

**RECOGNIZED ARABIC COLLEGES OF KERALA:
A STUDY IN CURRICULUM**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled **RECOGNIZED ARABIC COLLEGES OF KERALA: A STUDY IN CURRICULUM** submitted by **MUHAMMAD LIAKATHALI KALATHIL**, centre of Arabic and African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of any other university.

This may be placed before the examiners for the evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Prof. M. A. Islahi
(Chairperson)

31/7/03

Dr. Z. Bari Azmi
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Dedicated to

My Beloved Father and Mother

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Muhammadliakathali Kalathil

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Chapter – I

Introduction

Though the formation of Kerala as a separate state was officially completed only in 1956, the southwestern costal area of the Indian subcontinent had been named so fore centuries. Many explanations are given for the logic behind this naming, among which two are very popular and worth mentioning. One is that it is derived from the Malayalam noun '*keram*', which means 'coconut'. The other one is that it is developed from the Arabic word '*khairalla*' (خير الله), which means 'treasure of God'. It is notable that the usage 'God's own country is becoming more popular now.

Historians cite to many evidences for establishing ancient ties of the state – even centuries before the Christ – with remote areas of the world. For many reasons the Arabs had an important role to play in all these international business. As a result, the Arabs and their offsprings, who were born in the state, spread there especially in the coastal cities and were called '*Mappilas*'. When Islam spread in the whole Arabian Peninsula and found its way to other countries and continents it did reach to this state also through the hands of these Arab merchants. Many different opinions are given about the advent of Islam in the state. But the historians are in agreement that, of all the places in India, Islam reached Kerala first.

After the advent of Islam they used the mosques to educate their children, where Arabic was given importance – on the lines of the system that was widely spread in Arabia following the model of the Prophet. The natives called this educational system as '*Palli darses*'. With their monopoly in the international marine trades and the paramount level of amity shown by the Hindu rulers of Kerala, especially by the Zamorines of Calicut, the Mappilas did not feel the absence of Muslim rulers in the state for patronizing these institutions.

But ever since Vasco Da Gama anchored his ship at Calicut in 1498, the Mappilas had to defend themselves from the foreign invaders. Since then a new era of resistance, strife and struggle against the barbaric atrocities unleashed by Portuguese invaders began. After Portuguese, it was the turn of French and English invaders who came to Kerala consecutively as traders but dealt with the Muslims seemingly in a crusaded mindset. Violent and brutal feudalism, which prevailed in the agricultural sector also did not give them solace, but made them plunge in poverty and stagnation. The centuries long resistance did produce its result in terms of backwardness and lack of development, especially in the educational field.

So much so that, the standards of *palli darses* started declining. Earlier it followed a curriculum, which included a number of religious and secular subjects (all in Arabic Language). In the last quarter of the 19th century the only education that a common Mappila got was the

knowledge to read and write Arabic and some basic lessons in Islamic Jurisdiction. Even for that, they had to spend five to ten years in primary religious schools, which were called '*othu puras*'. The *palli darses*, which were not common in all places, were the institutions for higher studies. Its curriculum was known as '*al-Silsilathu al Nisamiya*'. There was criticism against this curriculum that it lost a logical basis in the distribution of subjects in it.

Some reformist voices were heard firstly at the end of the nineteenth century. But the people had to wait till 1908 to a traditional *palli dars* system at Vazhakkadu (a small village near Calicut city) being switched over completely to a somewhat scientifically organized madrasa system. Chalilakath Kunh Ahmad Haji, who is considered as the father of reforms in religious and Arabic education in Kerala, was the man who wrote a new history in this field.

A cursory glance at the changes he had made in the traditional methods of Arabic and Islamic education will reveal his thorough understanding of modern educational perspective. Nonetheless, due to the increased resistance and opposition from the conservatives and orthodoxies, his experiment ended within six years, though it was highly successful and extensively fruitful. But the effects it made in the sphere of educational reforms among the Muslims of Kerala did not end with it. The '*Arabic College movement*' started in the very beginning of the nineteen forties is just one of them.

Kerala may be in the first position among the Indian states, if the popularity of the Arabic education is concerned. Thanks to the primary religious madrasa education which spread throughout the state, Muslim students in the state grow up literate in Arabic in their very childhood as they spend one or two hours in these madrasas - usually in the mornings. If a certain number of students want to study Arabic Language a teacher would be appointed for them in government or aided schools also. Moreover Arabic Language is taught in all the four general universities of Kerala – either directly or through the colleges affiliated to them.

In addition, there are some institutions established exclusively for higher studies in Arabic and Islamic subjects, which are known as 'Arabic Colleges'. In the nineteen forties itself, when the Arabic College movement started, three of these colleges got recognition from the University of Madras. This affiliation was shifted to Kerala University after the formation of Kerala state and to the University of Calicut in 1968. After giving rooms for gradual changes – mainly in its physical appearances – the courses followed by these Arabic Colleges (Afzal ul Ulama) are now full fledged Bachelor degree course. Moreover now it has a special PG course – 'MA (Post Afzal ul Ulama) in Arabic.'

Recognized Arabic Colleges of Kerala enjoy almost all facilities which are enjoyed by other colleges. In addition to the recognition for their course, the students participate in curricular and co-curricular activities launched by the University, the teacher's salary is paid by the

Govt. of Kerala and so on. Still there arise the demands for more facilities.

All the Arabic Colleges in Kerala are not recognized by the Government. The total number of Recognized Arabic Colleges is eleven among which two are affiliated to the Kannur Universtiy. The curriculum followed by all these Recognized Arabic Colleges is the same leaving some marginal changes between the two universities. Most of un-recognized Arabic Colleges follow the same curriculum of Recognized Arabic Colleges and prepare the students for the BA (Afzal ul Ulama) examinations as private candidates. But there are some other Arabic Colleges, which follow their own curricula to serve the educational objectives anticipated by them.

The present work is confined to the curriculum of Recognized Arabic Colleges – not that of others – for two reasons. Firstly, the study on the curricula of various Arabic Colleges, which differ each other in many of their features, is not possible in the given time schedule. Secondly, it is the curriculum followed by the vast majority of Arabic Colleges in the state.

The main objectives of this work are:

1. To examine how such a system - with all salient features of its curriculum - was developed only in this state.
2. To check the stages of curriculum reforms in the state in this field with a reference to its causes and effects.

3. To introduce the system to the people of other states.
4. To compare it with those similar systems in other parts of India.
5. To find out merits and demerits of the existing curriculum in the Recognized Arabic Colleges and to indicate possible solutions for overcoming the problems, if any, in the way of acquiring the educational objectives of the curriculum. A study in this kind will lead to further reforms of the curriculum in future and may help the curriculum planners.

Apart from the 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion', there are three chapters in this study. In the first chapter an attempt is made to sketch some details of the historical developments, which led to the spread of Arabic Language in the state. Instead of narrating the whole history of the state, or rather Muslims in the region, the effort is to examine specifically the educational activities, which occurred place through years in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Here, a special attention is paid to find the developments in this sphere in the first quarter of twentieth century and more distinctively, the characteristics of curriculum of *palli darses*, which was reformed completely into the curriculum of Arabic Colleges. Further, the fourth part of this chapter exclusively deals with the voices of reforms heard in this period and how they were consummated in '*Darul Uloom*' at Vazhakkadu.

First part of the second chapter, 'Development of Curriculum in Arabic Colleges', describes how the experiment at Vazhakkadu led to

the emergence of other Arabic Colleges in Kerala and how some of these Arabic Colleges earned the recognition of Madras University. The second part illustrates the development of curriculum in the Recognized Arabic Colleges under the universities of Madras, Kerala and Calicut. In the third part of this chapter a comparison is made between the Arabic College system in Kerala and the madrasa system in other parts of India.

The third chapter, which corresponds with the fourth objective, is exclusively a critical study of the existing curriculum in the Recognized Arabic Colleges. First part of this chapter is on the 'Languages and Literature', the second on other subjects and the third on the general aspects of the curriculum.

For gathering information for the first and second chapters, a wide range of books were read, majority of them were written in Malayalam Language. The researcher found that the literature and history books dealt with many of the details of Arabic and Islamic studies in the early stages of the spread of Islam, especially the research works are very less in number. The available materials hardly cite sound evidences or authentic references for many of its claims.

The details of the developments that took place in the ground since the last quarter of the 19th century are more clear from the books written by the British officials, Muslim historians and from the biographies of eminent reformists of that time. Moreover, the

clarifications over certain matters of that time could be sought from the scholars, who had first hand experiences for many of its details.

But in the third chapter, more data is needed than what exist today in the books written in the past because an analysis of the existing curriculum needs to be based on the opinions of teachers, students and educationists more elaborately. So the methods and sources, which serve these purposes and are totally different from those of the first two chapters, are utilized here. Some eminent educationists and senior teachers were interviewed and direct interactions were made with other teachers and students of different Arabic Colleges. In addition, the researcher conducted a survey among the students of the Recognized Arabic Colleges to give them a chance to represent their views more scientifically on the issues concerned to them.

Four of the eleven Recognized Arabic Colleges were selected at random. Around one half of the total students (also randomly selected) of these colleges were asked to respond to the questions in the questionnaire given to them. Their replies were then tabulated using appropriate methods. The principles and guidelines of the Educational Sciences are widely used for analyzing the problems and other aspects of the curriculum, which were identified with the help of these three groups i.e. the teachers, students and the educationists.

CHAPTER – II

**Arabic Studies in Kerala and its Relations
with the Arab World**

Ancient Ties of the State with the Arab World

Trade relation of Kerala with many far regions of the world can be traced back to centuries before Christ. Many unique products of the state attracted the attention of the people through out the world, as they were available only in the southwestern coast of India. Kerala was very famous for spices (including pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom) ivory and teakwood. Pepper, which was found mainly in the state, had a significant role in the world market as it was used to a great extend as a substitute for currency. Arabs had a leading share in all these trades.

Arab used to come to Malabar region of India centuries before the invasion of Great Alexander to India (B.C. 356-324). In old ages products from Malabar reached the southern coast of Arabia through the Persian Gulf. Arabian Caravans transported them to Thadmûr city of Syria and Alexandria of Egypt through Yemen and Hijāz. European traders brought them from there to their markets. Arabs, along with the people of Egypt and Syria, mediated the trade between India and Rome and Greece. Zafār City was situated in the shore of Hazramouth. Then the people of Zafār run business with Malabar directly.¹

It is understood from the Old Testament of Bible that the Israelites had been making trade relations with Malabar during the time of David and Solomon. Teakwood and ivory, which had been imported from Kerala, were used for modification of royal palaces of Solomon as

¹ Moulawi, C.N. Ahmad and K.K. Muhammed Abdul Kareem, *Great Tradition of Mappila Literature (Malayalam)*, published by the authors, Calicut, 1978, P. 8.

it is engraved on Shaldin stones.² The description of some Kerala products like pepper in some pre Islamic Arabic poems also supports this opinion e.g. Imra'ul Qays, in his famous *Mu'allaga*, says:

ترى بحر الأرام في عرصاتها وقيعانها كأنه حب فلفل

(You can see the digs of deer in its lawns and front yards as if they are seeds of pepper)

Referring to Rowlandson, Sturrock and Francis Day, Tara Chand concludes³ that the commerce by sea continued and Muslims made their settlements in three towns along the South Indian coast and in Ceylon. Muslim Arabs first settled on Malabar Coast about the end of the seventh century. C.K. Kareem⁴ cites a number of proofs for the presence of Muslim Arabs in this coastal area in the first century of Hijra.

Meanwhile, conversion of a Perumal (title of kings in Perumal Dynasty) to Islam gave a remarkable boost to the spread of Arabic and Islamic studies in the state. Since then, the Hindu rulers of the state gave a limited royal patronage for such activities. The historians bitterly differs each other in fixing the time and context of the conversion and the exact name of the king who had converted. According to the traditional accounts, which was spread among Muslims and Hindus of

² Sewell, Robert, *The Historical Inscriptions of South India*, Vol. I., P. 81, quoted as C. K. Kareem *Ancient Kerala and Advent of Muslims (Malayalam)*, I.S.A., Calicut. 2, 1999, P. 44.

³ Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Indian Press Publications, Allahabad, 1963. P.

⁴ Kareem, C.K., *op. cit.* P. 56-61.

Kerala, and was recorded in *Thuhfathul Mujāhidīn*⁵ and *Keralolpathi*,⁶ the incident occurred as it is summarized below:

A Perumal from Kerala came to know about Islam through some pilgrims who were going to marvel the so-called footprint shrine at Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka. He accompanied them to Mecca after dividing his kingdom among his kinsfolk. In his return to Kerala he fell seriously ill. In the brink of the death, he advised his Arab-Muslim colleagues to pursue their journey to Kerala and to conduct missionary works throughout the region by utilizing all favourable conditions in the state. To facilitate this, he sent with them a letter of instructions to the rulers of Kerala, whom he had appointed as his successors. He asked them to extend all possible helps for these missionaries. His body was buried in Muqalla city of Oman or in Zafār city of Yemen.

While almost all historians accept the validity of this story they differ on points of details regarding the time of its occasion. William Logan⁷ and many others believe that it was in 9th century – more precisely in 825 A.D. But the authors of 'Great Tradition of Mappila Literature' cite a number of seemingly valid evidences to establish that a king from Malabar had met the Prophet from Mecca and embraced Islam.⁸

⁵ Maqdūm II, Sheikh Zainudhin, *Thuhfathul Mujahideen (Arabic)*, Al Huda Book Stall, Calicut, 1996, P. 26.

⁶ Logan, William, *Malabar Manual (Malayalam)*, Government Press Madrass, 1951, Vol-I, PP. 192-193.

⁷ *Ibid.* PP. 194-196.

⁸ Moulawi and Kareem., *op. cit.* P. 105-124.

Considering these facts, C.K. Kareem reaches in to an opinion that the Perumal who accompanied the missionary group in the period of prophet and the Cheraman Perumal who went to Mecca after two centuries for self actualisation after dividing his nation, were different persons. The archives from Zamorins' *Kovilakam* (palace) also provide the same explanations.⁹ According to him "the grave, which was situated in Muqalla city is that of Bana Perumal, who embraced Islam first and the mosque and tomb which is situated in Zafār shore at Salāla State of Oman was that of last Perumal."¹⁰

Role of Arab Muslims in Popularising Arabic Studies in Kerala

The arrival of Muslim missionaries in the state with a written will of King Perumal was the main reason that led to the large and wide spread of Islam and consequently the Arabic studies, in this southwestern coastal area. They got all co-operations from the then rulers of the state who were successors to Perumal. They made a mosque in Kodungallur, perhaps the first of its kind in India, followed by nine other mosques in the main coastal cities of the region.¹¹

The next centuries witnessed spread of Islam in the whole state, especially in the coastal areas. Different reasons are indicated for this development:

⁹ Kareem, *op. cit.* P. 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* P. 80.

¹¹ Maqdūm II, *op. cit.* P. 28.

1. Pre Islamic Arab colonies existed in these port cities as a result of centuries long trade relations. Some of them converted to the new religion before the arrival of Mālik Group.¹² The rest also might have embraced Islam all at once.
2. According to Tara Chand, then South India was largely suffering from a multiple crises – Political, spiritual and social. He says “the mind of the People was perturbed and they were prone to accept new ideas from whatever quarter they came.”¹³
3. Conversion of Perumal might have drawn a tremendous good impression about the new religion among all kinds of people including the elite ones.
4. For the low caste Hindus, who converted to the new religion at large,¹⁴ it was a switch over from a completely neglected and discriminated life to a highly venerated one.¹⁵
5. Zamorins encouraged the conversion through which he desired stronger navies for his country.¹⁶

People of Mālabar, at least those who were directly linked with the business, must have learned many Arabic words and usages, which were essential for the pursuit of their business. But there is no evidence indicating the existence of any Arabic education system or

¹² Tara Chand, *op. cit.* P. 32.

¹³ *Ibid.* PP. 33-34.

¹⁴ Logan, *op. cit.* P. 197.

¹⁵ Tara Chand, *op. cit.* P. 35.

¹⁶ Logan, *op. cit.* P. 197.

institution before the advent of Islam. But after the spread of Islam the conditions changed. As the Arabic Language was inevitable in the day-to-day life of every common Muslim vis-à-vis to offer regular prayers, to read Qur'an and different hymns, the *Qāzis* of each mosque started conducting daily classes for the common people. Further, they had to train some 'interested youngsters' who could spend more time in studying and could teach the far dwelling people the necessary lessons. Qāzis used the mosques as centres of Arabic and Islamic education conducted by them. Hence the system was called '*palli darses*' or '*darses*' in short. ('*Dars*' means in Arabic 'lesson' or 'class' and the word '*Palli*' in Malayalam indicates a mosque or a sacred place.)

Though this is the story of *palli darses* as inferred from all traditional accounts, hardly there is any sound record about the details of the system in its early phases. The first description about the *palli dars* reaches us from the world traveller Ibn Bathûtha, who visited Kerala in 14th century A.D. His enlightenments reveal that the system was well established long before his visit.¹⁷

Thus it is understood that the first teachers of Arabic Language in Kerala were the scholars, who were appointed as *Qāzis* of first ten mosques built by Malik bin Dinar and his niece Malik bin Habîb. Umar Suhrwardi names seventeen Qāzis of Malabar in the early

¹⁷ Moulawi and Kareem., *op. cit.* P. 130.

phase of Islamic settlement in the region.¹⁸ Migration of Arab Muslims continued in large numbers through centuries. The main reason was the favourable conditions prevailed in the state. Sheikh Zainudhin acknowledges this in detail.¹⁹ Mas'udi, who visited India in the beginning of the tenth century (916 A.D.), found over ten thousand Arab Muslims of Sirāf, Oman, Basra and Baghdad at Seymore (the modern Chaul) beside numerous others who were children of Arabs, born there.²⁰ As a result, Arabic Language enjoyed the status of an 'Official Language' in the international marine trades of Malabar. Gundert reports that the letter brought by Vasco Da Gama to Zamorine of Calicut was written in Arabic.²¹

Among these migrants, there were a few families and individuals who were known for their scholarship and had a great share in the development of *palli darses*. All of them used this system for expanding Arabic and Islamic studies in the region.²² However, the system continued in an un-regularized and non-identical way till 15th century A.D.

¹⁸ Kareem, *op. cit.* P. 70.

¹⁹ Maqûdm II, *op. cit.* P. 35.

²⁰ Tara Chand, *op. cit.* P. 36.

²¹ Gundert, Herman, *Old Tradition of Kerala (Malayalam)*, Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company, Kozhikkode, 1996, P.5.

²² Faisi, Aboobacker Iringattiri (ed.), *Scholarship of Kerala (Malayalam)*, Samastha Kerala Jami'yathul Ulama – Ulama Conference committee, 1997, PP. 35-73.

Role of Maqdûm Family in Arabic Education

It was in the beginning of the 9th century A.H. that the well-known Maqdûm family arrived in Kerala from Ma'abar city of Yemen.²³ One scholar from the family, Sheikh Ali bin Ahmad al Ma'abari, became the Qāzi of Kochin followed by his brother Zainudhin bin Ibrahim bin Ahmad. The latter, after assigning his duty to some other scholar, moved towards Ponnani (Fannān, as used in Arabic) along with his nephew Sheikh Zainudin Maqdûm. Owing to the arrival of these two scholars Ponnani came to the limelight of Muslim history of Kerala, particularly in the sphere of Arabic education.²⁴

Three reasons can be cited for the rise of this family to the 'spiritual leadership' of Muslims in Malabar.

