the primacy of thought and action. For Mujahids, the act of 'calling upon' (*dua*) is the essence of worship, whereas for Sunnis, one's intention and expectation determined whether calling upon constituted worship or not. This is similar to the debate between contesting Protestant groups on the manner of presence of Christ in the Eucharist described by Uberoi (2002). In these debates about what constitute worship we see underlying

---

[110] Ibid. 80
[111] Ibid. 93
[112] Maulavi, Muahmmad Amani (2012:45).
[113] Madani, Kunjeethu (1990:126).
[114] Ibid. 119
[115] *Risala* magazine (May 5, 1995: 8)
[116] Moosa Musliyar (2001: 37)
[117] Darimi, Abdul Hameed (2008: 49), Saqafi (2012:34).

94

conceptual engagements with sociological issues of which is basic, thought or action, what constitute material means of worship, what in this world is covered by cause and effect, and what goes beyond them.

On *Istigatha* (Making request for help)

Istigatha is of two types; request to the fellow beings through material ways or to the supernatural beings to help him through non-material ways[118]. The debate centres on the second type, seeking the help of supernatural beings such as *jinns, malaks,* and the dead saints through non-material ways, the request which lies beyond the cause and effect relationship. Mujahids allow the act of seeking help of the creatures through material, and visible means. The deviation from *tawheed* ensues when one seeks help from the creatures other than Allah such as *jinn* or *malak[119]* by invocating them or by calling upon dead or living saints to help him in the matters in which only Allah can respond with his exclusive powers[120]. To prove their arguments, Mujahids quote different Quranic verses which show the dead persons to whom they pray are not capable even to solve their own problems and the God exclusively deserve all kinds of prayers[121].

According to Mujahid ideology, when a person dies all of his powers and actions are broken which cannot make any effect on the living beings. Allah could help anyone in his critical conditions through supernatural ways if he prayed Him, but that help is only temporary which does not last even after his death[122]. A saint or *pir* is not able to do miracle with his independent power, rather, it is God who expresses it and it 'expires' with saint's death[123]. The dead persons whom the Sunnis pray do not have eyes and ears to respond those prayers, so, the patients and supplicants are made to believe that they could hear and see through a supernatural way even without the material eyes and ears[124]. By believing so, the patient associates an external force with Allah's divine attributes such as

---

[118] Abdul Hameed (2001: 13).

[119] This was the official position of Mujahids on the controversial issue of the permissibility of requesting *jinn* and *malak* for hel: But, we can see the further ideological shifts of Mujahids in the later sections of this chapter. Some of them like ISM who separated from KNM (official Mujahid groups) in 2002 disapproved the influence of the supernatural beings such as *jinn, malak,* or devils on human beings to help or harm. Later in 2012, a group from the official Mujahid group under the leadership of Zakariyya Swalahi argued, requesting supernatural beings such as *jinn* and *malak* from their abilities for assistance is not worship hence permissible in Islam. They were expelled from KNM for their ideological deviations from the previous official statements.

[120] Maulavi, Muahammad Amani (2012: 95-96).

[121] Pannoor (2010: 9-12).

[122] Madani, Kunjeethu (2012:108).

[123] Abdul Hameed, (2001: 69)

[124] Ibid.28.

the attribute of *baseer* (the one who is all seeing) and *sameea'* (the one who is all hearing). This action is a clear deviation from the given definition of *tawheed,* which is unification of Allah in His all names and divine attributes. This doctrinal contamination of *tawheed* leads to idolatry and away from the Islamic fold[125].

However, in Mujahid view, the action of seeking an allopathic doctor's help to solve his problem is not a prayer, because he expects the result through cause and effect relationship and material ways which is 'Islamic' while the former is 'un-Islamic' and a wrong application[126]. In the doctor's case, the patient's expectation of the result is through the *material* ways which is not prayer rather, it is a normal application whereas in the case of *jinn, malak* or saints, the expectation of healing is through the *supernatural* ways which becomes a prayer (*dua*) and prayer is worship (*ibadat*), and worship should be made only the God. Worshipping other than only one God is *shirk* which is the violation of the doctrine of *tawheed* and any such violation leads him out of Islam. So, Mujahids declare, if one wants to get the ultimate salvation in the next world he should not compromise his *tawheed* even in the critical conditions of severe illnesses and he should protect it even at the cost of his death[127]. And also, the God only is able to respond to his prayer through supernatural ways.

Sunnis believe that the practice of requesting the live or dead saints (*Istighatha*) in critical conditions has been permitted in Islam[128] and encouraged by *sharia* (the category of *mustahabb*)[129]. Sunnis argue when one seeks a saint's help, it is an expression of respect to him due to his position and status in religious achievment; so, *istighatha* is encouraged (*mustahabb*) rather than a permitted action (*jaez*)[130]. Many events and narratives of the prophetic tradition have been quoted from the texts[131] in the Sunni publication to show that the companions had sought the prophet's help in some critical situations[132].

---

[125] Madani, Kunjeethu (2012: 86).

[126] Madani, Kunjeethu (2012:20), Nadwi, Sulaiman (2009:3), Abdul Hameed (2001:33).

[127] Madani, Kunjeethu (2012 :45)

[128] Here, one has to remember that when the word 'Islam' is used in discourse, it denotes *'ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa''* since it is the only authentic ideology in the religion. For instance, the permissibility of a practice is claimed according to ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa'.

[129] As I have mentioned in the first chapter, according to the Islamic jurisprudence, all actions of a Muslim are classified into categories; they are *wajib* (obligatory), *mustahabb* (recommended or desirable), *mubah* (permissible), *makrooh* (hated) and *haram* (prohibited). Here, *musthahabb* means (which is the Sunni grading of *urukku* and *mantram*) any action that one earns reward for performing and earn nothing for abstaining from.

[130] Faizy, Riaz (2009:7).

[131] As we mentioned in the first part of this chapter, each group has its own method of recognizing the authenticity of religious texts and the sources of *sharia* law. For instance, Mujahids do not accept the analogy (*qiyas*) or scholarly

Sunnis argue it is equal to request live and dead saints, because for Sunnis, the dead persons, especially the 'good souls' like prophets and saints are able to hear and see without ear or eyes but it cannot be explained how. According to the Sunni ideology, there is no death for the saints and *pirs*[133], their miracles and powers (*karamat*) last even after their death and sometimes, they become more powerful after death[134]. Sunnis believe whenever a patient requests a saint's help coming to the healing shrine, the dead saint buried over there becomes able to help her with the power given by Allah each time the patients and supplicants approach him without having an *independent* power.

To prove this argument, different incidents from the prophetic traditions have been quoted such as the incident of a companion's request for the Prophet's help at his tomb after his demise[135]. This incident of request was through non-material and invisible way. Sunnis claim all of these 'evidences' (*dalil*) substantiate their argument that, request could be made to the creatures, provided that the seeker does not believe in their 'eternality and self-sufficiency' (*swamadiyyat*)[136]. So, Sunnis make it mandatory for the seeker to believe that the saints help him by the powers given by Allah.

Sunnis argue that all requests for non-material needs through non cause-effect ways do not constitute worship[137], but normal act of seeking help and showing respect to them. Only an act of according *divinity* to them would be *ibadat* to a force other than Allah and *that* is *shirk*[138]. If the patients or supplicants do not have such a belief it cannot be regarded as *shirk*[139]. So, the point of departure in Sunni perspective is the *belief* of the seeker at the moment of his act of worship or what Phenomenological sociology would refer to as intention.

---

consensus (*ijma*) as source of *sharia* whereas Sunnis accept them.

[132] See for instance Saqafi (2012:30-31), wherein he narrates many events from the companions' life. Yazid bin Abi Ubaid narrates: Salamth, one of the prophet's companions. told him. when his leg was wounded in the battle of 'khaibar' he sought prophet's help. prophet blew three times on the wound and it was treated instantly. The author claims that Prophet did not prohibit this action by saying that 'request should only be made to God'; rather, he had promoted it.

[133] Remember the words of *pir* at Patteshah dargah in Sudhir Kakar's study (1982) that his master was still guiding him in his healing and he believes that his masters would not die even if they disappear physically.

[134] Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009:57).

[135] See for instance, Faizy Ambalakkadavu's 'Istighatha: vimarshanangalkku marupadi' (Istighatha: replies to the criticisms (2008), published by a Sunni students organization, Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009: 73).

[136] Such a request is prohibited by Sunnis since the *swamadiyyat* (eternality and self-sufficiency) is the most important part of Sunnis' definition of *tawheed* as I explained it in the first theme. So, *swamadiyyat* should not be attached to anything than Allah.

[137] Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009:81).

[138] Saqafi (2012:33-34), Moosa Musliyar in 'Sunnatu jamathinoru mughavura' (an introduction to sunnat jamat, 2009: 30)

[139] Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009: 84).

Mujahids reject most of hadiths brought by Sunnis saying that one of the narrators of this hadith's *sanad* (chain of transmitters) is *zaif* (week) and even if it has a perfect serial of narrators, it could not be taken as a source of law. So, to participate in religious discourse, thorough knowledge on the discipline of *ilmu-usul-al-hadith* (science of the fundamentals of Hadith) is required such as the idea about the narrators, different categories of hadiths like *swahih* (perfect hadith), or *hasan* (not perfect but good hadith).

On *Tawassul* (request for intercession with God)

Another major theme debated in the religious discourse on *urukku* and *mantram* is the issue of the permissibility of the practice of requesting intercession by anyone with God, instead of praying directly to Him (the practice is called in Arabic *tawassul*). *Tawassul* is a type of prayer which means 'to approach God by making something as intercession or asking God anything like healing of illness by making holy men as intermediaries who are believed to recommend their cases with God on behalf of the supplicants.

Mujahids classify the practice of *tawassul* into 'permitted' and 'prohibited'. One can make Allah's names and his special attributes as medium while asking Him anything such as reciting the name of *Rahman* (the compassionate), or *Rahoof* (the kind) or reciting the names of *'asma-ul-husna'* (the beautiful names of God). Another permitted type of *tawassul* for Mujahids is the prayer to Him by making one's faith and *tawheed* or any of his good deed as medium. One can also request his fellow beings to pray for him as the companions of prophet had requested him to pray for them. These are the forms of *tawassul* permitted by Quran and Sunnah according to Mujahids.

Other forms of rituals such as the practice of calling Allah by making the 'holy men', dead or alive as intermediaries, have no religious legitimacy in the Mujahid view[140]. Mujahids raise two main theological problems with this practice that endows a healer with healing abilities beyond the cause and effect mode. It expresses the confidence in the capacity of the person to grant the request made by the seeker and this amounts to sin of according power to influence divine decisions to a creature. It also reflects lack of confidence in God to answer their prayers when they are made directly to Him. Actually, the piety or righteousness of the person, being requested for intercession, has no effect on the outcome of the prayer and they are unable to recommend on behalf of anyone. For the

---

[140] Maulavi (2012: 86-92).

Mujahid even the name of persons or objects should not be mentioned while praying to God, rather, it should be direct to Him. This is a categorical statement on divine agency of humans and the relation between god and man.

The Sunni refutation of these arguments is equally engaging and touches upon basic assumptions about meaning of actions of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial creatures. Sunnis argue when one prays to Allah making the 'good souls' as mediators, for instance, when one recites *malappattukal*[141] or *maulids*, his prayers are immediately responded due to the saint's relation with god. It is not the worship to other than Allah; rather it is the act of showing respect to the persons who is respected by Allah. Respect and prayer are different and *sharia* encourages Muslims to pray to Him directly and through with prophets and saints who are close to Him. So, the intercession is necessary for Muslims while praying to God in critical conditions as long as it only by respect[142]. So, the argument is the intercession is *Islamic* since it is authenticated by the texts and questioning its authenticity and its negation is *innovation* in the religion.

