

**The Development of Muslim Women's Education  
and Its Impact on Islamic Culture in Malabar  
(1947 – 2000)**

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By

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***DEDICATED***

***TO***

***MY PARENTS AND NAUGHTY MUFI, JUMU, SAFA AND SANA.***



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Date 22-07-05

### Declaration

I declare that the material in this dissertation entitle **“The Development of Muslim Women’s Education and Its Impact on Islamic Culture in Malabar (1947-2000)”** submitted by me is original work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

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## Acknowledgement

The study is an attempt to understand the fundamentals of society. Good and sincere efforts are always called for in this direction. Such efforts will in turn provide the society with a large chunk of informed sources to address various problems. The motivation behind this particular study of mine is to learn about the causes, which influenced the milieu of Mappila Muslims of Malabar.

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SHABEERALI K.K

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# CHAPTER-I

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the key and determining factor that plays a crucial role in transforming the society as well as the country. A society could pace with the modern age if it imparts better education to its citizens. Universal education remains to be the pointer to gauge the social impetus of a society. Education and erudition regenerate the individual as well as the society and contribute tremendously to the social uplift of both. Hence, it is imperative to give education for every individual.

The female education is conspicuously relevant in the contemporary scenario of modern education, which occupied the centre stage of social mobilization that aims at a comprehensive and progressive restructuring of world. In much of the world so far, little attention has been paid to the education of girls. A vast chasm that continues to exist between male and female educational attainments, from the stage of mere literacy to higher education forms the bedrock of any social reformation. Gender discrimination is the most disquieting factor of educational disparity between men and women. In every nook and corner of the world, men would have more educational opportunity than that of women. The plight of women in all society is miserable, only a few have chances to study and work in public. "Globally, nearly 600 million women remain illiterate today, compared with about 320 million men. In certain parts of the world, moreover, as many as three in four women are illiterate, and others have received no more than a negligible education."<sup>1</sup>

In the modern world, it is an imperative thing to educate women because they can contribute tremendously -in some way than educated men could- to the society and country. Education infuses confidence and self-esteem to give voice to the voiceless and bring the marginalized into the mainstream. Moreover, only better-educated women have higher aspiration for their children's education and are less likely to expect labour support from their school-going children than do their uneducated counterparts.

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<sup>1</sup>Foreword by Nafis Sadik, executive director of United Nations population fund, in Shireen J Jejeebhoy's *Women's Education, Autonomy, and Reproductive Behaviour: Experience from Developing Countries*.

As a religion, Islam has repeatedly asserted the importance of education in delivering social progress and prosperity in the world. Islam has never encouraged gender disparity in acquiring knowledge and providing it. The Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet unambiguously declared that women have to gain literacy and knowledge for their empowerment and improvement in the society. The very first revelation from Allah to the Prophet was "Read in the Name of your Lord who has created (all that exists)."<sup>2</sup>

According to Qur'an, the more knowledgeable people are the more pious. Seeking knowledge is therefore made obligatory to both men and women. Despite the fact that, still there is a sort of discrimination particularly in the attainment of higher education not only in Muslim societies but in other cultures also. According to a report, more than two thirds of the world's 960 million illiterate adults are women.<sup>3</sup>

Conspicuously, Muslims lag behind the rest in educational attainment even in developed countries. Historically, Muslims had tremendous eras of progress and prosperity in educational fields. After the monopolization of parochialism on the education in the past centuries, they have lost supremacy over the world. One of the largest Muslim populated countries in the world, India too has been the part of this phenomenon and Indian Muslims are educationally the worst sufferers in the society since long ago.

The policy of British Govt. caused the dismal performance of Muslims in pre-Independent India. By introducing policies like 'Down ward filtration' theory of Lord Macaulay and desecrating the religious feelings and symbols, the British regime in India had fully succeeded in distancing them from mainstream of the society. The post independent era witnessed to the rapid progress in Educational Arena. However, inequality and disparity persists between regions, religions and castes. In a latest development, ruling Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh has constituted a special committee in 2005, to assess the socio-economic and educational performance of Muslims in the independent India.

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<sup>2</sup> Quran., *Sura Al Alque*, Ayat, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Zecnath Kausar., *Women's role in Muslim Society*, *The Muslim World League Journal*, Vol. 32, May 2004.



In India women in general and Muslim women in particular, are a downtrodden section of the society. According to 2001 census report, over all literacy of Indian women is 54 percent. The Muslim women's literacy rate is 50.1 percent against 53.7 percent of Hindu women. There is an obvious contrast between Muslim women in Kerala and their counterparts in other states. In Kerala, they have achieved some enviable status in literacy and social fields. The total literacy rate of women in Kerala is 87.86 per cent in 2001 census report. According to National Family Health Survey 1992-93, illiteracy rate among Muslim women in Kerala was 20.6 per cent. The table shows the illiteracy rates of Muslim and Hindu women in the age limit 13-49, in 1992-93.<sup>4</sup>

Table: 1 National Family Health Survey 1992-93.

states	Muslim women (%)	Hindu women (%)
Assam	73.5	53.1
W Bengal	61.7	47.4
Kerala	20.6	15.2
UP	85.2	74.4
Bihar	87.7	76.7
Karnataka	62.6	62.7
Maharashtra	50.7	50.6
Delhi	62.5	36.7
Andhra	54.4	70.4
Gujarat	50.3	56.5
Rajasthan	88	82.6
Tamil Nadu	30.1	53.2
MP	60.7	76.1
Hariyana	98.2	63.1

Since the turn of the last century, the steady decline in the disparity of male and female literacy rate in Kerala is noticeable. At the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kerala had a general literacy rate of 19.15 for male and 3.15 of female. In 1971, it had gone upto 66.62 and 54.31, in 1981, it was 74.03 and 64.48, and in 1991, it was 93.62 and 86.17 percent for male and female respectively. According to the census of 1981, "The various sociological factors coupled with the greater stress on women's education

<sup>4</sup> National Family Health Survey Report 1992-93.

have made greater impact on the attitude of women. It is significant that the 95 per cent of girls in the age group of 10-14 have now become literate.”<sup>5</sup>

A mere rise in literacy could not be considered as the achievement of a community in the highly educated Kerala society. Because in India the definition of literacy is one who can write and read his or her name in his/her mother tongue is called literate. When the progress of a community is taken into account it should be considered how much it gained from the field of education at various levels, and how efficiently it utilized the riches knowledge for the greater common good of the society.

Here, the study assumes to be relevant, while the most of the Indian states are lagging behind in providing female education, the experience in Kerala is markedly different. Here, the case assumes greater significance where Muslim women have achieved higher status in other fields as well. The study aims at a dissection of the performance by the Malabar Muslim women at school and higher levels of education based on data collected from secondary sources such as books and articles. A specialized and systematic study on Muslim women’s education in Kerala has not been done so far. The sources are specified in the appropriate contexts.

The socio-cultural reasons could be traced in the educational performance of Muslim women in Malabar. For explaining the facts, the study has been divided into three main chapters according to the subject. The first chapter is a brief study about the historical background of Malabar and Mappila Muslims. Malabar includes six districts in the northern part of Kerala. The region has a distinct culture, tradition and history. The significant presence of Muslim population in the region constitutes the base and remains to be the incentive of the study on Malabar. In Kerala, Muslims make up 23 per cent of population out of which around 75 per cent of Muslim population concentrates in Malabar region. The chapter gives a short description of its past trade relationship with foreign countries, origin and spread of Islam and socio-cultural life of Mappilas.

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<sup>5</sup> B. T. Pillai., *A Portrait of Population Kerala, Census of India 1981, Serial No 10 Kerala*, P. 39.

Malabar had been under the yoke of the British since 1792, when Tipu Sultan signed the Sreerangapatnam treaty with British. Therefore, the second chapter is focused on the performance of Muslim women in Malabar at school level during the British period. The chapter is a dissection about the traditional educational systems, the policies of British Govt in India, the attitude of Muslims towards modern and secular education, the performance of Muslim girls in the secular schools and the reasons for the backwardness of the community.

The last and main chapter of the study is a discussion about the educational performance of Muslim women at school and higher level after independence. But, the lack of availability of religious wise data forced us to take the number of students who study Arabic and Urdu in primary and secondary schools as sample. In higher level, we discuss the performance of Muslim girls in two famous Muslim management colleges in Malappuram and Kannur districts since their establishment. There is also a brief discussion about the reasons for the development of education. Here, we discuss the role of religious, charitable and political organizations, the role of institution and the role of individual. In the final part of the chapter, we discuss the cultural impact of women's education in Malabar and delineate the features of Muslim women's status in the society, their political participation and the attitudinal changes of the community.

## CHAPTER-II

### HISTORICAL BACK GROUND OF MALABAR MUSLIMS

#### I-A PROLOGUE TO MALABAR

##### **Malabar**

Malabar is an ancient name for the entire Malayalam speaking territory, stretching from the northern landmark of Mount Deli to Cape Comerin. The famous Arabian traveller and geographer Al Biruni (970-1039) appears to have been the first to call the country Malabar.<sup>6</sup> However, there are different opinions about the naming of Malabar. According to S.M.H. Nainar, the Arab geographer Yaqut (1179-1229) is the first to give us the name 'Malabar' and 'Ma'bar'. Long before Al Biruni's time, the Egyptian merchant, Cosmos Indicopleustes, mentions a town 'Male' on the west coast of India, as a great emporium of the pepper trade.<sup>7</sup> The word 'Male' was used by Arab navigators to indicate the coast from the time of Cosmos Indicopleustes to the 11th or 12th century AD. They called it in various names like Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar, and Munibar. The word 'Malabar' is therefore, probably, in part at least, of foreign origin: the first two syllables are almost certainly the ordinary Dravidian word, 'Mala' (hill, mountain) and 'bar' is probably the Arabic word, Barr (continent, land) or the Persian word, Barr (country).<sup>8</sup> The indigenous name of the country was 'Malayalam', but the natives love to call it 'Keralam'.<sup>9</sup> But the name Kerala is used also to include regions like Cochin and Travancore. However after British invasion, the use of the term had been restricted to designate that portion of the west coast, which came under their direct rule.

Malabar, one of the two districts of the Madras presidency situated on the west coast of India, lies between Northern Latitude 10 15' and 12 18' and Eastern Longitude 75 14' and 76 15', and stretches along the shores of the Arabian Sea for a distance of 150

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<sup>6</sup> C.A. Innes., *Madras District Gazetteers, Malabar and Anjengo*, Vol-1, P.2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> William Logan., *Malabar manual*, Vol-1, P.1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

miles.<sup>10</sup> The land comprises the narrow coastal strip bounded by the Western Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. The region includes six districts along the northern part of Kerala: Kasargod, Kannur (Canannore), Kozhikode (Calicut), Wayanad, Malappuram and Palakkad. Since ancient age, Kerala has been the focal point of various people from different countries. In the words of Sreedharamenon “its unique geographical position and peculiar physical features have invested Kerala with a distinct individuality.” Malabar with its ever green mountains, dense forests, stately palms, swift flowing rivers, extensive back waters and blue lagoons look like a fairy land. Ultimately God has poured His blessing on it and endows it with richness and fertility the reason as to why the region is often referred as ‘God’s own country’.

### **Trade Relationship with Arabs and the West**

Malabar holds an important position in the trading map of the ancient world. Its port of Muzris, presently known as ‘Kodungalure’ or ‘Cranganore’ was one of the great commercial emporia of the world. Muzris was a meeting place of the East and the West. From the East came Chinese and probably East Indies traders, while from the West came Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Persians, East Africans and others to exchange goods and to draw on the treasures of India. This commercial enterprise had been tremendously encouraged when the Egyptian pilot, Hippalus, discovered how to utilize the monsoon winds for direct traverse of the Arabian Sea. This wind is known as ‘Hippalus wind’ among the western navigators.<sup>11</sup> Since little is known of the early history of Malabar, it is impossible to weave together a continuous and connected story.

The region has been continuing good relationship with many foreign countries since ancient age. According to some historians, it extends upto B.C. Perhaps early as long as the time of Moses, the great Jewish law-giver, this commerce existed, for cinnamon and cassia played a part in the temple services of the Jews (Exodus xxx. 23, 24). At any rate, the commerce existed in the time of King Solomon (B.C. 1000). The king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the

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<sup>10</sup> C.A. Innes., *Op ct*, P.1.

<sup>11</sup> William Logan., *Op ct*, P.248.

navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.”<sup>12</sup> With the exception of silver, these are all productions of the Malabar Coast. The Jewish traditions mention that they were settled on the coast at the time of their escape from servitude under Cyrus in the sixth century B.C.<sup>13</sup> At the time of Herodotus (B.C.484-413), trade with East was maintained. According to him the control of trade was in the hands of Egyptians and Phoenicians at that time. The west collected the products of Malabar from Arabs, who had direct contacts with Malabar. The ‘Aden’<sup>14</sup> was probably the port in which the Arabian and Indian merchants met the Greeks and exchanged their goods. Yet the Malabar products made inroads into the markets of the West, they were not aware of the way to Malabar and its exact geographical position in the east.

The important change came with the conquest of Egypt by the Romans. The trade passed directly into their hands and they traced it out. With increased trade came increasing knowledge of the countries whence the spices came. The fullest account of the trade is contained in ‘Periplus Maris Erythrai’<sup>15</sup> and a plenty of foreign books are overflowed by fascinating narration about Malabar, those were written by Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and Arabs. Prominent among them are Ptolemy, Pliny, Cosmas Indicopleustes, Herodotus, Al-Idrisi, Al-Kwazmi, Mis’ar Ibnu Muhalhil, Ibnu Batuta, Abdur Razzak and Al Biruni.

Ptolemy (AD.126-161) cut a canal between Nile and Red Sea and made a port to bring the Malabar products into the interior areas of Africa. Al-Kwazimi compiled his account of India from the works of others. He mentions ‘Kulam’ as a large city in India. Ptolemy describes about the Chera Kingdom. Many Roman coins have been dug up at various places on the west coast of Malabar. They belong to the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero.<sup>16</sup> The Peutingerian Tables (AD.226) mentions that there were considerable Roman settlements at Mouziris (Kodungalure)

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., P. 245.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., P. 246.