1. High level of scholarship prevailed in the family through generations, specifically in those who had been in the position of Maqdûm. To start with, Zainudin Maqdûm -I had spent several years in *al-Azhar* of Egypt, Mecca and Madīna and was the author of more than ten great works on different subjects including poetry. His son Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ma'abari, being educated mainly by his father, followed him in devoting the lifetime for the education and development of the community. Abdul Aziz's grandson, Sheikh Zainudin Maqdûm -II is the author of tens of great works including

²³ *Ibid.* P. 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.* P. 61.

Thuhfathul Mujāhidīn and *Fath'hul Mu'in*. Thus the ascendancy of Maqdūm Family continued.

2. Unlike many other scholars they came out from their barriers of 'monasticism' to the midst of the society to share its pains and sorrows, and to lead them in their crucial turning points, especially when their entity was questioned by the Portuguese invaders. For example, Zainudin Maqdūm-I wrote a poetical work against Portuguese aggressors, through which he encouraged the society to defend themselves. In his book, *Thuhfathul Mujahidīn*, Zainudin Maqdūm-II also discharged the same duty.
3. Zamorins, impressed by Maqdūms' scholarship and their influence over the society, considered them as representatives of Mappilas. They sought Maqdūms' help many times especially when they needed to develop good relation with Muslim rulers in other parts of India and those in Arab countries.²⁵

Their influence was evident from many grounds:

- A. The *dars* of Ponnani, which was undertaken by Maqdūms, was deemed to be the last destination of *Mutha'allims* (knowledge seekers). Only the Products of Ponnani were normally appointed in the higher posts like *Qāzi* and *Imām*. Significantly the study in

²⁵ Abdul Kareem, K. K. Muhammed, *About the Author* (introductory essay) (*Malayalam*), in Hamza C., *Thuhfathul Mujahideen Malayalam Translation*, Al-Huda Book Stall, Calicut, 1999, P. 22.

Ponnani *dars* was exclusively titled as “*vilakkath-irikkal*”(sitting by the lamp light).²⁶

B. As the products of Ponnani might have followed the same curriculum in the *darses* conducted by them also, the differences between the curricula in various *darses* of the state gradually became less observable.

C. Scholars of Ponnani had a significant role in the books taught in *darses*. For instance, the most common book in all *darses*, *Asharathu Kuthub*, is widely believed that they were notes and lectures drafted by various scholars of Maqdûm family.²⁷ Another *dars*-book, *Fath'hul Muin* was written by Zainudin Maqdûm-II. Moreover, printed notes, commentaries, and explanations of Ponnani scholars were also widely used for teaching many other books. Their name may be written on the books some times-but not always.

D. Before the rise of Maqdûm family the Arab migrants and the people influenced by them used the script of the places, where they belonged to, as it is evident from Kûfî Script used by Mappila witnesses in ‘*Thirisha Palli Edict*’ in 848 A.D.²⁸ But Ponnani scholars used for handwriting and printing a particular script which was slightly different from all other scripts used in the Arab world.

²⁶ Kanniyath, Abul Fazl Muhammad Musalliyar, interview on 11/12/02 at Farook.

²⁷ Abdul Kareem K. K. Muhammad, *Biography of Maqthi Thangal(Malayalam)*, Yuvatha Book House, Calicut, 1997. P. 28.

²⁸ Kareem, *op. cit.* P. 56.

II - Arabic and Islamic Studies in the State Before the Establishment of Arabic Colleges

Monopoly in the international marine trades and prosperous life of Mappilas shrank gradually in the state since Vasco da Gama anchored his ship at Calicut in 1498. Since then began a new era of resistance against barbaric atrocities unleashed by Portuguese invaders. After Portuguese, it was the turn of French and English invaders who came to Kerala consecutively. Many of them moved from coastal areas to rural ones to survive on agriculture. Violent and brutal feudalism, which prevailed in the agricultural sector did not give them solace, but made them plunge in poverty and stagnation.²⁹

British Government used their notorious policy of 'divide and rule' to suppress them. They misused the Hindu landlords, so that, any resistance against the government could be easily portrayed with communal colours. (History has witnessed tens of such outbursts, which ended later with famous Mappila rebellion of 1921). Scholars, leaders, literati, merchants, farmers and all member of Mappila society actively participated in this struggle. The centuries long resistance did produce its shortcomings in all development process, among which educational field was one of the roughly affected areas. They didn't realize that it

²⁹ Bahavudhin K.M., *Muslims of Kerala – A History of Struggle (Malayalam)*, I.P.H., Kozhikkode, 1995, PP. 91-122.

was with modern education and technology the Europeans won the battles and conquered the lands.³⁰

The scholars in the community, who were obliged to lead them towards progressive paths, were totally against modern education. They evidently misunderstood that to be educated by anybody other than Muslims is against the teachings of the religion. They misinterpreted the advice of Prophet Muhammad: من تشابه بقوم فهو منهم (Who he makes himself resembling with a particular creed, belongs to that creed only)

According to them English language was 'Language of Hell' and Pure Malayalam was 'Aryan Script'. So to learn any of them meant to go out of religion.³¹ William Logan Observes the educational conditions of Mappilas in the end of 19th century:

They are moreover, as a class, nearly almost, if not altogether, illiterate... The scruples of the parents prevent them from permitting their children to attend the vernacular schools of the Hindus... The teachers, being as illiterates as their pupils, except in knowledge of Koran recitation, usually employ Hindu youths to teach the pupils and so earn the result grants... The number of Mappilas who have advanced so far as to learn to read and write English in the schools, could very probably be counted on the fingers of two hands. The people, as a class, being thus ignorant, are very easily misled by designing persons, and they are of course as bigoted as they are ignorant.³²

He comments on their religious education: " The only education received is a parrot-like recitation of portions of the Koran,

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³⁰ Ibid. P. 88.

³¹ Moidu Moulawi, K, Interview with the author on 09/01/03 at Vanimal.

³² Logan, *op. cit.* P.198.



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which being in Arabic none of them understand.”³³ He further explains that their religious knowledge was confined to Islamic Jurisprudence. Thus the education among the Mappila community was confined to religious and Arabic Studies. According to Moidu Moulawi and Kanniyath, here were three main ways for that. 1) *Va'az* and *Urdu*. 2) *Othu palli*. 3) *Palli dars*.

Va'az and *Urdu*

Va'az and *Urdu* - two types of religious speeches - were part of informal education among the Mappila Community. *Va'az* is a lengthy religious speech by a *musalliyar* (a Mappila religious scholar) in the late hours of nights mostly inside the mosques or at the plots close to them. Usually the same *musalliyar* conducted it in forty to sixty nights consecutively as a series. Each speech normally ended after midnights only. The goal was to discharge religious education to the general public in a semi-organized way.

A typical *Va'az* begins with reciting the first chapter from Qur'an (سورة الفاتحة) and a congregational prayer. Then the speaker 'recites' an advice in Arabic, which starts: جددوا في كل وقت إيمان المعرفة وأدبوا في كل حال الحمد لله حمدًا Then comes another prayer, which starts: أداء شكر النعم... الخ كثيرًا يوافي نعمه ويكافي مزیده... الخ Then he enters to an introductory description which is known as '*thala-ibārath*' (head-text) - a common

³³ *Ibid.* P. 198.

narrative for all *Va'azes*. Then he introduces the topic of the day with all its importance. By this the first part of a *Va'az* ends. The second part usually covers Jurisprudential rules and regulations of the selected topic in its detail. Separate dates would be fixed for each subject, e.g.: regular prayer, fast, family life etc. Last two days were put exclusively for 'terrors of resurrections' and the 'holy wedding of prophet'. In the third part of a *Va'az*, *musalliyar* regales the audiences by narrating an attractive – and usually widely exaggerated- historic incident.

In a *Va'az* tone of the *musalliyar*, traditional and typical tune in narration, jesters and other superficial aspects won main attraction and impression from the audience. The *musalliyar* also would be more concerned about such things than the content matter as they were the determinant of the amount that he would get from the audience in the end.³⁴

An *Urdu* was an admonitory lecture took place inside a mosque usually after a congregational prayer (الصلاة الجماعة), in which a *musalliyar* would speak on any subject of his choice (though the deviation was very common). It usually continues from one *swalath* to another one, especially in Fridays and in the month of *Ramzan*. Tragic, miraculous or brave incidents of great persons would take major

³⁴ Moidu Moulawi. K. , *Memoirs(Malayalam)*, I.P.H., Kozhikkode, 1993, P. 93-97. And interview with the author.

portions of the speech. He advised the people occasionally on their personal and social life.³⁵

Moidu Moulawi recollects: “There was no need of reading ‘something new’ for drafting an *Urdu*. One could easily deliver an *Urdu* after hearing some similar ones. There were some well-known ‘*Urdu characters*’ like ‘Uj bin ‘Unq, Sham’ûnu al Gazi, Ibrahim bin Az’ham, Rābiyathul Adawiy, Maymûnathul Misriya etc. Any story, if attached to these characters, would work... Every one would know that the frequently repeated phrases ‘*khālallāhu*’ and ‘*khāla rasûlullāhi*’ respectively denoted ‘verses of Qur’an’ and ‘sayings of the Prophet’ – no matter whether they were really so. The only thing to be vigilant about was the audience would identify variation of the story in any point, from what they had heard earlier. ...As a result of hearing such *Urdis* frequently, their minds were overflowing with fables, myths, true and false explanations and the like. They largely misunderstood the religion. They were very prone to many superstitions and ill customs.³⁶

Othu pura

An *othu pura* or an *othu palli* is a shed where young Mappila children –boys and girls – earned their primary Arabic education. The main goal was to make the students capable to read and write Arabic. Hence it is called ‘*othu pura*’ (*othu* = reading, *Palli* = sacred place or

³⁵ *Ibid.* P. 8-11.

³⁶ *Ibid.* P. 9.

mosque, pura = home). However, fundamental lessons about the formalities of regular prayers and *Ramazan* fast were also discharged from these 'reading homes'. The lone teacher of an *othu pura* was addressed in different titles in various places, like *Musalliyar*, *Mulla*, *Mollakka*, and *Seethi*. A heterogeneous group of students, varying from five to ten years in their age and from ten to hundred in their total number, was the 'subject' in front of a *mulla*. He had to teach each student a different lesson from the other. The only teaching equipment that he used was a long stick in his hand.

A student studied names of Arabic letters using a Malayalam accent firstly. Like *alipe* (الف) *Ka:p* (قاف) *Ke:p* (كاف) etc. Then comes the vowel sounds and their signs in Arabic (فتح، كسر، ضم، سكون) followed by multiple letters (سدّ). Then they learned how to read a word by means of its letters. The first text, which a student learned in an *othu pura*, was a prayer: رب يسر ولا تعسر، رب زدني علماً وحلماً وفهماً وعقلاً كاملاً ، رب تمم بالخير والسعادة.

The traditional way was to read each word of a sentence by names of each letter with its sound. He had to recite, by heart, sounds of all letters from each word, like: (which can be translated roughly) 'ra' for 'ra', a multiplied 'ba' with 'bi', which is 'bbi', then it is 'rabbi' 'ya' for 'ya', a multiplied 'sa' with 'si', 'r' for 'ra' then it is 'yassir'.... And so on.

Student used a small wooden plank polished with clay-like mud to write the letter on it. When he had learnt to read - in the above manner - the last one part and some 'important chapters' of Qur'an like the chapters of 'Fāthiha', *Yasīn*, and 'Rahmān' he would be declared 'done'. It would take around five to ten years for a student to achieve this goal.³⁷

From the second half of the 19th century, British Government appointed some extra teachers in these 'reading homes' to teach them the mother tongue this was done on a condition that they will be paid their salary only they could make a good result.³⁸ But parents, students or even *mullas* were not interested in it. Many of these teachers (who were also known as 'Kurikkal') had to share their government grants with *Mullas* as a charge for their survival. There was no regular salary for *mullas* except what they got from each family sporadically in various stages of students' development and in some sacred days. Nor there was any committee to manage or monitor the *othu puras* other than the *mullas*.³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp.1-3. and Mahboob (ed.), *Jokes and Views of C. H. (Malayalam)*. Parksons Publications, Aluva. 1991, P. 18-25.

³⁸ Logan, *op. cit.* P. 197.

³⁹ Moidu Moulawi, *op. cit.* P.128-129. & Ahmad Kutti, E.K., *Arabic Language and Kerala(Malayalam)*, in *R.U.Assosiation and Arabic College Souvenir*, Farook, 1994, pp. 128-129.

Palli darses

Palli darses, or *darses* in short, were the only formal system prevailing in Kerala for higher studies in Arabic and Islamic subjects before the emergence of Arabic Colleges. The lone teacher who was called *usthad* or '*mudar'ris*' would sit on the floor on a sheet or a mat, in a particular place of the mosque. The students, who were called '*mutha'allims*' or '*musalliyar kutti*', would sit facing him and forming a half circle. When the number of students increased it was the duty of senior students to teach the junior ones. A student qualified to be admitted in a *palli dars* when he became capable to read and write Arabic.

Both *mudar'ris* and *mutha'allims* stayed in the mosques. One *mudar'ris* might be expert in teaching a particular subject or book while another was so in a different subject. So the migration of students from one *dars* to another one was a usual phenomena prevailed in this system. It is also observed that when a *mudar'ris* left a mosque for his own reasons his *mutha'allims* too accompanied him.⁴⁰

It was the duty of villagers to cater all members of the *palli dars* in their village. Behaviour of general public towards them varied from place to place, though by and large it was in a typical manner. People gave them all respects and high honour in the religious matters. At the same time they were extremely neglected and sometimes

⁴⁰ Kanniyath, *op. cit.*

humiliated in various domains of social life, where land lords, village chiefs and rich men were the masters.⁴¹ Total dependence of *dars* upon this creamy layer for its survival made its members incapable of defending their dignity. But, of course, there were a few *mudar'ris*, who had the ability even to challenge this socially dominant group. This was possible in view of their wide spread respect cutting across the geographical boundaries.⁴²

- III - Curriculum of *Palli darses*

The curriculum followed by the *darses* of Kerala was known as '*al Silsilathu al Nizamiya*.'⁴³ The details on the origin of this curriculum in Kerala are yet to be traced out. It is remarkable that many books from the '*Dars-i-Nizami*,' the well-known curriculum of Islamic religious institutions in Asia, are found in the above stated '*al Silsilathu al Nizamiya*'. Two assumptions can be made as the reason for this similarity. The first is that both might have originated somewhere in Arabia or Central Asia, spread to the two parts of India in different ways and then adapted changes according to the places they reached. The second is that some scholars might have introduced the syllabus to Kerala after its origin and spread in North India. Owing its origin form

⁴¹ Moidu Moulawi, *op. cit.* pp. 11-14.

⁴² Moidu Moulawi, *Interview*

⁴³ Moidu Moulawi and Kanniyath, *Interviews*.

Dars-i-Nizami, the very obvious variations in the curriculum, *al Silsilathu al Nizamiya*, are two.

1. The books used in Jurisprudence were totally different since the Muslims of Kerala were followers of Shafi'i school of thought.
2. The books used in Kerala for grammar teaching were mostly indigenous, though some other grammar books were common in both.

Then the books found in '*al Silsilathu al Nizamiya*' from the *Dars-i-Nizami* were those books on Mysticism (تصوف), Islamic Doctrines (عقائد), Geometry and Mathematics (رياضة), Philosophy (فلسفة), Basics of Jurisprudence (أصول الفقه) etc.⁴⁴

But even these books were not common in all *darses* because they apparently did not enter to the *Dars-i-Nizami* before completing their own curriculum, which was influenced by Ponnani scholars. In the long run, due to many defects (which are discussed later) appeared in the 'indigenous' syllabus of Kerala, students who reached to *Nizami* Syllabus declined gradually. But still 'the syllabus was called '*al Silsilathu al Nizamiya*.' So only the scholars, who devoted their lifetime in the pathway of knowledge, could have quenched their thirst by reading this books from their far destinations after spending tens of years.

⁴⁴ Nellikkuth Ismail Musalliyar, *Palli Darses and Arabic Colleges (Malayalam)*, in Jami'yathu Sunniya Othukkungal, Malappuram, *Al-Maqdûm-96*

The books and subjects taught in *darses* of Kerala in the first quarter of twentieth century are listed below in table numbers (1-1 to 1-4) The books listed in the tables do not mean that they were necessarily taught in *darses* in the same order nor they were classified strictly from primary to final levels.

Table No.II-1. Books of Darses in Primary level.

Sl.No.	Books	Subjects	Remarks
1	<i>Ma'arifathu al sugara</i>	Fundamental, esp. doctrinal aspects	Collection of these 12 books is most popular and common in all <i>darses</i> . It is known as 'Ten Books' (عشرة كتب), as last two were added later. Total number of pages of the collection is 90. Authors are unknown. But it is widely believed that they were collection of notes and lectures of scholars of Ponnani <i>dars</i> .
2	<i>Muthafar 'rid</i>	Jurisprudence (صلاة، زكاة، صوم، حج)	
3	<i>Ma'arifathu al Kubra</i>	Doctrinal	
4	<i>Mirqathu al Qulub</i>	Admonitory sayings on personal and social life, attributed to Prophet Muhammad.	
5	<i>Arkamu al Swalath</i>	Jurisprudence (كيفية الصلاة)	
6	<i>Nubdha</i>	Doctrinal	
7	<i>Arkamu al Iman</i>	Jurisprudence (كيفية الصلاة)	
8	<i>Arba'ina Hadith</i>	40 sayings attributed to the Prophet, mostly encouraging to worship by scaring (ترهيبى) and luring (ترغيبى).	
9	<i>Nûrul Absâr</i>	Jurisprudence (كيفية الصلاة)	
10	<i>Al Saum</i>	Jurisprudence (صوم، عيد، وغيره)	
11	<i>Mathmu al Bahoori</i>	Doctrinal	
12	<i>Fathhu al Qayyû:m</i>	A poem advising the disciples about the dignity of the knowledge	

Source: 1) Interview with Kanniyath, Abul Fazl Muhammad Muscā'iyar.

Table No. II-2. Books of Darses in Secondary level.

	Books	Subjects	Remarks
1	<i>Mizān</i>	Conjugation and related grammar	Author unknown
2	<i>Ajnās al Sugra</i>	„	„
3	<i>Ajnās al Kubra</i>	„	„
4	<i>Zanjān</i>	„	„
5	<i>Avāmil</i>	Grammar	„
6	<i>Thaqwimu al Lisan</i>	„ (Metrical form)	Author Sheikh Omar bin Vardi and commentator Zainuḥ Maqdūm-I
7	<i>Qatharu al Nada</i>	Grammar	A commentary of Sheikh <i>Uthmanu al Fannani</i> to the book, ' <i>Ainul Huda</i> of Sheikh ibn Hisham.
8	<i>Kifayathu al Awam</i>	Poetry	
9	<i>Riyādu al Badhī'a</i>	Prose	
10	<i>Umdathu al Sālik</i>	Jurisprudence	

Source: 1) Interview with Kanniyath, Abul Fazl Muhammad Musalliyar.