On Visitation of Shrines for Healing

The theme of shrine visitation for healing has to be related with 'controversial' practices of *tawassul*, and *istighatha*. Muslims commonly seek the intercession of the dead holy men (*tawassul*) at shrines erected over their graves or calling upon them in shrines to seek their help to solve their problems (*istigatha*).

Mujahids classify the tomb visit into two; one can visit his own relatives' graveyards to remember the mortality of life and pray for the deceased man which is permitted in Islam. On the other hand, visiting the shrines to seek their help and mediation to god, presentation of prayers, petitions, offerings and vows at tombs are strictly prohibited as 'un-Islamic' and are equal to idol-worship. All the Quranic verses refer to the point that praying to the dead saints and worshipping idols are same, both cannot hear those prayers, and if they hear they cannot deliver the results.

Mujahid publications allege that the act of taking vow is permitted only when the donor has to intend Allah's blessing not that of deities in the temples or dead saints in the

---

[141] *Malappauttuakal* are the hagiographical songs about the saints or the prophet's companions or the martyrs in Arabi-Malayalam language such as *Nafeesat mala,* Hagiographical song about renowned female spiritual leader Sayyida Nafisat-ul-Misriyya.
[142] Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009: 91).

shrines. Since the action of making vows and offerings has been regarded as *ibadat,* it cannot be performed at shrines that lead to polytheism. There is no difference between temples and Sufi shrines. For Mujahids, worshipping at temple and visitation of tombs are same since both them have the same purposes. This practice has been compared to the Hindus' practice of *pooja* in temples as '*qabr pooja*' or '*jara pooja*' *(Pooja* at graveyard).

Sunni groups argue that visiting tombs and sharing their woes with dead saints as if they are living *(istighatha)* is not a prayer to the saints, but the prayer is to the God in which the saints are only mediators *(tawassul).* The practice of seeking help from God is prayer *(dua)* while if it is to other persons it is only application which cannot be termed as 'prayer'.

According to Sunnis, tomb visit is *mustahabb* (desirable action) to get the *barakah* attached to the graveyard of the saint after his death. Just as the visitation of the tombs for healing is desirable action in the religion, *ziyarath* tour and travelling to those places such as the travel to Ajmer *dargah* is also desirable[143]. Making conditional or non-conditional vows to visit tombs *(nercca)* or to donate something to tombs are also desirable for Sunnis. For instance, one can take a vow to visit or donate to tombs if one's prayer is fulfilled.

Sunnis believe that all dargahs are not equal in the *barakah,* rather, its measure depends on the position of the buried saint. Since the power of saints and *pirs* would not cease after their death according to the Sunni ideology, the visitors of shrine are supposed to give them due respect as if they live and the way of expressing the respect may be various, like offering flowers or kissing the tomb or kissing the flags over the tomb. However, Sunnis also oppose the 'un-Islamic' practices at shrines which exist in the name of 'taking *barakah*' such as the practices of prostration, and revolving round of shrine[144]. They say visiting shrines and calling out to the dead saints is not idolatry unless the supplicants believe that buried saints have the power to determine the course of events. So, behaviour at the shrines should convey respect rather than subordination.

---

[143] Ibid. 108
[144] Ibid. 112-113

IV. *Urukku* and *Mantram:* Discourses and Classifications

Mujahid Statements prior to organizational split in 2002

As mentioned earlier, the debates that we are presenting in this chapter reveal intellectual analysis over the relation between god and man and the bearing of human action on the divine. These debates contain the seeds of sociological categories. How do they delineate the domain of god and that of human agency is crucial. Besides, the perspectives and positions also change with time with the emergence of new practices.

Analysis of religious discourses on *urukku* and *mantram* gives us a complex picture of the classificatory scheme in different periods. I could find consistent theological position from Sunnis for a long period till now whereas different voices reverberated from the Mujahid bastion which keeps changing from time to time. In fact there was an organizational split in 2002 in the Mujahid camp after which two factions have taken different positions on *urukku* and *mantram*.

The earlier Mujahid positions may be seen in legal rulings *(fatwas)* of K M Maulavi, one of the founding fathers of Mujahid organization in Kerala in early 20th century. Fatwas relating to various ritual practices have been published in weeklies and monthlies such as *Al-Murhid, Al-Irshad,* and *Al–Islah.* His fatwa says that the *urukku* practice, string or water incanted with Allah's names or His words are exceptions to the prohibited categories of *urukku* and *mantram* because they are authenticated by prophetic traditions. He has given some conditions for the religious legitimacy of *urukku* and *mantram* to be *jaiz* (neither prohibited nor desirable): incantation should be only with Allah's names and words, it should be in Arabic or in other languages but its meaning should be known, and the patient should not believe in its independent power to heal but according to Allah's will only[145].

However, K M Maulavi strictly condemned specific practices in the *ismu Chikitsa* that we described in the previous chapter such as burning the *urukku* or inhaling its smoke or hanging it in the wind or putting it in the water with a belief in their healing effects or in its power to 'counter' the sorcery. He has also criticized the invocation of superhuman beings

---

[145] Maulavi, K M in, *K M Maulavi fatwakal* (fatwas of K M Maulavi, 2007: 16). These are his fatwas compiled and republished in book form in 2007. This is the positions taken by Muhammad ibnu-Abdul Wahhab's on the use of amulets, charms, and talismans (see Deblong-Bas, 2004:72-73).

such as *jinn* and *malak* for assistance which has been practiced through 'some' magical spells, through a mixture of Allah's names and 'some other magic' to attract devils[146]. These practices such as *ismu Chikitsa,* or *twalsamatu Chikitsa*[147] involve the calling of superhuman beings other than Allah which is *shirk.* It has to be noted here that K M Maulavi had recognized the influence of superhuman beings such as *jinn* and devil on human beings to cause illness and he had spread these statements through the organizational publications.

Some of the Mujahid scholars, like Kunjeethu Madani (2012: 83-85) argued that the 'incorrect' form of healing practice is one of the gateways of *shirk.* If one becomes ill, he should consult practitioners of medical systems that work through cause and effect relationship such as allopathy, homeopathy or Ayurveda and pray to Allah only if these systems fail to deliver. The prophets and great ancestors in the Islamic history (*salafu-salih*) only prayed directly to Allah to heal their illnesses and to fulfil their wishes; they did not prayed to saints or *babas* and they did not have mediator to god. Hence, employing the practices of *urukku,* and *mantram* for healing is *jahiliyya* (the time of ignorance before the Prophet's arrival in Arabia). Even though the objects like *urukku* (amulet) do not have the independent capability to heal the illnesses, they become divine when they are worn with a belief in their healing powers which leads the wearer into *shirk.* Mujahids suggest the adoption of preventive measures and preparations on the basis of cause and effect relationship to alleviate illnesses because Prophet had never introduced the method of magical tables or magical circles with numerical calculations to predict or heal illnesses (ibid).

The Mujahid criticism of healing practices (before the organizational split) testifies another important fact. As we mentioned in the previous chapter these practices are also held inside the religious domains for which Mujahids have problem. Kunjeethu madani, who 'fought' for the propagation of *tawheed* for years, writes (1990: 127) that even the mosques which were built to worship only one God have become the site of un-Islamic customs and rituals. The *Khateeb* (preacher in the Friday sermons) who is responsible to lead people into right path and the *mudarris* (teacher in the religious seminaries inside mosque) who is supposed to teach true Islamic lessons lead them into hell by practicing the

---

[146] Ibid. 19

[147] *Ismu Chikitsa* (healing with names) or *twalsmatu Chikitsa* (healing with *twalsam*) or *mantra Chikitsa* are meant under the common discursive category of '*urukku* ' and '*mantram*'. I have described about them in the second chapter.

'black magic' of *asma* and *twalsamath* healing practices. And the leaders of the community such as the *mahallu* committee and mosque committee who are responsible to eradicate all superstitious practices from the society receive amulets and *mantrams* for themselves.

Kunjeethu Madani (1990:116-119) writes, instead of praying to God, some are approaching *tangals*, shamans, and the men of *asma* and *twalsamath Chikitsa* and tie incanted threads while cannot claim that they belong to *ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jamaa*. He says these are superstitious customs and innovations brought to the Islamic tradition and are against the doctrines of *ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jama*. Since these healing practices are not found in the prophetic tradition, they have to be considered as innovation in the Islamic tradition which has to be rejected. But the Sunni clergies legalise those superstitious practices by misinterpreting the scriptures and recognizing them as 'Islamic' to maintain their leadership and gain their material interests.

Some of them like Abdul Hameed (2001: 63)[148] write that there was no *mantram* in Islam except the chanting of Quranic verses and the *prayers* validated by Sunnah only. Their publishing houses have produced many special books on the 'authentic prayers' every Muslim can employ in his daily life to have protection from all kinds of illnesses such as *sihr* (witchcraft) and *kanner* (evil eye)[149]. So, for them, prayers are the 'real *mantram*' which are permitted while the same *mantram* becomes prohibited when one wears them as *urukku* or drinks them by writing them in a plate[150].

Abdul Hameed (2001) says if one writes some Quranic verses in a paper and ties it in, as a religious ritual it is a *bida* (innovation) since it was not taught by the Prophet and his companions. According to the authentic reports of the prophetic tradition, Prophet Muhammad had never incanted on string or water and he had condemned the foretellers and those who believed in the influence of stars on human beings. However, there are evidences for the practice of reciting the Quranic verses or Allah's name and blowing them on the body, but they cannot be regarded as *mantram*, instead, they have to be considered as the category of prayer. There is no valid evidence for the practices of *urukku* and *mantram* in the prophetic tradition except for the above mentioned types of prayers. The

---

[148] It is worth noting that Abdul Hameed joined the ISM or *Madavoor* group after the Mujahid split in 2002 which disapproved the existence of sorcery and evil eye.

[149] See for instance, Sead Qahtani's '*Musliminte rakshakavacham: Nitya jeevithathile Prarthanakal* (2011) (shield of a Muslim: prayers of everyday life), Feroke. Ahlussunna Books. C P Umar Sullami's 'prarthanakal nithya jeevithathil (2004) (prayers in everyday life), Calicut, Yuvatha Books .

[150]Sullami, C P Umar (2004 :66-67)

103

practices introduced after the prophet's death and the words and deeds of others in the later periods of Islam cannot be considered as the source of Islamic laws, instead they are all innovations (ibid.105).

However, the same author continues (ibid.71), *urukku* and *mantram* cannot be seen as *kufr* or *shirk* or *haram* because there is no authentic evidence to recognize them so. At the same time, there is no evidence which inspires that practice (which includes them in the category of *mustahabb*). So, it can be seen as *jaez* (permitted thing which is neither good nor bad). But if one wears the *urukku* as a healing prescription, his expectation of healing is in vain since sharia has not recognized its healing effect. But *shirk* comes when one believes that the healer and *urukku* has the non-material, independent power to heal. He also classifies the healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram* as permitted (*jaez*) with the same conditions given by K M Maulavi (2007). He says Mujahids do not promote these practices; rather they draw a line between 'Islamic' and 'un-Islamic' practices due to the confusions created by the Sunnis' justification of all 'un-Islamic' healing practices. What Mujahids do is only to delineate the maximum range of the permitted practices.

On Astrology and Numerology

Another object of discourses on *urukku* and *mantram* is the belief that the healers could predict and foretell the features of patients by calculating the positions and movements of the planetary bodies and they could find out the lost objects. As we have described in the second chapter, the healing system of *urukku* and *mantram* involves a plethora of many other systems of knowledge such as astrology, horoscope, prophesy and arithmetic calculations. It is on the basis of these links that the healing system has been undergone to classifications and delineations through religious discourses.