<sup>14</sup> A port in Yemen, the mouth of the Red sea, Aden was formerly under the British rule, first as part of British India (1839), and then from 1935 as a crown colony. It was capital of former south Yemen from 1967 to 1990.

<sup>15</sup> An ancient historical record, it is believed that was written contemporary with Pliny (AD. 23-79), the work of an unknown author, describing about south India and Malabar coasts.

<sup>16</sup> C.A. Innes., *Op ct*, P.31.

and there was a temple devoted to Augustus. Two cohorts of soldiers were employed in protecting the trade. These evidences doubtlessly speak the relationship of the region with foreign countries.

The Arabs were probably the carriers and merchants of the Indian Ocean before anybody else. As Indian and Western maritime activity decreased after the fall of Roman Empire in fourth century, the control of trade through Indian Ocean came into the hands of Arabs. Afterwards the region witnessed the dominance of Arabs in trade activities until the incursion of Portuguese in 15th century. It was natural for the Arabs to make the Kerala coast their first and chief port. Not only it was the nearest halting place, but it was also the source of pepper, 'the black gold', as well other valuable products.

In the seventh century, Islam was spreading rapidly over the face of the globe. With the conquest of Egypt (AD.638-40), the trade between India and Europe passed into Muslim hands.<sup>17</sup> The trade with Muslims brought developments and prosperity into Malabar. As a result, the native kings and chieftains in Malabar encouraged the Muslim settlement all along their territory. For instance, Zamorin, the Calicut king underlined the relationship with Arabs by giving each Muslim merchant a Nayar to guard and serve him, a scribe as his accountant, and a broker for his trade.<sup>18</sup> Soon after Arabs and Muslims began to settle and to establish trade centres, Calicut became the hub of trade and the main port along the coast of Malabar. Arabs and Muslims made it a safe city in south India for their transactions through Arabian Sea as well as through Indian Ocean. In the words of Abdur Razzak (AD.1442), who visited the region on the eve of the Portugal arrival, Calicut was a 'perfectly safe harbour' and he gives a shining account of the busy harbour and its merchants from all parts of the world.

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<sup>17</sup> William Logan., *Op ct*, P.254.

<sup>18</sup> Roland E Miller., *Mappila Muslims of Kerala, A Study in Islamic Trends*, P. 62.

There are many references about the products of Malabar, which could be seen in the pre-Islamic poetry, indicating the strong and stable relationship of Arabs with Malabar and vice versa. For instance, 'Imrul Quays' in his 'Mu'allaqa compared the dry dung of the antelopes to pepper corns. He says "There, all about its yards. And away in the dry hollows you may see the dung of the antelopes scattered like pepper corns".<sup>19</sup> In the view of C.N. Ahmed Maulavi, the pillars of the Ka'aba are teak. Mis'ar Ibnu Muhalhil, who visited the region, describes the commercial activities: There is in this kingdom a great quantity of pepper, ginger, cinnamon, turbit and nuts of India.....for which there is a demand here, and exchange them for the products of these countries.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that the presence of Arabs in Malabar contributed to history of Malabar an era of prosperity and developments. Their fall by the hands of European colonialists in 15<sup>th</sup> century is the turning point not only in the history of Malabar but also in the history of India. Even though they had firm hold in the region, they never tried to interfere in the matters related to the government and people. This attitude gave them a highly honourable place in the hearts of people irrespective of religion and caste. Even now, the relationship with the Arab countries is strong and stable among the people of Malabar. Due to a lack of sufficient employment opportunities in Kerala, a huge proportion of people from Malabar are forced to work in Gulf countries to earn their livelihood.

### **Arrival of Islam**

The origin and spread of Islam in Kerala has been a subject of discussion among historians for a long time. According to SS Nadvi, "It is an open fact that long before the Muslims settled in northern India, there were colonies in southern India."<sup>21</sup> Islam and its arrival into the region are entirely different from the remaining part of India. The Muslims didn't enter into the soil of Kerala as conquerors. They were never seen

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<sup>19</sup> Imrul Quays., *Muallaqat*, verse No, 3.

<sup>20</sup> William Logan., *OP ct*, P.284.

<sup>21</sup> S.S. Nadvi., *The Muslim Colonics in India before the Muslim Conquests, Islamic Culture, VIII* (1934). P. 478, Quoted in Roland Miller's *Mappila Muslims of Kerala, A Study in Islamic Trends*, P. 40.



as aggressors in the region. On the contrary, in North India Islam arrived after Muhammad ibn Qasim's expedition to Sind (AD 711-15).

### **Origin and Spread of Islam in Malabar**

Whether Islam was originated in Malabar at the time of Prophet or after His death is disputed subject. Evidences are supporting both opinions. According to Muslim tradition, a few Muslim pilgrims were on their way to Adam's peak in Ceylon. They arrived at Kodungalure shore, which was the centre of King Perumal, and an important port on the coast of Malabar. They visited him, and he came to know about the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (570-632) from the pilgrims. He was impressed by Prophet and Islam, and wished to accompany them on their way to Mecca. He sailed with them to Mecca, met the Prophet and accepted Islam at his hands. He accepted the name 'Thajuddeen', and died in Mecca in AD 624.

As per the accounts of Keralolpatti, Cheraman Perumal embraced Islam in his native land and went Mecca for Hajj in AD 825. Before leaving for Mecca, he partitioned the kingdom among his descendants. The memory of the event is still kept fresh in Malabar. For instance, at the time of coronation of Zamorin, it is the practice to have him shaved and dressed like a Musalman, and crowned by a Mappila. Whenever the coronation event was conducted in the kingdom, the kings had to declare "I will keep this sword until the uncle who has gone to Mecca returns."<sup>22</sup> It is said that after four years while he was returning to Kerala died at Zufar (AD 832). Before his death, he wrote letters to his governors and officials to provide all facilities to his companions to spread the new religion. Malik Ibnu Dinar and his associates, who accompanied him, landed at Kodungalure and travelled to different parts of the region to propagate the ethos of Islam. Initially to meet this purpose, they established ten mosques. According to historians like CK Kareem, the first king who visited Mecca and embraced Islam by the hands of Prophet is not Cheraman Perumal, but 'Bana Perumal' who was his predecessor.<sup>23</sup>

It is believable that the existing trade relationship with Arabs had become the reason for the spread of Islam in Malabar at the time of Prophet or immediately after His

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<sup>22</sup> William Logan., *Op ct*, P. 231.

<sup>23</sup> C.K. Kareem., *Ancient Kerala and Muslim Origin*, P. 76.

death. At that time, Prophet had sent letters to kings in different parts of the world in order to introduce Islam. He might have sent one letter to king of Kerala too. Prophet might have enough knowledge about Kerala because He was a trader in his youth. Hakim quotes in his famous book 'Al Mustadrak', "One king from India came to Prophet and embraced Islam and he gifted a bottle of ginger pickle to Prophet. Prophet distributed it among His followers at the presence of Abubakar Siddique."<sup>24</sup> A counter argument is that, if such a king visited and embraced Islam, it must have reported in vast 'Hadith' literature. According to Sheikh Zainuddeen the author of *Thuḥfatul Mujahideen*, "As far the exact date, there is no certain information with us. Most probably it must have been two hundred years after the Hijrah (AD 632)."<sup>25</sup>

### **Reasons for the Spread of Islam**

The relationship of the people of Malabar with Arabs had played a vital role in the immediate spread of Islam in the region. The trade relationship between Arab and Malabar was so cohesive before the rise of Islam. By the support of local kings and people, Arabs settled on the coastal areas of Malabar and engaged into inter marriage with Hindu women, especially from Nayar and Tiyya community. Their offsprings were the forefathers of Muslims in Kerala. Both Arab settlement and inter marriage helped the spread of Islam in Malabar.

Second factor is the support of local kings. For instance, Calicut king Zamorin, in a significant move, ordered that in every family of fishermen (*Mukkuvans*) in his dominion one or more of the male members should be brought up as Muhammadan.<sup>26</sup> The deal with Arabs made Calicut a world famous port. "The Arabs not only made Calicut the greatest port on the west coast of India, they even helped to spread the name and fame of the Zamorin to Europe."<sup>27</sup> In the north, establishment of *Arakkal Swarupam*<sup>28</sup> and rise of Ali Raja helped the progress of Muslim growth. The first Ali

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<sup>24</sup> K.M. Bahauddeen., *Kerala Muslims, A Struggle History*, P. 38.

<sup>25</sup> Shcikh Ahmed Zainuddeen Al-Ma'bary Al-Malaibari., *Thuḥfatul Mujahideen Fi Ahvalil Burtugaliyyin*, P. 39.

<sup>26</sup> C.A. Innes., *Madras District Gazetteers, Malabar and Anjengo*, P. 190

<sup>27</sup> K.V. Krishna Ayyar., *Zamorins*, P. 52. Quoted by Roland Miller, *Op ct*, P. 55.

<sup>28</sup> It is the name of ancestral house of Ali rajas, situated in Kannur in North Malabar. It remains with their proud and privilege there. Arakkal Beevi has the control over Arakkal Swarupam and they follow *Marumakkatayam* system.

Raja, who embraced Islam, was a Nayar minister of Kolathiri king. He married a Muslim woman and was given a small principality to rule at Kannur by Kolathiri.

The third factor is the religious tolerance they showed towards local people. Establishment of Islam in Kerala was marked by a calm forward movement, the peaceful contact and development sharply contradict with the progress of Islam in North India where Islam came as conqueror. The followers of Islam in Kerala never tried to establish their rule over the country and to launch their sovereignty over them.

The peaceful conversion is one of the most important factors that contributed to the spread of Islam in Malabar. At the time of its arrival, people were divided by castes since the system was deeply rooted in the society. The concept of equality and parity in Islam attracted lower castes into its folder. By converting to Islam one low class member of Hindu could sit with upper class Hindu and he would get all privileges in his public life as a Musalman. The major influence of Islam in the society of Malabar is resultant of the former's preaching of equality among human beings and it's envisaging a noble concept about men.

### **Political History of Malabar**

Malabar has witnessed many political developments in its long history since ancient age till today. Politically the region has seen many incursions and invasions in her glorious history from inside and outside the country. But the absence of reliable historical records makes it very difficult to make a full description of political history of Malabar prior to the advent of Europeans.

From AD 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century, three powers ruled over today's Kerala-they were Aay Rajas in the Southern side, Ezhimala kings in the Northern side i.e. today's Malabar and the first Chera kingdom comprising most of the present central Kerala. Malabar was under the rule, though not direct, of Chera kingdom. The region was managed by their Viceroys who were known as 'Perumakkanmar' in history. The Perumal rule continued till AD 825 when the last Perumal, Cheraman embraced Islam and went to Mecca. Before leaving for Mecca he partitioned the region among his descendants.

After the departure of Perumal, politically Malabar became a collection of independence states. The various Hindu rajas were constantly at war with one another. Prominent among them were the Zamorin of Calicut, the Kolathiri in the North and the Cochin raja in the south.<sup>29</sup> The only one Muslim chieftain in the region was the Ali Raja of Arakkal kingdom in North Malabar. By the time of European incursion into the region, Ali raja had become ruler of a small principality at Kannur. Before that it was the part of Chirakkal kingdom. Probably it might have achieved independent status in 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### **European Invasions**

The European period may be conveniently divided into Portuguese (1498-1663), Dutch (1663-1793), and English periods. The French appeared on the scene in 1725, but played only a marginal role in the history. During the European era local kings continued to reign by accepting the sovereignty of Colonialists.

### **Portuguese Incursion**

Portuguese is the mentor of all colonialists who had come to Malabar to occupy the land. Their period covers 165 years; from AD 1498 to 1663. The era begins when Vasco Da Gama's fleet anchored at Kappad, a coastal village situating very near to Calicut town, in May 1498. His discovery of India turned a new page in the world history. Gama started his first voyage to discover the root to India from 'Belom' near Lisbon on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1497. His fleet consisted of 160 men and four ships. They crossed 'Cape of Good Hope' in Africa and reached Madagascar Island, where they detained the famous navigator and traveller 'Sheikh Ahmed Ibnu Majid', and forced him to direct them to India. Eventually they reached the shore of Malabar in 1498.<sup>30</sup>

When Gama arrived in Malabar, Calicut was its famous port and the control of trade was in the hands of Muslims and most of the traders were from Arabia. The Gama was not much satisfied with Calicut and sailed back home on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1498. But

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<sup>29</sup> K.T. Muhammad Ali., *The Development Of Education Among The Mappilas Of Malabar(1800-1965)*, P. 2

<sup>30</sup> K.K. Mohammed Abdul Karcem., *Kerala Muslims against the Companies. Indian Muslimkal Suppliment-Yuva Sarani*, P. 129.

he had secured samples of the various products of Malabar and had ascertained which articles were the most useful for barter on the coast. Before leaving Calicut he had shown his enmity and animosity towards Muslims and tried to sow the seeds of hatred and to break the communal amity of the people. The Portuguese expedition continued after Da Gama. Pedro Alvarez Cabral (1500), Francisco D Albuquerque (1503), Francisco D Almelda (1505) and Alfonso D Albuquerque (1509) succeeded their predecessor Gama. Their presence on the soil of Malabar continued till 1663, when they were defeated by the Dutch who wrested the fort of St. Angelo at Canannore. After that the Portuguese withdrew their military and men to Goa, which later became their base in India.

The intentions of Portuguese incursion into India could be concluded as follows. The first and the main purpose of their arrival into the region was to propagate the Roman Catholic creed. They got the permission from the Pope to do so in 1454<sup>31</sup> and followed a policy of religious persecution and forcible conversion. The second factor for the incursion is to destroy the dominance of Muslims and Arabs in trade and their supremacy over Indian Ocean. Their policy was to destroy Muslims socially and economic. For the fulfilment of malintensions, they wanted the local princes and chieftains to break the relationship with Muslims and to oust them from their locality. For the execution of their intentions, they successfully exploited the jealousies of the native princes and wrested the virtual monopoly of the pepper trade.