Table No. II-3. Books of Darses in Higher level

	Books	Subjects	Remarks
1	<i>Alfiya</i>	Grammar	1000 metric lines of Ibn Malik
2	<i>Fath'hu al Mu'in</i>	Jurisprudence	Author Zainudin Maqdūm-II widely respected as a lone indigenous work in jurisprudence in accordance with <i>Shafi'i</i> school.
3	<i>Thuhfathu al Ikhvan</i>	Rhetoric (علم البيان)	The book contains a bold text, its commentary and some notes of Imām Sawi. It is difficult to say which is belonging to the named author Shihābudīn Ahmad bin Muhammad - bold text or commentary.
4	<i>Mirqāth</i>	Logic	The author is Moulana Fazal al Khairabadi. Commentary (مرآة) is of Muhammad Imadudhīn al Shaikūni.
5	<i>Al Thasreeh</i>	Logic	The book contains a bold text, commentary and explanatory notes. Authors are un known.

Source: 1) Interview with Kanniyath, Abul Fazl Muhammad Musalliyar.

Table No. II- 4. Books of Darses in Final level.

	Books	Subjects	Remarks
1	<i>Mukhtasar</i>	Rhetoric (علوم البيان والبديع والمعاني)	Sheikh sa'adudheen al Thanthazani.
2	<i>Sharahu al Thahzib</i>	Rhetoric (-----)	Moulana Abdul Hakeem
3	<i>Minhāj</i>	Doctrinal	Imam Gaza.li
4	<i>Jalālayn</i>	Commentary of Qur'an.	Imam Jalaludheenu' Suyu:thi and Imam Jalaludheenul Mahalli
5	<i>Azkiya</i>	Admonitory poems on good character and Sufism.	Zainudin Maqdûm-I
6	<i>Thuhfathu al Muhthāj fī Sharahi al Minhāj</i>	An authentic work in <i>Shāfi'</i> i school of jurisprudence.	Better known as 'Thuhfa'. The author is Imam Ibn Hajar al Haythami.
7	<i>Ihyā' Ulûmu al Dhīn</i>	Doctrinal, esp. on Sufism.	Imam Gazāli.

Source: 1) Interview with Kanniyath, Abul Fazl Muhammad Musalliyar.

It was the *mudar'ris* who determined what to teach and when. He might also delete some of them.⁴⁵ Normally, thanks to their 'piety', the students did not 'dare' to read a book themselves with out the help of an 'usthad'. Even if they do so, they would not be ready to teach those books to their students without consulting their teachers.

Merits and Demerits of Dars Curriculum

In this analysis only the curriculum, which existed in *palli darses* of Kerala in the first quarter of the twentieth century, is included. This is significant because it was this curriculum that was reformed for Arabic Colleges later. Taking it as a whole it can be said: "The studies were book oriented. *Alfiya* was studied only for the sake of learning

⁴⁵ Kanniyath, Interview.

alfiya, *Fath'hul Mu'in* was for *Fath'hul Mu'in's* sake. It is said almost correctly that to learn the subject matter was the second goal and to acquaint with the book was the first goal."⁴⁶ As a result, assessment of a student depended upon the books he had read – no matter what knowledge he had acquired. To worsen all, there was no other evaluation process in the system.

Another major defect of the *dars*, as a system, was the over consumption of time. A student get admission to a *dars* after spending around five to ten years in an *othu palli* to learn reading and writing Arabic. It would take another ten or more years for completing secondary level books in a *dars*. Each small book would take at least a year. A student was not allowed to read two books simultaneously, especially under the same *usthad*.

Arabic as an Active Language: Considering the *palli darse* as institution for higher studies in Arabic Language, its failure in promoting Arabic as an active language can be noted at a glance. Only such books got importance in the curriculum as part of Arabic studies, which contained dry and painstaking grammatical rules. Years were lost learning the same rules from different books – sometimes metrical otherwise prosaic – as old wine in new bottle. For example, nine among eleven in secondary level were such books. In higher level, students had to learn *Alfiya* from its first line to last line and vice-versa.

⁴⁶ Moideen, K. Veeran, *Late Coming Revelation(Malayalam)*, in, Markaz 10th Anniversary Souvenir, 1996, P. 69.

Consequently, the products of *darses* totally failed in reproducing an idea in their own sentences. Muhammad Kuttasseri describes it in a comparison with Arabic Colleges: "One of the defects seen in the *darses* was that they ignored the importance of communicative, modern and literary aspects of the language." According to Moidu Moulawi: "The 'stuff' taught as part of 'Arabic studies' in *palli darses*... would help them, in its maximum, to understand the literary meaning of the prescribed text and its implication. They do not practice to communicate their ideas by using the language - written or spoken... They cannot dive in to the vast ocean of Arabic Language and to plumb its depth. They do not even dream such an experience."⁴⁷ Since there was no ample number of books in Arabic Literature and even studies in Qur'an and Hadith were not many, the grammar like learning of *Balāga* (Rhetoric Studies) also could not have drawn much benefit.

Theological Subjects: The similar irregularities in the form of skewed distribution of importance to each subject are very evident in religious subjects also. Qur'an and Hadith were among the mostly neglected subjects. It was in the end phase of Final Level a Qur'an Commentary - the *Jalalayn* - came in front of the students. That also was taught merely to weigh up the vocabulary of the students. There was scarcely any discussion about the content matter of the book or

⁴⁷ Moidu Moulawi, *op. cit.* P. 92.

from its literary perspective. Moidu Moulawi recollects: “I asked a gentleman who completed reading *Jalalayn*. ‘O.K. What did you study from that great book?’ His replay was: ‘Hei, it was not to study something new. I read it just to check whether I could read it correctly as an Arabic text. After all, is there something new in that book to study? Only four out of six obligatory do’s of ablution (أركان الوضوء) are mentioned in it. Then the laws of inheritance?! They are also incomplete.”⁴⁸

In Hadith, none among the six genuine collections (الصحيح (الستة) were included in any level of the education. The book *Mirqāthul Qulūb* and *Arba’ina* Hadith contains sayings which are criticized as ‘baseless’ and ‘falsely attributed’ to the Prophet, as the names of reporters were not cited. The said *Riyāzu al Sālihīn* (in Final Level) was taught in a small number of *darses*.

Meanwhile, Islamic Jurisprudence got over representation in the *dars* curriculum. Six books in *Asharathu Kuthub* dealt with the same questions (المسائل الفقهية). The same views were recorded in *Umda’* (Sec. Level), *Fathhu al Mu’in* (Higher Level) and *Thuhfa* (Final Level) in an extensive manner. All these books were written in accordance with *Shafi’i* School. A simple and comprehensive book in Primary Level and another referable work in Final Level could have replaced all these books.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 38.

Other Related Subjects: It was the History, a very important subject that could not find a place in the curriculum, which it extremely deserved. The *mutha'allims* were totally unaware about the great history of the Arabic Literature and Islamic Culture. Compared to the dearth of books in many other important subjects, Logic got an over consideration. It is pointed out by many analysts that the books used for teaching rational and developing subjects in some *darses* apart from the books listed in the tables were centuries old and out dated.⁴⁹

Merits: In the same time, an injustice should not be shown to this system by withstanding its merits. By repeatedly reading grammatical rules and theories, the skill of *palli dars* products in grammatical analysis of Arabic texts was so competitive. They could analyse a text – word by word – by citing related rules and theories—metrical and prosaic – by heart. Their skill in conjugation of odd words to its various forms is also outstanding. In Jurisprudence, they could point out solutions for highly complicated or even imaginary problems, though they could hardly cite references from Qur'an and Hadith. Their competence in logic is also widely appreciated. Debates of scholars from *palli darses* on different subjects - from petty questions of jurisprudence to the highly sensitive doctrinal issues – revealed the audience their towering competence in the subject.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 91-92.

⁵⁰ Kanniyath and Moidu Moulawi, Interviews.

IV

Establishment of First Arabic College

Voices of Reform

The sad state of affairs in the Arabic and Islamic Studies continued in all the three institutions mentioned above, presumably till the end of 19th century. It was Sheikh Thanauulla Maqthi Thangal (1847-1912) who raised his voice against it. Maqthi Thangal, author of more than forty books, was educated both in regular school and *palli darses* and was a scholar in Arabic, Hindustani, Persian and Tamil languages other than Malayalam. Moreover, he was one of the most eminent reformists ever produced by Kerala. He carried out the struggle for modification of Arabic educational system in the state as one of the vital issues of his lifelong comprehensive reform mission.

He clearly identified the vast areas in the educational sector where reforms were needed. He says about *othu pura* system: "...so, a black board must be there in an *othu pura*. Teachers have to teach the single letters first, then how to join them... That means the students should be divided into separate classes according to their standards..."⁵¹

He raised his voice against the over representation, given to Jurisprudence in *palli darses*: "Take the case of 'Ten Books' (عشرة كتب), which is also an aggression on (students' personal) rights. All its

⁵¹ Maqthi Thangal, *Maqthi's sorrow* (Malayalam), quoted as K.K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem., *Biography of Maqthi Thangal*, Yuvatha Book House, 1997, P. 25.

contents should not be learned by every one necessarily.” He explained that if such subjects had been taught in a better way it would have been learned in a shorter period.⁵² He took his strong exception against the way the grammar was taught. “Immediately (after the Ten Books) *Moulawi* leads him (the student) to the vast ocean of grammar and dip him in it. Many of them drop out and a few others continue firm.”⁵³

Arabic script was used for writing Malayalam in *palli darses* and *othu puras*, which was known as ‘*Arabi-Malayalam*.’ It was he who aimed to modify that script using a more convenient method. He was very frustrated about the attitude of *musalliyars* towards English and Malayalam Education. “*Musalliyars* from north (Kerala) to south were in consensus that both Malayalam as the ‘Hindu language’ and English as the ‘Language of hell’ were against the religion. An uneasy struggle was needed to avert them from this dangerous situation.”⁵⁴ He questioned the ‘infallibility’ of Ponnani education in its totality. “It is only an arrogance to think that there is no educational system better than that of Ponnani, that it is un-Islamic to use a language style other than that of *Musalliyars* and that to read and write pure Malayalam is against the religion.”⁵⁵

Obviously he had to face a strong protest from the conservative corners who opposed him without pondering on his vision. The poetic

⁵² *Ibid* P. 30.

⁵³ *Ibid* P. 29.

⁵⁴ *Ibid* P. 25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid* P. 31.

lines used by him to illustrate sharply his opponents, who had had their own vested interests, became a hit of that time.

“Neither they have gone
Crossing the kitchen zone
To meet a skilled one
Nor they have read a treatise
But still they issue decrees”.⁵⁶

Though he was the pioneer among Muslim scholars in the state, who was noticed for his advocacy of reforming Muslim educational systems as a whole, he could not institutionalise his views and thoughts because of his preoccupation with missionary and related issues.

A Seminar on Educational Reforms

Meanwhile a seminar was held at Kuttichira in Calicut City to discuss the educational backwardness of Muslims in the state and the measures needed for the restructuring of *dars* and *othu palli* education. The seminar, which was participated by a large number of Muslim educationists and scholars and convened by the deputy inspector (education), Bava Master, seriously analysed why the *palli dars* students could not use Arabic as school students used English.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* P. 32.

⁵⁷ Moulawi, Muhammad Sageer, *History of Madrasa Movement (Malayalam)*, in Hasan K. A. Siddique, (ed.), *Prabhodhanam special issue*, Islamic Service Trust, Kozhikkode, 1998. P. 61.

Darul Ulûm at Vazhakkadu

It was Chalilakathu Kunh Ahmad Haji,⁵⁸ who had fought a silent revolution in the history of religious education in Kerala and who won it. He was appointed as *Sadar Mudar'ris* (head teacher) in a famous *Palli dars* at Vazhakkadu, a small village near the Calicut City, in the year 1908⁵⁹ or 1909⁶⁰. The manager Moitheen Kutti Haji appointed Kunh Ahmad Haji to that post to raise his *dars* above the standard-level of other *darses*.

The new principal was apparently highly motivated by the curriculum and methods adopted by *Madrassa Lathweefiya* in Tamil Nadu, where he had been educated, and a supporter of views enlightened by Maqthi Thangal. After the above-mentioned seminar both the *Mudar'ris* and the new Manager, Haji Khan Sahib, determined to institutionalise the progressive and reformist views of Kunh Ahmad Haji in their *dars*. Thus a new chapter was opened at Vazhakkadu, which became a milestone in the history of educational and socio-religious development of Muslims in Kerala. There were three domains for the reforms he has made in the *dars* system.

⁵⁸ He studied Malayalam and a little bit of English from a primary school in Calicut, got educated from different *palli darses* of Kerala and migrated to Velloor of Tamil Nadu to study in Madrasa Baquiyathu Swalihath followed by Madrasa Latheefiya. Along with Malayalam and Arabic he became well versed in Persian, Hindustani and Tamil Languages. He was reportedly the first Kerala student who successfully completed his studies in Latheefiya Madrasa,

⁵⁹ Moideenkutti, A.B., *Moulana Chalilakath and Darul Ulûm (Malayalam)*, in K. A. Hasan (ed.), *op. cit.* P. 65.

⁶⁰ Moulawi and Kareem, *op. cit.* P. 484.

1. The Escape from Messy Management

He clearly identified that the root cause of many defects in *dars* system emanates from messy conditions in management and administration and that by reforming these two ones the *darses* could restore its lost glory and dignity. The very re-naming of the *dars* was done in this direction. Its early name, '*Thanmiyathul Islam Dars*' was replaced with '*Madrassa Darul Ulûm*' aiming to make the *dars* as higher as famous Arabic institutions in India. They were Darul Ulûm at Deoband, Darul Ulûm Nadwathul Ulama at Lucknow and Darussalam at Umarabad). The food and residence of students and staff were arranged in hostels and in family quarters respectively, so that they did not have to knock the doors of rich people for the same.⁶¹

Pre-qualification and age limit for admission, time of teaching on period basis, duration of vacation, leave procedure, attendance of students and all other rules and regulations were rationalized and rigorously listed in a byelaw released in 1913.⁶² The byelaw had rules about the admission: "So if a student comes for admission he would be examined thoroughly and would be admitted to a class appropriate to his level of knowledge". The total number of classes was ten according to the bi-law.⁶³

He divided the students according to their learning levels. There were three types of students in the *madrasas*. The first group was some

⁶¹ Moideen Kutti, *op. cit.* PP. 65-66.

⁶² *Ibid.* P. 65-66.

⁶³ Moideen Kutti, *op. cit.* P. 65.

famous young scholars who came to Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm to learn those subjects, which were not taught in the *darses* of Kerala. The students in the second row were not so famous though they also had done their studies in many other *darses*. The third group comprised of children, mainly from adjacent places, who could only read and write Arabic.⁶⁴ Kunh Ahmad Haji arranged classes for them in the morning and appointed his skilled senior students as teachers of these students.⁶⁵

Thus he could scientifically institutionalise Arabic studies from its vagueness in *dars* system.

2. New Books and New Subjects

His axe of reform fell heavily on the syllabus. He himself describes what he has done to change the method of teaching Arabic: "We had been thinking of initiating a new system of teaching Arabic by bringing books from Egypt, Bayroth, Lahore, Aligarh and Delhi, which were sketched in a renewed and progressive style. We did do it in Vazhakkadu *Madrassa*."⁶⁶ Instead of accepting these books in their existing forms, he himself authored many new books to be suitable to Kerala students using the same educational methods and techniques to make the language learning active and pragmatic.

He added many new books and subjects into the syllabus Commentaries of Qur'an, Hadith, Mysticism, Logic, History,

⁶⁴ Abdul Kareem, K.K. Muhammad., *K.M.Moulawi Sahib (Malayalam)*, al-Kathib Publications, Thiroorangadi, 1985. P. 53-58.

⁶⁵ Moulawi, Sageer, *op. cit.* P. 62.

⁶⁶ Kunh Ahmad Haji in a public notice issued by him, quoted Moideen Kutti, *op. cit.* P. 62

Geography, Astronomy, Engineering, Mathematics and Malayalam Language, were among those subjects, which had not been common in *darses* and were introduced newly in Vazhakkadu.⁶⁷ Through these reforms Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm became the only 'all in one institution' in the state for such subjects.

Unlike *darses*, class timings were fixed in period basis as it was in other modern educational institutions, so that the students could study different subjects in different periods and did not have to wait for completion of one book to start another one.

3. New Tools and Methods for Teaching

He introduced new types of educational equipments in his institution. These included chalks, black boards, benches, desks, tables etc., which were very common in other institutions and totally strange in *darses*. Contrasting traditional methods of teaching, the standing *mudar'ris* had to teach the students who were sitting face to him. As teaching aids, he used globes, maps, atlases, and books of pictures of animals etc. It was he who introduced Kerala the famous dictionaries like *al Munjid*, *al Qāmûs* and *Lisānu al Arab to Kerala*.⁶⁸

End of Vazhakkadu Episode

Even though Madrasathu Darul Ulûm at Vazhakkadu was the product of the series of reforms made in the *dars* system, by 1914 the only similarity between other *darses* and the Darul Ulûm was that both

⁶⁷ Moulawi and Kareem *op. cit.* P. 485.

⁶⁸ Abdul Kareem, *op. cit.* P. 59.

were discharging the same Arabic and Islamic education. As a result, the reforms did provoke the conservatives and orthodoxies. And they revolted against the each point of modification. Malayalam Language had been declared taboo (*harām*) for a long time since it was 'Aryan Script'. Writing of Qur'anic verses on the black board was portrayed as a humiliation of the Holy Book, because the chalk dust, by which the Qur'an had been written, might be treaded on. Sitting of students in front of the standing teacher was viewed discourteous. Translation of the Qur'an was also slammed by many sources. Lobbying against the new system increased day by day and the Manager was warned to be questioned in the Day of Judgment for using *waqf* endowments for un-Islamic purposes⁶⁹.

The manager of the *madrasa* discussed the matter with Kunh Ahmad Haji. Haji indicated to invite some eminent scholars to the *madrasa* to examine the standard of the students. The scholars, who came for inspection, were highly impressed by the standard of the students and were exceedingly satisfied. Even so, in the discussion held after the inspection, there were some differences about the reservations raised by some corners 'whether it was allowed to use *waqf* endowments for teaching 'non-Islamic' (not 'un-Islamic') subjects like Geography and Malayalam. This made the manager in a dilemma, which ended in departure of Kunh Ahmad Haji from Vazhakkadu.⁷⁰ Haji himself

⁶⁹ Moidu Moulawi, Interview.

⁷⁰ Moideen Kutti, *op. cit.* P. 67.

describes the story: "We had been thinking about starting education in such a new method. We did start it in Vazhakkadu. But we had to abandon it due to some obstacles caused by misadvises of some *musalliyars*."⁷¹

⁷¹ Moulawi, Sageer, *op. cit.* P. 62.

Chapter III
Evolution of Curriculum in Recognized
Arabic Colleges

Emergence of New Arabic Colleges

Though the *madrassa* at *Vazhakkadu* was reverted to the traditional *dars* system in a short period, the tremendous effect of that experiment over the reformist movements in the state was far reaching. Influences of Vazhakkadu experiment can be divided into three categories.¹

1. The emergence of *madrassa* movement in Kerala in the field of primary religious education.
2. The socio-religious reforms lead by the products of Vazhakkadu *Darul Ulûm*.
3. The emergence of new Arabic Colleges in the state.