All Mujahid scholars, before and after split, are unanimous in condemning astrology or attempting to draw knowledge from the stars, seeking the assistance of soothsayers to learn about the future, the belief in astrology, numerology, prophesy, palmistry, looking for the weekly forecasts, and reliance on omens which are superstitious and blasphemous[151]. They refuse the influence and interference of stars and planets on the events and people's characters. The healing practices which work on the basis of these knowledge systems have been understood by Mujahids as the influence of Hindu rituals on Muslims practiced as

---

[151] Shoukathali (2012: 5-6).

'Islamic' or 'Arabic' healing. Even if the Sufis and Shias followed these practices in some places they have deviated from the Islamic ideology. The early Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazzali, Ibnu-Sina, and Ibnu-Qayyim were the strong opponents of Astrology although there were influenced by the Philosophy of their time. Mujahids allege that astrology had been introduced into the Islamic world following the wide trend of translating the Greek and Indian books into Arabic language and it was prospered under the Sufi influence. Moreover, the belief in the influence of the stars on the natural events makes one believe in the independent powers of stars and zodiac signs which cause *shirk* and *bida* (innovation) in his faith .

Mujahids argue it had been substantiated in the Quran and Sunnah that it is only Allah who possesses the knowledge of all things, present and absent which is impossible for any of his creatures. Even the great prophets, including Prophet Muhammad could not see the future and hidden things, then how can these healers identify the illnesses by analysing the absent planetary bodies? So, since the knowledge about invisible things is the exclusive feature of Allah according to the Islamic belief, one has diluted his religious belief through his action of approaching the healers or the sorcerers[152].

One of the Mujahid treatises argue that the unrecognized *mantrams*, sorcery, prophesy, foretelling, writing on ceramic plates, blowing on amulets are the consequences of the peoples' reliance on the healers other than God for the help through non-cause and effect ways. Here, the patient relies on shamans, *jinns*, devils and *malaks* (angels) by which he deviates from one of the demands of *tawheed* that one needs to have complete trust in Allah. That is why Prophet Muhammad had said that if one tied the amulet, he has committed *shirk*.

Sunnis' refutations and their Classificatory Scheme

Sunni groups engage with the discourses on the healing practices of '*urukku*' and '*mantram*' as their religious responsibility to protect and maintain the original form of Islam, which is *sunnat jamaa't* (another term used for *ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa*'). All ideological books intended to defend or offend the practices of *urukku* and *mantram* start with the definition of *tawheed* and *shirk*, *ibadat*, and these themes are explored in *urukku* and *mantram* in order to substantiate them as 'Islamic' or 'un-Islamic'. For instance,

---

[152] Shoukathali (2012: 36-48).

Nasiruddin Darimi, an activist of *sunnat-jamat* starts his ideological book '*mantram:* Quran*ilum hadithilum*' (2008) (*mantram* in Quran and Hadith) through this thematic format.

Sunnis argue *tawheed* means all worship is to Allah and *ibadat* is the extreme form of politeness, so *tawheed* is to believe that extreme politeness is to Allah only, and it becomes extreme if it is to a self-sufficient and eternal power. So, there is no division between the blessings through cause-effect and non-cause and effect relationship, rather, every blessing are from Allah (Nasiruddin Darimi, 2008: 7-10).

Sunnis say Islam has prescribed two ways to cope with the un-healthiness, both physical and non-physical: one is material way and the other non-material. The non-material way is what meant by the spiritual healing (*atmiya Chikitsa*) which can be consulted for physical and non-physical illnesses[153]. The controversy and discourse is on the second type[154]. According to Sunnis, these practices are permitted, religious, and 'Islamic' and after all, they are 'recommended' and 'desirable' (the category of *musthabab*)[155] practices[156].

Sunni publications on *urukku* and *mantram* usually quote different verses from Quran and Hadith along with their exegeses and commentaries to prove that the healing practices of '*urukku*' and '*mantram*' are 'Islamic'. For instance, the verse "and we send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrong doers except in loss" (Quran, 17:82) has been interpreted by Sunnis as the clear indication for the religious legitimacy of the *urukku* and *mantram* as healing for both physical and mental illnesses. The authentic Quranic exegeses of *Al-razi* and *Qurtubi* have also been quoted to defend the practices against the Mujahid understanding of them as innovation in religion[157]. For instance, a famous commentator Qurtubi explains this verse as: "it is only through incantation and writing and tying them that Quran becomes a healing for the believers"[158]. Famous Quran commentator *Al-Razi* interprets this verse as 'the spiritual

---

[153] Moosa Musliyar (2009: 41).

[154] Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009: 170).

[155] Here, *musthahabb* means (which is the Sunni grading of *urukku* and *mantram*) any action that one earns reward for performing and earn nothing for abstaining from.

[156] Saqafi (2012: 74-75).

[157] Omachappuzha in 'Ahlu-sunnati-wal-Jama' (2007:195), Faizy, Riaz (2009:22), Saqafi (2012:74), Moosa Musliyar (2009:41), Faizy Abdu Latif in '*Javab: Karmashastra Nivaram*' (The answer: jurisprudential solutions, 2001:63-64).

[158] Saqafi (2012:74).

healing with Quran and holy words is the treatment for both physical (*jismani*) and non-physical (*roohani*) illnesses'[159].

They claim that all hadith texts including *Al-Bukhari*, the most authentic religious text after Quran, have given separate chapters for explaining the practice of *mantram*. For instance, all hadith texts include 'chapter on *mantram* for evil eye' and 'chapter on blowing with *mantram*' which consider *urukku* and *mantram* as desirable practices[160]. Their permissibility has been authenticated by the hadith texts of *Bukhari* (2:854-856), *Al-Muslim* (2:222-224), *Turmudhi* (2:27-28), *Abu-Dawood* (2: 186-189), *Nasai* (2:317), and *Ibnu Maja* (251-254)[161]. The practice of *mantram* for the healing has also been authenticated by *ijma* (consensus of scholars), the third source of sharia law. Even Ibnu-Taimiyya, the most respected scholar of Mujahids, agrees with *mantram* , because he had prescribed to write Quran with permitted ink and drink them to ward off evils[162].

Events and words from the prophetic tradition have been quoted by the Sunni publications and speeches to validate the practices of writing the *mantrams* inside the urukku or writing them in a bowl of water and drinking it. For instance, the ideological book '*ahlu-sunnathi-wal-jama: the lesson for the right path*' (2007, p.202) notes that the Prophet had sent some of his female companions (*swahaba*) to incant *mantram* on his daughter Fatima when she was about to deliver her child which indicate to the fact that women are better to heal other women. *Al-bukhari* reports: Prophet's wife Aisha narrates that whenever any of his wives fallen ill Prophet used to recite the last chapters of the Quran and blow on the patients (Al-Bukhari, 13:126)[163]. It has been also reported from one of the prophet's companions that he used teach his children a particular *dhikr* to ward off the fear and shock in the sleep and he used to write and tie those *mantram* with his younger kids making it as *urukku*[164]. This hadith has been usually cited by Sunni publications to authenticate the practice of *urukku* for the problems while sleeping. Sunnis claim that *urukku* and *mantram* have been authenticated and practiced by the Prophet and his companions, so, they are not innovations. As elaborated in the first section of this chapter,

[159] Moosa Musliyar (2009: 41).
[160] Shamsuddin Musliyar (2009: 172)
[161] Moosa Musliyar (2001: 62). While quoting hadith texts, the first is chapter number and the second is the hadith number.
[162] Ibid.176
[163] Ibid.75
[164] Darimi, Nasiruddin (2000: 26)

mujadis counter this argument by saying that the action of a companion could not be taken as a source of law in the religion.

Sunnis also cite some of the *fatwas* (legal rulings) of the celebrated Mujahid thinkers and theologians to prove their arguments. Nattika V Moosa Musliyar, who was an active presence in almost all stages of public debates and face to face dialogues, cites[165] a fatwa given by the prominent Mujahid theologian Abdul Aziz-ibnu-Baz: Ibnu Baz given the ruling that there is no problem in writing the verses and words of sharia in a neat ceramic plate and drinking them for all kinds of illnesses, rather, it is a desirable act[166].

According to Sunnis, the illnesses such as *sihr,* (sorcery), evil eye and the possession cases could be only with *urukku* and *mantram*, no other systems such as the Allopathic medicine can solve these 'problems'[167]. The healer is allowed to employ every means permitted in sharia in order to heal the illnesses. *Jinns* are called for the assistance because they are comparatively more powerful than human beings in the domain of healing illnesses. P. A Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, a Sunni activist responds to a question 'whether evil eye (it has been referred as '*kanner*' in Malayalam) is true or not? He responds that prophet Muhammad used to practice *mantram* on the babies who were affected with evil eye and he had recognized the reality of evil eye and *sihr*[168]. There are religious textual traditions which prove the method of hitting the patient with stick to relieve him from the devil possession. However, healing with the service of devils is strictly prohibited[169].

We described in the previous chapter that the healing practices recognize the belief in the classification of time into good and bad depending on the extra-terrestrial beings of planets and zodiac signs. Here, we have seen that this belief has been condemned by Mujahids. However, Sunnis recognize the classification of time into auspicious which has more *barakah* and inauspicious (called as *nahs* time) which has comparatively less *barakah*. Textual evidences have been quoted to show each day has its own particularities and it is permitted to look for the appropriate hours (*saat*) and appropriate days for any action. For instance, the textual tradition had acknowledged the inauspiciousness of

---

[165] Moosa Musliyar (2009: 41-42).

[166] Ibnu Baz was a leading Islamic jurist and mufti (one who gives legal rulings) and he headed almost all religious bodies in the modern Saudi Arabia. As a prominent scholar of Mujahids, the contrast of his positions on *urukku* and *mantram* can tell us the ideological divisions between Saudi and Egyptian versions of *Salafism*. Saudi *salafists* allow and practice the healing practices which involve *jinn* and sorcery in contrast to Egyptian *salafists*. The elaboration on these internal discourses will come in the next section on 'shifts of statements and Mujahid splits'.

[167] Faizy, Riaz (2009:18 and 38).

[168] Faizy Sadiq (2008:231).

[169] Omachappuzha in '*Ahlu-sunnati-wal-Jama*' (2007:204-205).

Saturday and Tuesday to do good things and the auspiciousness of the morning hours, especially the Monday morning for doing good things[170]. However, one should not believe in the self-sufficient attributes of time to bring good or bad effects.

Sunnis trace the reason behind the Mujahid understanding of *urukku* and *mantram* as 'superstitious' to the onset of Egyptian reformism and its influence on the rise of rationality among some Muslim groups in Kerala which began to question some traditions prevailed for centuries. Sunnis argue that *urukku* and *mantram* are not blind customs, rather; they have examples from the life of the Prophet and his companions. In one of the ideological books published by Sunnis aiming to defend the local practices opposed by Mujahid groups, the author claims that Muslims in Kerala have developed their own methods to cope with the illnesses which come inside the religious domain.