### **Dutch and French**

Another European power the Dutch came to Malabar in AD 1604. They entered the picture as supporters of indigenous people in their struggle against Portuguese which seemed natural given their enmity towards the latter in Europe. After the fall of Portuguese, the monopoly of trade went into the hands of the Dutch. But they followed the path of Portuguese and clashed with people. Ultimately, the people defeated the Dutch and they were forced to return to Europe in 1793. In 1725, the French captured 'Mayyazhi' and renamed it as 'Mahe' in honour of the French captain 'Francois Mahe De Labourdonnais'. However, they were diminished into a small territory; finally they relinquished it to the Indian government after independence.

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<sup>31</sup> K.M. Bahauddeen., *Kerala Muslimkal A Struggle History*, Islamic Publishing House, P. 45.

### **British (1792-1947)**

The arrival of British into the region was under the banner of English East India Company (EEIC). They came here for trade, for the first time, it acquired a site at Thalasseri for the erection of a fort and a factory in the closing years of 17<sup>th</sup> century. Immediately after the treaties of Sreerangapatanam signed by Tipu Sultan, the Mysore king, on February 22 and March 18 in 1792, Malabar was formally surrendered to British. After the treaty, Malabar came under the Government of Bombay till 1800. Later, it became a district in Madras presidency.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after the establishing of their own rule over the region the British started to follow anti people policies. Most of the decisions taken by the British were against the interest of common man. During the tenure, the British desired to appease the upper caste people by giving them high status in the society and gave them back the monopoly of land by abandoning the land reform policies initiated by the Mysore king Tipu sultan. British encouraged the caste system in the society to assert their supremacy and to suppress the resentments of people against the government. During their period, there were three hundred outbreaks against the government. The British followed the policy of divide and rule and tried their best to sow the seeds of communal hatred and enmity among the people. Until 15 August 1947 their rule continued over the region.

### **Mysore Kings (1763-1792)**

The conquest of Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan-Mysore Muslim rulers-was the most important episode in the political history of Malabar in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Haider Ali descended into Malabar in AD 1763. At that time, people of Malabar were socially uncivilized. All sorts of superstitions and social evils prevailed in the region. Muslims and Christians were the communities who had enjoyed religious freedom apart from upper class Hindus. Untouchable and unapproachable were common in the society and generally practiced by upper caste Hindus. Another practice was that both men and women were half naked. The women of Kerala

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<sup>32</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 13.

especially Nayar women, were following polyandry.<sup>33</sup> They desired to eliminate such uncivilized practices. In the struggle against social evils Tipu was seen more serious because he was a learned man who hated all kind of uncivilized practices. He ordered to keep purity and chastity in life and to get rid of liquor from public life.

The father and son were highly vigilant to keep religious tolerance in the society during their reign. It is an accepted fact that Hyder and Tipu appointed Hindus as important officers not only in their kingdom of Mysore but also in Malabar. Tipu set up grant and gave more land for many temples such as Guruvayoor temple at Thrissur and others. Yet the contemporary historians attempt to depict them as religious bigots. Indeed Hyder Ali and Tipu were the founding fathers of a new Malabar in the sense that they helped to eliminate the feudal character of Malabar society by implementing land reforms and changing tax system. Many roads, bridges, forts and towns were constructed under their rule. During their period, for the first time in history, Malabar came under a centralized administrative system. The failure of Mysorian kings in AD 1792, immediately after the treaties of Sreerangapatanam signed by Tipu and the British, transformed the entire region into a new arena of exploitation by the foreign power.

### **Post Independence**

After independence, Malabar continued as a district in Madras presidency. In 1949, Travancore and Cochin became a united Tiru-Cochi state and there were growing movement towards a united Kerala. Following the favourable recommendation of the State Reorganization Commission, Travancore- Cochin and Malabar were joined into one Malayalam speaking Kerala state on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956.<sup>34</sup> By and large Malabar is one of the most significant regions in united Kerala. It has contributed many stalwarts and prominent leaders to the political terrain of Kerala. It holds crucial role in forming governments in the state. Malabar is politically polarised among variants of Congress, Communist parties, B.J.P and Muslim League.

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<sup>33</sup> M. Janaki., *Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, Kerala Muslims a Historical perspective*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer, P. 105.

<sup>34</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 13.

## **Malabar Muslims and their Struggle against Colonialists**

Malabar Muslims were the only community continuously fought against colonial powers for centuries since 1498 to 1947. At first, the struggle was against Portuguese then it was Dutch & the French and finally against the British. In the incessant war against the colonial powers, they have lost thousands of members and abundance of wealth. More over, as a consequence of long wars, the community was pulled down to backwardness both socially and economically.

Portuguese were the executors of European hatred policies in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Muslims were their main target. On the way to Calicut in 1498, Vasco Da Gama started his animosity by burn alive 240 Hajj pilgrims in a ship near Madayi in Canannore district. After that within 165 years Malabar had witnessed many kinds of atrocities by Portuguese and retaliations by people of Malabar. At the beginning of events Muslims were subjected to all kinds of oppression and hostility, women were raped, men were mutilated, and children were forcibly converted to Christianity, Masjids, worship places and even grave yards were demolished. Besides, trading centres were also targeted by Portuguese pirates. This attitude was very clear from the letter of Alfonso De Albuquerque to the king of Portugal: "I wish to destroy Mecca..... I conceived a plan to send a troop of 400 cavalry to Medina to seize its treasures and the body of Muhammad which was to be held in ransom for the liberation of Jerusalem."<sup>35</sup> By the charter of *Padroado*<sup>36</sup> the King of Portugal was granted the power to conquer the kingdom of the Mohammedans and the pagans, and to possess their goods. With the arrival of Portuguese, the centuries of peace on the Malabar Coast came to an end.

The people of Malabar united behind the king Zamorin to protect their assets and to preserve their identity in the view of Portuguese attack. In the beginning, the Kolathiri and Cochin Rajas supported the Portuguese due to their enmity with Zamorin. Since Muslims were in the forefront of struggle, Zamorin entrusted his navy to Mappilas. Kunjali Marakkars, the Muslim family that built naval defence to Malabar, were his

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<sup>35</sup>F.C. Danvers., *The Portuguese in India (2 vols- London)*, 1894. P. 271. Quoted by Roland E Miller., *Op ct.*, P. 62.

<sup>36</sup>The charter was given to the King of Portugal by Pope to propagate the Christianity in all new land discovered by her.



admirals. It was during the time of Zamorin that the title of 'Marakkar' was created. In fact, they were a trading family at Cochin, when Portuguese started their animosity against Muslims and people of Malabar. They changed their base to Ponnani for protecting themselves from the enemy. The force of Zamorin, which comprised Nayers and Muslims, under the leadership of Kunjali engaged in fierce battles with Portuguese on sea and lands. Although Portuguese continued to be in the soil of Malabar for 165 years, they were not able to establish their supremacy over the region owing to the bravery of Muslims and other people of Malabar who opposed and challenged them every where. Finally they had to change their military and trade base to Goa.

It is noteworthy that Albuquerque himself paid tribute to the Mappila resistance movement in a communication to his Monarch. He stated that it was always necessary to maintain a powerful presence in the area, failing which the Mappilas would attack bravely, in fact "better than any other people I have ever seen."<sup>37</sup> During the century long war, the community had given birth to many excellent admirals and navigators such as Kunjali-I, II, III and IV, Kutti Ali, Kutti Pokkar, Kutti Ammu and others. All of them were well aware of war tactics along the sea. Some times they took out guerrilla warfare and even suicide attacks against a strong enemy.

However, finally, the Portuguese pirates won the game by making void in the relationship between Muslims and the Zamorin. They carried out their goal by spreading rumours against Muhammad Kunjali Marakkar properly known as Kunjali IV. Besides, they aimed at exploiting the religious feelings of the King. In 1598, Zamorin and the Portuguese entered an agreement to fight together against Kunjali. But their first joint attack ended in a total failure in front of valiant Kunjali. In 1599, again they entered an agreement. As per the new treaty signed by Zamorin and Andre Furtado on behalf of Portuguese, a second assault was conducted on Kunjali in March 1600. Finally, Kunjali surrendered to Zamorin on condition that his and his associates' lives to be spared. But Zamorin violated his promise and handed him and his 40 associates over to Portuguese. They were taken to Goa where they were publicly hanged. "It is said that Kunjali's body was cut to pieces and exhibited at the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., P. 68.

beaches of Goa and his head was salted and sent to Canannore and displayed there as a warning to local Muslims.”<sup>38</sup> The end of Kunjali Marakkar is one of the tragic episodes in the history of Malabar. Kunjali would be the first well known personality in Malabar who are martyr while fighting against colonialism.

Mappilas were regarded as one of the greatest freedom fighting ethnic group during British rule in India. The century long fight against the Portuguese made them suspicious about West and its culture. In the view of Mappilas, Europeans were religious bigots and fanatics. The British colonial policy, land revenue system, administrative and judicial system- all contributed to the development of social tensions in the agrarian society of Malabar. The British gave high privilege to upper class Hindus, and totally ignored the concerns of lower caste Hindus and Muslims. During the tenure of British, Malabar witnessed many outbreaks against the Government on the part of people. The main outbreaks during this period were, 1836 outbreak at Pandalam, 1849 uprising at Manjeri under the leadership of Athan Gurukkal, and 1894 revolt in Vellingad near Pandikad and the major revolt which took place in Manjeri in 1896. The 1921 Malabar rebellion was the culmination of all outbreaks against the imperialist dynasty. It was a land mark in India’s freedom struggle. The most significance of the rebellion was the overwhelming presence of Muslims in the struggle. But it is quite unfortunate that British historians illustrated the great struggle as Mappila mutiny.

Malabar rebellion of 1921 was an important political event of that period. British authorities became restless due to the strengthening and spreading of Khilafat movement in Malabar. On 18<sup>th</sup> August 1920, Gandhi and Shaukat Ali personally addressed a meeting at Calicut to encourage the movement. After the incident many Khilafat committees were established in the nooks and corners of Malabar. People from all walks of life involved in the movement irrespective of their religion or caste. By 30 June 1921, over 200 such Khilafat committees had been established. The list of Khilafat leaders included both Hindus and Muslims.<sup>39</sup> The government resorted to

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<sup>38</sup> M.T. Narayanan., *Kunjalis- The Muslim Admirals of Calicut*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer, *Op ct*, P. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 132.

brutal repression to destroy the movement which resulted in the bursting out of Muslim peasants who were already simmering with anger.

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The rebellion began at Tirurangadi on 20 August 1921, where the British Forces tried to arrest religious leader Ali Musaliyar, who was a Khilafat movement leader as well, from Tirurangadi mosque account of his aggressive sermons which were anti British in tone. The British attempt led to violence and the revolt broke out in various parts of Malabar especially in Eranad and Valluvanad Taluks. Variyan Kunnath Kunjahammed Haji, Chembrassery Thangal and O Kunju Koya were the noted leaders of the outbreaks. Government declared martial law and through brutal repressive measures suppressed the rebellion. Hundreds of people were killed and orphaned. Even women were not exempted from ill-treatment. The train 'tragedy', publicly known as 'Wagon Tragedy', of November 19, 1921 attracted notice beyond India. It happened when 122 prisoners were loaded into a goods wagon at Tirur for transportation to prison camp, and the wagon was sealed. The cries of the innocent people en route were ignored by guards. When the wagon was opened at Coimbatore, ninety miles away, sixty four of the prisoners were found suffocated to death and the remaining were in serious condition.<sup>40</sup> There are no parallels to the tragedy in the history of Indian freedom struggle except 'Black hole of Calcutta' and 'Jalianwalabagh in Amritasar'.



Active participation of Muslim scholars in the struggle against colonialists was very significant in the history of Malabar. Some of them were in the forefront of the battle while others were engaged in giving inspiration to the fighters by writing patriotic songs, poems and little articles and books in both Arabic and Arabic-Malayalam (Malayalam written in sophisticated Arabic script) languages.

'Thahrees Ahlil Iman Ala Jihadi Abdatissulban', the first famous historical poem, was written by Sheikh Zainuddeen Makhdam I (871-928-H). He had written many Arabic poems against Portuguese and had sent it to Muslim kings all over the world, but the said poem is remaining. Another famous work is the world famous historical book of 16<sup>th</sup> century 'Thuhfatul Mujahideen Fi Ba'asi Akhbaril Burtugaliyyin', written by

<sup>40</sup>Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 141.

Sheikh Zainuddeen Ibnu Muhammedul Gazzali, known as Zainuddeen Makhdam II, in Arabic language. By writing the book he intended to encourage the Muslims to fight against the Portuguese. It was translated into many regional and foreign languages; and was being published from Portuguese, England and many other places. It is an authentic historical reference book in the world about Malabar and its history.

Moyin Kutty Vaidyar, a renowned poet, composed many revolutionary and patriotic songs to give the people of Malabar much inspiration to fight against the colonialists. These songs retain their popularity among the Muslims of Malabar even today. Another notable work is 'Saiful Battar' written by Mampuram Sayyid Alavi Thangal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was an edict (Fatwa) against the British government, but it was not to be printed in India. His son Sayyid Fasal Pookoya Thangal, who was expelled from Malabar in 1852, printed it in Turkey. Other remarkable works were 'Muhimmatul Mu'mineen', a translation by Pareekutty Musaliyar, and 'To Kerala Muslims' by E Moidu Maulavi, however, both were banned by British government.<sup>41</sup>

## II-MAPPILA MUSLIMS OF MALABAR

### **The Origin and Evolution of Mappila Community**

Mappilas are the Muslim community living in the northern part of Kerala, the area being known as Malabar since the ancient age. The community possesses its own culture, tradition and custom in their way of life. As far as the origin of the term 'Mappila' is concerned, it is a disputable matter. The exact time could not be settled upon, but it appears to have been basically a title of respect. In the partial form, *Pilla* can be seen among *Nayar*, an upper caste Hindu. It was used as an honorific word for Christians in central Kerala. Meantime it is the word that was been used to differentiate the Malabar Muslims from others. In an earlier period Muslim and Christian Mappilas were differentiated as 'Jonaka' and 'Nasrani' Mappilas respectively.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> K.K. Mohammed Abdul, Kareem., *Op ct*, PP. 129-131.

<sup>42</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 30.