1- Madrasa movement

It is true that the opposition and the protest from some sections of the society was the reason behind the reverting of Madrasa Darul Ulûm back to the old *dars* system. But many local leaders and scholars, who impartially analysed the result of rationalizing the curriculum, came to support this thought. Needless to say, it was not easy to establish an institution like Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm in their villages. Lack of fund, books and efficient teachers were the main obstacles. But they introduced the new system in a less risky field i.e. their primary

¹Hasan. K.A Siddique, (ed.), *Prabhodhanam special issue (Malayalam)*, Islamic Service Trust, Kozhikkode, 1998. P. 61. and Moidu Moulawi, K., *Memoirs*, I.P.H., Kozhikkode, 1993, PP. 93-97.

religious schools – *othu puras*. They called the same as '*madrassa*', just to differentiate them from traditional *othu puras*. Haji had been conducting the primary classes in Vazhakkadu only two or three hours in the morning. The same timing was also adopted in the new *madrassas*. After the end of Vazhakkadu chapter, Haji and his disciples extended all possible helps for the spread of *Madrassa* Movement in Kerala.

Altogether, a '*madrassa*' in Kerala denotes a primary religious institution, which functions only for around two hours, especially in the morning. It does not interrupt regular schooling of the students, and at the same time discharges the mission of 'primary religious education for all'. This movement is viewed as one of the important reasons behind the better educational awareness among the Muslims of Kerala when compared with other parts of India.

2 - Socio-Religious Reforms

Majority of Haji's disciples had been well known as scholars among the people even before they joined Vazhakkadu. Apart from the plenty of knowledge, an innovative mind and a reformist thought were the most important things they got from Vazhakkadu. It is noteworthy that the alumni of Vazhakkadu were the forerunners of all socio-religious movements among the Muslims of Kerala henceforth. K.M.Moulawi, E.K.Moulawi, P.K.Moossa Moulawi, E.Moidu Moulawi, M.C.C.Abdul Rahiman Moulawi, M.C.C. Hassan Moulawi (both sons of Haji) are some of the scholars worth mentioning among them. When

these leaders were moving in the *Salafi* school of thought Moulana Khuthubi Muhammed Musalliyar, Tharakkandi Abdul Rahiman Musalliyar etc. were among the leaders of *Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathu al Ulama*- the traditionalist movement in the state.

3-Emergence of New Arabic colleges

The social, political and economical conditions of Kerala Muslims were not favourable enough to establish new institutions like Darul Ulûm. Not because of that the people did not desire it; but it needed a huge amount to institutionalise such innovative ideas. Kunh Ahmad Haji could manage to do it only because his domain was Vazhakkadu, which was managed by a progressive personality and was enjoying a huge endowed *waqf* land in its favour. Even so, he could not pursue his endeavour more than six years, and then it is better not to think about ordinary villagers.

After all, the Malabar region experienced a different kind of social disaster after the year 1914. The nationwide *Khilafath* and non-cooperation movements gave an acute momentum for the ongoing struggles of *Mappilas* against the British policies in the region. Once the mutiny ended in a disastrous climax in 1921, the scholars and leaders became pre-occupied with healing the wounds of the community and protecting the hundreds of widows and orphans.

Progressive thinkers of the community, including the disciples of Haji, felt that the society was badly in a need of an all-round awareness

campaign and a reformist movement in all their social, religious and educational spheres. As a result, they broadened the domain of '*Aikya Sangam*' (a local body in Kodungallur for settlement of internal differences among Muslim families) to the whole state. Later in 1924, it merged into the pioneer scholars' body in the state – *Kerala Jam'iyathu al Ulama*. It is noteworthy that each and every initiative introduced by these scholars was opposed with tooth and nail by the conservatives. Common people were provoked against them by all means including decrees of apostasy.

Despite all these hurdles, some endeavours for founding new Arabic Colleges are reported in this duration. It would not be true to say that the only motivation behind these struggles was Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm. But its influence was very visible.

First Ventures for New Arabic Colleges

First such an endeavour may be that of Sheikh Mahin Hamdāni Thangal in Thiruvithankur. He had a track record of progressive writings and founding educational and social movements in different places of South Kerala. When he was a nominated member of Sree-Moolam Assembly in Thiruvithamkur, he founded an organization – Muslim Conference – for the educational enhancement of Muslims. He managed to get a land of eight acres endowed by the government to found 'an institution like Aligarh.' But he could not succeed in his struggle till his

death in 1922.² Later, this plan was renewed by Vakkam Abdul Khadir Moulawi, another veteran reformist, But he also had to satisfy himself with some other educational institutions.³

Approximately in the same time, Muhammad Abdul Rahman Sahib, one of the most familiar icons of that time in political, social and religious activities, made another attempt in North Malabar to establish such an institution. Jamia Millia Islamia, founded by National Muslim Leaders, tremendously impressed the man, who was among the forerunners of freedom struggle, later rose up to the presidency of *Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee* and was executed by British Government. Using his capacity as secretary of State Khilāfath Committee, he sought the help of Central Khilāfath Committee for the purpose. With a positive response from them, he started an Arabic institution in Valapattanam Township of North Malabar. But due to the emergency situations, which floated up in the aftermath of Mappila Mutiny in 1921, he could not keep it on functioning.⁴

First Attainments

In the beginning of the thirties Pangil Ahmad Kutti Musalliyar took the charge of an old *palli dars* in Tanur (Malappuram Dt.) and partially converted it to a college re-naming it as *Kulliyathu Islahul Ulûm*. Details of its functioning at that time are not available. After

² Hasan, K.A. Siddique (ed.), *op. cite*. P. 48.

³ Seethi Sahib K. M., *Vakkam Abdul Khadir Moulawi*, in Hasan K. A. Siddique(*Malayalam*), *op. cite*. P. 53.

⁴ Rasheed, M., *Contributions of Sahib and al-Ameen (Malayalam)*, in Hasan K. A. Siddique, *op. cite* P. 56.

passing through a number of ups and downs, it is still functioning as a popular Arabic College.⁵

In the beginning of the forties, students from Kerala who desired a collegiate Arabic education needed to travel to Umarabad, Madras, Velloor, Deoband or Lucknow. It was at this time Moulana Abussabah Ahmad Ali, who had been fortunate to have his education in al Azhar University of Egypt – an exceptional case in the then Kerala – came back to the state. The man, who cherished in his mind many dreams about a multifaceted complex of various educational institutions, started - as a first step - an Arabic College at Anakkayam (Malappuram Dt.) in 1942. The college was shifted to Manjeri in 1944 and to Farook in 1945. After giving birth to many other institutions in the campus, the College is still functioning excellently.⁶

Sheikh I'zudhin Moulawi assured his teachers in Madrasa Darul Salām at Umarabad, that he would try to establish an institution in Kerala similar to the one found in Umarabad. He commenced his 'pilgrimage' to find lands and sources for the institution - speaking to the public, talking to the leaders and encouraging the rich men. In 1940, he started a new organization named *South Karnataka Jam'iyathu al Ulama* and commenced religious classes in a mosque at Chemnad. By

⁵ Al-Qasimi, Abdul Gafoor Abdullah, *al-Muslimoona fi Kairala (Arabic)*, Akmal Book Centre, Malappuram, 2000, P. 115.

⁶ Kuttasseri, *op. cite.* P. 14.

1945 it started functioning in a separate building as '*Madrassa Aliya Arabic College*.' Since then, 'Āliya is in the way of stable development.⁷

It was literally a rebirth for Darul Ulûm Vazhakkadu when M.C.C. Abdul Rahiman Moulawi, son cum disciple of Chalilakath Kunh Ahmad Haji, was appointed principal of the institution. The new principal returned back all the reforms his father had initiated and more. The new title 'Arabic College' was given to the institution replacing *dars* and *madrassa*. Since other Arabic Colleges were in their teething problems, Vazhakkadu could raise up easily to the highest reputation of that time. But the college was closed in 1946 due to some differences surfaced between the principal and the manager in dealing with the influence of wide spread famine in Kerala and the functioning of the college.⁸

Though Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm was closed, many of the students and teachers were not ready to disperse and so to lose a great institution. In an analysis they realized that the good future of such an institution needed self-independence from rich people at least in administration and management. Therefore *Kerala Jam'iyathu al Ulama* – the pioneer organization of reformist scholars of Kerala – came forward to shoulder the college. Thus a new college was born in 1947 in

⁷ Sharool, A. K., *Iz-zudheen Moulawi and Aliya (Malayalam)*, in Hasan K. A. Siddique, *op. cite* P. 76.

⁸ Moidu Moulawi, *op. cite*. P. 104.

Pulikkal – with the same Principal and most of his staff and pupils. The new college was named ‘Madīnathul Ulūm Arabic College’.⁹

These are the first experiences of rationalizing and reforming the Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kerala. After the independence, many educational organizations were formed in different parts of the state, especially in the Malabar region. Mainly inspired by the reputation of Arabic Colleges and the best impression their products gained in the society, several such organizations came forward to establish new similar institutions.

II

Phases of Curriculum Reforms

Recognition and Curriculum of Madras University

Before the appearance of Arabic Colleges in Kerala there were some well-known institutions in Tamil Nadu for higher studies in Arabic and Islamic Studies like Jamāliya College Madras, Dāru al Salām Umarabad and Bāqiyāth and Rashīdiya at Vellūr etc. The University of Madras recognized some of these institutions as centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies and conducted examinations to assess their efficiency in related subjects. This exam was titled as ‘*Afzal ul ulama*’ and the students who passed this test were addressed with the same title.¹⁰

⁹ *Ibid.* P. 116.

¹⁰ The researcher is very thankful to, Karuvalli Muhammad Moulawi, who has provided many details about the Afzal ul Ulama course under the University of Madras in 1940, when he was a student there, through a written replay to the related queries.

As soon as the new Arabic Colleges were started in Kerala, they tried for recognition from the University. It is noteworthy that the Malabar region of Kerala belonged to the then Madras Presidency. Consequently the Madras University recognized Darul Ulûm Vazhakkad in 1944¹¹ and Rouzathul Ulûm Farook in 1945.¹² When M.C.C. Abdul Rahman Moulawi started the new college in Pulikkal the same was also recognized by the university in 1948.¹³ These were the first recognized or university affiliated Arabic colleges in Kerala.

Affiliation of these colleges to the University of Madras did not mean that they started functioning under the complete authority and control of the university. But the influence of the recognition was realised in a limited way.

Funding: The University provided a limited amount to these colleges as a grant, which was far less than the total expenses. The managers had to collect contributions from the general public for the remaining amount of the total expenses.

Course and Examinations: The University conducted two exams – ‘*Afzal ul Ulama Preliminary*’ and ‘*Final*’. Students of Arabic Colleges in Kerala, who attended the exams through Kerala Arabic Colleges, remember that they had to pass an entrance test as a prerequisite to the course¹⁴. However Karuvalli Muhammed Moulawi,

¹¹ Darul Ulûm Students Union, *Through the Memories (Souvenir)*, 1999, P. 24.

¹² Kuttasserri, *op. cite.* P. 14.

¹³ Al-Qasimi, *op. cite.* P. 119.

¹⁴ Kuttasserri, *Interview.*

who had attended the exam before that, does not remember such a test. However, any student – no matter whether he was a student of these colleges or not – could attend the exams in a fixed duration of four years.¹⁵

Syllabus: The University recommended a list of books for each year of the course. But each college had its own syllabus, in which the recommended books were also included. So the duration of the course varied from college to college, from six to nine years. Each college conducted its own examinations apart from the university exams. Syllabus of the University included books on Arabic Language, Literature and Rhetoric, History of Islam and Arabic Literature and some other books on Qur'an Hadith and Jurisprudence. Apart from that, there would be one or two books from regional Languages e.g. Chandu Menon's '*indulekha*' was prescribed for Malayalam students.¹⁶

First Recognized Arabic Colleges and Their Curriculum

As it is made clear, each Arabic College followed its own syllabus at that time, though they were affiliated to the University of Madras. The syllabus prepared by the then Principal of the Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm M.C.C. Abd al Rahman Moulawi along with the Manager, (see table no. II – 1) contains a table of books and subjects taught in the college in 1945. Considering the socio-religious conditions and educational backwardness of the time it is miraculous that he had

¹⁵ Karuvalli, the letter.

¹⁶ Karuvalli, the letter.

prepared a syllabus of that kind. It is also deduced that he was following his father cum teacher, Chalilakath Kunh Ahmad Haji, in the preparation of syllabus by and large.

The curriculum sought a nine-year course of study. First four years for Preparatory – to prepare the students for entrance test, two years for Preliminary, and next two years for Final (total four years of Preliminary and Final are marked as university level). And the last year is marked as '*allāma*' (most Knowledgeable). A student who came for admission would be examined thoroughly, and depending upon his level of understanding he would get admitted in one of the four preparatory classes.

No data is found on the curriculum of Rouzathul Ulûm Farook. Nonetheless, old students like Mankada Abdul Azeez Moulawi (a student of 1948) remember that their teachers also had been following a similar curriculum¹⁷. Madinathul Uloom Pulikkal, one of the three Recognized Arabic Colleges in the forties, was in fact a transmigration of Darul Ulûm Vazhakkadu.¹⁸ So it also might have followed the same syllabus.

¹⁷ Mankada, Abdul Azeez, interview on 19/01/03 at Mankada.

¹⁸ See page. 47.

Table No. III –1. Text books in the Curriculume of Vazhakkadau Under the University of Madras.

Year	Books
I-Prelims:	<i>Al Fauzu al Kabir fi Usûli al Thafsir</i> , Five parts from <i>Jalālayn</i> , remaining parts of <i>Mishqāth</i> , <i>al Nafāisu al Irthizi'ya</i> , <i>Mukhthasaru al Ma'āni (al fannu al A'wal)</i> , <i>sharahu al Thahdhīb</i> , <i>Uqalidas</i> , <i>Khulāsathu al Hisāb (al kasr)</i> , <i>Mu'allāqa of Imra'u al Qays</i> , <i>Zuhayr</i> , <i>Nābiga</i> , <i>Amr and A'asha</i> , <i>Nūru al Yaqīn</i> and fourth book in Urdu.
II Prelims:	II-part of <i>al Manār</i> , ten parts from <i>Jalālayn</i> , <i>sharahu Nukhbathu al Fikr</i> , <i>Jāmi'u al Thurmudi</i> , remaining parts of <i>Mukhthasaru al Ma'āni</i> , <i>Usūlu Sāshī</i> , <i>Rashīdiya</i> , <i>Khthubi ma'a mubir</i> , <i>Khulāsathu al Hisāb (to misāhath)</i> , <i>Mu'allāqa of Tharafa</i> , <i>Labīd</i> , <i>Hārith and Ubayd</i> , <i>Thāriḳhu Ādābi al Lugathi al Arabiya</i> , <i>Humāthu al Islam</i> and fifth book in Urdu.
I – Final	Remaining parts of <i>Jalālayn</i> , selected chapters from <i>Thafsīru al Athqān</i> , <i>Muwatha' of Imām Mālik</i> , <i>first half of Bukhāri</i> , <i>Jam'u al Jawāmi'</i> , <i>Mi'badi</i> , <i>Mathmu al Kāfi</i> , <i>Khulāsathu al Hisāb (to Jabr)</i> , <i>Jawāhiru al Adab</i> , <i>Muhāzarāthu Thāriḳhi al Islāmi (I-Part)</i> , <i>Thāriḳhu Ādābi al Lugathi al Arabiya (II-part)</i> , and in Urdu <i>Rasāilu Shibli</i> and <i>makāthību shibli</i> .
II - Final	<i>Al Wahyu al Muhammadi</i> , <i>al Baqara</i> from <i>Thafsīru al Baizābi</i> , II-half of <i>Bukhāri</i> , remaining parts of <i>Jam'u al Jawāmi'</i> , <i>al Mahalli</i> , <i>Thashriḳhul Aflāk</i> , <i>Risālathu al Mār adīni</i> , <i>sharahu al Aqāid</i> , selected parts from <i>Hujjathullāhi al Bāliga</i> , <i>Jawāhiru al Adab</i> , <i>Thāriḳhu Ādābi al Lugathi al Arabiya</i> , <i>Muhāzarāthu Thāriḳhi al Islāmi (II-part)</i> and in Urdu <i>Qawāidu Urdu</i> .

Source : A copy of this printed pamphlet was found in an unscathed corner of Koyappathody House. Its Heading is Darul Ulûm Arabic College – syllabus and Textbooks. It was printed in the year 1945.

Note: The curriculum contain textbooks and 'Books for Reading' for nine years, but the textbooks marked as 'University Level'(for four years), which might be common in all the University affiliated Arabic Colleges then, are only tabulated here.

After the formation of Kerala State affiliation of all these colleges was shifted to the Kerala University. Nonetheless, the new University did not make any fundamental change in the curriculum except that it included social studies in the core subjects of the curriculum (the same was included in 'Books for Reading' earlier.¹⁹ The books in social studies, prepared for secondary schools under the Government of Kerala, were introduced for *Afzal ul Ulama* also.²⁰

Gradual Changes in the System Under the University of Calicut²¹

When the University of Calicut was opened in 1968, there were three Arabic Colleges affiliated to it; Rouzathul Ulûm at Farook, Madeenathul Ulûm at Pulikkal and Sullamu Salam at Areekode. Still the colleges enjoyed a wide range of freedom in conducting additional classes and examinations and deciding on the qualification of teachers etc. In a book-let issued by the University, the course was divided into same Preliminary and Final levels and the entrance test still continued. It lists out the books for all the three examinations. Here are the fundamental changes took place in the system since then, at a glance.

1984: Anew two-year course, named *Muthakhassisu al Ādab* is launched in R.U.A. College at Farook, as 'Post *Afzal ul Ulama* Course'.

1987: The University resolves to exempt secondary school pass outs from attending Malayalam paper of the course.

¹⁹ Moulawi, M.C.C. Abdul Rahman, *Syllabus of Vazhakkadu DarulUloom. 1945.*

²⁰ Mankada, Interview.

²¹ University of Calicut, collection of important circulars and documents regarding the curricular changes of Recognized Arabic Colleges.

1990: Considering the long pending recommendations of T.P. Muhammad Commission, which was appointed in sixties, *Afzal ul Ulama* 'New Scheme' is launched with comprehensive changes in the curriculum. The important changes are cited below:

- A. Admission is restricted only for secondary school pass outs. So the school-subjects like Malayalam and Social Studies are deleted from the curriculum.
- B. The entrance test is no more.
- C. The course is divided into two: Prelims (two years), and Final (three years), so that the course can be at par with other Bachelor Degrees in 10+2+3 pattern.
- D. For the same reason, the subjects are grouped in to three parts: Part I – Arabic, II – English and III – Different Subjects in Arabic.
- E. English Language is introduced into the curriculum for the first time.

(After the launch of New Scheme the agitation of Arabic College community for equalization of course to other Bachelor degrees gained momentum.)

1995: In accordance with the recommendations of a commission, which was appointed to study the above demand, the University decides to replace *Afzal ul Ulama* in Arabic Colleges with a new course – 'BA Arabic Special (Optional)', of which the first part is English, the II part is Arabic and the III part is Different Subjects in Arabic. But many

colleges do not accept the new course and they continue their agitation for recognition of the old course as BA.

1995: The University sanctions Post *Afzal ul Ulama* in three more colleges - D.U. Vazhakkadu, M.U. Pulikkal and S.S. Areekode.

1998: The University accords sanction for granting 'BA Degree (*Afzal ul Ulama*) in Arabic' for all students passed the New Scheme of *Afzal ul Ulama* that was launched in 1990.