One of them is the practice of reciting '*malappattukal*', the collection of piety songs in Arabi-Malayalam which commemorate the saints and Sufis. The author claims that *Malas* were recited at the time of crisis and illnesses when there were no hospitals and clinics. For instance, *nafisath mala* was specially recited at the time of delivery pain. Everyday life of Muslims in Kerala filled with *dhikr*, *maulids*, and *malas* were instrumental to prevent the diseases and illnesses. Each *malas* end with *iravukal* or *munajath* through which the supplicants and patients seek the saints' or *pirs'* help to heal their problems with the powers given by Allah which have been undergone to the religious discourses under the theme '*tawassul*' and '*istighasa*'. The author defends it by arguing that the *mala* is a pure literary work mixed with historical facts and the appraisal of the life, and the miracles of the Sufi saints written in the local language of Muslim social life in Kerala and they do not consist un-Islamic elements of *shirk*. Rather, this practice is a 'good *bida*' (good innovation) which is not at odds with the sources of Islamic law. So, it is 'religious' even if it is not mentioned in the legal sources because every innovation is not un-Islamic. The author has also been coerced to defend this practice against the Mujahid's labelling of it as 'Hindu culture' due to its similarities with the Hindu prayer songs. He defends it by saying that even if they have some similarities in language, and style, they are completely different from the Hindu prayer songs in its 'inner' qualities.

The interesting point here is even though Mujahids support the use of local cultural symbols and language in religious life, some of the local cultural elements like *malas*,

---

[170] Baqavi. K K C. in '*Nattacharam: thettum sharium*' (local rituals: right and wrong, (2008 second edition, : 16-18)

ratibs which are written in Arabi-Malayalam are subject to doubt. Mujahids are known for their staunch opposition towards Arabi-Malayalam and the whole-hearted support for English or Malayalam. For instance, Mujahids use Malayalam as medium in their Friday sermons[171] and the text books in Mujahid madrasas are in Malayalam medium, unlike Sunnis who only use Arabic in Friday sermons and either Arabic or Arabi-Malayalam in their madrasa text books. But at the same time, Mujahids discourage the persistence of Arabi-Malayalam as the identity of Muslims in Kerala. Even if Sunnis are stubborn in using Arabic as the medium of Friday sermons and madrasa text books, they frame Mujahids as the destroyers of the local cultural traditions of Muslims in Kerala. These ideological positions reflect problems in the interpretation of original texts but the negotiations between Islamic law, regional texts and local cultural symbols and practices.

Sunnis deem the practices of approaching non-Muslim sorcerers, participating in the *poojas* and meditations in temples and churches, making offerings there, as well as approaching Muslim healers who deviate from the *correct Islamic* methods of healing, as prohibited in Islam[172]. Sunnis classify *Mantram* into three types: one is *jahiliyya mantram*, incantation with the names and words whose meaning is not known which is strictly prohibited since it has the elements of *shirk*, the second type is the *mantram* with Allah's names and holy words which is permitted and encouraged to practice since prophet and his companions had practiced it, and the third type is the *mantram* with the names of creatures other than Allah such as the names of angels or saints which is better to be avoided[173].

V. Ideological Shifts and Organizational Splits of Mujahids

As explained in the section on the definition of '*ibadat*', Mujahids' had defined it as the application to those who are believed to answer it through *non-cause and effect relationship or through superhuman ways*. According this definition, requesting *malaks*, *jinns*, and the dead persons for help is *ibadat* (worship) and is hence a deviation from *tawheed*. Different Mujahid groups however have taken different stand on these issues.

---

[171] Each religious group have their own separate mosques to conduct *jumua* on Fridays. According to Sunnis, if one performs his Friday prayer at Mujahid mosque it is not *sahih* (not a correct practice).
[172] Abdu-samad omachappuzha in '*Ahlu-sunnati-wal-Jama*' (2007, :193), Moosa Musliyar (2009, :40)
[173] Ibid. 196

ISM Group of Mujahid

The splinter group ISM (*Ithihadu-Shubbanil-Mujahideen*) has retained the 'original position' and condemnation of the official group's (KNM) soft stand towards healing practices. They see this as a setback to their untiring efforts that almost 'wiped out' blind beliefs among Kerala Muslims.

Abdussalam Sullami, a prominent ISM leader opposes the practice of writing the *mantram* on ceramic plates for pregnant woman to drink as innovation, not authenticated by the religion[174]. According to him, Islam prohibits everything which is tied to the body such as *urukku* or thread as well as the practice of blowing on water. Even the *Urukku*, thread and water incanted with the *mantram* from Quran or Allah's names are not an exception to this prohibition[175].

Moreover, ISM argues, superhuman beings such as *jinn* and *malak* are unable to help or harm human beings[176]. *Jinns*, *malaks*, and devils can neither harm nor help humans and they are beyond the human reach and control because they are invisible for humans. Nothing is known about them except what Quran and Hadith has talked about them. These texts never recognized the influence of superhuman beings on humans to cause physiological or psychological disorders. So, the illnesses like madness and epilepsy are not caused by devil or *jinn* as 'orthodoxists' believe. It is only Allah who is responsible for every good and bad effects in the human life which cannot be changed by any of his creators, be they human healer, *jinn* or *malak*[177]. The authors of the ISM group cite the quotations from *Al-manar*, the Quran exegesis of Rashid Riza, the late 19th century Egyptian reformer who had opined that 'bacteria' which cause for many illnesses could be interpreted as '*jinn*'. Rashid Riza had also said the modern medical science has found that it is the problem in the veins which cause epilepsy and there was no valid evidence to prove the human-*jinn* contact behind the physiological and psychological disorders[178]. Thus, Islamic discourses draw upon scientific findings to substantiate their arguments about natural laws of cause and effect in the terrestrial world.

---

[174] Sullami, Abdussalam (2005:30)
[175] Sullami, Abdussalam (2005:243-244)
[176] Sullami, Abdussalam (2012: 38)
[177] Madeeni, Abdul Hameed in *'malak, jinn, manusyan, maranam: oru Padanam'* (*malak, jinn,* human, sorcery: a study) (2012:12-20), Maulavi K. Avaran in *'sihr'* (2010, : 15), Sullami, Abdussalam (2008:11)
[178] Madeeni, Abdul Hameed (2012: 57-58)

111

ISM scholars say that it is through Jews who were practicing and disseminating these 'false' forms of knowledge that *ismu Chikitsa* or *twalsamat* entered to the Muslim communities[179]. They argue that black magic (*Sihr*) is not real and the affected party suffers from his/her own fear and anxiety not by any invisible force of sorcery. But the opponents of ISM argue if *sihr* is not true why Islam has regarded it as one of the great sins. They respond to this question as it is a great sin because it involves the intention to harm others through hidden ways and it has some elements of *shirk* also[180]. ISM tries to argue with their erstwhile comrades turned adversaries- KNM and their all-time opponents-Sunnis. The debates revolve around questions of whether supernatural beings do exist and if they do what effects can they produce and how do we understand happenings that are outside the pale of observable cause and effect.

ISM books on *urukku* and *mantram* published after the split in 2002 reject a hadith which says Prophet Muhammad was affected by *sihr* which was 'done' by the Jews of Medina[181]. They reject this report as 'weak hadith' because one of its reporters, Hisham is not a reliable person. So, there is a possibility of *tadlis* (fabricated hadith). Moreover, they say, the hadith which comes against the Quranic teachings and human logic should be rejected[182].

Expelled Group of Zakariyya Swalahi

Now, a group of scholars from the official Mujahid group (KNM) have given a new definition for *ibadat*. Zakariyya swalahi and his group were expelled from the KNM in this year (in the wake of Mujahid state conference-2013) due to their deviations from the 'official' organizational positions. Now they define *ibadat* as 'requesting the creatures for their help which is beyond their abilities', so, according to this new definition, seeking the help of *malak*, and *jinn* from their abilities is not *ibdat* and, thus, not *shirk* because it is a the normal application. The veteran Mujahid scholar Zakariyya Swalahi is the prominent propagator of this 'new'[183] doctrine and he has the support of some other important Mujahid scholars. They argue, their definition and ideological positions have been the

---

[179] Ibid. 116-127
[180] Maulavi K. Avaran (2010: 50-51).
[181] Medina is one of the two holy cities in Saudi Arabia where the Prophet had lived for 10 years and passed way.
[182] Madeeni, Abdul Hameed (143-164), K Avaran Maulavi (2010: 7-14).
[183] Whether it is new or old (original) is a disputed issue. As I have made clear through this paper, It is the common feature of all claims and arguments that no one wants to see their position as 'new', but they understand it as 'original' or 'correct'. For instance, Zakariyya swalahi rejects the allegation that his definition is 'new'; he claims his group's findings have been the old Mujahid doctrine in Kerala.

original Mujahid doctrine. They never claim theirs is a new finding or new definition, rather; they say they were fighting for the perpetuation of the original Mujahid tradition.

Zakariyya swalahi and his group republished some old Mujahid books and magazines to prove that their ideas have been the official Mujahid positions on the issue of requesting *jinn* or *malak* for assistance. These old books state that devils and *jinns* may help those who serve them and act according to their wishes, for instance, they can find out the lost object and tell the healer where it is. It means human beings can use *jinn* for their needs such as healing which may appear to others as 'miracle'[184]. The healer can know the about missing objects with their help; belief in this fact cannot be regarded as *shirk*, because calling, asking help, and praying are different from each other. Asking the creatures to help beyond their capabilities is what meant by prayer; this cannot be made to other than Allah. So, if one seeks *jinns*' help in the matters of their capabilities, it does not become prayer even if it is not an inspired practice in Islam. It is just like one seeks the doctor's help for the treatment. *Jinns* and *malaks* have the unique natural capability to heal these 'non-material' illnesses. A healer can request them to find and bring back the lost objects and they are able to do that. These are their natural capabilities just like the natural attributes of human beings to eat or laugh.

Thus, this group gives a new interpretation to the clauses of 'non-material', 'invisibility', and 'non cause-effect relationship' and distinguishes between acts of supplication in terms of intention and knowledge of the object of action. But, they disapprove requests to dead saints buried in shrines for help because the dead do not have any contact with the living world. *jinns* and *malaks* are not like that; they have contact with the living creatures on the earth[185].

According to them, *jinns* and devils can cause physical and mental illnesses for humans such as the possession cases just like virus attack on the body. If the illness is diagnosed as '*jinn* possession' and all treatments failed, one can seek other healing systems such as the '*jinn* treatment' and '*mantra Chikitsa*' through the methods approved by Islam by which one does not deviate from the Mujahid doctrine. The possessed patient can be healed through *mantram* and beating. *Jinn* possession, *sihr*, evil eye, devilish illnesses are

---

[184] Maulavi, Uthman (2011: 84-85).
[185] ISM rejects the belief that the devils can influence humans by helping or harming. They say, even if humans worship or serve them they are unable to do anything material or superhuman acts.

not blind beliefs; they are 'real' and a Muslim should believe in all these 'truths' because they have been proved by the prophetic tradition[186].

The 'official' Position of *Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen* (KNM)

Amidst all these controversies and confusions on the issues of jinn, *malak, sihr*, and *mantram*, KNM published an ideological treatise[187] to clarify its 'official' positions on the same to solve all public confusions, especially among the Mujahid activists. The treatise says Mujahids could believe in the influence of devils and *jinns* on humans and in their role to cause physical and mental illnesses. The prescription to heal them is the recitation of the 'recognized' *dhikrs*, prayers, and the verses as taught by the Prophet to prevent these 'superhuman' diseases. KNM recognizes *sihr* as real and effective on human beings.

However, KNM argues that, Islam prohibits the blind beliefs and healing practices held in the name of *jinn* and devils such as *urukku, mantram*, sacred strings, and *jinn* expulsion through some rituals which do not have evidence (*dalil*) in *Sharia*[188]. Here, KNM takes a midway position between the Sunni belief of finding *jinn* behind all mental diseases and the 'modernist' (ISM) position of negating devil influence on human beings. So, KNM warns, even though the devils and *jinn* can cause illness, prayer to them or invoking them and requesting them for assistance in healing is *shirk*[189].

KNM therefore prescribes prayer with Quranic verses, Allah's names and attributes, and the authentic *dikhrs* in the way as mentioned in tradition and they give a new title for it, that is *'ruqya shariyya'* (translated as *'mantram* authenticated by the *sharia'*). In other words, *'ruqya'* can be said as 'special prayer for healing'.