If it be considered as an honorific word, the word had been used by natives of Kerala to respect and to welcome the visitors and immigrants from abroad. Another view is that the word 'Mappila' was originated from two Malayalam terms, Maha (great) and Pilla (child). According to the view, a mixed group was created as the offsprings of foreign fathers and indigenous mothers. Their offsprings embraced Islam, when Islam arrived in Malabar, were known as Mappilas. Earlier, the Arabs came here for trade, and they had to stay here for long time before going back to Arabia. The circumstances forced them to marry local women, most of them from Nayar and Tiyya community of Hindu. They had to stay at wives house, so the tradition of Nayar community was that the bride groom had to stay at bride's home after marriage. The same tradition was assimilated by some Mappilas in few parts of Malabar, especially in Canannore and some parts of other districts and is still being practiced. The bride grooms are called 'Puthiya Mappila' i.e. 'New Husband'. Another view is that the word derives from two Malayalam terms, 'Maha', 'Pilla' 'Great child' because of their fathers were foreigners.<sup>43</sup> However, the term, at present distinctively denotes the Malabar Muslims.

Kerala is a distinct state in India by its geographical peculiarities and cultural variations and traditions. The people of Kerala share a common culture that is known as Malayali culture. Social life of people is totally different; communal harmony and mutual amity is greater among Keralites, when compared to the rest of India. It is because the structure of Kerala society itself is constituted by mutual relationship of its people, irrespective of religion and caste. In the past, Kerala had come forward to welcome all religions from inside and outside the country: Buddhism and Jainism from within and Islam, Christianity and Judaism from outside. Kerala is also a famous emporium of spices and other products. An abundant treasury of pepper and other spices such as cardamom, ginger and cinnamon made its name popular in the world trade map.

The Hindus make the largest portion of population in the state. Muslims and Christians fall into the second and third places respectively. Religion wise population rate of the state is as follows: Hindus constitute 57.28 per cent of total

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<sup>43</sup> C.A. Innes., *Op ct*, P. 185 and Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 31.

population, Muslims make 23.33 per cent of population, Christians make 19.32 per cent and others constitute 0.07 per cent of total population. The data clearly indicates the fact that Kerala society has been religiously polarised among the three major religions. Educationally, Kerala has topped all the census reports so far. It has the highest percentage of literates among its population when compared to other Indian states. At the turn of the century Kerala had a general literacy rate of 11.14 per cent. By 1921 the rate rose to 19.02 per cent, by 1951 to 40.47 per cent, by 1961 to 56.85 per cent, by 1971 to 60.42 per cent, and by 1981 the rate rose to 70.42 per cent. In the corresponding year seven- eighth of all males and three-fourth of all female became literate. In 1991, the rate rose to 89.81 per cent of total population. In the said year male literacy rate was 93.62 percent and female literacy rate was 86.17 percent. The 2001 census report asserts the fact once more that the literacy rate of Kerala has reached its all time record, 91.65 of the total population are literate as against the national average of 65.38 percent. Kerala has 94 per cent male literacy and 88 per cent female literacy against the national average of 76 and 54 per cents respectively.<sup>44</sup>

Muslims constitute the second largest community within Kerala society. Comparatively larger community in the state they have to play crucial role in all the developmental activities of Kerala. If the population growth of Kerala is taken to be analysed, the Muslim growth rate is steadily and consistently growing. According to census data 2001, population growth rate in Muslim dominated districts of Kerala, such as Malappuram, Kannur, and Kozhikode is greater than that of other districts. In Malappuram the growth rate from 1991 to 2001 is 17.2 percent however, in Kozhikode it is 9.87 per cent only. Religion wise the growth rate is 7.3, 15.8, and 7.7 percent among the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities respectively. However, the data reveals a steady decline in the growth rate when compared to 1981-1991 period. During the period the growth rate was 12.6, 25.5 and 7.4 per cent among the three religions. Similarly in the case of sex ratio, Muslims retain the top position among the three religions. The Malabar districts are ahead of others due to the remarkable presence of Muslim community. According to 2001 census report, the

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<sup>44</sup> Census reports of India.

over all sex ratio of the state is 1058 female for 1000 male and independent ratio of three communities are 1058, 1082 and 1031 females respectively.<sup>45</sup>

Geographically, northern part of Kerala stretching from Kasargode to Palakkad comprises six districts of the state. Malabar has its own specific culture, tradition, inheritance and self-righteousness besides the common culture of Kerala. Malabar is often the melting pot where several ethnic and religious groups mingle; the significant presence of Muslims in the region is the main characteristic. Islam was the crucial factor in changing the social fabric and equations in the region. The reasons for the overwhelming presence of the Muslims in Malabar region may be found in the historical, social and economic trajectory of the region. According to census report 1991, 76.42 per cent of total Kerala Muslim population live in Malabar region only. Malabar Muslims comprise 34.98 per cent of total Malabar population. Of Malabar, Gleason stated: "Looking at a map, there is no area so extensive with so concentrated a Muslim population in all of peninsular India as in Malabar."<sup>46</sup> In all the districts of Malabar, Muslims constitute the second largest community except in Malappuram where they outnumber the Hindus. Malappuram district has a higher percentage of Muslim population than any other districts in India (65.5 percent) except Kashmir.<sup>47</sup> The ordinal status of Muslim population in Malabar districts is as follows, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur, Palakkad, Kasargod and Wayanad.

### **Social Life of Mappilas**

Having a mixed culture, both indigenous and exotic, Mappilas of Malabar keep a distance from others and become a socio-ethnic group in Kerala. Besides, ethnic connection with the Arabs helped them to develop a distinct culture among the society. They keep their own identity in social life unlike their counterparts in southern Kerala. A large number of community members in rural areas depend on agriculture activities to earn their livelihood. Most of them are peasants, cultivators and small scale labourers. The main agriculture items in the region are coconut, areca nut, rice, cashew, pepper, ginger and rubber. In the urban areas of Malabar, Mappilas

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<sup>45</sup> Mahendra Premi., *Religion in India, A Demographic Perspective: Economic and Political Weekly*, (census data India), September, 25, 2004, P. 4299.

<sup>46</sup> Gleason., *Religious Communities*, P. 91. Quoted by Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 34.

<sup>47</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 34.

concentrate themselves in trades, but people in coastal areas continue their traditional occupation as fishermen.

Religiously, a chunk of Mappilas are the followers of Shafi's school of Sunni thought, which is more conservative and orthodox in practices. Progressive movements like Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen and Jama'ate Islami Hind have significant presence among the community. They have been working among the community to promote modern education and religious education by changing the attitudes of the community towards education, Islamic ethos and moral values. Apart from these organizations, there are some charitable trusts and welfare associations, which are working for the benevolence of Muslim community and their progress and prosperity. These are Muslim Educational Society (M.E.S.), Muslim Service Society (M.S.S.), Kerala Muslim Educational Association (K.M.E.A.) and Muslim Souhrida Vedi, a unity of all Muslim religious, political and welfare organizations. Today the most significant and remarkable thing is the unprecedented presence of Muslim women's organizations. They have been working among the Muslim women to develop awareness among them about education and to bring them into main stream. These organizations are Mujahid Girls Movement (M.G.M.) and Girls Islamic Organization (G.I.O.). Both of them are women wings of Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen (K.N.M.) and Jama'ate Islami Hind respectively.

Politically, Muslim League has considerable presence among the Mappilas of Malabar. The League was established in 1948 by the leaders like Muhammad Ismayil Sahib, KM Seethi Sahib, B Pokkar Sahib and others to protect the rights and interest of community and to uplift its status in the society. It is the part of ruling government of Kerala today, and has been sharing power since the establishment of a united Kerala in 1956. CH. Muhammad Koya became the only ever Muslim chief minister of Kerala in 1979. In addition to its women's wing, Muslim Women's League, Muslim League has student organization and youth & labour wings too.

The sizeable presence of the community in the ownership of media organizations is also a matter to be considered. There are four daily news papers run by religious and political organizations of Mappilas. These are 'Chandrika' the mouthpiece of Indian



Union Muslim League, and 'Varthamanam', 'Madhyamam' and 'Siraj' run by religious organizations. Besides, there are many periodicals such as 'Chandrika', 'Madhyamam', 'Shabab', 'Satyadhara', 'Prabodhanam', 'Al-Manar', 'Al Islah', 'Sunni Afkar', 'Thelicham', 'Bodhanam', 'Thejas', 'Thulika', and 'Keralanadu' which are run by religious and political organizations. Apart from this, Muslim organizations run some periodicals for women. They include 'Aramam', 'Poonkavanam', 'Pudava' and 'Santushta Kudumbam' and 'Mahila Chandrika'. There are some magazines for children too, such as 'Malarvadi', 'Balachandrika', 'Kurunnukal' and 'Balakauthukam'.

### **Mappila Culture**

One of the main common characteristics that the Mappilas of Malabar share with others is their language. Although Malayalam is the natural language of the Mappilas, its religious usage is heavily Arabicised. As a special literary form, Arabic-Malayalam utilised Arabic script and Malayalam vocabulary in combination. Unlike early periods, now all are sharing common characteristics in clothing irrespective of region or religion. Today the ordinary dress of a man from Kerala is 'Mundu', generally white with a purple boarder or pants in various colours and shirts. Earlier a small cap of white turban or some bright coloured scarf was worn commonly, but today the tradition is followed by very few from conservative sects. In earlier periods women were wearing a 'Mundu' of some coloured cloth, a white loose bodice, more or less embroidered and a veil or scarf on the head.<sup>48</sup> Today only aged women wear traditional dress. With the influence of Gulf migration *Pardah* in various colours substitute the traditional dresses. Besides *Pardah*, *churidar*, *Pavada* (a common dress of girls in Kerala society) and other modern dresses are popular among the young women of Mappila community. Different models of ornaments are often used by women.

The growth of nuclear families is another characteristic. Mappilas too began to reside in single houses. In early times, large family groups had been living together in one extended accommodation ('Tharavadu' or ancestral house), under one family head.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> C.A. Innes., *Op ct*, P. 188.

<sup>49</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 8.

Early marriage was a common phenomenon among the Mappilas of Malabar until recently. In north Malabar, Mappila girls were married at age of 14-15 while the average age for marriage was 8-12 in south Malabar. As an impact of higher education, empowerment of women and the tireless efforts of various religious and social organizations, the attitude of Muslim community is changing. Now the average age for marriage has gone above 18. In south Malabar, the bride lives in husband's house, ironically in the north especially in Canannore and in the adjacent areas of Calicut town, bride lives in her own house with her mother and sisters.

Polyandry was a common phenomenon among them until recent past. Once it was more often in south and unusual in north. Divorce too was comparatively more often in south Malabar than in north Malabar. Today the number is steadily declining. Mappilas in south Malabar follow the *makkatayam* (patrilineal) system. But in north, Muslims continue *Marumakkatayam* (matrilineal) system of inheritance, though it is against the precepts of Quran.<sup>50</sup> Indeed this is the tradition of Nayars<sup>51</sup> in Kerala.

Muslims of Malabar strictly observe religious practices such as five time prayer, fast in Ramadan, Hajj and other religious activities. There are many madrasas, Dars, Arabic colleges and other such institutions run by religious organisations and trusts to teach the students religious creeds and deeds, Islamic history and Arabic language, literature and culture. Parents are very conscious to send their sons and daughters to the madrasas. The important festivals of Mappilas are two Eids, 'Bakrid' or 'Valiya Perunal' and 'Idul fitar' or 'Cheriy Perunal'. Apart from two Eids, the conservative sects of Muslims-the two factions of Sunni sect- celebrate 'Milade sheriff' on the occasion of prophet's birth day.

The largest public festival of conservative sects of Mappilas is a variant of saint worship known as 'Nercha'. This is an expensive and elaborate ceremony which combines nominally Islamic elements with certain features of indigenous folk festivals. Thus, the focal point of each 'Nercha' is the reverence shown to a 'pir',

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<sup>50</sup> A man's self acquisitions usually descend to his wife and family in accordance with the Muhammeden law of property.

<sup>51</sup> An upper caste among Hindus.

'sheikh', or 'shahid'.<sup>52</sup> People gather at tombs and recite verses which are composed by Ulema to pour praises on the dead sheikh or shahid and to pay tributes to him. On this occasion they often perform some kind of folks and some martial arts. These practices seem to be a mixture of exotic and indigenous culture. In the words of a contemporary historian "These Jaram festivals (Nercha) remind us of the 'Utsavam' of the renowned temples of Kerala. In fact these are betrothed to the converted from their old faith."<sup>53</sup>

The popular artistic forms among the Mappilas of Malabar are Kolkali and 'Duff Muttu'. In Kolkali a number of people play with sticks and sing devotional songs. It may be ancient Persian or Arabic saga and legends, life stories of holy men or mythicized saints or stories related to the situation of Mappilas in Kerala. In fact, Kolkali is the folk tradition of Hindu community (Kolattam or Kolkali). When Islam arrived here, indigenous Muslims Islamicized it and retained it as their tradition with slight changes in its basic form. 'Duff' is in fact the only significant Arab contribution to the musical instruments used by the Mappilas.<sup>54</sup> The songs of 'Duff muttu' and 'Aravana kali' are same as in Kolkali. Perhaps the most popular Mappila folk form is 'Oppana', a kind of dance performed in marriage ceremonies. There exist two versions of Oppana for men and women. The contemporary form of Oppana performance is heavily influenced by certain indigenous art forms such as 'Kaikottikkali' and 'Thiruvathirakkali'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed a kind of assimilation has occurred in the culture of Muslim community by centuries of interrelationship with other communities in the region.

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<sup>52</sup> Stephen F Dale & M. Gangadhara Menon., *Nercca, Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer., *Op ct*, P. 174.

<sup>53</sup> C.K. Kareem., *Kerala and Her Culture; an Introduction*, P. 72.

<sup>54</sup> C. V. Harris., *From Structure To Communitas And Back: Notes On The Arts and Festivals Of He Muslims Of Kerala*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer., *Op ct*, P. 204.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 204.

## **Status of Mappilas**

The status of Kerala Muslims is comparatively better off than their brothers in rest of India. They have attained some noticeable achievements in the fields of education, economy and politics in Kerala society. Although they are in better position than the other Muslims in the rest of India, their position is not as much good as other highly educated sections in Kerala. However, nobody can underestimate these achievements since it is a community which was subjected to the oppression of colonialists for centuries. But its commitment and morale to achieve progress paved way to remain in the mainstream political and social terrain. In the view of Roland E Miller, aggressive Mappila activity in politics, education and their social uplift attracted the attention of other Indian Muslims. In fact, Mappilas have suddenly emerged as a new force to reckon with in Indian Islam.