1999: The University sanctions the altering of Post *Afzal ul Ulama* Course as MA Degree (*Afzal ul Ulama*) in Arabic.²²

Development of syllabus

From its very beginning, Arabic Colleges have tried to make their syllabus comprehensive to all related subjects to a large extent. It is very appropriate in this study to examine what are the changes occurred in each subject of the course throughout the years to know whether these changes were favourable or not. (To understand the increasing or decreasing of the books in each subject at a glance, the five-year course is taken as a single unit and the books for entrance examination [in the early phases] are considered as part of curriculum.)

Language Sciences

Since the seventies, six parts of *al Nahw al Wāzih* (of Ali al-Jārim) and *Ajnāsu al Kubra* (a small book in conjugation) were the books in grammar. They still continue in the syllabus excluding a small

²² University of Calicut, *op. cite.*

duration in which the second book disappeared. In prosody, different old books, which were criticized for their superfluous explanations, were taught in early Arabic Colleges. But the book *al-Balāghathu al Vaziha* (of Ali al Jārim) replaced all of them by sixties and is still there in the syllabus. Elementary lessons on Prosody and Literary Criticism were not included apparently in the syllabus of Madras University. They have found their place in the syllabus by sixties and still continue.²³

Arabic Literature

Arabic Literature was not at all an important subject in *dars* curriculum. In the beginning of Arabic Colleges a very few classical works like *Mu'allāqa* were included. Under the University of Calicut comparatively due importance is given to the Literature - both to prose and poetry. Some modern works are also included. But by nineties 'selected parts/chapters' got more importance than books in their total. Contemporary Arabic Literature has yet to get a place in the syllabus.²⁴

History

The history of Islam and Arabic Literature from Pre Islamic period (*Jāhili'ya*) to the modern times is covered by the syllabus of all times in Arabic Colleges. Only the textbooks and references have been changing. And since the eighties the History of Islamic Legislation (تاريخ (التشريع الإسلامي) is taught separately.²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Qur'an

In the early phases, a number of great commentaries (*thafsirs*) got more emphasis as they were counted along with textbooks. See the table no.II – 1) Later, in the process of including maximum parts of Qur'an in the syllabus, *thafsirs* were sidelined as 'books for reference' on which neither the students nor the teachers apparently gave due attention. The importance of *Ilmu al Qur'an* also has been falling.²⁶

Hadith

The syllabus of Madras University (four-year course) covers a number of Hadith books completely or partly. Hadith and its sister subject *Ulûmu al Hadith* is also among the negatively affected subjects in the long run.²⁷

Other Languages

Urdu was taught in Vazhakkadu under the curriculum of Madras University (see table no. II –1). But it had disappeared before the sixties. One or two books of Malayalam Literature were also included in the syllabus. In 1987 the University of Calicut exempted secondary school pass outs from attending the Malayalam examination. (Then the schoolbooks were advised to Arabic Colleges too.) In 1990, Malayalam was totally deleted from the syllabus and the English was introduced as the part II of the New Scheme.²⁸

²⁶ University of Calicut, *op. Cite.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid*

Other Subjects

Some old Arabic books on secular subjects like Geography, General History, Maths etc. were taught in earlier in Arabic Colleges because the students were totally unaware about all these things. When the students with school background gradually increased, these books got disappeared one by one. After launching the New Scheme in 1990, all such subjects disappeared except *Manthiq* (Logic).²⁹

Doctrinal

Doctrinal Studies have been a vital subject in Arabic Colleges and different books were introduced from time to time. In the first phase, old books like *Sharahu al Aqā'id* of Imām Nawawi and *Hujjathullāhi al Bāliga* of Shah Waliyullāhi al Dahlawi represented the subject. In the sixties they were replaced by *Risālathu al Thauhid* of Muhammad Abduh and al *Risālathu al Hamīdiya* (of Husain al Jasar). These two books continued in the seventies also. In the eighties *Risālathu al Thohid* continued and *Hujjathullāhi al Bāliga* returned replacing *Risālathu al Hamīdiya*.³⁰

Jurisprudence

The books in the subject were confined to the *Shāfi'i* school of thought in the beginning. Illumination of Imam Mahalli on *Minhāj* of Imām Nawawi and *Bidāyatu al Mujtahid* of Imam Ibnu Rushd came into the syllabus by the sixties and the latter continues till now.

²⁹ University of Calicut, *op. Cite.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Similarly, *Mathnu al Gāya* of Qāzi Abu Shujā is still continuing from the eighties and since then laws of inheritance (الفرأض) is taught separately. *Minhāju Thālibin* of Imam Nawawi was the new book in eighties in the subject. Moreover, 'Principles of Jurisprudence' (اصول الفقه) also has been a part of syllabus from the beginning. *Waraqāth* of Imam Jalāludhīn Mahalli replaced in seventies *Kithābu Usūlu al Fiqh* (of the sixties) of Muhammed Khuzri Bek and it still continues. Apart from that *al-Musthafā* of Imam Gazāli had been in the syllabus in the sixties and the seventies and was replaced by *Kithābu Usool al Fiqh* by Muhammed Abu Zuhra in the eighties.³¹

-III-

A Comparison with Madrasa Systems in Other Parts of India

1. The Antecedents

For Muslims all over the world an educational institution for teaching the younger generation about the fundamental lessons of the religion is an unavoidable part of their social life. Moreover, they establish in all places where they live, some institutions intended to conduct higher studies in religious subjects. These institutions are supposed to be conducting studies and researches about the current issues of the modern world in the light of Qur'an and Hadith and to

³¹ University of Calicut, *op. Cite.*

produce religious scholars who can lead the community spiritually. Since the advent of Islam to south and north of the Indian Subcontinent was entirely different in its time, route, preachers, ways and means of spreading etc. the antecedents of religious educational system in both places are also different. Consecutive invasions of Muslim rulers caused the spread of Islam in North India whereas it spread peacefully in South, especially in Kerala, through the hands of Arab Muslim merchants.

In the first phase of Islamic dispersion mosques were used directly for discharging the knowledge among Muslims in the South and the North. Then in North the teaching was shifted to separate parts of the mosques or buildings attached to them. These buildings were called as 'madrasas', which literally meant 'places of learning'.³² The Arabs did not know these institutions of higher studies in its known technical meaning (as in present time) before the end of fourth century A.H.³³

But in Kerala the religious classes, which were held inside the mosques, did not move to separate buildings but to separate corners or to the second floors of the mosques. This tendency is cited as a reason behind the spreading of multi-storied mosques in Kerala.³⁴ In Kerala, as it is explained in details in first chapter, people called this educational system as *palli darses*, which meant 'mosque centred classes (see page. 7.). Similarly, apart from the name 'madrasa' people in the North called

³² Alam, Muzafar, *Evaluating the Islamic Religious Madrasas in India: Its Syllabi and its Relevance in the Present Time*, (Dessertation – CAAS, JNU), 1995. P. 23.

³³ *Ibid.* P. 16.

³⁴ Mohammad Ali, K.T., *The Deveolpment of Education among the Mappilas of Malabar-1800 – 1965*, Nunes Publication, New Delhi, 1990. P. 38.

their system as '*dars gah*' also. The word '*dars*,' which means 'lesson' is common in both. The word '*gah*' means '*sacred place*'. Similarly the word '*palli*' is used in Malayalam to denote sacred places like church, mosque and school.

The primary institutions for religious education were called in North India as *Maktab* or *Kutāb*, which literally meant '*centres of writing*'.³⁵ This kind of institutions in Kerala were called *othu pura* or *othu palli* which literally meant '*centres of reading*.' Teachers were designated as *mudar'ris* and were addressed as '*usthad*' both in *darses* of Kerala and *madrasas* in other parts of India³⁶.

1. Royal Patronization and Government Recognition

The madrasas of North India had been enjoying the patronage of Muslim rulers from its very beginning. It does not mean that all the madrasas were under direct control and authority of rulers. Abdul Gafar Choudari says:

There was an Ecclesiastical Department under the chief divan called Sadar al-Sudur, who sanctioned monetary assistance to the learned profession. It took the form of grants of landed property free from taxation. There was a countrywide system of free land (Mu'afi), granted to the distinguished members of the profession, who were associated with higher learning but also to the teachers of the Maktabas (elementary schools).³⁷

³⁵ Sufi, G. M. D., *Al-Minhaj, Being the Evaluation of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India*. Idarht-i Adabiyath-i Delhi, Delhi, 1997. P. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.* P. 3.

³⁷ Choudari, Abdul Gafur, *Some Aspects of Islamic Education*, Universal Books, Urdu Bazar (Lahore), 1982. P. 4.

Many times the rulers made rules and regulations to assure standard of learning in these institutions. For instance, Akbar ordered not to waste a long time in *makthabs* and *madrasas* for simple teaching tasks and fixed time duration for each task in the learning procedure e.g. a fixed time for learning alphabet, joined letters etc.³⁸ As a result, when the time was utilized more precisely and the teachers got more time for teaching, he introduced new subjects in educational institutions.³⁹ Aurangzib compelled the *Bohras* of Gujrath to educate their children. Teachers were appointed for them and by monthly examinations Aurangzib was kept informed of the progress made.⁴⁰

In the early phases of the expansion of Islam in Kerala, it was the Hindu rulers who extended all possible helps for establishing religious institutions. The small dynasty of 'Arakkal' was the lone Muslim ruling family in Kerala and its jurisdiction was limited to some limited villages and towns. There was nothing more than the generosity of some rich Mappila merchants as resources of maintaining the *dars* system. So almost persistently the living standards of *dars* community were utterly poor.

All ups and downs in the power of the empire were reflected in the educational field in North. For instance, 'after the time of Alamgir Mugal Empire started declining and this decline affected the glory of

³⁸ Sufi, *op. cit.* P. 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.* P. 53.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* P. 67.

Madrasas.⁴¹ Similarly the decline in the business monopoly of Mappilas bitterly affected the glory of *palli darses* in Kerala. (See page.12)

The teachers in the Islamic Institutions all over the world, including North India, enjoyed a maximum freedom in all matters of their institution: "the teaching staff exercised the right of autonomy in framing of curriculum, planning or general organization."⁴² The endowment system, which was also under their control, have made them more or less free from any servile dependence on the state or other patrons. This was not completely true in the case of teachers in Kerala (details in first chapter).

The attitude of the British Government is often counted as the first reason behind the decline of standard in *Madrasas*. But even in British India there were a few instances for the government trying to initiate new measures for the enhancement of education among the minorities, though their 'hidden agenda' was very obvious. First Arabic institution in British India, which enjoyed the government patronage, may be the Calcutta *Madrasa* that was founded by Warren Hastings in 1781. His object was 'the encouragement of Arabic learning and the teaching of Muslim law and to enable sons of Muslims to qualify for responsible offices in the state and for courts of justice'.⁴³

On the other hand, different courses were adopted by earliest Indian Universities under British rule, like Universities of Calcutta,

⁴¹ Muzafar. *op. cit.* P. 107.

⁴² Choudari, *op. cit.* P. 3-4.

⁴³ Sufi, *op. cit.* , P. 90.

Madras and Bombay, for the promotion of Arabic Urdu and Persian Languages. G.M.D. Sufi lists out the curriculum of each subject in these courses.⁴⁴ Arabic Course included subjects in Arabic Language Literature and Islamic Studies. There were matriculation (which was then called the entrance), BA and MA examinations. BA honours was conducted only in Arabic. The MA degree did not require any special examination after BA honours.⁴⁵ Similarly in *Panjab* University, apart from Persian and Arabic being subjects of studies from the entrance (matriculation) to the BA level, special oriental classes were organized in Arabic. The courses were: 1) *Moulawi*, 2) *Moulawi Ālim* and 3) *Moulawi Fāzil*.⁴⁶

But, whatever may be the reason; there were apparently little struggle in other parts of India to keep the recognition of the government and affiliation of the universities for the courses of religious institutions. In fact, the Arabic Colleges of Kerala can be appropriately compared with religious *madrasas* in other parts of the country. But the Arabic Colleges utilized the opportunity in its first chance for the recognition and funding from the part of the government. It is noteworthy that three of the first four Arabic Colleges of Kerala got the recognition of Madras University within three years of their foundation. Before its evolution into a full-fledged degree course, *Afzal ul Ulama* was also like any Islamic courses in other parts of India.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* P. 90-92.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* P. 111.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* P. 115.

3 - Women's Education

As a religion, Islam encourages its followers for getting all kinds of education. Similarly it does not discriminate between male and female in the imparting of knowledge. There were a number of female scholars among the companions of Prophet Muhammad including his wives and daughters. No incident is reported insisting prevention of women from attending the regular classes conducted by him. However, as a matter of fact, women education was very restricted in almost all Islamic societies.

For girls in North India, it was laid down that they should be instructed in moral and religious things. High intellectual development for them was not attempted in the beginning. Women's proper sphere was the home. At times, old-fashioned people urge that writing was tabooed in the case of women.⁴⁷

General decay and deterioration in Muslim learning on the disintegration of Muslim power in India had its setback on women's education in Muslim homes. It appears that mere reading, writing and simple arithmetic were what the girl could at best have. This too was confined, in most cases to the mechanical reading of a few chapters of the Qur'an. Some rich parents engaged *mullas*, but the instruction does not seem to have gone beyond a very elementary stage. Here and there, one might meet cases of advanced instruction but they were not many.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* P. 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 148.

In Kerala for a long time the only educational institutions, where girls got access were the *othu puras*. Even there, the girls education was confined in *othu* (reading). The *ethu* (*ezhuthu*= writing) was tabooed. It was not only a part of tradition but also the eminent orthodox scholars had decreed so.⁴⁹

In other parts of India girls got permission to sit with boys only in the elementary religious classes. Even in contemporary *madrasas* outside Kerala, though the girls get admission in a few higher religious institutions, their education with boys is still unthinkable. But ten among the eleven recognized Arabic Colleges of Kerala are mixed colleges where boys and girls study in mixed classes. (And the remaining one is a women's college.) Interestingly, now the girls have outnumbered the boys in almost all Recognized Arabic Colleges of Kerala.⁵⁰ As a result, educated females from Arabic Colleges have risen to the posts of lecturers and principals in such highly reputed religious institutions. But the extreme struggles performed by the reformist scholars for such revolutions are not duly remembered.

4 - Madrasas in Kerala

According to Kanniyath, then Chalilakath Kunh Ahmad Haji started his reforms in *palli dars* of Vazhakkadu, he was greatly influenced by the *madrasas* existed in other parts of India including the neighbouring Tamil Nadu, where he had completed his education. He

⁴⁹ Moulawi. *Sageer. op. cit.* P. 63.

⁵⁰ R.U.A. College Union, *Assabah '97 (Annual Magazine)*, Farook, 1997. P. 30.

changed the old name '*Thanmiyathu al Islam Dars*' to '*Madrasathu Darul Ulûm*' apparently cherishing a dream of making the institution at par with the highest institutions of the then India – one in Deoband and another in Lucknow. Then the term '*madrasa*' denoted the whole institution – lower and higher classes. But once the Madrasa Darul Ulûm was closed and the people in some parts of the state started primary religious institutions under the new scheme, they called the new approach of these institutions as '*madrasa system*'.

By nineteen thirties, the people knew only primary religious institutions by the name '*madrasa*'. Therefore the managers of new institutions of higher studies in Arabic and Islamic Subjects had to find a new title for their new institutions. Then the term '*Arabic College*' came in to use. Hence in Kerala, the term '*madrasa*' still denotes only the primary religious institution. These *madrasas* function only around two hours, daily. Normally the students spend two hours in *madrasas* in the early morning and then go to regular schools. Thus, the two types of essential education do not interrupt each other.

But in other parts of India, '*madrasa*' denotes mainly the higher institutions established for religious studies. For primary religious schools the term '*maktab*' is widely used. Both *makthabs* and *madrasas* work parallel to regular schooling in their time schedule. So, unlike Kerala, the students have to choose either religious education or modern school education.

5 - Admission

The students, who were able only to read and write Arabic, got access in the early Arabic Colleges. Many of the students in the Madrasa Darul Ulûm were ignorant of all other subjects and majority of them were even illiterate in their mother tongue.⁵¹ When the new Arabic Colleges started to follow the curriculum of Madras University, students had to pass an entrance test as a prerequisite. Henceforth the number of students from school background continuously increased. The prospectus of the course in the University of Calicut rules that: "Candidates for the *Afzal ul Ulama* Title Examination shall be required to have passed the *S.S.L.C.*⁵² Examination with eligibility for college admission with 35% marks in Arabic⁵³ or the Entrance Examination prescribed below or any other examinations approved as equivalent thereto...."⁵⁴

And in 1990, when the New Scheme was launched, its 'Regulations and Scheme' clearly says: "The *Afzal ul Ulama* Preliminary examination shall be open to all those who have passed the Secondary School Leaving Examination, conducted by the educational department of the Kerala State, and have been declared eligible for admission to a course of study in the University or any other

⁵¹ Abdul Kareem. *op. cit.* P. 60.

⁵² Secondary School Leaving Certificate [SSLC] is the public examination conducted in 10th Std. By the Govt. of Kerala.

⁵³ Arabic is one of the languages taught in Kerala schools.

⁵⁴ University of Calicut, *office circular regarding syllabus of Afzal ul Ulama Title Examination-1978*

examination acceptable by the University as equivalent there to.⁵⁵ This pre-qualification is still continuing. Needless to say, gradual changes made in the pre-qualifications of the students made their standard high and gave a rational basis for their claims for the recognition of their course.

The central and state governments in India have formed in schools a curriculum, which must be studied by each student irrespective of his/her field of interest in future. It helps him to become a good citizen of the country who believes in the social democratic and secular values of the constitution and knows the fundamental issues of human life. So this curriculum is called as 'core curriculum'. But hardly any of the *madrasas* in other parts of India prescribes regular schooling as a pre-condition for the admission.

6 - Secular Subjects

Although the students of *palli darses* did not have any chance to obtain basic and fundamental education from any other source the general curriculum of *palli darses* gave no importance for such subjects.⁵⁶ This condition was strongly flayed by reformers in the state. When they got the chance for preparing their own curriculum they took the matter in to account and gave due importance for such subjects in the curriculum of Arabic Colleges.

⁵⁵ University of Calicut, *Abstract No. GA-I/B2-5714/90*, dated 25/10/91. P. 3.

⁵⁶ see chapter (I - 3rd part)

There are many Arabic books dealing with such subjects in the curriculum prepared by M.C.C. Abdul Rahman Moulawi. Apart from the old Arabic books, which were apparently added to the University-Curriculum from the *Nizamiya-Syllabus*, he had included many books of that kind in 'The Books for Reading.' Moreover, his disciples become eloquent when they describe the extra curricular activities undertaken by their *Moulana* for the enhancement of general education among them.

Till the launching of New Scheme in 1990, the books taught in government. high schools in social studies were part of the curriculum in Arabic Colleges also. Since the New Scheme confined the admission to the SSLC pass outs, it was argued that, there was no point in continuing such subjects in Arabic Colleges because the students were coming after studying the same from schools. There is no such general subject in the existing curriculum.⁵⁷

As the students from the school background are not the aspirants of *madrassa* education in other parts of India, some fundamental general subjects are part of their curriculum, and many corners still demand to include more and more general subjects in it.