As we explained in the previous sections, earlier, Mujahids had rejected the term *'mantram'* and used the term 'prayer' for *mantram*. Still KNM selectively rejects some healing practices such as blowing *mantram* on water for drinking, tying *urukku* or string after blowing *mantram*[190]. KNM circular wants its followers fight against both the efforts

---

[186] The source for the details of Zakariyya Swalahi and his group's positions on jinn, *malak* and *sihr* are his speeches after their expulsion in 2013 which are available online websites like YouTube.

[187] Before publishing the treatise they had convened an all scholar meet in one of their colleges to have a consensus on *mantram, jinn* and the request to them and issued a circular to all Mujahid units to inform the activists about the organizational positions on these 'controversial issues'. The book *'ruqya'* is the reflection of that circular.

[188] *Jinn, Pishach, Ruqya shariyya: pramanangalude velichathil (jinn*, devil, *mantram* of sharia : in the light of texts) published by Kerala *Jamiathul Ulama* (6-7, 30-31), Maulavi, A P Abdul Qadir (2010:10).

[189] Ibid. 35, Maulavi, A P Abdul Qadir (2012: 24).

[190] *Ruqya Shariyya* (p.43)

of some 'neo-orthodoxists' (followers of Zakariyya salahi) who try bring back the blind beliefs of *jinn*, devil, and *sihr*, and the efforts of some modernist groups (ISM) who reject the 'original' *mantram* authenticated by tradition.

Intellectual Roots of Ideological Shifts: Role of Gulf *salafism* and Egyptian *salafism*

As we mentioned in the first chapter, Clifford Geertz understood religious change as change happened to the local cultural symbols against the onset of scripturalist *salafism*. But, he took only one of its versions to understand the cultural encounter with the puritanism. Actually *salafism* has different versions as practiced in different parts of world. Only one version of *salafism* that is Egyptian *salafism* (which is analysed by Geertz) tries to reconcile religion with Science. In order to have a consonance with Science, they interpreted scriptures according to modern European reason and rationality and recognized *urukku* and *mantram* as irrational and illogic which have neither scriptural authenticity nor scientific validity. However, Saudi *salafism* or Gulf *salafism*, another version of it, offers different perspective to understand reformism and religious change. The writings and legal rulings of Ibnu-Abdul Wahhab, Ibnu-Taymiyya, and that of modern Saudi *salafi* scholar Ibnu-Baz indicate *salafism* recognizes the superhuman influence on human bodies and the use of *mantram* as valid. Here, the positions of ISM can be understood as the reflection of Egyptian *salafism* while Zakariyya Swalahi (whose training was in Medina University, Saudi) represents the Saudi *salafi* takes on healing practices and KNM seems to have taken a midway position between two extremes.

The reformists in the gulf countries (known as gulf *salafis*) believe that human beings can be possessed by *jinn* and its solution is *ruqya* (*mantram*). Gulf *salafis* (*Salafis* of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and UAE) approve incanting the Quranic verses and blowing it in water and drinking as the treatment for diseases like *sihr* affection and possession and also practice them. Muhammad Ibnu Abdul-Wahhab, the founder of *wahhabism* in Saudi Arabia believed in superhuman influence to cause illness for humans. He had also permitted the invocation of the 'genuine' spiritual powers (*ruqya*) through the recitation of the Quranic verses to ward off the illnesses caused by them. For him, illness was not strictly physical in nature; rather, he recognized its spiritual dimension also (Deblong-Bas, 2004: 75-76).

It was this position on *urukku* and *mantram* that the earlier leaders of Mujahids like K M Maulavi had as they wrote in their Arabi-malayalam publications. But, the Egyptian version of *salafism,* which rejected all kinds of illness and healing under the influence of the superhuman agents which are antithetical to the modern scientific rationality, became the official Mujahid position in its early periods. The rationalistic ideas of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Riza influenced the official Mujahid ideology in its earlier periods. For instance, the earlier definition given to *ibadat* was that of Rashid Riza, the Egyptian reformer which included the clauses of 'invisible' and 'absent' ways of asking anything as *shirk.* Vakkam Abdul Qadir Maulavi, the founder of Mujahid organization in Kerala was deeply influenced by the Egyptian *salafism* through his reading of *Al-manar,* the magazine published from Cairo in Egypt whose chief editor was Rashid Riza. Vakkam Abdul Qadir Maulavi had contacted Rashid Riza via letters[191]. But, we could see the gradual changes in their positions on *urukku* and *mantram* which caused for further classifications of them followed by many organizational splits.

The reformist ideas of the Egyptian thinkers such as Afghani and Abduh were partly in response to the challenges posed by the military and scientific dominance of European powers in 19th and 20th centuries. They sought to reconcile Islam with the scientific growth and rationality. While doing this they encouraged Muslims to refer back to the *salafs* (first generation of Muslims) and avoid medieval interpretation. They maintained that texts remain open to contemporary interpretation in response to the challenges of modern social conditions (Rasanayagam, 2011:125).

So we can see how local Malayalam debates on the status of healing practices in Islam are influenced by global transformation. We also see how various schools of thought engage vigorously with philosophical categories of knower, known and modes of knowing in setting out the relation between man and god.

VI. Medical Perception and Discourses on Muslims' 'Renaissance' in Kerala

Mujahids present the renaissance as the eradication of the 'pre-Islamic' elements which were introduced into Islam by the converts. They allege that Sunni scholars Islamizing pre-Islamic practices by misinterpreting the scriptures[192]. The Mujahid movement has been

---

[191] Abdul Hameed in *'Kerala Muslim Navothanam'* (Renaissance of Kerala Muslims, 2010:98), Musthafa Thanveer (2012:20).
[192] Mankada, Abdul Azeez (2006: 10)

understood as response to the internal conflicts in Muslim societies; most important of them being perceived 'deterioration' in Muslim beliefs and practices. For the reformers one of the major signs of this deterioration was the adoption of rituals and beliefs from other religions, especially the Hindus. These practices were understood as failure to act in accordance with the monotheism which opened the door to questions about the person's status as Muslim. So, return to the strict adherence to *tawheed* was the primary step of their reform.

It is also important to note that some schools of Islamic thought discussed above attribute the deterioration to social and economic backwardness that has led to the persistence of the healing traditions such as *urukku* and *mantram*[193]. The 'renaissance' among Muslims in Kerala has been understood as the eradication of those practices. The increasing number of modern hospitals in Muslim localities which 'work' through cause and effect relationship has been seen by Mujahids as the product of their long efforts to lead the community from the 'darkness' of blind beliefs into 'light'. For instance, Dr. Sulfiqarali, one of the Mujahid author and a medical doctor, explains the history of 'awakening and the progress' of Muslims in Kerala. He tries to claim the Mujahids' major role in the renaissance of Kerala Muslims by quoting a study by W.H.O in two *Panchayats* in Kerala. He says (2012:13) W.H.O could find a sharp difference between these two *Panchayats* in the health index. The region which has the overwhelming presence of Mujahids has all kinds of health facilities such as hospitals and other 'modern' facilities for treatment, whereas in other with Sunni majority, has poor social and development indexes indicating 'backwardness' caused by the persistence of the blind beliefs such as *mantram*, *jinn* expulsion. He claims it was only through the successful propagation of Mujahids that Muslims in Kerala have started to consult the 'scientific' medicines. Mujahids urged them to seek 'treatment' from hospitals at the time of illness (ibid. 35).

We conclude the discussion on discourses by referring to Michel Foucault's study on the changing patterns medical discourse and medical perception and the birth of the clinic in the 18th century. His study reflects of what we presented here, the interconnections between the changing pattern of discourses on medicine, the change of medial perception, and the birth of modern hospitals. Looking into the archaeology of *medical perception* through the modern phenomena of the birth of the clinic, he has said that at the end of the

---

[193] Renaissance of Muslims in Kerala (Edited by E K N Ahmad Kutty, 2010: 46).

117

18th century, seeing was accompanied by 'experience' which had the power of 'truth', the sovereign power of 'empirical gaze' (from darkness to light). He says it was this reorganization of theories and old systems that made clinical experience possible and had a scientifically structured discourse about and individual (Foucault, 1963: xiv-xv). In 'birth of the clinic' (1963), he gives an analysis of a type of discourse, that of medical perception, at a period when it had changed its materials. For instance, the features that made up the pathological phenomena, the morbid events, were reorganized and the disease was located with its cause and effect, in a three dimensional space (ibid: xxi). "What is the matter with you" has been replaced by "where does it hurt?"

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, we have tried to show how religious discourses objectify the healing practices among Muslims in Kerala taking *urukku* and *mantram* practices as analytical categories. We began with the socio-historical profile of Muslims in Kerala in the first chapter in order to locate the research in specific social historical context. A brief account of their historical trajectory and of social and religious structures of contemporary Muslims in Kerala was intended to set the background for the remaining chapters.

The first question we tried to address in this dissertation was about sociological and anthropological perspectives on the study of rituals and practices of Muslim societies.

Social scientists whose work was discussed in the first chapter do offer some frameworks for the study of Islam in contemporary times. Each approach, however, has its own priorities and thrust area and has merged from a specific constituency. The sociological and anthropological studies presented here (Geertz, Asad, Woodward, Eickelman, El-Zein, Akbar Ahmad) are either based on Muslim countries like Middle East or on Muslim majority countries like Indonesia, and are hence limited in their scope in understanding South Asian realities like India. Nevertheless, important theoretical insights are contained in the debates between renowned anthropologist Clifford Geertz and Talal Asad that took place during 1980s and 90s.

Clifford Geertz's study (1966) has brilliantly set a theoretical framework in modern anthropology to enter into this area. He studied Islam as a cultural system, as a text to be interpreted in specific local contexts which provided its adherents specific system of meaning through religious symbols. He excluded the Islamic scriptures and texts from the study of Islamic religious life in the Far East and saw the emergence of 'scripturalism' as a crisis in the lived religious symbols which were conducive to change and transformation. He said the ritual, not the written sources of texts, was the sacred symbol which provided the religious worldview. For him, the scriptures (the universal Islamic tradition) and the local culture (understood as syncretic, classic and mainline tradition) are oppositional binaries which have to be set apart while approaching Islam. In other words, he has understood religious change as changes in the local tradition against Islamic scholasticism, or the *ideologization* of Islam.

We discussed the writings of Talal Asad (1993) written in response to Geertz' work and which marked a major theoretical shift in the sociology of religion, particularly Islam and Muslims societies. Asad studied religion by tracing the genealogy of the concept of 'religion' and 'ritual' as Western categories and showed the dangers in employing them while studying non-Western religious communities such as Muslims. In contrast to Geertz's symbols, Asad's explorations exposed the history of the role of power in the production of religious truth, religious worldview, meaning and knowledge. He argued that doctrines, laws and sanctions, authorization process and authorization discourses, not only the symbols, produced the meaning. They defined and redefined the religious practices as true or false. The sociologist hence has to focus not only on the symbolic aspects of the rituals and performances but also the disciplinary discourses and, production of religious knowledge. He also noted institutional powers inherent to rituals by which the truth is attained and the religious subjectivity is formed.

Asad demonstrated the limitations of the European analytical categories to understand the social phenomena in the non-European contexts such as the Muslims in the Middle East. He explained this by looking into the problem with understanding the religious reason in Saudi Arabia through the Kantian definition of Enlightenment and public reason.