## **Under British rule**

A close look towards the status of the community under the British and after the British period will reveal more facts about their achievements. Under the British, Malabar was a district in Madras presidency. During this period, Malabar held a comparatively higher place in the matter of literacy among both sexes. One in every five Malayali men could read and write, so could six in every hundred women. Notwithstanding that, the Mappilas and Cherumas were the most illiterate people in the region. 945 Mappilas out of 1000 were illiterate. Eranad was the highly illiterate Taluk in Malabar where Muslims outnumber Hindus. Its literacy rate was 15 per cent and 3.3 per cent for male and female respectively. At the other end Christians were the most literate community in Malabar among both the sexes. Merely 2.7 percent of total Muslim population was literate in the year 1871. In the same year the proportion of Christians was very high: 13.8 percent. The Mappila literacy rate in 1931 was only 5 percent. The attitude of the community didn't change much until 1947.

## **After Independence**

The Mappila reluctance towards education continued in the post independence era too. Changing circumstances exerted much pressure on them to alter their attitude towards modern education. Some religious and political leaders had started their

efforts in the pre independence era to awake the community. They strengthened their attempts in the new situation. As a result of these attempts, in August 12 1948, Farook College was established at Farook near Calicut town by prominent scholar and social reformer, Abussabah Ahmedali along with Muslim leaders like KM Seethi Sahib and others. The establishment of the college was a turning point in the Muslim developmental activities in Malabar and in its history. Now the college is the biggest educational institution in Kerala under Muslim managements. It is popularly known as the 'South Indian Aligarh'.

Establishment of Kerala Muslim Educational Association (K.M.E.A.) at Ernakulam under the leadership of B Pokkar Sahib in 1964 was another significant step. The association ensured educational scholarships and established a Poly-technic institute at Tirur. The efforts initiated by T.P. Kuttiyammu Sahib by uniting intellectuals, industrialists and officers from the community under the banner of 'Islamic Seminar' to create awareness among the society about education facilitated the spread of education among the Muslims of Kerala. In 1964, Dr. PK Abdul Gafoor took initiative to establish Muslim Educational Society. Today, it runs 10 first grade arts and science colleges, 20 parallel colleges, 1 engineering college more than 50 schools, 6 ITCs and other such institutions. Establishment of Calicut University in 1968 as a result of the consistent efforts of Muslim League and that of Kannur University in later nineties is other significant factors that contributed towards the improvement of Mappila education in Malabar. All arts and science and professional colleges in Malabar region have been affiliated to either Calicut University or Kannur University.

After the formation of Kerala state in 1956, state government had taken some important steps towards educating backward communities and making their educational status equal to that of other educated communities. The government offered its help by sanctioning some scholarships for poor students including girls from Other Backward Communities (OBC) especially for Muslim and Nadar communities. Muslim community is regarded as a backward community and is granted 12 per cent reservation for job in government service sector. The Kumarapillai Commission and Nettiur Commission (1964) were inducted to find out the status of backward communities and to suggest solutions. They recommended 8

percentage reservations in professional courses such as medicine and engineering. As a result of all efforts, by 1965 it was estimated that 47.3 percent of Muslim children of school age in Kerala were enrolled in schools. By 1972 all eligible Mappila children were enrolled in elementary schools.

A recent survey (data based on 1991-92 years) conducted by noted historian CK Kareem reveals that more than 26.6 per cent of total children attending primary schools are Muslims. Proportionally it would be higher than the total Muslim population (23 percent) of the state. The result indicates urge of parents to impart school education to their children and their concern about the future of their child. But only 17.9 per cent Muslim children enter the secondary stage which means a 10 per cent drop-out rate among them. The status is more pathetic in higher studies where the proportion comes down to 11.19 percent in higher secondary stage and 9 percent at Graduation and Post graduation level. The percentages of Muslim students in professional courses are 11 percent for Medicine, 9.5 percent in Engineering, 8 percent in Law and 6 percent in Ayurveda. The number of Muslim students in secondary stage during 1991-92 period is 1,342,722. At the higher secondary level it comes down to 22,979, at Graduation level it is 11,130 and at Post Graduation level it is only 729. The total number of students in higher secondary, Graduation and Post Graduation is 34,838. The number shows that only 0.54 percent of total Muslim population of Kerala is pursuing higher education.<sup>56</sup>

Now the situation has changed much from the above facts. The latest report from educationally most backward and Muslim dominated Malappuram district indicates that the percentage of SSLC passing candidates is steadily increasing in the last few years. In 2001 the per cent of the total students who passed the SSLC examination was 33 in the district. It has gone up to 58.77 percent in 2004 academic year. Indeed, it is the result of a programme conducted by Malappuram district Panchayat under the title of 'Vijayabheri' for improving the results of SSLC in the district in 2001. From Malappuram, 116 and 61 candidates could get into the first 1000 ranks in 2004

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<sup>56</sup>C.K. Kareem., *Kerala Muslim Statistics and Directory, A Survey About Kerala Muslims, 1991-92.*

medical and entrance examinations respectively.<sup>57</sup> These results indicate the urge of the community to imbibe education as much as they can.

The rigidly defined traditional gender norms denied the girls even of a little education in early periods and even after independence. Decades of tireless efforts by various progressive Muslim organizations and the government of Kerala have changed the attitude of the community towards female education. Recent data shows that all Muslim girls complete at least their secondary education. A considerable percentage of them pursue higher education. In many Muslim management institutions, the girls outnumber boys in Graduate and Post Graduate courses.

Today Kerala Muslims have 31 arts and science colleges, 11 training colleges, 2 engineering colleges, and 2 poly-technical institutes. Apart from these institutions, they have 204 high schools, more than 40 higher secondary schools and some vocational higher secondary schools and 11 Arabic colleges affiliated to universities in Kerala. As far as the proportion of Muslim population in Kerala is concerned, the attainments in the field of education are not at large, but when compared to other Indian Muslims the achievements of Kerala Muslims are far ahead.<sup>58</sup>

The representation of Muslims in the service sector points to the backwardness of Muslim community. There is no Muslim representative at the government secretary level. Their representation is only one percentage in I.A.S, cadre. Though there is 12 per cent reservation in the government service sector, their representation in service is merely 5.6 per cent. At the same time, the data from various districts reveals the alarming rate of un-employment among the Muslim youth. In Malappuram district the rate is 74.83, in Calicut 72.90, in Canannore 70.07 and in Palakkad 69.64 per cents.

“It is notable that the recent report of the Justice Narendran Commission (9-11-2000) appointed by the Government of Kerala indicated that there was a short fall of 7383 reserved posts in the case of Muslims while the corresponding figure was only 5 in

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<sup>57</sup> C.K. Ahamed Kutty., *Educational Level of Malappuram District increases (Malayalam)*, Chandrika daily, 28/05/2004.

<sup>58</sup> K. A. Jaleel., *Farook College Diamond Jubilee Souvenir 2000*, PP. 155-56.

the case of Ezhavas”<sup>59</sup>( a low Hindu community). The above mentioned reports and data reveal and describe the plight of the community in a highly educated society like Kerala. Even though they have made some achievements in educational and social fields than their brothers in other states of India, they have miles to go in this direction. The changing attitude of the community towards modern education and technology will give them further boost and morale.

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<sup>59</sup> U. Muhammed., *Education In Kerala Society-The Malabar Scenario, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, Rouzatul Uloom Arabic College, Calicut 2004*, PP.144-145.



# CHAPTER-III

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION AND THE PLACE OF WOMEN

Developed society demands that all members should be educated irrespective of gender. A person, well educated and well placed in life, can contribute tremendously to raise the standard and quality of life of the members of his family and society. The Quran and the teachings of the Prophet underline the need to gain literacy and knowledge for women for their improvement. In most communities, the education of women has traditionally been perceived as less important than that of men. Educating women should be considered as an obligation in order to impart their daughter's better education along with that of their sons.

Women in general and Muslim women in particular, are a downtrodden section of Indian society. The empowerment of Muslim women is crucial for the development of the nation. The literacy rate of Muslim women in Kerala is 80 percent which is much higher compared to their counterparts in the country. According to the census report of 2001, the total literacy rate among women in India is 54 per cent. Among the Muslim women the figure is 50.1 percent against a literacy rate of 53.7 per cent among Hindu women. Though the literacy rates among the Muslim women in Kerala are higher than that of their counterparts in other states, this cannot be seen as the only means to arrive at conclusions on the general position of women's educational status of a community. The increase in the secondary and higher education as well as technical education which the community achieved over a period of time, the rate of school drop outs and adult education etc. have to be analysed in order to arrive at conclusions on the position of women among the community.

## I- THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

### **Religious and Arabic Education**

The system of Islamic education in Kerala presents considerable contrast to its counterparts elsewhere in India. Early educational activities were essentially religious in character because of their emotional adherence to religion. There were no such institutions like schools and colleges to impart education to Mappila women. Mosques served as the main centres of education, where missionaries and religious teachers taught Arabic and Islamic studies to youth and adults. Later, small *Maktabas*<sup>60</sup> were established adjacent to *Masjids* for the religious instruction of young boys and girls. The higher education meant exclusively for boys.

### **Othupalli or Othupura**

Traditional Islamic education in Kerala, like elsewhere, was largely mosque-based. Students would gather in learning circles or *Othupallis* to read a text or set of texts under the guidance of a spiritual teacher. The name was a composite form of two Malayalam words 'Othu' (recite) and 'Palli' (mosque). It is a sort of primary school for religious and Arabic education for both boys and girls. Girls were allowed to get only *Othupalli* knowledge in the morning. The method of teaching was oral. A teacher, who was called 'Mullah', 'Musaliyar' or 'Mollaka', would recite the lesson and the students would be asked to recite the same repeatedly until they memorized it.<sup>61</sup> The curriculum was limited to learning the recitation of Quran and memorizing some of the 'Adhkar' and 'Awrad'. Despite several years of study, students in most cases were not able to write. Teacher would write Arabic alphabets on a wooden slate by a bamboo pen and ask them to read it. During the process of learning pen, pencil, book, black board or chalks were not used.<sup>62</sup> As soon as modern madrasas made its presence across the region, *Othupalli* disappeared from the scene of religious educational system.

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<sup>60</sup> In Malayalam 'Othu Palli' (mosques schools)

<sup>61</sup> William Logan., *Op ct* P.198.

<sup>62</sup> Muhammad Ali. K.T., *Op ct*, P. 38.

### **Madrasas**

The early twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a number of powerful reformist movements among the Muslims of Kerala. The reform of the Islamic education system was one of the main objectives of these reformist movements. A.M. Koya Kunhi, an early reformer founded 'Ma'danul Uloom Madrasah' in 1911 at Kannur. It provided the study of Arabic as well as Malayalam, which was the important feature of this Madrasah.<sup>63</sup> Even though its impacts were very little and confined to some parts of Malabar, it transformed the nature of religious education among the Muslims.

One of the pioneers of Madrasah movement in Kerala was Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji (1283-1338.A.H). As a Sadarul Mudarrisin (head master) of the Tanmiyatul Uloom Madrasah at Vazhakkad in 1909, Chalilakath began to apply the new ideas in the Madrasah system. The Madrasah was established in 1871 and run by famous Koyapathodi family.<sup>64</sup> He renamed the Madrasah as Darul Uloom Arabic College, and sought to turn it into a modern institution for the study of Islamic as well as modern subjects. He prepared a new scheme for modernising the primary education. For this purpose, he started a new Madrasah at Vazhakkad.

In the new Madrasah, he used new educational tools and equipments such as black boards, chalks, benches, desks and so on, which were radical innovations of his time. He prepared necessary textbooks according to new scheme and syllable. Girls were permitted to attend the classes on regular basis. Although he was forced to leave the institution by the opposition of conservatives, the news about his innovative experiments spread across the region. As a result, the newly established primary and higher Madrasas in different parts of Malabar were keen to follow the line of Chalilakath.

During the British rule, permission was given to religious instruction in the schools of Malabar to attract Muslim boys and girls schools. In 1904, the British colonial administration deployed some mullahs from traditional *Othupallis* to teach Arabic in selected government schools in Malabar. Later, they set up a few Muslim high schools in the region, where facilities were provided for the study of Arabic and

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<sup>63</sup> K.T. Mohammad Ali., *Op ct*, P. 41.

<sup>64</sup> E.K. Ahamed Kutty., *Islam and Reformist Movement In Kerala*, P. 12.

Islam. As a part of it, in 1914, the government of Travancore began employing Quranic and Arabic teachers in several primary and high schools in the state. The Government appointed a Muhammadan Inspector of schools to supervise their work, and constituted an Arabic Examination Board for preparing syllabus and textbooks for the schools and training the teachers. In 1920, the government of Cochin began appointing Arabic teachers in schools. The introduction of Arabic and Islamic education in the government schools in Kerala, in both the areas under British and princely rule, played a major role in bridging the divide between the othupally and the 'modern' systems of education. In 1957, a year after the merger of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, Arabic was introduced in 17 additional government high schools in the state. In 1958, Arabic began to be taught in primary government schools in Malabar, where, unlike Travancore and Cochin, it had earlier been taught only at the high school level. Today, there are an estimated six thousand Arabic teachers working in government schools all over Kerala, with more than ten lakh students mostly Muslims. Experts committee consisting of leading Arabic scholars, appointed by the state government, has prepared modern textbooks and regularly updates them.

Although Arabic studies in schools were allowed after independence, state government banned religious instruction and abandoned religious instructors from schools. The decision forced Muslims to find out an alternative system to impart religious education for their children. Various groups, organizations and agencies came forward and established numerous Madrasas in every cities and villages in order to provide religious education for boys and girls. Each group follow its own syllabi, scheme and textbooks according to its own religious views and ideals and has its own educational and examination boards for conducting examinations, granting 'leaving certificates', preparing textbooks and inspecting Madrasas.