7 - Languages

The position of languages and their development in the curriculum of Arabic Colleges has been discussed in detail in the preceding chapter. Since the schools in Kerala are following a four-

⁵⁷ University of Calicut, op. cit.

language pattern there was no point, it is argued, to give fundamental lessons of some other languages in Arabic Colleges. Moreover the course is considered a Bachelor Degree in Arabic. So, it is asked, what is the relevance of teaching another language during this time. Even so, since the launching of New Scheme, English is taught as Part II of both the Preliminary and Final of *Afzal ul Ulama* as it is a common subject in all UG courses in Kerala. In BA Arabic Special (Optional) course for a short time, which replaced *Afzal ul Ulama* in some Arabic Colleges, English became the first part and Arabic, the Second. This change was the most important reason behind the non-acceptance of the new course by majority of the colleges.⁵⁸

For historical reasons, Urdu and Persian are not at all in use in any part of Kerala, nor they have any religious attachment. So they were not a part of curriculum in *palli darses*. But, thanks to the majority of teachers who got educated out side Kerala and were impressed by the importance of Urdu in Islamic institutions, basic lessons of Urdu were part of Vazhakkadu-Curriculum of 1940 (see table no. III – 1)

However, Arabic, Urdu and Persian are the three main languages generally taught in contemporary North Indian *Madrasas*. Recently English is also taught in some of them.

⁵⁸ University of Calicut, op. cit.

8 - Curriculum

There was no single curriculum accepted by all *madrasas* of North India before the drafting of *Dars-i-Nizami*. 'It is accepted by all scholars and Historians that the *Nizamiya* Syllabus, which was most popular in Indian subcontinent, was developed by Mulia Nizamudhin in the time of Mugal Emperor Alamgeer.⁵⁹ The leading syllabi in majority of *madrasas* in Indian subcontinent are evolved from *Nizamiya* Curriculum by adding or deleting books from that. But still they are known as *Nizamiya* Syllabus.

Details about the curriculum followed by *palli darses* in Kerala and its relation with *Dars-i-Nizami* is discussed in the first chapter.

⁵⁹ Muzafar, *op. cite.*, P. 63.

Chapter IV

Existing Curriculum of Arabic Colleges:

A Critique

In the preceding two chapters it is discussed in details about the plight of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kerala before the emergence of Arabic Colleges and the changes took place in the field through them. Comparing the *dars* system to the Arabic College system, generally there are two opinions. The first is that the *darses* were the most effective means for the purpose and the only reason behind the decreasing number of 'real scholars' is the replacing of 'deep and wide learning style' with a 'system of capsule sized books, which is extremely examination oriented'. The second view is that the *dars* system was unscientific and ineffective for the purpose, which lost decades for 'reading' some counted books in three or four subjects. The second group criticizes the first view that it is based only on the 'old is gold theory'.

Though the new system of Arabic Colleges can claim some positive features and merits compared to other systems existing in India including the old *dars* system, the thought provoking fact is that the Arabic College community, who are very keen to slam the *dars* system for its 'non-scientific means and methods' is moving in the same path i.e. following a curriculum for decades without making needed reforms in it. As it is seen (in chapter II -1), all the reforms made in the curriculum throughout all these years resulted mainly in betterment of its 'physical appearance' on par with other university degrees.

'Expansion of co-curricular and extra curricular activities in the colleges and the background of teachers and students in mainstream secular subjects'¹ are indicated as favourable features of new Arabic College generation.

The appointment of two commissions, notwithstanding their recommendations regarding addition or deletion of some subjects, was also mainly on this direction - to get more recognitions from the University. No study is undertaken hitherto on the effectiveness of Arabic College curriculum in attaining its goals and sorting out the ways of increasing its quality in terms of seats of higher education in Arabic and Islamic Studies. So, in the following pages an attempt is made to find answers for three questions, which the researcher felt to be answered.

1. What are the educational objectives behind the inclusion of each subject into the existing curriculum?
2. To which extend these Educational objectives are being accomplished and what are the problems in the way of their accomplishment?
3. What means and methods can be accepted in solving these problems successfully?

No authentic records or written materials were found which clearly describes the Educational objectives of each subject in the

¹ Madavoor. P.K. Husain, Interview with the author, on 20/01/03, at R. U. A. College, Farook.

existing curriculum of Arabic Colleges. So the researcher tried to identify them from the writings about the background of establishing each Arabic College and the motives of their founders. Further, these inferences were confirmed during the interviews with old students of early Arabic Colleges, present or ex-members of the Board of Studies (Arabic) in the University of Calicut, Principals of Recognized Arabic Colleges etc. When selecting the interviewees it is taken to account that they are closely related to the curricular changes occurred in the Arabic Colleges and are representing deferent viewpoints in this field.

To check to which extend these Educational objectives are being achieved by the existing curriculum the researcher conducted a survey among the students of Arabic Colleges. Moreover, to get a first hand explanation, much consultation is given with the alumni, students and teachers of various Arabic Colleges.

For sorting out solutions for these problems all books and subjects in the existing curriculum were thoroughly analysed in the light of modern educational sciences. There may be pragmatic difficulties in applying certain educational rules and theories in the existing situations of Arabic Colleges. These possible difficulties also were discussed with the above-mentioned interviews.

Languages and Literatures

Language Skills in Arabic

Importance of Language Skills: There are four basic language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Natural order of acquiring efficiency in any language is the same order. The skill in the *listening* and *reading* means the ability to understand oral and written expressions respectively. The skill in the *speaking* and *writing* denote the ability to express ideas and feelings using the oral and written ways. Once a person becomes competent in all of these four skills of a particular language he can be described skilful in that language.²

It is unscientific to use a language as a medium of teaching other subjects without developing a satisfied level of language-skills in that particular language. As it is in Russia, where only the mother tongue is the medium of instruction, any student who gets admission in medicine or other courses, has to undergo a one-year course exclusively to learn Russian. Similarly students, who want to do their higher studies in English-speaking countries, have to prove all these language skills by passing the tests like TOEFL. Even some Arabic institutions in Kerala like 'Jamia Nadwia at Edavanna, follow the same approach in their courses of study and find it more effective'.³

² Billows F.L., *The Techniques of Language Teaching*, Longman, London, 1971.

³ Salafi, interview.

Table No. IV – 1, report on Language Skills of Students of Recognized Arabic Colleges.

Contents	Response	Percentage of students
1 –Capacity to read an Arabic newspaper and understand the meaning.	a) Can understand below 25%	57%
	b) Below 50%	37%
	c) Below 75%	06%
	d) Above 75%	00%
2 – Ability for conversation in Arabic.	a) Below 25%	58%
	b) Below 50%	36%
	c) Below 75%	06%
	d) Above 75%	00%
3 - Time of compelled speech in Arabic in a period of one month.	a) Less than ½ an hour	77%
	b) One hour	18%
	c) Two hours	2%
	d) More than two hours	5%
4 – Approximate number of pages, which are corrected by the teachers in an academic year.	a) 1 – 5 pages.	51%
	b) 5 – 10 pages	35%
	c) 10 – 15 pages	07%
	d) More than 15 pages	07%

Source: survey conducted among the students of selected Arabic Colleges.

Current Condition

Decades after the commencement of Arabic Colleges, the students still rarely ‘dare’ to speak or write in Arabic. It is admissible that ‘the Arabic College students express their ideas in Arabic better

than the *dars* products.⁴ But still the existing situation is not at all satisfactory. (See the Table No. III – 1)

In Arabic Colleges, Arabic Language has a double role. It is simultaneously one of the study subjects in the curriculum and the medium of instruction for other subjects. Thanks to Arabic Studies in schools and primary *madrasas*, even the fresh students in Arabic Colleges know reading and writing Arabic a great deal. Though they necessarily do not know the meaning of what they read and they cannot draft their own ideas in writing too. So, to some extent, it is easy to develop language skills among them.

Many of the Arabic College community still observe that 'the acquiring of language skills is not a goal of Arabic Colleges but it is to learn the subjects included in the curriculum. So a minimum level of importance is given to the development of language skills rather Arabic studies are confined to the study of Literature, Grammar, Rhetorics, and Prosody. Also, many teachers are not ready to use Arabic as medium of instruction even though the students prefer to be taught so. (See the table No. III – 2).

⁴ Salafi and Kuttasseri. Interview.

Table No. IV – 2, report on the medium of instruction in Arabic Colleges.

Contents	Response	Percentage of students
1 – The medium preferable to the students for teaching Arabic Subjects.*	a) Arabic only	8%
	b) Arabic with a little Malayalam	62%
	c) Arabic and Malayalam	25%
	d) Malayalam with a little	5%
2 - Share of pure Arabic lectures in daily classes.	a) Below 10%	37%
	b) 25%	38%
	c) 50 %	20%
	d) 75%	5%
	e) Above 75%	1%
*Among the students, who have chosen the options c, d and e - for this question, 46%, 88% and 100% are from Preliminary –I respectively. And 71% of BA Final year students have chosen the option –b.		

Source: Survey conducted among the students of selected Arabic Colleges.

The majority of students, including the final year ones, have become addicted to many unhealthy learning habits. To read Arabic books in a typical way of word-by-word translation is one of them. Not only the students, but also many teachers usually teach different subjects in the same way. Hence the students prefer Malayalam books for preparing Arabic papers in the examinations. That means even after studying a number of subjects in ‘Arabic medium’ for five years, Arabic has not become an ‘active medium’ for them.

Measures Required

The first measure to solve all these problems is to restructure the curriculum in a scientific perspective. For that the first step is to make first year curriculum centralized on developing the language skills of the students as it is discussed in the part '*importance of language skills*'. Apart from this scientific side there are some other reasons, which support this approach in Arabic Colleges. The interviewees say that students from *dars* background, who had a satisfactory knowledge in Arabic, only would seek admission in early Arabic Colleges. So the teachers could start teaching other subjects without taking the risk to teach basic lessons of Arabic Language. So if the students acquire a satisfactory level of language skills in the first year more importance can be given to other subjects in the coming years.

When asked about the proposal of concentrating on language skills in the first year, all of the interviewees theoretically agreed with it. But they did present their reservations about its practicability. Important suggestions include the followings. The reforms in the field so far have already reduced size and number of books in many important subjects. So precautions must be taken not to reduce importance of any existing subject.⁵ Another suggestion is that the practical works with language training should be given more importance, other wise this experiment

⁵ Moulawi K.N. Ibrahim, Interview.

also will end in vain.⁶ All these suggestions are highly realistic and convincing.

Another measure is up to the teachers. As it is seen in the discussion above, the only way to make the students skilful in any language is to give them more practice in the four language skills. So a change from the facts revealed during the survey (table no. III -1 & III - 2) is a must. Two reasons came out from interviews for not using Arabic as the medium. (A) When the teachers continuously explain the matters in Arabic, they are suddenly caught in a doubt, whether the students get the points or not especially, it is difficult to teach some particular subjects in Arabic'. (B) The curriculum of each subject includes a wide portion in each year of the course. Teaching in Arabic medium is more time consuming. So even the teachers who desire to use Arabic medium may be compelled to switch over to the mother tongue.

It is easy to understand the mindset behind the teachers' arguments. But on many grounds they can be proven unsustainable. The first argument is about the difficulty in making the students understand the matters using Arabic medium. [1] If the students do not understand Arabic explanations they would not have preferred it and said that they are very fond of Arabic medium (as it is seen in the survey). [2] As there is no other way to enhance the students' language skills but to practice them, it is the duty of teachers to give them more chances for that.

⁶ Madavoor, interview.

[3] Students have to answer their examinations in Arabic medium. If the explanation of some ideas is not practical in Arabic even for the well-versed teachers, it would be illogic asking the students to explain the same in Arabic in their answer sheets. If the teachers can be given this excuse to use mother tongue in their lectures, the students deserve the same excuse more reasonably. [4] Some teachers present their lectures successfully in Arabic medium thinking that 'there is no other chance for our children for hearing Arabic. So whatever reasons are there we must use only Arabic'. As a matter of fact, students follow them and they are very fond of such classes. That means the inability of some teachers in using Arabic is not a defect of 'Arabic' but it is their own. [5] It is clearly stipulated in the curriculum that the medium in all papers (except English and some papers in Preliminary I year) should be Arabic. So, if a teacher exceedingly uses the mother tongue for his instruction he himself is violating the curriculum rules for his own convenience in broad daylight.

The second excuse of the teachers is regarding the over consumption of time for Arabic medium. In fact, one of the major favourable characteristics of the Arabic Language is that fewer words in it can include comparatively more ideas than any other language. This can be easily proved practically by translating a given passage from Arabic to any other languages or vice versa. So the real reason behind the over consumption of time also is not a defect of Arabic Language.

But when the serious subjects are taught using the Arabic medium in which they are not much skilful it takes more time. Once the proposed 'language skill centric curriculum will be enacted in first year this problem also can be easily solved.

Another misunderstanding regarding the enhancement of language skills is that the enhancement of language skills means making the students well versed in colloquial Arabic Language, which is not a goal of Arabic Colleges. Of course, to understand the colloquial forms of a language is a high quality in the case of learning any language. But in the case of Arabic Colleges, for all the practical reasons, it is meant to make them capable in using the language at least in what is known as literary Arabic (اللغة العربية الفصحى). After all, if only the subject matter is needed to be studied it could be in the mother tongue also. Ironically they do not prefer the mother tongue being the medium of examination. So, the simple fact is that if the students of Arabic Colleges should be taught and examined in Arabic medium they must be skilful in that language first.

Apart from concentrating on the language skills in the first year, some other measures also needed to be taken separately for developing each language skill.

Listening:- It is a fact that the students have lesser opportunities for hearing Arabic as a foreign language in comparison with English. But another fact is that even the possible sources are not utilized

completely. Cassettes and CDs of speeches of eminent scholars, CDs of cartoons for developing language skills in children and for illustration of historical incidents are easily available in the markets of Arab Countries. Use of such tools makes the language learning more interesting and gives the students access for listening native Arabs. "Even listening to a flow of speech that seems beyond our grasp, has its own importance and impact more than that we realize on developing the language."⁷ Even though many of the Arabic College teachers frequently make tours to these countries, it is revealed during the interaction with students that such things are hardly available in their colleges.

Speaking:- As it is explained above, the ability of students in speaking depends firstly on what, how and how much they listen. The second thing is to reduce their tongue-tie and timidity by giving more and more chances for speaking the language freely.⁸ 'Arabic-only literary forms' and 'Arabic-only class periods', which were very interesting and beneficial for both teachers and students, have become a 'long lost' in the case of many Arabic Colleges. There are number of sophisticated psychological methods for training the students in eloquence, which do not come to the sphere of this research. But according to the teachers 'when a wide portion of syllabus is still remaining uncovered, where is the time to think all about these?'

⁷ Billows, F. L. *The Techniques of Language Teaching*, Longman, London, 1971. P. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Reading:- Almost every fresh student in the Arabic Colleges knows to read an Arabic text provided that the grammatical signs (الحركات) are marked on. So the task is to make them capable to read correctly without signs. The very significant predicament – a special case of Arabic Language – is that until a person becomes capable to read perfectly and independently without *harkath* he would not be able to understand the meaning correctly. According to the students the main difficulty faced by them, in reading an Arabic book is that ‘they know the meaning of each word but they fail to get the total meaning. That is why they, who write their exams in Arabic, choose Malayalam books for preparation. The trouble lies in the base because this ability mainly depends upon their competency in practical grammar. Since many teachers and students feel shame to practice the reading in the classrooms its consequences are inevitable. At least in first year classes, as part of the proposed ‘language skill focusing’, they should be practiced in reading the *harkath*-less text according to the grammar rules. Once they become trained on it, many other jobs will go more smoothly. As this task, as many others, is related to both grammar and prose Salafi suggests that grammar and prose should be assigned to the same teacher. (Little more discussion about this problem can be in the coming part ‘Grammar and Syntax’.)

Writing:- The students know the basic lessons of writing Arabic. In the first phase teachers may have to practice them on ‘hand writing

style script' (الخط الرقعي). Then the task is to practice how to draft his ideas in Arabic. As is in the training of all other skills, 'simple to complex theory' should be practiced in this too. That means to ask the students of Preliminary I to PG for drafting essays on subjects like 'celebration of *Onam*', 'summer vacation', 'our college', 'a job application' etc. without considering their level of knowledge will cause unreasonable fear and lack of confidence in their minds. Simple exercises, which inspire an 'I can do it' confidence, should be given to fresh students. Then only comes 'the summer vacation' or 'job application'. And in the last stages more complex exercises like 'book review', 'speech reporting' can be given.

The teachers can do many things for developing reading and writing skills among the students of the higher classes also. To assign them for a book review, a summary of related article in a current magazine or a specific part of explanation from a reference book etc. are among them. As it is reported by the students assignment system – as the educational field knows - is completely absent in Arabic Colleges, at least in BA classes. (See also the table No. III – 1)

Another interesting fact is that, as part of giving importance for subjects, the students in the first year Preliminary are allowed to write the main papers in Malayalam. 'One can reasonably expect that this

option would be replaced by Arabic when the proposed 'language skill focusing' start in first years'.⁹

Take a look on what was the ancestors' attitude towards all these matters. 'M.C.C. Abdul Rahman Moulawi directed his staff in Vazhakkadu Darul Ulûm that the medium of teaching and learning must be Arabic. But the students found it difficult to express their doubts satisfactorily in classrooms and used Malayalam. But the Principal was very strict that the teachers must give explanations at least once in Arabic.'¹⁰ 'In Farook, even though the teachers, who could use Arabic as a medium, were less in number at that time, many of them tried their best for that. Moreover, Abussabah Moulawi, founder principal of Rouzathul Uloom would check the classes frequently for this cause. He would also practice a counter checking of composition notebooks of students to know whether the teachers had corrected them properly. When K.P. Muhammad Maulavi was appointed principal of Sullamu Salam at Areekod, he also followed the same way.'¹¹

Grammar and Syntax

Existing Curriculum:- *Al Nahw al Wazih* by Ali al Jarim (all six parts) is the prescribed textbook for teaching the Grammar in the existing curriculum. More over a small book on conjugational rules, *Ajnas*, is taught in Preliminary first year.

⁹ Moulawi, K. N., Ibrahim, interview.

¹⁰ Kanniyath, interview.

¹¹ Kuttasseri, interview.

Objectives:- As it is in any other language, grammar has two faces i.e. theoretical and practical. Even though the modern educationalists and linguists are against giving importance on grammar rules the Arabic College Community is on a consensus that the students should be authentically well versed in the grammar rules. The reason is that the Arabic Colleges are found not only to teach the Arabic Language in terms of a foreign language but also to produce great scholars (افضل العلماء) in Arabic and Islamic subjects. So after the completion of the course they should reach to a position, where they can precisely comment on an Arabic text 'it has only this (particular) meaning and does not have that meaning'.

Issues of Concern:- The old scholars feel that the importance of grammar is reducing to a large extent in the Curriculum of Arabic Colleges.¹² But the existing teachers opine that the books included in the syllabus are sufficient for fulfilling both objectives of the curriculum i.e. theoretical and practical, especially when the overall duration of the course is concerned. But the question is how effectively these books are taught.¹³ So it is better to concentrate on this question.