An overview of other approaches by different anthropologists and sociologists were also given. Dale F Eickelman (1981) approached Muslim rituals through the interconnection between textual tradition and ethnography of diverse socio-cultural contexts taking Islam as an ideology for the meaningful social actions of individual actors. Mark R Woodward (1988) suggested a complex typology of text and practice to study the local practices. Both of these authors questioned the dichotomous understanding of Muslim rituals as text versus practice and universal versus local and folk versus elite Islamic traditions.

There have been attempts to see Muslims as separate from other religious communities in view of specific worldview. In this regard, anthropologists like Akbar S Ahmad (1984, 1987) and Richard Tapper (1995) argued for 'Islamic Anthropology' (by Islamizing anthropology) placing Muslim societies within the framework of one universal Islam and diverse social situations. This is different from Asad's theoretical framework of

'Anthropology *of* Islam' (1986) which seeks for a new anthropological perspective to study Islam not through Islamizing it.

We just observed that scholars have tried to understand Muslims in India through the oppositional binaries of universal versus local and text versus practice by assuming their social practices as 'syncretic of Hindu-Muslim' (Ahamd (1981) and J J Burman(1996)). Imtiaz Ahmad's (1981) approach appears to be similar to Clifford Geertz. Ahmad argued Sociology should look into the actual religious beliefs and practices of *Indian* Muslims which are syncretic and indigenous, varied from place to place excluding the formal doctrines and scriptures which are universal because Islamic belief in India has acquired an *indigenous* form.

Most of the sociological approaches have understood the local as the domain of symbolic which gives meaning (Geertz) and as syncretic culture (Imtiaz Ahmad). The implication here is that the scriptures understood to be universal have to be separated while studying practices on the ground. Muslims and their practices were also understood either as modern (counter-traditional) or traditional and either orthodox or heterodox. Even if some of them like Woodward and Eickeleman challenged the text-practice dichotomy, a comprehensive method to understand the complex process of the authorization practices to produce legitimate form of practice through the harmonious relation between text and practice is not easy to find.

The writings of Talal Asad (1993, 1986), John R. Bowen (1993), and Charles Hirschkind (2006) did address this tension between local practices and normative texts and dealt with the social life of religious discourse. They recommended the discourse centred approach in the study of religion and ritual among Muslims based on contextualization of texts and ethnographic approach to understand the day to day life of Muslims. Responding to these questions, Talal Asad (1986) stated that Islam should be approached as a discursive tradition which includes and relates to its foundational texts, not as types of Islam according to the types of societies as Geertz has understood it. Islam, as a tradition has a correct model and consisted of the discourses to instruct the practitioners to follow the correct form. The arguments and conflicts over a practice had to be understood as natural and necessary part of Islamic tradition not as the crisis for local cultures as Geertz did. So, the sociologist who wants to study Muslim societies has to focus on the religious

discourses within the specific historical situation. In short, the discussion is to view Islam as a knowledge tradition.

These post-colonial theoretical trends have directed me to approach Islam through discourse. Religion and practices were understood through the ways in which they have been debated and argued by the religious authorities. We found that only some practices were always the objects of controversy in religious discourses. From these controversial practices we selected 'healing practices' purposefully, because, they were the hub of several foundational debates on truth and validity of the world, cosmos and beings in Islamic thought. Our aim was to add to Asad's notion of centrality of discourse (1993) in the formation of religious subjectivity by going beyond general disciplinary discourses and institutional authority. We wanted to look at a specific domain of discourse where micro-level analysis of individual experiences and where diverse ways in meaning making towards the religious practices are possible. Hence, we focused on healing practices.

Healing practices are related with health and survival and, there is great possibility of flexibility, creativity, negotiations, and the resistance of social actors towards the authority and authorization discourses. Health and illness are aspects of human suffering that always attract pluralistic behaviour in order to alleviate pain and discomfort at the earliest.

We have provided detailed accounts in second chapter of various healing practices. We have presented the cosmology and the interconnections between the terrestrial and extra-terrestrial domains of universe as reflected in the textual corpuse of Islam as well as field studies on healing. It seems to us that debates on healing in Islamic texts are not either syncretic or classical as Geertz argued. Rather, each group/sect has its own texts and 'ideological assertion' even if they are alleged by other groups to be 'esoteric' and 'magical' texts, and thus, as 'un-Islamic'.

We have seen the practices of *urukku* and *mantram* were based on the assumed relationship between elements of nature, metals, alphabets and numbers, and the extra-terrestrial planetary bodies, zodiac signs, and the superhuman beings such as *jinns* and angels. In this framework, illness and aetiological factors get classified into physical and spiritual (such as evil eye) along with the belief that superhuman beings can help (by assisting the healer) and harm (by causing illnesses) human beings. Such beliefs and practices, even if they involved some religious symbols such as Quranic verses and chanting words, were understood as 'controversial' in Islam and as deviations from the

122

foundational texts. If the practices were cultural and symbolic and texts had no role in them as Geertz has argued, these practices would not have become the objects of debate. So, as Asad said, practice in Islam related to the politics of interpreting the founding texts.

We also presented anthropological literatures on the efficacy of healing practices in order to examine the connection between interpretation and efficacy, if any. Sociologists and anthropologists explain the effectiveness of healing practices by drawing attention to factors such as, individual belief, body techniques, importance of *cultural contexts, shared language of cultural symbols, myths and metaphors*, and the instrumental role of religious symbols. We have to remember that only certain practices related to healing have become controversial requiring authorization and legitimation whereas other practices such as five times prayer or fasting of *Ramzan* or *zakat* (offering dues) have not been interrogated.

In contrast to Asad's (1993) theory, our analysis of field studies indicated incongruences between the textual norms and actual practices, flexibility and negotiation on the part of actors even if they lived in the context of 'authorization and legitimation of knowledge'. At the same time the actors such as healers (Amma and *pir* of Patteshah in our study) and patients never understood their practice as 'syncretic' or 'local' tradition (as Geertz and Ahmad said), rather; they placed them inside the Islamic fold. Ethnographic accounts of healing practices of Muslims in Kerala have also shown that *urukku* and *mantram* were practiced in mainstream religious centres like mosques, provided by religious men of *mollaka* which substantiates my point that not all healing practices are in the periphery and that believers negotiate with the mainstream authorization discourses coming from religious institutions every day. Local songs and hagiographies like *malas* used in healing have been authenticated by the 'universalist' traditions of texts through discourses (Woodward 1988). They were not set apart as a separate category of 'practical religion', antithetical to the scriptural Islam as Ahmad (1981) argued. Healers in the ethnographic studies cited here also classified healing into 'white' (accepted and Islamic) and 'black' (rejected and un-Islamic), revealing the moral basis of their classificatory scheme.

In the second chapter we cited some beliefs, rites and rituals related to healing practices that became 'controversial' when they were judged according to texts. They were interlinkages between terrestrial and extra-terrestrial domains, importance of a master as intercession with God, the concept of *baraka* attached to saint and his graveyard, seeking

123

help through invisible and immaterial ways and beyond cause and effect relation. Healing system also verily depended on calling on superhuman beings such as *jinns* and angels and the supernatural theories of disease causation, intercession between divine and human world, prayer to the dead saints and the belief in the individual charismatic powers. As we proceeded into the third chapter, we could understand that all these beliefs, rites and practices described in the second chapter are subject to debate on their authenticity and validity according to original texts of Islam.

In third chapter, we observed that institutional powers which designated the authentic model of practice was based on the belief that there exists a single true religious ideology '*ahlu-sunnati-wal-jamaa*' as recognized by scriptures. It was on the basis of this belief that the organizational identity of each debating group and the existence of an 'organizational other' was produced in relation to the search for authentic Islam. Healing practices we described in second chapter have also become case studies in this search. We also showed how unlike the monastic program of medieval Christendom which disciplined the bodies (as Asad (1993) has showed), the practice of authorization of knowledge in Islam was perceived as moral obligation. Each group had its own view of Islamic history and placed themselves in accordance with the original period while the 'other' was placed in the period of innovation which was supposed to be rejected.

Third chapter revealed that religious discourses were primarily scriptural having their own logic and rationality. But, sectarian differences on the authentic sources of law do reflect Asad's (1986) conception of Islam as a "discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of Quran and Hadith". Rather; recognition of authentic texts as source of religion was also part of discourse. The exegesis, commentaries, and medieval interpretations could make *urukku* and *mantram* Islamic for one group while not for others. Publication of books and treatises, conferences, oral debates, religious schools and colleges operated as the institutional bases for the production and reproduction of discourses. All the practices and the assumed relation between terrestrial and extra-terrestrial domains of universe contained in them that we described in the second chapter were taken up for interrogation and debated by contesting groups. The themes around which the discourses centred were the definition of *ibadat* (worship), *istigatha* (practice of seeking help), *tawassul* (practice of seeking intercession) and the status of dead saints in tombs. All of these themes were related to the doctrine of *tawheed* (monotheism), the

single underlying logic which was taken to be the hallmark of all themes, defined differently by different sectarian groups.

Analysis of discourses and classification at inter and intra-group level showed the complex reality rather than the conventional picture of dialogue between two groups. It also showed the appearances, disappearances, and re-appearances of particular themes in the discourse in different periods which defined and redefined the organizational positions (institutions which authorize the practices) on healing practices.

We saw the different ways in which an illness, its aetiology, treatment methods, and their ethical dimension were interpreted according to the organizational positions of different religious groups and their changing pattern in different periods. To understand the pattern of change at local level, we have to grasp intellectual developments at global level and their transformation. We concluded the textual analysis by noting how one set of reformist Islamic discourses endorsed medical systems while delegitimizing healing rituals, facilitating medical perception which was based on bio-medicine and birth of hospitals in the neighbourhood of modern Malayali Muslims.

Our research revealed that all religious groups argued from within the boundaries of tradition referring to the fixed authoritative texts within which only the arguments could make sense. As Asad argued, approaching a religion which has fixed texts and authority through the anthropological categories of 'religion' and 'ritual' is inadequate. So, rather than taking the religious groups or sects as two opposing binaries of syncretic-normative, local-universal, orthodox-heterodox, and modern-traditional (as Geertz (1966) and Ahmad (1981) conceptualized), they might be understood as differences within a same tradition.

We could realize that the religious discourses on *urukku* and *mantram* had their own rational coherence and all arguments revolved around a single theme that is *tawheed* (oneness of God). So, we think, the Sunnis and their healing practices cannot be understood as syncretic and local cultural elements and their opponents as 'scripturalists' and universal. The analysis of discourse has shown that the 'classical culture' (Geertz, 1966) and scholastic, legalistic, and doctrinal, or scriptural Islam (which was understood as counter-tradition) are not separate categories, rather; they work as together. Third chapter exposed that all debating groups, including Sunnis (widely understood as 'classical' or 'local' in scholarly and academic literatures) and *Mujahids* or *Salafis* (understood as 'scripturalists' or 'puritans' or 'fundamentalists') were basically scripturalists. We realized

125

that no one could argue a single point without the textual references and the *ideologization* of religion or emergence of scriptures did not mean fading away of traditional practices. Rather than understanding scriptures as threat and 'counter-tradition' movement (as Geertz found in Indonesia), our analysis of discourses has revealed that there has been a process of *Islamization* of 'local practices' by placing them inside the religious domain (as part of organizational identity) while at the same time healing practices did call for a reworking of founding conceptions about the relation of god to the world of human and non-human beings through interpreting the scriptures. And the practices which were not amenable to the textual interpretations were classified as 'un-Islamic'.

The selection of particular themes for discourses such as *urukku* and *mantram*, *istighatha*, *tawassul*, and tomb visit stands in contrast to Talal Asad's approach of all Islamic practices as discursive tradition which consisted of discourse to instruct its followers towards the correct form. The kind of his 'Grand theory of Islam and Muslim rituals' does not address the issue of the complex nature of discourse and classification within the tradition.