Virtually all Muslim children attend madrasas for a minimum period equal to the first five years. Madrasas conduct classes for two hours in the morning prior to the starting time of government schools or in the evening. The Madrasas follow co-educational system of instruction. Here boys and girls often study together. There are some separate Madrasas for girls too. A number of women work as teachers in the Madrasas run by progressive groups of community such as Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen and Jama'ate Islami al Hind. Both of these organisations have more than

500 and 200 madrasas respectively. The Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Muallimeen, a sect of Sunni, has 7863 Madrasas and approximately 1,000,000 students, both boys and girls. More than a thousand Madrasas run by factions of other Sunni sects. In south Kerala, there are 2000 madrasas under South Kerala Jam Iyyatul Ulama.<sup>65</sup>

### **Arabic Colleges**

The system is an advanced form of 'Dars' education. Its objective is to provide an opportunity for higher education in Arabic studies. The beginning of Arabic colleges dates back to 1891, when Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji founded Darul Uloom Arabic College at Vazhakkad.<sup>66</sup> At the higher levels, government has worked with Muslim organizations to reform the system of Arabic teaching. As a result, Arabic colleges were established and Arabic departments were introduced in arts and science colleges. Today, the universities of Calicut and Canannore have eleven affiliated Arabic colleges, most of them located in Malabar region. Several Arabic colleges follow co-educational system. It is not uncommon to find women teach male students. The colleges offer a five-year Afzal ul Ulama degree; it has been recognized as BA degree by government. The recognition helped to integrate the system of Islamic and Arabic education in the state with the 'mainstream education'. The basic qualification for which is SSLC pass. A few of them offer postgraduate course for students who completed Afzal ul Ulama. The curriculum focuses on Arabic grammar and literature, along with general Islamic studies. Experts in language and literature regularly update them. The method of teaching is same as modern educational institutions and it applies new educational technology and methods. Many of them utilise the prospects of computer technology in educational field and give opportunity to develop skills through extra-curricular activities and social programmes conducted through local units of the National Service Scheme. In 1980, the syllabus was considerably restructured and modernized and English was made compulsory at all levels.

The government decision to equalise Afzal ul Ulama to BA has increased the range of opportunities. Now graduates of Arabic colleges in Kerala are eligible to appear for a range of examination for various government jobs or pursue higher education in

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<sup>65</sup> Sakshi Muslim Keralam Souvenir, Rahamaniya Arabic College, Kadameri, Calicut., P. 127.

<sup>66</sup> K.T. Muhammed Ali., *Op ct*, P. 50.

regular universities. The presence of Muslim girl students in Arabic colleges is so overwhelming that they now outnumber the boys in many colleges. All most all colleges provide hostel facilities for both men and women. The most important recognised Arabic colleges are: Rouzatul Uloom, Farook, Madeenatul Uloom, Pulikkal; Sullamussalam, Arecoce; Ansarul Islam, Valavannure; Anwarul Islam women's Arabic college, Mongam; Sunniya, Chendamangalore; Najathul Islam, Karuvarakkundu.

Arabic studies were introduced in a few colleges in Malabar in the beginning of last century. The early college in which Arabic was introduced is Government Brennen College, Thalasseri. The first private college to follow the suit is Farook College. Now there are many colleges affiliated to Calicut and Kannur universities offering Arabic studies in their respective departments. Arabic is either main or second language for BA degree and MA in those colleges. A department of Arabic was opened in the University of Calicut in 1974 for the postgraduate teaching and research.<sup>67</sup> At present Kerala's system of higher Arabic education is the best-organised one all over the country.

### **Secular and Modern Education**

In pre-British period, the indigenous system of education had prevailed throughout India. It was carried out through Pathshalas, Madrasah and Gurukulas. These are the source of traditional knowledge systems in India and played a significant role in the Indian education. In fact, these are the watering holes of the culture of traditional communities. All surveys during the 19<sup>th</sup> century reveal that the attendance of students, method of teaching and number of institutions were far better than that of the plight of England in the corresponding period. The only exception is in girls' education, which may have been proportionately more extensive in England in 1800.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., P. 49.

Table: 2 No of students in Madras presidency in 1823-25.<sup>68</sup>

No	Language speaking	No of schools	Hindus										Muslims		Total	
			Brahmin		Kshatriya		Vysia		shudra		Others		B	G	B	G
			B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G				
1	Oriya	225	808	-	-	-	243	-	1001	2	886	10	27	-	2965	12
2	Telugu	3561	13893	108	121	-	7668	-	10076	180	4755	284	1639	9	38152	641
3	Kannada	574	1233	2	-	-	1003	1	3296	40	1332	31	329	-	7193	74
4	Malayalam (Malabar)	759	2230	5	-	-	84	13	3697	709	2756	343	3196	1122	11963	2190
5	Tamil	6562	11557	5	369	-	4442	11	57873	657	13196	335	5453	96	92890	1104
6	other	7713	7586	98	-	-	6132	63	7589	220	3449	136	1690	-	26446	517
<b>Total</b>		<b>19394</b>	<b>37307</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19572</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>83532</b>	<b>1808</b>	<b>26374</b>	<b>1139</b>	<b>12334</b>	<b>1227</b>	<b>179609</b>	<b>4538</b>

The government of Madras presidency conducted a survey about Indian educational institutions in 1823-24. The survey reveals the fact that despite poverty and disturbance, there were about 13000 schools and 740 colleges under the presidency. The number of students in schools and colleges were 188,650 across all castes and religions. The number of girl students was only 4538. According to the report, the lesser number of girls was mainly due to the prevalence of home education for girls. However, the number of Muhammeden girl students in Malabar district was very large. There number of girl students was 1,122 and boy students, 3196. According to the report published by the government of Madras on 10 March 1826, the number of Muslim students constituted nearly 27 percent, while other castes except Brahmins accounted for 54 per cent of the total school-going students, notwithstanding the fact that Malabar had the largest Muslim population.

<sup>68</sup> K. Basheer., *Systems of Education Then and Now (Vidyabyasa Reetikal Annum Innum. Malayalam)*, Chandrika Weekly, April 26 to May 2, 1997, P. 8.

There was a sense of wide spread neglect and decay towards indigenous education within a few decades of the introduction of new education policies by British Government. Mahatma Gandhi held that the Indian population was illiterate than it had been fifty or hundred years ago and the British administrators, instead of encouraging the existing educational system, began to root them out.

For about half a century after their acquisition of political power, the British made little effort to introduce English education. Under the Charter Act of 1813, the English East India Company was to take responsibility of the education in India. Nevertheless, the idea did not come into light until 1823, when committee of Public Instruction was constituted to allocate funds for the establishment of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian institutions. In the early days, there was no move on the part of Government to introduce English. However, the controversy erupted on the type of education and the medium of instruction in modern schools and colleges. In 1835, the Government ordered that the medium of instruction of western sciences and literature should be English language alone. In the view of Lord Macaulay,<sup>69</sup> the Indian languages were not competent to serve the purpose of scientific and literary learning and completely poorer to European learning.

The policy of Government effectively neglected the needs of masses. It opened a few English schools and colleges instead of a large number of elementary schools. The 'Downward filtration theory' of Macaulay was the bedrock of all British education policies. He suggested that the Government should create a governing class in India like their aristocratic counterparts in England by educating the sons of Rajahs, Sirdars, and Zamindars etc. When it failed to make success, an attempt was made to educate only the elite classes on the ground that new culture would filter down from the upper classes to the lower. They had to adopt a slight change in the policy since they did not get what they desired. In accordance with new policy, the Government would give good education to a few persons. They would impart education to the masses through the Indian languages. His intention was clear in his observation "we must at present

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<sup>69</sup> Macaulay who joined the Governor-General's Council as the first Law Member in 1834 was appointed President of the Education Committee and within a few months of his appointment, he insisted upon the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges in the place of Persian and other native languages. While recommending the courses in English, he suggested that the printing of Sanskrit and Arabic texts should cease. The Sanskrit and other colleges should be closed, scholarships to Muslim and Hindu students should be discontinued, and all that money should be devoted to English studies.



do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”<sup>70</sup> In 1844, Government officially announced that the applicants for Government jobs should possess knowledge of English. The 1904 Lord Curzon declared that the Government was directly responsible for the education of the masses; in fact, it was a beginning of a policy change.

### **Attitude of Government towards Educating Muslims**

The British Government was not able to carry on their suppressive and repressive attitude towards the Muslims of India for a long time. In 1870, they made a special announcement regarding the state patronage of Muslim education. The cohesive attachment of Muslims to their religion, culture and language prevented them from modern education.

In 1871, the Government of India issued a resolution to respond appropriately to improve the educational level of Muslims. Resolution directed to allow classical and vernacular languages of Muslims in all Government schools and colleges. Besides, the resolution recommended establishment of English schools in Muslim districts and the appointment of qualified Muslim English teachers. Moreover, the resolution appeals to give them grants-in-aid to open schools of their own and encourage Arabic studies in the university courses. Nevertheless, the attitude of the community was same as earlier. The Resolution of 15 July 1885 is considered as the Magna-Carta of Muslim education in India. It was the first important declaration regarding the policy of Muslim education. The resolution declares that<sup>71</sup>

- 1) A special section should be devoted to Muhammeden education in the Annual Report of Public Instruction. By giving precise and detailed information and discussing the position and advancement of the Muhammeden community not merely as a whole, but with reference to local variations. In order, the Government of India may be fully informed as to the state and progress of this important section of the community.

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<sup>70</sup>The Cambridge history of India, edited by H.H. Dodwell., (6Vols; Cambridge: university press, 1929).

<sup>71</sup> K.T. Muhammed Ali., *Op ct*, PP. 73-74.

2) For the attraction of Muhammadens to higher education, a liberal provision of scholarships is essential and their wants must not be overlooked in the framing of any general scheme of scholarships for any province.

3) Special Muhammadens Inspecting officers should be appointed to inspect and enquire into Muhammadens education, generally in places where the Muhammadens are very backward.

In the wake of new policy of the Government, the wide spread attempt to educate the people were seen in Malabar area too. The British Government assumed that the solution of what they termed as the Mappila problem is educating them on western lines. The Mappilas were given more elementary schools to impart their children modern and secular education. In 1931 the number of Mappila elementary schools was 1410 in Malabar region. There was one middle school and one higher elementary school in Calicut. At the same period the number of schools for Mappila girls was 87. Besides these schools, there were a large number of night schools for adults. When they faced strong opposition from Mullas and Musaliyars, the Government decided to give training for Mullas and to appoint them in schools as religious teachers. For that, a training school for Mappila teachers was established at Malappuram.<sup>72</sup> The Government sanctioned many grants and scholarships to attract the Muslim students to schools and to change their attitude towards modern education.

One of the important institutions, which imparted modern education to Mappilas was, *The school of commerce, Calicut*. The institution conducted special classes mainly on commercial subjects. At the close of the year 1917, there were 234 pupils in this school and number increased to 306 at the end of 1921. The *Himayathul Islam Arabic school, Calicut* was one of the famous schools in early period. It was established in 1912. Even though it started as an elementary school in 1919, it was upgraded as a high school in 1922. In 1936 girls were permitted to attend classes. This was the only Muslim high school then imparting religious as well as secular education.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Roland E Miller, *Op ct*, P. 205.

\*The Malappuram School had originated as part of the first effort of the British to train religious teachers for the task of general education, and it maintains to the present day its special concern for Mappila education.

<sup>73</sup> Muhammad Ali. K.T, *Op ct*, P. 160.

Similarly, *The Madrasatul Muhammadiya* was started at Calicut in 1918 under the auspices of the Muhammeden Educational Association. In 1944 girls were admitted to the school. It was a middle school and was upgraded as high school in 1947. *Umbichi High School, Chaliyam* was another famous school, which was established at Chaliyam in 1924 under the name of 'Madrasatul Ihya' to impart religious and secular education. In 1927 it was upgraded as a higher elementary school. Later, the institution was renamed as Madrasatul Manar. In 1932, it was upgraded as a middle school and in 1947 again upgraded into high school and once again renamed as 'Al Manar Muslim High School'.<sup>74</sup> The rigid attitudes of community towards education had confined many early institutions to the elementary level and made them backward.

## II-EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE PRE INDEPENDENT MALABAR

Modern education began to spread in Malabar during the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the constant efforts of missionary societies and individuals, though the Government did little efforts to promote education. The schools under the missionaries were comparatively larger than that of schools run by individuals. These schools were under the auspices of native managements. The Despatch committee forwarded its directions in 1854 to establish primary schools in villages. After that, the Madras Government decided to open a few vernacular schools in Malabar district as part of its new educational policy. It helped the promotion of modern education among various communities in the region. However, the Mappilas of Malabar were not able to comply with Government's decision. The low number of Mappila students in general and girl students in particular shows the apathy of the community towards education. The table shows the attitudes of three main religions towards education during the period of 1868-69 to 1870-71.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., P. 164.

Table: 3 Religion wise representations of students during 1868-69 to 1870-71<sup>75</sup>

Year	Hindu		Christian		Muslim		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1868-69	9649	360	1589	417	309	-----	11547	777
1869-70	11412	583	1870	469	348	-----	13630	1052
1870-71	11439	603	1898	389	369	-----	13706	992

The above-mentioned data reveals the fact that the Mappila girls were reluctant to attend the new schools during the said period. The number Mappila boys' was far behind than that of their Hindu and Christian counterpart. Comparatively their number was lower than that of the girl students from both communities.

The Government initiated methods to address the problems of Mappilas. They considered the Mappilas as a constant threat to them. Eventually they found out a permanent solution for what they termed Mappila problem; spread of education. In addition, they constituted a committee in 1871 to implement strategies to make them accept secular and modern education.