As the curriculum of a subject should be sketched depending upon its educational objectives, both theoretical and practical sides of the grammar should be considered in the Arabic Colleges. Even so, there are two different ways for learning the grammar theoretically. One

¹² Moulawi, K. Moidu and K.N. Ibrahim, interviews

¹³ Salafi & Husain Madavoor, interview.

is to learn the rules by heart, overlooking their meaning and applications. This will not bring any benefit for the student – either to develop the language or for ‘scholarly comments’. The second way for learning grammar theoretically is to understand the rules so that he applies them practically. For instance, when he reads a sentence he should be capable to comment why certain words have got particular *harkaths* and what are their grammatical positions (إعراب). And he should be capable to cite examples for that. Only this type of study will serve the objectives of Arabic Colleges in grammar learning.

Ali al Jarim, in his book series *Al Nahw al wazih*, which is taught in Arabic Colleges, has used the inductive reasoning method, which is more preferable to psychologists for teaching grammar. That means to cite specific examples first and then, through a logical discussion to arrive at the general theory. He has given a model of logical discussion, which should take place in the class during the teaching of each lesson. Moreover, he gives guidance to the teachers, in the introduction of the book, on the methodology of teaching grammar. He also provides various models of exercises.

According to Salafi and Madavoor, ‘The book is really sufficient to serve both objectives of Arabic Colleges in grammar provided that it taught in the way it should be. The first problem is that it is taught in the same, old word-meaning style. That means, many teachers read the examples, discussion and rules one by one using the translation method

and may give an assignment to learn the rules by-heart. Some of them may give some exercises too.

Unawareness of the teachers about the psychological methods of teaching is the main reason for this condition, which will be discussed in the part 'Teachers'. The second reason is that the questions of the examinations are more concentrated on the theoretical level of the subject. The third one is that the grammar is taught separately from the prose and poetry. This problem can be solved to some extent if the same teacher teaches the grammar and the prose in a class. After all, though the existing book is more or less scientific, a new book that includes grammar and prose in a combined way would be more desirable.

In the case of Arabic Colleges '*Ajnas*', a small book exclusively on conjugation (*sarf*) is taught in the first year class. The parts of *al Nahwu al Wazih*, which contains conjugation rules, are comparatively tough. So those parts of *al Nahw al Wazih* can be deleted from the syllabus. As the book *Ajnas* includes mainly the rules, the learning is more prone to be confined to 'by-hearting.' Many students in junior classes even do not know why they are studying these rules. Teachers more often forget that they have to make the students practically firm in the use of first group of conjugation rules (مثلاً - صرف فعل ماضي) by different types of exercises before entering to the next group (مثلاً - صرف فعل مضارع).

Syntax is one of the prime difficulties in learning any foreign language.¹⁴ In this discussion it is meant by syntax the order of words in a sentence – not the rules of conjugation as some others wrongly use it. When the vast and wide ocean of Arabic grammar-books are checked, the rules related to syntax are hardly found, as it is the case of *Al Nahw al Wazih*. Two key reasons can be cited for this phenomenon. Firstly, the syntax cannot be confined into precise rules especially in literary usages. Secondly, the Arabic grammarians have put the grammar rules mainly to avoid misunderstanding of holy scripts and religious literatures. So the syntax, which is needed by the non-Arabic learners for developing their speaking and writing skills, was out of their agenda. Altogether, the syntactical structure of the Arabic Language should be included into the curriculum of Arabic Colleges. This is not at all a suggestion to put some new rules for syntax too and make the students learn them by heart. But if the composition books of the students of Arabic Colleges are checked, it would be convinced that they must be given some practical guidance in the subject.

Literature

Existing Curriculum

Literature has three parts in the curriculum of Arabic Colleges apart from the History of Literature (which will be discussed in the part of 'History). They are:

¹⁴ Politzer, Robert L, *Foreign Language Learning, A Linguistic Introduction*, Prentice Hall, Inc. London. 1975.

- 1) Selection of prosaic and poetical works of eminent authors and poets.
- 2) Rhetoric Studies (علم البلاغة) Literary Criticism (النقد الادبي) and Logic (منطق).

It is a favourable feature of this curriculum that it has included a good number of books from both classical and modern Secular Literature. According to Kuttasseri 'it is a precaution to avoid outward criticizers against the course.'¹⁵ It also includes different types of Arabic Literature also like dramas, *maqama*, free poems, short stories, essays and novels.

Defects in the Selection of Items:- One major defect, which was detected, was that while selecting the books and items for Prose and Poetry the theory of 'easy to complex' is completely ignored. If the prose books in Preliminary I year and BA II year are analysed hardly any difference would be noticed in their difficulty level. Contrary to this attitude, simple literary works, which includes more familiar words and usages, can be taught in the first year. From the second year the quantity and quality of the text can be increased, so that the final year students will not feel more number of good literary works as a burden for them.

The case is similar to poetry as well. In the Preliminary classes easy lanes, which are free from strange words, deep philosophy and wide imaginations can be included. But the existing collections –though

¹⁵ Kuttasseri, interview.

its literary value cannot be questioned— do not corroborate with this theory. For instance, which shows a clear disparity to this attitude, fresh students of Preliminary I have to study two books to get forty marks in Prose. But the second year students can get fifty marks in the same 'Prose' if they study only one book. Then it is not a surprise that many students chose Prose and Poetry, which is they enjoy, as 'subjects'.

When asked about 'most difficult or irrelevant subject', majority of the students (69%) from Preliminary -I named the Prose and Poetry. Second majority (16%) from BA- I year and 31% from BA - II year selected Prose.¹⁶

The second deficiency noted in the selection of literary works is the absence of contemporary works in the curriculum. When the matter was taken with Madavoor, he replayed: "all Arabic literature can't be included directly in the syllabus and for that the students can utilize other sources like library." According to Ibrahim Moulawi, "classical works are more connected with the foundational goals of Arabic Colleges."

Here the question is not of inclusion of all the literature in to the curriculum. But it is of true representation of literature of all periods. Not only the classical Muthanabbi or Imru' al Quaise, but also the modern Shouki and Hafiz are taught many times during the five year course - either their biographies or their poems. Along with them some

¹⁶ Source: Survey conducted among the students of selected Arabic Colleges.

contemporary authors and poets also worth representing their age. In any case, the inability of the products of Arabic Colleges even to name some 'living' Arabic poets or authors is a clear shortcoming and discredit for the curriculum.

Literary Related Subjects:- '*Al Balagathu al Waziha*' of Ali al Jarim is a good selection in the 'Rhetorical Studies'. But as long as the language skills are ignored in the first year it is not a surprise that the students see the teaching of this subject in the second year as 'irrelevant' or most difficult. Compared to earlier books the existing book in Literary Criticism (in final year BA) may be adjudged as 'more suitable', but a 'really suitable' book is yet to be selected. An educationalist may hardly see some logic in prescribing the book *Meezan al Uqool* (ميزان العقول) for teaching the Logic.

These two subjects i.e. Rhetoric and Criticism are taught only in Preliminary -II and BA Final classes; the students from these classes chose them as 'most difficult or irrelevant' subject. Preliminary-II, second majority (23%) chose the Paper of '*Nahw and Balāga*'. BA-III-Majority (48%) chose Criticism and other 22% chose Logic.¹⁷

English

The immediate reason for inclusion of English to the curriculum in 1990 was to make it on par with all other Bachelor degrees. Apart from this technical reason there were some significant motives behind

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

this move. Says Mankada Abdul Azeez Moulawi, who was noted for his advocacy for English inclusion into the curriculum. “In the changing global scenario mere Arabic knowledge will not be enough even for a preacher. Many unique scholars passed away without articulating their views to the vast majority of the world community because of their inability to communicate in English.” He explains what the inefficiency in English means for an Arabic Scholar when he gets a chance to speak a heterogeneous audience or becomes the head of an institution. Another motive behind the introduction of English was that the Arabic College products should match up with any other Bachelor degree holder viz. a viz. English language too, so that there would be no differences between them in general terms.¹⁸

The efficiency in English, as is the case of all other languages, is not possible merely through teaching some three to five literary works. Educationalists and linguists recommend another type of curriculum – especially for whom they cannot spare more time for the purpose – which is undertaken by many universities and institution in the world including in India. This is known as ‘Functional English’, ‘Communicative English’ etc. with slight differences in its characteristics.

In the case of Arabic Colleges, the proposal of initiating English, even as a second language had invited much controversy and only after

¹⁸ Kuttasseri, P. Muhammad

waiting for tens of years it could found a place in the curriculum. Another attempt, to make it as first paper, caused for strong differences between the Arabic College community and was a reason to declining of the Teachers Union.¹⁹ So the only way is to change the existing curriculum to a new approach, which may help the objectives of Arabic Colleges in a more efficient way.

Table No. IV – 3, Response of the students on English curriculum.

Content	Response	Percentage of students
The opinion about introducing communicative English in Arabic Colleges instead of English literature.	a) Support	92%
	b) Oppose	05%
	c) Can't say	03%

Source: survey conducted among the students of selected Arabic Colleges.

When asked about the proposal, Students' replay was above the expectations. (See the table III – 3). All the interviewees and teachers also replayed very favourably. They have their own doubts on the practicability of this change about which it will be discussed in the Conclusion.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

II

Other subjects in Arabic

History

History has been an important part of the curriculum in Arabic Colleges. Since the students study General History in secondary schools, the same is deleted from the syllabus since 1990. So the the History curriculum in Arabic Colleges aims to make the students' aware of the history of Muslims and Arabs - their politics culture and literature - in all its ages and places. The existing syllabus of History in Arabic Colleges comprises of three important constituents i.e. Political History, History of Arabic Literature and History of Islamic legislation. Political History covers the age of Prophet Muhammad in Preliminary I, four Pious Caliphs and Umayyad period in Preliminary II, Abbasid period and modern age in BA final year. The History of Literature in Preliminary II, covers from the pre-Islamic age to the end of Umayyad Period. The duration from Abbasid to modern ages is covered in BA final year.²⁰

Disharmonised distribution of different parts:-

As it is the nature of human intelligence, it is easy to remember a new idea or information by connecting it with a piece of already existing information. Also, it would be easy to study a host of new facts if they are connectable to some already existing pieces of information or

²⁰ University of Calicut, Collection of Documents and Circulars.

in a mutually connected way.²¹ (In primary classes psychologists urge to make even artificial links between different items if no natural connection is found.)²² Ibn Khaldoon may be the first philosopher who put the idea of linking all incidents and movements of a particular time to each other as a methodology of dealing with History. Moreover, this is the widely used method in teaching History i.e. to teach in a class all related and needed features of a particular era or a period, which are deeply linked with each other, then to start the study about the next era or duration in the next class or year.

But this theory is not followed in the curriculum of Arabic Colleges. For instance, take the syllabus of Preliminary I. The students learn the history of Prophet Muhammad in such a way that without knowing the features of *Jahiliya* period they study Prophet's early life and its magnificence. When he learns about the Prophetic mission he is ignorant about the circumstances of Mecca, which necessitated a mission of that kind. He studies about Islamic policies in Madina and Prophet's political relations with neighbouring countries without knowing the pre-Islamic politics in the region and so on. In the second year, History of Literature starts from *Jahili* period and the political history starts from the time of Pious Caliphs. However both share the duration till the end of Umayyad Caliphate.

²¹ Chouhan, S.S., *Advanced Educational Psychology*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991. P. 180.

²² *Ibid.*

In BA II year students exclusively study the History of Literature from Abbasid to modern age – a duration that he is completely ignorant about all its features. And in the final year he studies the political history of the same period separately. Another paper in the same year deals exclusively with the history of Islamic legislation from Prophethood to modern age.

When the History syllabus loses the historical linkage between its various parts, learning of History, which is generally counted as an interesting subject, becomes a burden for the students. The students, when asked about most difficult or irrelevant subject, did reveal their difficulties.

Second majority (20%) from Preliminary I and majority from Preliminary II (58%) chose the History as most difficult or irrelevant subject. In BA II 84% of the total students say that the History of Literature is the most difficult or irrelevant subject in their class. In BA III second Majority (29%) chose the paper 'Jurisprudence and History of Legislation' for this question.²³

As a result of separating the integral parts of the History into watertight compartments the History became confined to the study of some political leaders, authors and poets. Similarly, when the syllabus for a year deals exclusively with the political history of a very long

²³ Source: survey conducted by the researcher.

duration, teachers and students will become un-enthusiastic and take a lukewarm attitude towards the later periods.

Take the case of History syllabus in BA III for instance. One can argue that it covers Islamic history from Umayyad Period to modern age. But what is happening in the ground level is a different story. Even the minute points of the early periods in their complete details are discussed in the classes very interestingly e.g. the antecedents of Yazeeds's wife, fatherhood of Ziyad bin Abeehi and the likes. When it reaches into the end of Abbasid Period 'the repetition of history' really bores them and they discuss only about the important personalities and incidents. When it comes to the modern age teachers leave it to the students to study selectively. But the students choose to leave it untouched as 'already there is a bundle which is taught hitherto. After all there will be 'choices' in the question paper'. Consequently, history of the crusades, emergence and fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, development of Modern Arab nations, history of Muslims in India and particularly in Kerala, Modern international movements among Muslims and a lot of that kind are either ignored completely or are reduced from their importance.

Over Concentration on Persons:- One another deficiency in the curriculum is its over concentration on persons. Ibn Khaldun has criticized the History that deals solely with the life of kings and heroes and narrates only invasions and conquests. History of Arabic Colleges

may be a fitting example for that. Political History or History of Literature hardly deals with other social, religious or philosophical movements in the prescribed period. From the nineteen eighties onwards the History of Islamic Legislation is taught separately to plug this defect to some extent. Development of different politico-religious movements like *Shiism*, *Mu'athazalism*, *Kharijism* and roots and rise of Sufism are examples for the parts still untouched by the curriculum. Similar things in the modern Arab Muslim world are also ignored. History of Arabic Literature too follows the same method. When it deals with an author, even the significance of his works, his contribution to the literary world etc. are projected in a dim light and his personal details get more importance. The literary movements of different times, its causes and impacts, its salient features etc. are almost completely ignored.

One reason behind this problem rests in curriculum planning itself since this too is one of the consequences of disharmonised distribution of different parts of the History. One other reason is the unscientific method of preparing question papers for the examinations. Students, in their teenage, may not be studying the History aware of its glory. When they notice the question papers asking only about 'kings, heroes, wars and conquests' they give importance for that part only. In the History of literature most of the questions are on the life of the authors and poets. One may argue that some subjects cited above for their absence are already there in the syllabus in its wide range. But as

long as they are uncovered by examinations, students may hardly read it. (This matter will be further discussed in the part 'Evaluation'.)

It is high time to apply Ibn Khaldoon theory in the History curriculum of Arabic Colleges to overcome all the three defects mentioned above. Based up on the importance and significance of each stage, the total duration can be divided into four convenient stages as the History is taught in four classes. Suppose, one of these stages is starting from the commencement of Abbasid Caliphate to its end and the same is the History portion prescribed for a particular year. Then they have to cover all the important aspects of this period. Political developments, significance of eminent rulers, literary movements and innovations, contributions of distinguished authors or poets, emergence and growth of social, political or religious movements, its causes, expansions in Islamic legislation, commencement of *Madh-habi* compartmentalisation and many of the related matters occurred in this duration should be parts of the study.

From the psychological viewpoint also this kind of learning, will last longer. Boredom of repetition can be minimised for teachers and students, (a king is born, rules a long or a short time, offends or defends, then he dies, another is born and naturally the history 'recurs'). Suppose the portion of BA III includes only the modern time. As the syllabus will be exclusively on modern time teachers and students cannot flee away from it completely. Even if a teacher or a student drop a part, as his own

decision, from his studies it would be depending upon the unimportance of that part – not by the reasons mentioned in the case of existing curriculum. After all, even a below-average student would get a comprehensive picture of that particular period.

Qur'an and *Hadith*

One of the main feature of Afzal ul Ulama course is that it gives a room for all important subjects related to Arabic and Islamic Studies in its five-year curriculum. This attitude is not to make the students well versed in all the taught subjects. But the students must be aware of the fundamentals of all these subjects so that he he himself can continue his studies in his interested fields. Importance of each subject will determine its place in the curriculum.²⁴ But in the care of Quran 'it took care to cover maximum number of Qur'anic chapters'.²⁵ So the place of the *thafseer*-literature is in the 'Books for Reference'. Usually, as the study items itself in this paper is suffering from excessive workload the teachers or the students hardly touch the *thafseers* in their teachings and studies.

One suggestion that was put forwarded to solve this problem is to ask *thafseer*-related questions in the examination. So, a limited part of a particular *thafseer* can be included in the curriculum of each year and questions can be asked directly from that part.²⁶ If this is made

²⁴ Kuttasseri, Interview.

²⁵ Salafi, interview.

²⁶ Madavoor, interview.

considering the standard of each year it would be more possible to succeed. For example, if the *thafseer* of Imam Razi is prescribed for Preliminary I to all the Qur'anic chapters in their study items all at once, it may hardly succeed. But if it is decided that the questions of eight or ten marks will be exclusively from *Thafseer Jalalayn* for the chapter *Mu'minoon*, it is more likely to work.

In a similar way the commentaries on the *Hadith* also can be included in the study items of the curriculum. At the same time its position in the 'Books for Reference' should not be reduced.

III

General Aspects

Teaching

Earlier the teaching-learning process was a part of devotion and piety for both students and teachers - not only in the subjects related to religion and faith but also in other branches of study. They did not have any difficulty in spending years or more for acquiring knowledge in a particular matter. But the time has changed and the people's attitude towards education as well. Now the students want to gain maximum level of knowledge in a minimum duration of time. For the teachers, the teaching is a profession and a way of livelihood. In a world of ever developing subjects of study it is impossible to be a scholar in all type of knowledge.

All these changes are visible in Arabic Colleges also. For instance, according to the products of old Arabic Colleges (whom the researcher interviewed), a reason behind the shrivelling quality of Arabic Colleges is that the teachers of new generation, after achieving all official facilities, are not much concerned about creating scholarly products from their institutions. 'Teachers in the earlier generation have devoted all their worldly pleasures for the development of their institution and the enhancement of this movement. They had to collect money from door to door for their scarce salary and to cater the students.'²⁷ 'Teachers did not enjoy any support from the government or from general public. But even if they were hungry they arranged banquet of knowledge for their students. It has become a normal thing in many institutions – not only in Arabic Colleges - that some Arabic teachers become a burden for their students with their extreme apathy in doing their duties. They draw a general criticism that 'Arabic Teachers are idle' and this will jeopardize even the devoted endeavours of other majority of the Arabic teachers.'²⁸

There is no device to measure sincerity of teachers in the old and new ages. But as it is revealed in the survey (see the table no. III – 1 and III – 2) there are some realities behind the complaints against the teachers. The students opine that the teachers who keep active participation in different socio-religious organisations are showing more

²⁷ Moidu Moulawi, interview.

²⁸ Mankada, interview.

apathy towards their duties. According to Mankada, anybody can not be prevented from his attachment to any socio religious movements; rather it is welcomed. But these occupations should not be allowed to come in the way of their primary duty, for which he is getting the salary'.²⁹

All these phenomena are not confined in the sphere of Arabic Colleges. But in other fields of studies the measures to minimise the shortcomings are carried out because 'no change in the curriculum will work effectively unless the teachers impliment it effectively'.³⁰ Three among such very common measures in the educational field, which are noted with their absence in Arabic Colleges, are discussed below.