We found that healing practices of *urukku* and *mantram* have been among the most controversial practices on the basis of which different religious groups broke up and new groups were formed. So, without taking the whole tradition as discursive (as Asad has understood it), only these controversial practices were focused in this paper to understand why they became 'controversial' and how they were debated and classified. The first question was addressed in the second chapter by exploring the cosmology of these practices as they were prescribed and practiced among Muslims and its relations and deviations from the religious formal texts. And the third chapter showed how these practices which were understood in social science as popular and syncretic were debated within the texts and classified into various forms.

The shifting nature of statements and plurality of positions expressed on this single topic indicated the unfinished and tentative nature of this discourse. The discursive character of these practices was embedded in the 'ethico-political' institutional forms of religion and the power of religious authorities. It means, defending and offending 'some controversial practices' through the practice of arguments was inherently interlinked with the organizational identity and an argument over a practice was nothing but the organizational decision in which the *ulema*, the authority of religious scholars who are

experts on religious texts reserved the right. As Asad has rightly pointed out, authorization process and legitimating discourses among Muslims in Kerala have the power to define and redefine a practice as Islamic or un-Islamic which was understood as the moral responsibility sanctioned by religious texts.

Here, one further dimension can be added to the frameworks given by Geertz who understood the scripturalism as threat to the persistence of traditional practices, and Asad who said the formation of religious subjectivity is through the attainment of religious truth produced by power and authority. We think the formation of religious subjectivity and moral self-hood cannot be understood by focusing solely on the authoritarian discourses, disciplinary practices, and religious developments at macro level. In this thesis, we have engaged with the classification of healing practices only through the authoritarian discourses which is its drawback. Rather, it necessitates a study into the formation of religious subjects at micro level of day to day practices. The inability to corroborate and enrich through fieldwork is the main limitation of this dissertation.

Unlike Middle Eastern Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt or Muslim majority countries like Indonesia and Morocco (the contexts where the studies of Geertz, Asad and Hirschkind primarily touched upon) where the powerful religious institutions go hand in hand with the political authority in defining the religiousness, the context like India offers more possibilities of resistance on the part of religious subjects. However, a study into the formation of religious subjectivity may not be possible by freeing the actor from different forms of power and authority at micro level. Rather; resistance and creativity of actors have to be understood by placing them inside the tradition of Islam.

Then, there arise different questions which were not addressed in this research that can be answered in further study. It has to be addressed that how the social actors respond to the on-going discourses and, thus, how the classifications, modifications of healing practices are reproduced by the actors. This question poses another set of queries which has to be ethnographically answered such as how the individual actors make their own interpretation and classification through negotiation of meaning produced by public debates? How does the authorization of practice operate in Muslims' everyday life? How do they develop a religious reason and moral self with individual resistance and creativity, and how do they attain meaning in religious practices with their own sensibility? How different actors accord legitimacy to their actions and practices within the religious

tradition and how do they develop their own understanding of Islam and Muslim while practicing healing? What are the ways in which the resistance by Muslim subjects become possible within the boundaries of religion? How resistance to power and the use of rationality within the tradition becomes possible? These questions can be addressed taking healing practices as analytical categories since the human healthcare often necessarily needs negotiation and compromise with the authorized practices.

This question assumes many possibilities that have to be looked further through extensive fieldwork. Taking Habermas's theorization (1994), the possibility of the formation of opinion through *intersubjective reason* and *intersubjective* communication free from the power and authority of public debates and the possibility of identity formation through the *communicative rationality* in the *intersubjective* life world, have to be addressed further. In this regard we can enquire why patients and supplicants consult the healers, how healers attract patients, how do they find tradition in their practice and how do they shape and reshape their practice within the tradition. Here, the relations between ethics, tradition, and authorization process of social practice must be explored ethnographically, looking through the experience of healers and patients from diverse social categories, especially the women patients who are the non-active participants in the public discourses.

Primary Sources in Malayalam (for Data Chapters 2 & 3)

Ahmad, K. (2012). *Al-Istigatha (on Istigatha)*. Calicut: K.N.M Publication.

Ahmad, K. (2012). *Athawassul (On Tawassul)*. Calicut: KNM Publication.

Al-Buni (2010). Manbau-usulil-hikmah (Source of Wisdom). (translated by Panthavoor K V). Calicut: K Muhammad Kutty and Sons

Al-Qahtani, S. (2011). *Nitya Jeevithathile Prarthanakal (Prayers in Everyday life)*. Calicut: Ahlu Sunna Books.

Azeez, A. (2006). *Muslim Chintha Prastanagal (Muslim Intellectual Organizations)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Baqavi, K. (2008). *Nattacharam Sheriyum thettum (Rituals: right and wrong)*. Calicut: Poonkavanam Books.

Baqavi, M. (2012). *Al-Husban: Ismu Chikilsa*. Calicut: Capitol Books.

Bashameel, M. (1990). *Tawheedinte Pradhanyam (Importance of Tawheed)*. Calicut: KNM PublicationBooks.

Darimi, A. H. (2008). *Sunnatum Bidathum: Oru laghu Padhanam (Tradition and Innovation: a Short Study)*. Rahmatabad: Sunni Publishers.

Darimi, N. (2008). *Mantram Quranilum Hadeethilum (Mantram in Quran and Hadeeth)*. Calicut: Shifa Books.

Faizy, A. H. (2003). *Mujahid Prastanam engottu? (Where Mujahid Organization Dose Going?)*. Calicut: Shifa Books.

Faizy, A. H. (2008). *Istighatha: Vimarshanangalkku Marupadi (Istighatha: Rebutal for Criticisms)*. Pattikkad: Noorul Ulama Publication.

Faizy, A. L. (2008). *Jawab: Karmashastra Nivaranam (The answer: Jurisprudential Solutions)*. Pattikkad: Noorul-Ulema Publication.

Faizy, K. Q. (2007). *Sufisathinte Verukal (Sources of Sufism)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Faizy, R. (2009). *Ahlu-Sunnati-wal-Jamaa*. Calicut: Middle Hill Publications .

Faizy, S. (2008). *Islam: Samshayangalkku Marupadi (Islam: solutions for doubtful issues)*. Pattikkad: Noorul-Ulema Publications.

Faizy, S. (2008). *Muslim Navothanam: Vazhiyym Varthamanavum (Muslims renaissance: history and present)* . Calicut: Shifa Books.

Farooqi, I. (2002). *Tawheedinte Darshanam (The Vision of tawheed)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Gafoor, M. A. (1999). *Sarvaroga Chikilsa Vidhikal (Treatment for all Illnesses)*. Calicut: Ayyoobi Books.

Gafoor, M. P. (2004). *Rogam, Maranam, Mayyith Samaskaranam (Illness, Death, and Burial Ritual)* . Calicut: Ayyoobi Books.

Hameed, A. (2001). *Prarthana, tawheed: Chodyangalkku Marupadi (tawheed: Tauheedu Response to Questions)*. Calicut: Yuvatha pubication.

Hameed, A. (2009). *Navothana Prsthanam: Vazhiyum Porattavum (Renaissance: way and struggle)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Haris, A. (2007). Mala. In B. Musliyar, *Nervazhiyude Padam*. Kadameri: Bahjathu Publications.

130

Ishaqali, T. (2012). *Prarthanakal (Prayers)* . Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Islahi, A. (1995). *Tawheed (Monotheism)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Kunji, P. M. (2008). *Muslimingalum Kerala Samaskaravum (Muslims and Kerala Culture)*. Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Academy .

Kunjippa, V. (2010). *Mathavidhikalude Laghu Padnam (Short Study on Legal Rulings)* : . Malappuram: V.K Brothers Books.

Kuttasheri, P. (1999). *Shaikh Ibnu-Baz: Panditha Lokathe Vismayam (Shaikh Ibnu-Baz: Wonderful Scholar)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Kutty, A. (2010). *Kerala Muslim Navothanam: Vimarshanangalum Vasthuthakalum (Kerala Muslim Renaissance: Criticism and Facts)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Publications.

Madani, K. (1990). *Ahlu-sunnati-wal-Jamaa*. Calicut: KNM Publication.

Madani, K. (2012). *Islaminte Adithara Tawheed (Tawheed: The foundation of Islam)* . Calicut: KNM Publication.

Madavoor, H. (2003). *Adarsha Vyathiyanam Oru Pukamara (Ideological deviations: an Illusion)*. Kuniyil: Anwar Publications.

Madeeni, A. H. (2012). *Malak, Jinn, Manushyan: Oru Padanam (Malak, Jinn, Human beings: A study)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Publication.

Majeed, A. (2012). *Vakkam Abdul Qadir*. Grace Educational Publication: Malappuram.

Maulavi, A. (2010). *Sihr: Pracharangalum Vasthuthakalum (Sihr: Hypes and Facts)*. Chemmad: Hima Creations.

131

Maulavi, A. I. (2003). *Wahabism: Anubhava padangal (wahabism: experiences).* . Calicut: Ihsan Publication.

Maulavi, K. M. (2007). *K M Maulavi Fatwakal (Fatwas of K M Maulavi).* Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Maulavi, M. A. (2012). *Jinnum Shaitanum (Jinn and devil).* Calicut: KNM Publication .

Maulavi, P. A. (1998). *Ziyaratul Quboor (On Visiting Graveyards).* Calicut: Yuvatha Publication.

Maulavi, P. A. (2012). *Athawheed (The tawheed).* Calicut : KNM Publication.

Maulavi, S. (2011). *Islamile Ithikkannikal (Deviators in Islam).* Feroke: Ahlu-Sunna Books.

Moosa Musliyar, N. V. (2001). *Tawheedum Shirkum (tawheed and Shirk).* Pattikkad: Noorul-Ulema Publication.

Moosa Musliyar, N. V. (2006). *Nattika parajathu (Collection of Nattika's works).* Calicut: Shifa Books.

Moosa Musliyar, N. V. (2009). *Sunnathu Jamathinoru Mukhavura (An Introduction to the Sunnat Jamaath)* . Calicut: ISA Books.

Nadwi, S. (2009). *Allahuvinte Ekatham (The oneness of Allah)* . Chungathara: Nehra Books.

Omachapuzha, A. S. (2007). Athmeeya Chikilsa (Spiritual Healing). In B. Musliyar, *Nervazhiyude Padangal.* Kadameri: Bahjathu Publications.

Pannoor, E. K. (2010). *Wahhabikalum Mujahidukalum (Wahhabis and Mujahids).* . Calicut: KNM Publication.

Pannor, E. (2011). *Maulidum Istigathayum (Maulid and Istigatha).* Areekode: Asha Books.

Pannor, E. K. (2010). *Vadapradivadangaliloode (Going through the debates): Interview with A P Abdul Qadir Moulavi*. Calicut: KNM Publication.

Panthavoor, K. V. (2006). *Manthrika Chikilsa: Malayalam Translation of Mujarabathudairab*. Calicut: K Muhammad Kutty and Sons Publication.

Qadir Maulavi, A. (2012). *Chodyangal Marupadikal (Questions and answers)*. Calicut: KNM Publication.

Qaliq, A. (2000). *Salafikalum Nalu Imamumarum (Salafis and four Imams of Schools)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Quthub, ,. M. (2004). *La-ilaha-Illallah: Ideology, Law, and Life*. Calicut : Islamic Publishing House.

Saqafi, S. M. (2012). *Sunnath Jamaath* . Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau.

Shamsuddin Musliyar, K. (2009). *Adarsha Guide (A guide for Islamic Ideology)*. Trivandrum: Dreamworld Printers.

Shantapuram, H. (2009). *Samaskarana Chinthakal (Civilizing thoughts)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Shoukathali, S. (2012). *Bhavi, Jyolsyam, Islam (Future, Astrology, and Islam)*. Calicut: KNM Publications.