After a long deliberation, the committee suggested that the existing programme of education had to be changed. A plan was made in this direction to improve the quality of *Othupalli* education. It was the only institution, from where Mappila students were imparted religious education. They were taught nothing except read Quran without understanding. The Government's move was to popularise Malayalam among the Mappilas. Mullas were given special instruction to teach the children elementary lessons in the regional language along with religious training. The Government set up two Muhammeden Inspectors for annual inspection of institutions. After the inspection, they would recommend for grants from Government. As a result, 96 Mappila schools were established and 3634 students were enrolled within two years. In the subsequent years, there was a considerable increase in the number of schools and students. But as soon as they learned to read and write the parents

<sup>75</sup> Report of the Inspector of Schools, 6<sup>th</sup> circle (Malabar) for the year 1868-69 to 1870-1871.

mounted pressure on them to leave the schools since education, for them, meant nothing but reading and writing.<sup>76</sup>

Table: 4 Progress of education among the Mappilas and the presence of Muslim girls in schools.<sup>77</sup>

year	Schools	Boys	Girls	Total
1874-75	156	Boys and girls		6017
1875-76	210	Boys and girls		7212
1876-77	201	Boys and girls		6445
1877-78	166	Boys and girls		5274
1878-79	189	Boys and girls		4963
1879-80	251	Boys and girls		5648
1880-81	210	5961	392	6353
1881-82	205	5131	435	5566
1882-83	158	4415	559	4974
1883-84	213	6551	1014	7565
1884-85	188	5422	638	6060
1885-86	224	6554	874	7428

The immediate increase of Muslim students especially girls in the years 1883-84 was due to the favorable rates of results allowed for Mohammedans in section 77 of the Grant-in-Aid code.<sup>78</sup> During the period all proposals for the expansion of Mappila education were generally accepted with a favorable reception from the president, Local fund Board of Malabar. In this period, the Government allocated Rs.10533 as grant and stipend for schools. It encouraged opening more schools and bringing more students to schools. Ironically the Government turned away from its earlier decision and allocated less grants in the following years. So there could be seen a fluctuation in the number of students. During the 1884-85 the number of girls of school going

<sup>76</sup> Garth Waite L., Inspector of schools 6<sup>th</sup> division, Report on public instruction, Madras presidency, for the years 1873-74. Quoted by K.T. Muhammad Ali., *Op ct*, P. 82.

<sup>77</sup> Report of the Inspector of Schools, 6<sup>th</sup> circle (Malabar) for the year 1885-86.

<sup>78</sup> A suggestion recommended by Garth Waite (Inspector of schools VI circle-Malabar) to spread education among the Mappilas, submitted in 1872-73 to the Director of Public Instruction. He says that, I accordingly arranged a scheme which I submitted to you and to the Collector (of Malabar) as President of the Local Fund Board of that District. By this scheme more favorable result grant rules were permitted for Mappila schools and special inspecting school masters of their own faith were appointed to organize their schools and mostly stipends of Rupees4 were given to the Mappila masters. A system similar to that which has been successful in the Hindu schools of Malabar has thus been begun among the Mappilas.

age was 48687 but only 638, merely 1.31 per cent of them were under instruction in Malabar.

The recommendations of the Education Commission of 1882 for the allocation of Grand-in-Aid came into force in the Madras presidency in April, 1886. The Government appointed a separate Deputy Inspector for Mappila schools in Malabar for further expansion of Mappila education. Immediate effect of this decision was the further increase in the number of students and schools in general and in the number of Muslim girls in particular. The number increased from 874 in 1885-86 to 2196 in 1886-87. A total of 20696 rupees were allocated during the said period as grant.

However, the progress of female education had been very slow when it is compared to boys. The pressure of custom mounted over them to withdraw from school soon after completing the elementary education. The circumstances forced them to give up the study at a very early stage. The second obstacle, which stood in their way, was the absence of trained female teachers. According to Garth Waite report, there were two female teachers in Malabar, one teaching in a girl's school and other in a mixed school.

The Government had initiated some efforts on its part to give inspiration for female education by establishing a *Mappila Female Normal School* at Calicut in 1883. Even though the school had only 27 pupils in the opening year, it had gone up to 67 in 1887-88, out of which 8 were Mappilas. By establishing such a school for Mappila women the Government had expected that it would help to extent female education among the Mappila community. Two of the 8 pupil who studied at Calicut Normal school were trained and employed in teaching in their village at Ponnani. In addition to this school, three preparatory or sessional schools to train teachers for the primary school examination were established at Thalasseri, Malappuram and Tirur during 1889-90.<sup>79</sup>

In a significant development in 1872 the Government established separate primary schools for Mappila students when Muslim students refused to go to Hindu schools and refused to sit together because they thought that they were looked down upon by

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<sup>79</sup> Report on public instruction, Madras presidency for the year 1890-91.

the Hindu castes. The Government ordered that whenever and wherever it is necessary, the Muhammadens should be taught separately from Hindus up to a certain point.<sup>80</sup> Though the separate schools were opened, the Mappila attendance of these schools was very poor. Owing to the lack of funds the Government had to impose some restrictions on the matter of giving the results grants. As a consequence the number of pupils and schools decreased considerably in subsequent years.

Efforts at improving education in the region, was often hampered by the occurrence of violent peasant outbreaks in Malabar against the landlord which in course of time turned against the institutions of the government in the form of attack on government offices, police etc. Since the number of students attending schools was steadily declining during the time of outbreaks the Government had to rethink their education policy. Finally, they decided to introduce a new scheme to educate Mappilas. Consequently, the Government officially recognized the Mappilas of Eranad and Valluvanad as 'Backward Class' for educational and social uplift of the community (Government Order no 2186, 1894). The order made them eligible for free education in Mappila elementary schools under public management.

The Mullas of vernacular schools (*Othupalli*- mosque schools) had been the hurdle in the way of modern and secular education. To reduce their influence among the community, Government decided to implement a new programme. By the new programme, they got vernacular schools separated from the mosque and freed it from the influence of Mullas.<sup>81</sup> The schools were brought under the jurisdiction of local boards and encouraged by local funds. Through another significant move, Mappila scholarship had been introduced. Apart from Muslim boys, seven and ten scholarships were reserved for girls on the basis of the lower secondary and primary examination results. And the Mappila pupils, who attended training courses for the profession of teaching, were given an allowance of Rs.2. An additional allowance was given to Mappila female students who were under training and did not reside at town where they were being trained.

The educational status of the community was subjected to change from its earlier form. But it did not bring efficacious results as expected. As majority of student did

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<sup>80</sup> Government order No. 288 of the 7 October 1872. Law & Education.

<sup>81</sup> C. A. Innes., P. 300.

not cross the elementary level, very little progress was achieved in then higher level. It will be apparent when the status of the community is analysed during the period 1906-07. The highest standard reached by the student was fourth. Out of the 19000 Mappila children in schools, little over 300 were crossing standard fourth. Out of the eleven Muhammeden students under training in the whole of the presidency during the 1907-08 period, only one was in the Malappuram training school and one in Moyan training school, Calicut. In 1907, only two Mappila students were attending Arts College.

Table 5: Progress of Muslim girls and boys during 1900-01 and 1909-10 period<sup>82</sup>

Year	No of mixed schools	Total strength of boys and girls in mixed schools	No of girls schools	Strength of girl students in girls schools
1900-01	572	26092	13	627
1901-02	652	30503	12	621
1902-03	645	31044	12	655
1903-04	537	25220	14	805
1904-05	562	26010	14	836
1905-06	584	26790	14	769
1906-07	605	27235	15	754
1907-08	678	31262	17	788
1908-09	566	26929	15	798
1909-10	635	31830	15	820

During 1909-10 the total number of students in girl's schools was 820 compared to 627 in 1900-01, denoting a total 31 percent increase. The total number of mixed school came down to 537 from 645 in the corresponding period. The total number of students declined from 31044 to 25220. Ironically, at the same time, the number of girl's school and the strength of students increased to 14 and 805 from 12 and 655 of corresponding year. The number of girl students was slowly but steadily increasing in all the periods except 1905-07.

Even though the community continued their opposition to British, their indifferences to education were slowly breaking down after 1910. The percentage of student increase in 1909-10 was 8 per cent whereas the percentage during 1911-12 was nearly 23 per cent. The work done by Inspecting Agency for bringing Mappila indigenous

<sup>82</sup> Report on Public Instruction in Madras presidency for the years 1900-01 to 1909-10.



schools under inspection had helped to a great extent for the progress of Mappila education. In 1911-12 two Mappilas took BA degree and one proceeded to LT and the other joined the BL degree.

The establishment of Khilafat committees in 1920 was a major set back for the steady improvement of Mappila education. The exhortation of Gandhi and Shaukat Ali to boycott all western products at a meeting in 1920 in Calicut inspired the people to give up all, including the withdrawal of their children from secular schools. In a parallel movement a large number of un-recognized schools were opened under private management. These efforts ultimately resulted in the large scale decrease of students' participation even in elementary level.

After the Malabar rebellion of 1921 the Government decided to pay more attention on Mappila education. In 1922, a committee was appointed to investigate the nitty-gritty of the abolition of separate elementary school for the Mappilas. At last the committee had unanimously recommended to the Government that those schools should not be abolished. Along with that they forwarded some other recommendations too. Important among them were,

- To make elementary education compulsory for Mappila students.
- To appoint qualified Arabic teachers in Government training schools to give religious education.
- To constitute a committee to compile text books in Malayalam from selected portions of the Quran and other kitabs.
- To set up additional scholarships for Mappila students in higher education.

The Government accepted most of the recommendations and introduced compulsory education in selected parts of the region. To give further impetus a special educational officer and two junior Inspectors were appointed in 1926.<sup>83</sup> Besides, special scholarships were sanctioned for higher education of the Mappilas. It comprised of 50 special scholarships for Mappila girls in elementary schools. To increase the number of trained Mappila teachers, an additional lower elementary training class was opened in the Government training school for Mappilas in Malappuram.<sup>84</sup> As a result some satisfactory mobility was seen in the number of

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<sup>83</sup> G.O. No. 462, Law (Education) dated 29 March, 1926.

<sup>84</sup> C. A. Innes., P. 301.

pupils during 1921-22 to 1931-32. It was a significant turning point when six Mappila girls were admitted to the higher elementary grade during 1929-30.

To enhance the participation of Muslim girls in educational activities, the Inspector of schools, sixth circle, strongly emphasized the need for combining general elementary education courses with some form of handicraft. As far as girls from poor family were concerned, it would help them to earn wages. Following the report of A.G. Grieve in 1931, the Government appointed a part time religious instructor in each of the Government training schools for men and women. New schemes did good result as many children entered the schools. It gave morale boost for Government to implement it to all the parts of region, especially rural areas.

Table: 6 No of Muslim Girls in Malabar and Travancore& Cochin area 1933-34 to 1939-40.<sup>85</sup>

Year	Malabar		Travancore& Cochin area	
	No of public Muslim girls' school	No of Muslim girls in public schools	No of public schools providing Arabic	No of Muslim girls
1933-34	130	4558	217	4852
1934-35	129	4738	230	6052
1935-36	134	5828	253	10450
1936-37	132	5681	-	-
1937-38	128	-	272	9743
1938-39	126	5338	278	9126
1939-40	120	4763	284	9719

The highest number of Muslim girls in Malabar schools was 5828 during the period 1935-36. While in the southern states of Travancore and Cochin the figures stood at 10450. However Malabar accounts for 76.46 per cent of the total Muslim population of Kerala. Probably the number of Muslim girls in Travancore and Cochin was more than their proportion in that area. As per the data, there were more public schools in south than Malabar, but most of them were not under Muslim management. All were providing Arabic education for students. Perhaps that would be one reason for their overwhelming presence in schools. What would be other reasons?

<sup>85</sup> Report on Public Instruction in Madras presidency for the year's of 1933-34 to 1939-40 and Administrative reports, Education, Travancore state.

A close look into the matter will reveal more facts. One of the main reasons for the progress of modern secular education in the area is that both Travancore and Cochin were princely states under British rule, and ironically Malabar was under direct British rule. Compared to Malabar, many social and religious reforms occurred much earlier in the southern states. In 1911, Malabar Muslim Educational Association was formed at Cochin and gained support from leading Muslims. Its objective was to propagate the importance of education among the Muslims in Cochin. Its branches were formed at various places: some of them are,

- Muslim Samajam, Muhampam-1918.
- Mufidul Islam Sangham, Mattancheri, Cochin.

In 1919, MEA got the support of Dewan Vijayan Ragavachari and he accepted their suggestions. Its secretary Seethi Muhammed Sahib was nominated to Cochin Educational Code Revision Committee as a representative of Muslims. By the dint of his efforts fee concession and stipends were granted to Muslim students. Arabic teachers were allowed in schools. Like Cochin, Travancore was also entertaining the social and religious reforms. Muslims were responded positively to the changes in the field of education. There several local associations and a central organization were formed.

- Muslim Dharma Poshini Sangham, Quilon.
- Chirayinkil Taluk Samajam, Travancore.
- All Travancore Mahajana Sabha (a central organization of all educational association)

Vakkam Abdul Khader Maulavi was the leader of the central organization. In fact, he was a pioneer of the all educational and religious reform among the Muslims of Kerala. As a result of the efforts of the ATMS Arabic teachers were appointed in schools, religious instruction was allowed. When the Arabic examination board was constituted, Vakkam Maulavi was made the president and the Muhammeden School Inspector. Under his inspiring leadership there many local educational organizations were formed like,

- Lajmathul Muhammadiya Sangham, Allapppy. Established a higher elementary school in Allapppy.
- Muhammadiya Sangham, Erattupetta.
- Muslim Aikya Sangham, Alikkod.

As a result of the first Muslim girl passed the Vernacular Leaving Examination and entered the college for further studies in 1925-26.<sup>86</sup>

There was a large increase in the number of Muslim girls who joined the schools in 1935-36. The decision, which had been taken in the earlier periods, might be the main reason for the development. During 1934-35 the Government had decided to teach Arabic in schools and grant many scholarships for students. As a result, five Muslim girls sat for the Lower Grade Arabic Munshi's Examination. A Muslim lady graduate was deputed to undergo training in the Lady Willington College, Madras. The co-operation of Muslim associations was sought for doing propaganda work for girls' education through grant-in-aid. Eighty six associations co-operated in this venture. Consequently, the number of Muslim girls attending schools increased from 4852 in 1933-34 to 6052 in 1934-35 and to 10450 in 1935-36.<sup>87</sup>

In contrast to the southern part of Kerala, socio reforms in Malabar were of a late origin, though certain efforts on the part of a few individuals and some organization were done. It was confined to certain parts of the region. One of the popular organizations, which was established at Calicut in 1891, was *Himayathul Islam Sabha* under the patronage of Khan Bahadur Muthukoya Thangal. Many leading Muslims of Calicut were the members of the association.<sup>88</sup> This committee took initiative to establish 'Himayathul Islam Arabic School' in 1912 in Calicut. In 1919, it started an elementary school and in 1922 it was upgraded as a high school. For the first time in its history girls were admitted to class-I, in 1936. It is to be noted that 6 girls got admitted in that year. And the number of girls substantially increased in the subsequent years. Most of them studied up to the VII class. But admission of girls to high school was started only in 1966. A few others include Ansarul Islam Fitta'leemul Anam, (The Muhammeden Educational Association) which was established in 1918 at Calicut and Madrasatul Muhammadiya which was established under the association in 1918 was upgraded as a high school in 1947. Girls were admitted to the school in 1944 and 21 girls were admitted in 1<sup>st</sup> standard that year. There were 6 girls in standard V in 1947.