Lack of in-service or pre-service training for the teachers:- In the early times, knowledge in a particular subject was the lone qualification to teach it. Now the educational world has realised that the proficiency in the subject is not enough to teach that subject but the teachers must know how to teach their particular subject using most effective means and methods. The theory got acceptance around the world with in a relatively shorter period because 'it stems from the belief that teaching is a profession and that Teacher Education is education for a profession'.³¹

Founders of early Arabic Colleges did not think about teacher training. In fact, the changes they have made at that time were the most

²⁹ Mankada, interview.

³⁰ Haikal, Ahmad, *Fi al Adabi wa al Lugathi* (Arabic), Makathabathu al Usra, Egypt, 1998. P. 113.

³¹ Hilliard, F. H. *Theory and Practice in Teacher Education*, in Hilliard, F. H. (ed.) in *Teaching the Teachers, Trends in Teacher Education*, Feorge Allen& Unwin Ltd., Great Briton, 1971. P. 33.

revolutionary ones. If they had restricted the teaching posts only for the trained teachers they might have to close their institutions due to the shortage of qualified teachers.

There are two types of Teacher Education Courses: in-service courses and pre-service. In Kerala teachers from primary schools to the universities have to get an appropriate certificate in teaching skill as a prerequisite for this profession. Teachers of higher secondary schools, who get their salary in the scale of Arabic Colleges, have to qualify both BEd and NET/SET apart from their master degree in the respective subjects. Recently the court has prevented the BEd holders from teaching in primary schools because BEd holders are not trained enough in kids' psychology. But amazingly, any MA holder in Arabic can become a teacher in an Arabic College without any of these certificates or degrees provided that he can appease the management. No interviewee came forward to defend this sorry state of affairs; rather they accepted it as a defect.

The University sometimes conducts in-service courses for Arabic teachers. But the Arabic College teachers find it inadequate for them since the course would be concentrating on general BA Arabic curriculum, which is different from the syllabus of Afzal ul Ulama. They stress the need of conducting in-service courses exclusively for the teachers of Arabic Colleges.³² Absence of an authorised body to deal

³² Salafi & Madavoor, interviews.

with such needs is the setback here too. (A discussion on this matter is included in the Conclusion)

In fact the in service courses neither will stand by themselves nor they are made for that. Instead, they update what they have learned from their teacher-training course at par with the latest developments in the field. More over the educational scientists have their own ways to make an in-service course effective in each subject. Once the 'one teacher for one subject' proposal (which will be discussed shortly) is activated, subject-based discussions can also be organized separately.

Lack of specialisation:-

There are entirely different subjects taught in Arabic Colleges. The only relation between some of them is that their medium is Arabic. But the existing arrangement in Arabic Colleges is that a teacher may deal Prose in Preliminary I, History in Preliminary II, Prosody in BA I, and so on. This is made under the pretext that the teachers who hold an *Afzal ul Ulama* Degree are efficient in teaching all these subjects. In fact, 'Afzal ul Ulama is not a course to impart 'efficiency' in all these subjects. Rather it gives only the basic or standard knowledge in different subjects so that the products could acquire efficiency in any of them'.³³

The method adopted by seats of higher studies in Arabic and Islamic Studies in other parts of India is to appoint in each subject, only

³³ Kuttasseri. interview.

teachers who have specialisation in that specific subject. The predicament in activating this method in Kerala is the non-availability of such teachers because 'the habit of specialisation was hardly prevailing in this field in the past and it is so in the present time too'.³⁴ Secondly, since there is no legal mandate demanding specialisation of teachers in a particular subject the managers are not bound to do so in the time of appointment.

But at least in the practical level, the principals may be able to solve it to some extent. This can be done by using the method adopted by the *madrasas* like Darussalam at Umarabad³⁵ and Arabic Colleges like Rouzathul Ulûm at Farook³⁶ in their early phases. The principal gives each teacher his right to select the subjects of his own choice. He will be assigned to teach only the selected subject in any class. For instance, if a teacher is interested in History, then he will be assigned to teach only the History in different classes. Such teachers were even addressed with titles relating to their subjects in *Umarabad*-like madrasas as *Sheikh al Thafseer*, and *Sheikh al Hadith*.

There are many advantages from making such a change in teaching. Take the History as a model for discussing this matter.

1. Only the teachers interested in History will teach it.

³⁴ Salafi, interview.

³⁵ Moidu Moulawi, interview.

³⁶ Kuttasseri, interview.

2. The teacher can increase his efficiency focussing on a single interested subject. Then the students will easily get clarifications for all History-related matters from him.
3. He can discuss with the 'historians' of other Arabic Colleges on the problems of their subject. This will have a tremendous impact on curriculum planning. More over it is easy for them to select suitable books for teaching History.
4. In the in-service courses, special sessions can be arranged on History.
5. After all, he will become more responsible in his subject because if the standard of the students in his college subsides in History he would be held accountable for that.

Irregularities in the appointment of teachers

There are some loop-holes in the Kerala Government rules regarding the appointment of staff in Govt. aided institutions, through which the managing committee can appoint any particular teacher if it is determined to do so. Earlier, the managing committees of Recognized Arabic Colleges did not succumb to any kind of temptations in the appointment (which are usual business in other institutions.) The reason was that they regarded these colleges as seats of sacred knowledge. So a candidate, who was bestowed with manifold skills and noted with his distinguished performances in his studenthood, only could dream of a lectureship in any Arabic College.

Now the 'sacredness' of this appointment has lost somewhere especially after a split in an organisation, which had a major stake over many of these managements and staff. The depth of this deterioration is evident from a single incident. A student who scored only less than forty five percentage marks in *Afzal ul Ulama*, managed an MA certificate and then was appointed as a lecturer in an Arabic College. In the interview, he 'over foot' some candidates, who possessed BEd and NET certificates. His main 'advantage' was a strong attachment with one of these splinter groups.³⁷

The teaching aptitude test conducted by the interviewers in the time of interview itself shows how interested they are in the matter. They ask the candidates to teach the interview board a hitherto-unseen passage without any planning. It seems that they need those teachers who have such a skill, which is regularly practiced in Arabic Colleges. Interestingly, some organisations and movements, which stand against any reform in Arabic Colleges, for its 'sacredness', are also keeping mum on this 'un-sacredness'.

In fact, if they really need to test the performance of a teacher effectively in the time of appointment there are many scientific ways for it, and one among the most objective-based and practical tests is the following.³⁸ First of all, a fewer number of candidates are short-listed

³⁷ The researcher conceals the details about the College for Academic reasons.

³⁸ Pophan, W. James, *Educational Evolution*, Prentice-hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1975. P.293.

through interviews and verification of certificates. Then the teaching aptitude test is made through three steps:

1. A teacher is given a specific instructional objective (and any needed background information), and then asked to plan a brief lesson.
2. The teacher prepares a lesson, using any instructional techniques *he* chooses.
3. The teacher instructs a small group of learners, typically for 15-30 minutes. The learners are post-tested with a test previously unseen by the teacher...the learners are also asked to write how interesting the lesson was.

If four candidates have to be tested, for instance, a single class can be divided to four groups so that each candidate will get students of equal standard level. The heads of the institutions can also use this technique to allot certain duties among his staff.

Career

In the beginning of Arabic College movement in Kerala, more specifically in Malabar, only a limited number of Muslim families had educational awareness among them. The only education the Mappila community got was religious or Arabic. When some hard-working students from darses heard about somewhat better institutions in their field they got admission in Arabic Colleges. Total number of Arabic College products till the sixties will not presumably surpass three

hundred.³⁹ Only in the sixties the number of Arabic Colleges has seen a rise.

The young students of Arabic Colleges from its very beginning were extremely worried about their job opportunities. M.T. Abdul Rahiman Moulawi, a student of first crop in Vazhakkadu writes: "Then the products of religious institutions did not have any idea about their future life. Many times we wished whether we could have studied any technical or artisan jobs along with the religious education"⁴⁰

By the seventies, after the spread of Arabic education in government schools in large scales as a result of devoted struggles of C.H. Muhammad Koya, the Afzal ul Ulama course got a new face of professionalism because any one who pass this course could manage a teaching job somewhere. Then started mushrooming of Arabic Colleges in every corner of the state especially in the Malabar region and still it is continuing. Withstanding all the changes, which took place in the career field, the students of Arabic Colleges still dream only a teaching post. (See the Table no. III – 3).

Now there are eleven Recognized Arabic Colleges in the state. The number of private Arabic Colleges is not available. An estimated 1500 students pass outs from them each year after BA. Apart from them an estimated 3000 students complete their Preliminary Course each year, who are also ready for teaching- posts in classes up to seventh standard.

³⁹ Moidu Moulawi. interview.

⁴⁰ Moulawi, M.T. Abdul Rahiman., *A Suggestion in Olive-92* (Darul Ulûm Vazhakkadu Annual Magazine), 1992.

The number of vacancies in government or aided schools is not increasing correspondingly.

Table No. IV- 3, Report on career ambitions of the students of Arabic Colleges

Question	Response	Percentage of Students
Field preferred by the students for their future occupation?*	a) Teaching	83%
	b) Non teaching employment	17%
	c) Mosques and madrasas	00%
	d)----(Specify any other)	00%
* Note: This question was asked only to BA II, III & PG students.		
Opinion about introducing vocational guidance and coaching in Arabic Colleges without interrupting regular classes.	a) Support	99%
	b) Oppose	01%
	c) Can't say	00%
*Note: This question was asked only to BA II, III and PG students.		

Source: Survey conducted among the students of Arabic Colleges

So, many of these teaching job dreamers have to find some other ways for their livelihood. One other field waiting the Arabic College students is in the madrasas and mosques. Salafi and Madavoor indicate this field as a job opportunity. The attitude of students towards this field is very visible (see the table no. III – 3) So it is the duty of leaders and scholars to come down from their ivory towers and to deal with the problems in this 'job field' instead of merely advocating that 'the goal of the founders of Arabic Colleges is to produce scholars and to make them an asset in the religious and social fields.'

It is arguable that shrinking job opportunities are not a phenomenon that is seen merely in this field. But the fact is that, the thinkers of other branches are coping with the situation by making needed changes in their curricula. In a situation in which the higher education becomes more and more job-oriented it is not a sin if a student or his parents think 'what is there after this course.' When the number of job less products of Arabic Colleges increases, two consequences are visible in the field now. a) The number of Arabic College aspirants is shrinking fast especially ever since the access to other streams became easier by the de-linking of +2 classes from the universities of Kerala. b) 'Being denied the admission in other fields of study some kind of frustrated students are increasingly coming to Arabic Colleges recently.'⁴¹

So, it is up to the managers, principals and teachers to decide the formalities of introducing coaching and guidance classes for wider career opportunities of the students. The remarkable thing is that, unlike in the early years now their course is recognised as BA. So, they can knock any door where other degree holders have access. The help of organisations and NGOs, which work in this field, can also be sought for this purpose.

⁴¹ Kuttasseri. interview.

Educational Objectives and Evaluation

According to the educational sciences the first step of launching a curriculum is to fix its educational objectives.⁴² Teachers also must have awareness about the educational objectives of each lesson i.e. for which purpose he is teaching a particular passage or chapter. 'It is one thing to designate what you want the learners to be able to do (after your teaching). It is another thing to indicate how well you want them to do it.'⁴³ Similarly, when the teacher asks a question he should think what ability of the student he wants to measure through that question. A teacher may simply argue that the objective of his teaching is to make the students learn the matter being taught, and the questions are intended to check whether they learned it. But there are different types of learning. For instance learning a grammar rule, a poem, a word-meaning or date of an incident are different types of learning. The objective behind teaching a particular lesson/text is very significant.

Dealing with this question, many educationists have brought out different types of taxonomy. The one that was done by Benjamin S Bloom and a group of his associates is the most popular among them⁴⁴. It divided educational objectives into three major domains, the

⁴² Kaufman, Rogar A., *Educational System Planning*, Preutise Hall, Inc., New Jersey. 1972.

⁴³ Pophan, *op. cit.* P. 54.

⁴⁴ Pophan, *op. cit.* P. 57.

cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Cognitive objectives are those behaviours of learners that reflect their intellectual skills. Affective objectives deal with the behaviours that reflect non-cognitive dispositions as attitudes, values, and interests. Psychomotor objectives, as the name implies, deal with the physical and motor skills that the learner will acquire.

A teacher has to bear in mind all types of educational objectives in the time of teaching any lesson. Nonetheless, only the achievements in the cognitive level can be measured in ordinary written examinations. So it is worth mentioning little more about cognitive level objectives of teaching and evaluation. Bloom has classified six sub-levels of these cognitive level Educational objectives. For convenience, her it is classified into three. They are knowledge, comprehension and application.

If a learning material is needed only to be recalled by the student it can be grouped into the knowledge level e.g. name of a person or date of an incident. But in many cases teacher expects that the student should understand the subject matter comprehensively and should be able to relate it with other materials to make use of it. This is known as comprehensive level. The causes of a war, contributions of a poet and traits of an organization are taught with this kind of objectives. But in the case of some other learning materials, like grammar rules or mathematical equations, the students are supposed to use their intellect

more effectively. There is no use by merely remembering the grammar rule by heart or understanding it; rather they should be able to draft sentences according to it, to analyse a text based on it and to compare it with similar rules. This is known as application level.

Teachers have to take in account all these facts, because the teaching learning process can be described 'effective', only when these objectives are achieved. For instance, a teacher who does not consider these facts may adjudge a student that he learned a particular grammar rule merely because he studied it by heart along with an example.

Same thing happens in the time of evaluation too.⁴⁵ There are two types of evaluation – formative and summative. It is the duty of a teacher to test the students frequently whether the anticipated changes are taking place in students' behaviour because if one method of teaching is not successful another method can be adopted or he can understand which aspect of his teaching has failed. These kinds of tests are called formative evaluation. Interrogations during or after the lecturing and class tests are examples for this kind of evaluation. In summative evaluation the tested material is a big part of educational objectives or in some cases, all educational objectives of a subject. Final test of a subject can be included in this kind.

Exam orientation of students in their studies is often indicated as a main reason behind the worsening standard of students of Arabic

⁴⁵ Hilliard. *op. cit.*

College in their knowledge. The exposing of this complaint will reveal that the same exam-orientation can be made a main force to encourage the students to study well. Logically two inferences can be drawn from the above complaint. a) The students are more concentrated with the examinations than with the objectives of teaching each subject. b) These objectives are not measured in the examinations so that the students do not acquire them. So the standard of the students can be increased by assuring that the educational objectives of each subject is accurately measured by the examinations in the respective subjects. For this purpose the scientific way of standardising the examinations should be utilised. Here also the lack of teacher education for Arabic College teachers is a major setback.

For instance, it is needed that the students should have a comprehensive view on Abbasid period. But the biographies of some kings or poets are only asked in exams. A student writes all the family details of them by heart he gets more marks than another one who studied the history of that period comprehensively. Then there is no point in merely complaining that comprehensive studies do not occur in Arabic Colleges.

In short, the person who sets the questions must consider that the correct educational objectives of each subject are measured through his questions. Objectivity of the questions, their validity, reliability and proper coverage for all parts of the curriculum and different types of

questions (simple, complex, short answer and essay type) are the main matters to be taken into account for standardising the questions.⁴⁶ A quick glance at the question papers of various subjects in Arabic Colleges makes it clear that they hardly consider any of these important guidelines.

⁴⁶ Pophen, *op. cit.* P. 293.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The discussion in the previous chapters gives a detailed account of the struggles that the traditional Arabic curriculum in Kerala had undergone in its voyage to a full-fledged degree course, which enjoys all facilities of other courses. It is also implicit how the later generation ignored the devoted struggles and dedicated endeavours of their ancestors, who stood by their visions and missions, withstanding all the tough times.

The first evidence of this negligence appears in their failure in preserving the historical traces of these reformers to a large extent. Not only the details of *darse* curriculum in its early phases but also the documents about the curricular changes in the nineteen fifties and sixties are among the list of nonavailable data. Perhaps the lack of research in the state in the related areas may be the prime reason behind this apathy.

Many related areas in the field were identified during this study where serious research works are yet to be done. The 'curriculum of *palli darses* is an important one among them. More specifically, the connection between '*al silsilath al Nizamiya*,' which was followed in Kerala and '*Dars i Nizami*' of North India is yet to be studied. The life mission of Chlilakath Kunh Ahamad Haji and his reforms in the field of Muslim education itself must be studied separately. The influence of

Arabic Colleges on the social, religious and educational spheres of Muslims of Kerala is another unnoticed tract.

The third instance of ignorance, perhaps most important one is that the present Arabic College community is not in a mood to reform the existing curriculum according to the latest developments and inventions in the field of Education though they are very keen to claim the inheritance of those reformers. This does not mean that the Arabic College community is against reforms in the field. As it was seen during the interviews, survey and other interactions with them, all of them have their own ideas and opinions for the betterment and development of their system. They responded favourably to the proposals given for their consideration but also put forwarded many genuine opinions. They have innovative and sparking ideas about the needed reforms in it. Just to site some of the proposals, which would have radical impact on upgrading the quality of this system are:

1. Centralisation of curriculum on language skills in the first year partial replacement of the English curriculum of literature with communicative English.
2. Making official tie ups with the Arab universities to
3. Restricting the teaching posts only for the trained candidates

One may think, then why they don't initiate these proposed changes in the curriculum. The main predicament is that, it is due to the absence of a body to monitor the arising needs and wants of the

institution from time to time and to congregate together all kinds of views and opinions. Now the Board of Studies in Arabic (UG and PG) is the body, which is authorized to take needed decisions on the matters related to the curricular changes. In this body only two or three members represent the Arabic Colleges. There was a Teachers Union exclusively for Arabic College teachers, which started functioning from the very beginning of the Arabic Colleges. Though the Union was founded for matters related to teachers, it would forward its recommendations regarding the syllabus too to the Board of Studies. Because of the internal differences surfaced among the teachers this organization declined from its functioning by the beginning of the nineties. Now the Board of Studies usually accepts the recommendations of 'eminent persons' in the field instead of conducting serious enquiries in the matter or trying to get collective opinions of the Arabic College community. Sometimes complaints surface through the media about certain changes in the curriculum.

Considering the importance of curriculum in every courses of study, even different teachers organizations in the state have their own wing to frame their own academic views. But in the case of Arabic Colleges there is no official or unofficial body that initiates a collective discussion on the matters related to them. It is very sad to hear from responsible persons that they are helpless in introducing many valuable initiatives in the curriculum without such a body. So it is high time to

constitute an official body to monitor and deal with all curricular matters of this course. It can be a wing under the Board of Studies of Arabic or with an independent entity as it is apparently possible utilizing the provisions under the University.

The 'curriculum' is not a word to denote merely some subjects and books studied in an institution. But it is the way to achieve the anticipated educational objectives of the institution. So the subjects and books in the course, tools and methods of teaching schemes and techniques of evaluation and more are part of the curriculum.

As far as the founders of Arabic Colleges are concerned the reform they have made in the system of Arabic and Islamic studies itself was a big revolution of that time. Now instead of making some superficial changes the need of the time is to re-plan the curriculum considering the founding objectives of the Arabic Colleges and the ground realities of the modern time. When such reforms are made, the guidelines of educational sciences should also be given due consideration. For that sake, help of some educationalists, who are aware of the mottos of Arabic Colleges can also be sought. Presence of such personalities also must be guaranteed in the proposed body also.

In this research work, especially in its fourth chapter an attempt is made to explore scope of such a reform in the curriculum. Of course, the findings are only an agenda for further studies and discussions, which may lead to fruitful changes and new initiatives in the field.

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