Siddiqi, N. (1993). *Sathyavum Asathyavum (Truth and Untruth)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Suhail. (2007). Vishwasam (Faith). In B. Musliyar, *Nervazhiyude Padam (Lesson for the right path)*. Kadmeri: Bahjath Publication.

Suhoori, S. A. (2005). *Cancerinu Sufi Healing.* . Calicut: IIMS Publishers.

Sulfiqarali. (2012). *Muslim Navothanam: Charitravum Varthamanavum (Muslim Renaissance: History and Present)*. Calicut: KNM Publications.

Sullami, A. (2002). *Sunnat Jamathum Hadith Durvyakyanagalum (Sunnath Jamath and Misinterpretations of Hadith)*. . Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Sullami, A. (2004). *Mujahid Prastanavum Vimarshanakarum (Mujahid Organization and its Critics)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Sullami, A. (2005). *Muslingalile Anacharangal (Bad rituals among Muslims)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Sullami, A. (2008). *Tawheedum Nava Yadasthigarude Vyathiyanavum (Tawheed and the Deviations of the neo-Orhtodox)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Sullami, A. (2012). *Mujahidukalum Navayathashikarum: Vyathyasangal, Vyathiyanagal (Mujahids and neo-Orthodox: Differences and Deviations)*. Calicut: Mujahid Voice Publishers.

Sullami, K. M. (2010). *Prarthana Nitya Jeevithathil (Prayer in Everyday Life)*. Calicut: KNM Publication.

Sullami, U. (2004). *Prarthanakal Nithyajeevithathil (Prayers in the Daily life)*. Calicut: Yuvatha Books.

Taruvana, O. (2013). *Jinn Kayariya Tawheed (Tawheed Possessed by Jinn)*. Calicut: Ahlu-Sunna Books.

Thanveer, M. (2012). *Navothanathinte Oru Noottandu (A Century of Renaissance)* . Calicut: KNM Publications.

Ubaid, T. (2001). *Islamika Pravarthanam: Oru Mukhavura (Islamic Activism: an Introduction)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Ubaid, T. (2005). *Prashnagal Veekshanangal (Controversies and Positions)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Umari, J. (1997). *Rogavum Arogyavum (Illness and Health)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing House.

Uthman, M. (2011). *Manushyante Yathartha Shathru (The Real Enemy of Human)*. Manjeri: Insaf Publications.

Zainuddin. (2007). *Kerala Muslim Navothanam: Charitram, Varthamanam, Vimarshanam (Kerala Muslim Reform: History, Present, and Criticism)*. . Calicut: Kaizen Books.

.

Zainuddin. (2012). *Kerala Muslim Charitram: Nirmitha Sathyangalum Yadarthyangalum (Kerala Muslim History: Constructed Facts and Realities)*. . Calicut: Capitol Books.

Zainuddin, M. (2001). *Thuhafathul Mujahideen.* . Calicut: Al-Huda.

Arabic Text Books

Ibnu-Baz, A. A. (H.1412). *Majmu-ul-Fatawa: Fataw-al-Aqida (Collection of fatwas on theology by Ibnu-Baz)*. Riaz (Saudi Arabia): Darul Watan publishers.

Taimiyya, I. (2001). *Majmooathul-Fatawa (Collection of the Fatwas given by Ibnu-Taimiyya)*. Saudi Arabia: Centre for the Publications and Distributions.

Souvenirs, Special Issues, News Papers and Periodicals in Malayalam

Jamia, Nooriyya, Arabiyya Golden Jubilee Conference Souvenir, Pattikkad, 2013.

Mathrubhumi Daily News 03/07/1983

Mujahid State Conference Souvenir. Calicut, 1997.

Nusrathul-Anam (Malayalam monthly), Special Issue on *urukku* and *mantram*, 45 (3), March-2013.

Risala Magazine, May 5, 1995.

Samastha 85th anniversary Souvenir (Second Edition), Calicut, 2012.

Samastha 85th anniversary special issue on *ibadat,* and *Adrisya jnanam* (knowledge of invisible), Calicut, 2012

Sensing (Malayalam monthly), January-2013.

Video CDs

Thiruvanathapuram Kalayikkavila *mukhamukham* (face to face dialogue) Al-Noor Presentation, Calicut.

Kodampuzha *samvadam* (debate) Star Audios, Calicut.

Prarthana (Prayer): Rebuttal to Mujahids (oration with LCD Clippings), Echo Cassettes, Calicut.

Moovattupuzha *samvadam* (debate), Lubaba Media, Calicut.

Kattilpeedika *randam samvadam* (Second debate) (with LCD Clippings), Arafa Cassettes, Calicut.

Bibliography

Ahmad, A. S. (1987). *Toward Islamic Anthropology: Definition, Dogma and Direction*. Islamabad.

Ahmad, A. S. (1988). *Discovering Islam: Making sense of Muslims History and Society*. London: Routledge.

Ahmad, I. (1975). Unity and Variety in South Asian Islam. In D. Rothermund, *Islam in South Asia* . Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Ahmad, I. (1981). Introduction. In I. Ahmad, *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (pp. 1-20). New Delhi: Manohar.

Ahmad, I. (1983). *Modernization and Social Change among Muslims in India*. Delhi: Manohar.

Alam, A. (2008). Enemy Within: Madrasa and Muslim Identity in North India. *Modern Asian Studies, 42*, 605-627.

Asad, T. (1980). Ideology, class and the origin of the Islamic state. *Economy and Society, 9*(4), 450-473.

Asad, T. (1983, March). The Idea of Anthropolgy Of Islam. *Occassional Series Paper*, 1-28.

Asad, T. (1993). *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Bowen, J. R. (1993). *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

137

Bowen, J. R. (1998). 'What is "universal" and "Local": Communicating Multiple Identities of Muslim Communities. *Ethos, 26*(2), 258-261.

Cammann, S. (1969). Islamic and Indian Magic Squares. *History of Religions, 8*(3), 181-209.

Commins, D. (2006). *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* . London: I B Tauris.

Cooke, M. L. (1994). Method as Ruse: Foucault and Research Method. *Mid-American Review of Sociology, 18*(1), .47-65.

Dale, S. (1997). The Hadrami Diaspora in South Western India: The Role of the Sayyids of Malabar Coast. In U. Freitag, & W. C. Smith, *Hadrami Traders, Scholars and Statemen in the India Ocean.* Leidan: Brill Publications.

Dale, S. F. (1990). Trade, Conversion and the Growth of Islamic Community in Kerala, South India. *Studia Islamica,* 75 - 155.

Dale, S. F., & Menon, M. G. (1978). Nerccas: Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala. *Bullettin of School of Oriental and African Studies,* 523-538.

Davar, Lohokare, & Bhargavi. (2012). Recovering from Psychological Traumas: The place of Dargahs in Maharashtra. In S. V, & L. Abraham, *Medical Pluralism in Contemporary India.* New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.

Deblong-Bas, N. (2004). *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad.* . New York: Oxford University Press.

Diaz-Bone, R., Bührmann, A. D., Rodríguez, E. G., Schneider, W., Kendall, G., & Tirado, F. (2008). The Field of Foucaultian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments, and Perspectives'. . *Historical Social Research, 33*(1), 7-28.

Dinhaue, J., & Esposito, J. L. (1982). *Islam in transition: Muslim Perspectives.* New York: Oxford

University Press.

El-Tom, A. O. (1985). Drinking the Koran: the Meaning of Koranic verses in the Berti Erasure. *Africa: Journal of International African Institute, 55*(4), 414-431.

El-Zein, A. H. (1977). Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 6*, 227-254.

Faisal, K. P. (2010). *Rites of Passage among Muslims of Kerala: A Sociological Study on Texts and Practices (Unpublished PhD thesis).* New Delhi: Centre for the Study of Social System JNU.

Flueckiger, J. (2006). *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Foucault, M. (1963). *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception.* London: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1972). *Archaeology of Knowledge.* London : Routledge .

Francis, R. (2008). Islamic Reformism and Maternities in South Asia . *Modern Asian Studies, 42*(2/3), 259-281.

Frezzutti, L. (1981). Muslims rituals: the Household Rites v/s the Public Festivals. In I. Ahmad, *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (pp. 91-112). Delhi: Manohar.

Gangadaharan, M. (2004). *Mappila Padanangal (Studies on Mappila).* Calicut: Vachanam Books.

Geertz, C. (1968). *Islam Observed.* London: Yale University Press.

Geertz, C. (1966). *The Interpretation of Cultures Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Geertz, C. (1974). From the Natives Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological
Understanding. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 28*(1), 26-45.

Hajj, S. (2009). *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition; Reform, Rationality and Modernity.* Stanford:
Stanford University.

Hirschkind, C. (2001). Civic Virtue and Religious Reason: An Islamic Counterpublic. *Cultural
Anthropology, 16*(1), 3-34.

Hirschkind, C. (2001). The Ethics of Listening: Casettee-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt.
American Ethnologist, 28(3), 623-649.

Hirschkind, C. (2006). *The Ethical Soundscapes Cassete Sermons and Islamic CounterPublics.*
NewYork: Columbia University Press.

Burman, J. (1996). Hindu Muslim Syncretism in India. *Economic and Political Weekly, 31*(21),
1211-1215.

Javaheri, F. (2006). Prayer Healing: An Experiential Description of Iranian Prayer Healing,, Vol.
45, No. 2, pp. *Journal of Religion and Health, 45*(2), 171-182.

Kakar, S. (1982). *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and its
Healing Traditions.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Keller, R. (2006). Analyzing Discourse: an Approach from the Sociology of Knowledge. *Historical
Social Research, 31*(2), 223-242.

Kleinman, A. (1980). *Patients and Healers in the context of Culture: An exploration of the
borderland between Anthropology, Medicine, and Psychiatry.* Berkeley: University of
California Press.

Lapidus, I. M. (1997). Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the

Historical Paradigms . *Journal of the Economic and Social history of the Orient, 40*(4), 444-460.

Levi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Structural Anthropology*. Edmonworth: Penguin.

Malinowski, B. (1948). *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Norwich: Eletcher Son Ltd.

Miller, R. E. (1976). *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*. Madras: Orient Longman.

Mines, M. (1981). Islamization and Muslim Ethnicity. In I. Ahamd, *Religion and Rituals among Muslims in India* (pp. 65-90). Delhi: Manohar.

Madappally, M (2010). Knowledge and Power among Muslims in Kerala: a Sociological Study, Unpublished Mphil Dissertation, CSSS/SSS/JNU.s

Mommersteeg, G. (1988). He Has Smitten Her to the Heart with Love" The Fabrication of an Islamic Love-Amulate in West Africa. *Anthropos, 83*(4/6), 501-510.

Ortner, S. B. (2007). Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) . *American Anthropologist,, 109*, 786-798.

Osello, P., & Osello, C. (2008). Islamism and Social Reformism in Kerala, South India. *Modern Asian Studies, 43*(2/3), 317-346.

Rasanayagam, J. (2006). Healing with spirit and the formation of Muslim self-hood in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan. *The Jouranal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 12*(2), 377-393.

Rasanayagam, J. (2011). *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: The Morality of Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sanyal, U. (1996). *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Spoer, H. H. (1935). Arabic Magic Medicinal Bowls. *Journal of American Oriental Society, 55*(3),

237-256.

Tapper, R. (1995). 'Islamic Anthropology' and the 'Anthroplogy of Islam'. *Anthroplogical Quarterly, 68*(3), 185-193.

Varisco, D. (2005). *Islam Obscured* . New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Woodward, M. (1988). The "Slametan": Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam. *History of Religions, 28*(1), 54-89.