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<sup>86</sup>T.K. Velu Pillai., *The Travancore state manual*, Vol- III, P. 733.

<sup>87</sup> K. T. Muhammad Ali., *Op ct*, P. 134.

<sup>88</sup> Mappila review, July 1941, book I, part 3 quoted by Muhammed Ali., *Op ct*, P. 157.

Table: 7 the status of Muslim students in secondary school and intermediate level. 1926-27 to 1935-36.<sup>89</sup>

Year	Total No of Mappila pupils in secondary school	No of Mappila girls in secondary school	No of Mappila pupils in the intermediate college.
1926-27	680	3	-
1927-28	736	-	-
1928-29	910	-	-
1929-30	967	-	-
1930-31	988	14	20
1931-32	1006	16	18
1932-33	1025	-	-
1933-34	965	-	-
1934-35	978	-	-
1935-36	-	-	-
1936-37	1149	20	-
1937-38	1224	19	-
1938-39	1319	-	-
1939-40	1406	41	-

The total strength of students increased every year except during the period 1933-35. The total number of students in secondary school increased from 680 in 1926-27 to 1406 in 1939-40. In total, 726 students joined for secondary education during a 14 year period, recording a total increase of 106 per cent and 7.57 per cent increase every year. The average number of students who joined the school every year was 51.85. At the same time the number of female students in the beginning was only 3 which form only 0.44 percent of total Muslim pupils. In 1939-40 it went up to 41 adding a total increase of 38 female students from the initial stage. The percentage of female students is 2.91 of total Muslim students. Average of students who joined secondary level is 2.71 per year, and the percentage of total increase is 7.89 and 0.56 per cent in every year. It is significantly being noted that the number had been increasing gradually every year.

<sup>89</sup> Report on Public Instruction in Madras presidency for the years 1939-40.

### III-THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

#### **Geographical**

Most Mappilas were living in the interior parts of the region in and their huts and small houses were scattered throughout the forest and jungles along the foot of the hills and mountains making it almost impossible to trace them out to bring their children to schools. The task of educating Mappila children became more and more difficult and the establishment of schools within reach of their living places was hard due to the less availability of infrastructure and the reluctance on the part of teachers to work in interior places.

The weather was another hindrance on the way of spreading education. Torrential rain in the monsoon seasons paved way for the absence of students and would force them to stay at home. Travel proved to be hazardous through overflowing rivers and streams. Along with rain the rapid spread of epidemics throughout the region had created hurdles. As education was not made compulsory, any attempt to bring children to class rooms proved futile even though the Government was able to establish schools in villages.

#### **Social**

There were many reasons for the educational backwardness of the community. Poverty was one of the major reasons for the backwardness of the community in the early periods. The majority of people was peasants and small scale labourers and depended on agricultural activities for earning their livelihoods. The social system of the region especially caste system denied them adequate wages for their works and reasonable rates for their products. Such kind of circumstances enfeebled the family and doubled the burden of parents. In this regard, the expenses for the long term education of children would be unbearable.

Along with poverty they were too illiterate to understand the importance of education and education was seen as a worthless attempt which might negatively influence their children. Boys were allotted the job of herding cattle and helping parents at fields whereas girls looked after the responsibility of maintaining household jobs, on the belief that they could be better employed in helping the family.

The Inspector of Girls' Schools- 6<sup>th</sup> circle (Malabar) in her report on the education of Mappila girls, stressed the need for a vocational education simultaneously extracting training in some kind of handicraft works which would enable them in earning. She describes the reasons for the poor attendance of girls in girls' schools as "There are many subjects in an ordinary elementary school, which the Mappila parents object to, such as certain types of drill, singing, action songs, drawing pictures and illustrations, dramatization of stories etc. Certain educational devices which are found absolutely necessary to make school life happy and attractive have to set aside. It is no wonder that the schools for Mappila girls are such dull, lifeless institution where the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic is carried on in the old- fashioned form. Even needle work is deprived of its aesthetic and attractive side, for fear of introducing drawings and designs, which might hurt the religious of the parents."<sup>90</sup>

### **Opposition of the Scholars and Mullas**

Mullas were the teachers in single teacher school i.e. *Othupalli* or *Maktabas* and were highly respected. However their knowledge was restricted to that of reciting Quran and some religious practices only. Indeed Mullas were exploiting the ignorance of people by creating self respect through manipulation in the community. When modern and secular education was introduced in the region, they encouraged the Mappilas to oppose the new system of education on the belief that modern education is a passport to hell and English language is the language of hell. In fact, they feared that getting knowledge would deteriorate their privilege in the society.

The eminent reformer Sana Ullah Makti Thangal (1847-1912) ridiculed the view by saying, "It would be good to learn English, as it would be useful when one reached hell."<sup>91</sup> He advocated education for girls and deplored the then prevailing reluctance to learn Malayalam and English.<sup>92</sup> The Government considered the idea of giving training to Mullas in modern education. The Government appointed them as religious teachers when introduced religious education in secular schools. It was seemed to be to attract the students and to eliminate the prejudice of people. For this purpose, a

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<sup>90</sup> Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras Presidency, for 1931-32.

<sup>91</sup> K.K. Muhammed Abdul Kareem., *Makti Thangal Sampurna Krithikal*, P. 636.

<sup>92</sup> K.N. Panikkar., *Against Lord and State. (Religion And Peasant Uprisings In Malabar 1836-1921)*, P. 64.

sessional school for the training of Mullas and Musaliyars was started at Malappuram in 1930-31.<sup>93</sup>

The religious scholars too caused the backwardness of the community in the earlier period by issuing edict (fatwa) against secular education in general and female education in particular. Its dire consequences overshadowed the all round development of the community in subsequent decades, even today the ghost of the edict has been haunting the community. The Samastha Kerala Jam Iyyatul Ulema, a leading orthodox organization of Malabar Muslims, which follows Shafi thought of jurisprudence, had given an edict against educating women by issuing a resolution in its fourth plenary at Mannarkad on March 16, 1930. Terms of the resolution could be concluded as 'Imam Ibnu Hajarul Haithami', in his famous book 'Fatawal Hadeesiyah', issued an edict that female education is nothing but loathing and abhorrence. Nothing is wrong if any one did it, but getting females rid of education is good. And the resolution says if women are taught to read and write it would generate unpleasant environment in society and instill outrageous behavior in female character. Finally, the resolution compares educating female children to alcoholic consumption.<sup>94</sup> Even some times the scholars were biased towards Malayalam as it was thought to be fraught with the idolatry and superstitions of the Hindus. The Muslims believed that the learning of Malayalam was prohibited by religion and was considered as 'Aryanezhuthu'. The eminent reformer and the leader of Mujahid movement E.K. Maulavi remembered the prayer of the orthodox Muslim scholars at that time Oh! Lord, God, make us not of those who speak the Malayalam language well.<sup>95</sup> As an alternative to Malayalam they themselves developed a new script called "Arabic Malayalam".

### **Wastage and Stagnation**

Both wastage and stagnation were the common phenomenon among the pupils of Malabar especially among the Muslims. Wastage was the chief problem related to the elementary education. At that time, the highest standard usually reached by students was fourth. Moreover, majority of them could not go beyond the elementary stage;

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<sup>93</sup> Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras Presidency, for 1931-32.

<sup>94</sup> Samastha Smaranika 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Calicut, 1985, P. 67.

<sup>95</sup> P.A. Syed Muhammed., *Kerala Muslim and Malayalam Language, Kerala Muslim Educational Association Souvenir*, 1966, P. 85.



and most of them either dropped out of school or stagnated in their current standard for years. The table given below shows the tendency of students in Madras presidency.

Table: 8 Wastage and Stagnation among the students of Madras presidency.<sup>96</sup>

Year	Standard	Total number	passed	No of dropped out or stagnated students	Percentage of drop out or stagnation
1931-32	I	13,08,473	576,094	732,379	55.97
1932-33	II	576,094	422,950	153,144	26.58
1933-34	III	422,950	336,453	86,497	20.45
1934-35	IV	336,453	129,727	206,726	61.44

During the period 1931-32, the total number of students who joined the first standard is 1,308,473, out of which only 576,094 students entered into class second in 1932-33 period. All most 55.97 per cent of total people either dropped out of school or stagnated in the same class. From class two to class three 73.42 per cent of total students entered. Here, drop out or stagnation rate is reduced into 26.58 from 55.97 per cent of corresponding year. Next year the rate again had been reduced into 20.45 per cent of total students. It means that 79.55 per cent of students entered into the fourth class. However, in the subsequent year the rate of drop out or stagnation had gone up into highest percentage of 61.44. It proves that mere 38.56 per cent of total pupils had passed out of fourth standard. Only 9.91 per cent of total students, who joined for the first standard in 1931-32 period had successfully completed their elementary education in 1934-35 period. The data makes it clear that there was reluctance on the part of students to continue at schools even in the primary level.

There were many reasons for such a phenomenon. The important one was the inadequacy of qualified staff where plenty of unqualified teachers were appointed in schools. Consequently, the status of education swiftly declined. Lack of infrastructure was another major reason. The huge amount of stagnation, as an aftermath of all these

<sup>96</sup> Reports on Public Instruction in the Madras presidency for the year 1936-37, p.103.

aforementioned causes, brought out difficulties in providing facilities for all and necessitated in the multiplication of classrooms, which culminated affecting the sufficiency of supervision of schools.

### **Absence of Female Teachers**

The lack of qualified teachers stood in the way of Mappila education as an obstacle. As far as girls' education in the earlier period was concerned, the availability of qualified and trained female teachers from the community was an indispensable need. Since the parents were not ready to send their daughters to achieve modern and secular education as it was viewed with prejudice. Moreover, the Mappila women were more stubborn than man in their opposition to girls' education. In such a situation, the considerable presence of female teachers would have melted the hardness of opposition. Though two girls' schools were sanctioned by the government for Eranad Taluk in 1929-30, it was not opened as female teachers needed for working in the interior parts of that Taluk were not forthcoming.<sup>97</sup>

Table: 9 The status of female teachers during the period of 1932-33-1939-40<sup>98</sup>

Year	No of public Mappila girls' schools	No of women teachers	No of Muslim women teachers	No of trained Muslim women teachers	Total no of trained women teachers
1932-33	-	218	106	55	150
1933-34	130	214	93	-	170
1934-35	129	215	-	-	-
1935-36	134	218	119	-	-
1936-37	132	-	-	75	-
1937-38	128	-	-	-	-
1938-39	126	-	109	-	-
1939-40	120	221	124	90	147

### **Attitude of community**

The major set back, not only in early periods but also after independence towards educating the Mappilas, was the immovable attitude of the community. They bitterly opposed all movements of British to educate them. In 1835, the Government

<sup>97</sup> Grieve. R.G., Directorate of Public Instructor., Repot on public instruction in Madras for 1928-29.

<sup>98</sup> Report on Public Instruction in Madras presidency for the years 1932-33 to 1939-40.

announced new educational policy, encouraged English education, and discouraged religious studies in schools. There was no provision for teaching religion. The cohesive attachment of Muslims to Islam forced them to describe the new system of education as an attempt to convert the people into Christianity. The women of the community were the scapegoats of such opposition. Prejudices and superstitions prevalent in the society and among the community forcibly confined them inside their houses.

The rigidly defined traditional gender norms denied the girls even a little of education. Girls used to leave the *Othupallis* after religious classes by 9.30 in the morning. The Muslims from most of the villages in Malabar hesitated to send their children to government schools, known as *Othupallis*, before the take-over of these schools by the Board. The government converted these institutions into formal primary schools by retaining Mullas as teachers if they so desired. Mullas, most of them were poor, agreed to the conversion of *Othupallis* to schools, and were lured by the offer of salary. The general attitude of the Muslim society during these periods towards girls' education is reflected in the following words.

Oh my holy saints!

Girls go out for learning, reading and writing!!

This is no doubt the sign of the doomsday!<sup>99</sup>

Muslims thought of female education as an unnecessary and unwanted exercise as it entails the risk of not getting a bridegroom for an educated woman. This conception emanates from the traditional idea of allotting homely jobs-something considered to be of 'immense help' to her even after the marriage- for woman instead of giving her education.

### **Political**

The century long struggle-1498 to 1947-against colonialists made the Muslims antagonistic towards the west leading to a hostile attitude towards any change. They had fought against four major forces in the world. First it was against the Portuguese, Dutch, and French and against the British administration. All had showed their hatred and disgust against Mappila Muslims. Because of their allegiance to Mysore kings,

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<sup>99</sup> Ayisha Kutty Teacher, Pathapiriyam, Edavanna, MGM Souvenir, (1995) Edavanna., P. 86.

British ignored the needs and necessities of Muslims and considered them as enemy. Due to the negative attitude of the Government Muslims rejected the new system of education. Above all, in the initial stage, the activities of the Christian missionaries and the socio-religious policies of the British Government aimed at asserting the superiority of western culture. It was these missionaries who introduced English education in India, apparently with a hidden agenda of converting natives to Christianity. The Bible was compulsorily taught in the schools and the Muslim girls were forbidden to veil their heads. Some of the textbooks used in government schools carried hostile and disrespectful references on Islam and created hatred in the minds of Muslim students which dissuaded Muslims from attending schools introduced by the British.

## CHAPTER IV

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CULTURE OF MUSLIMS IN MALABAR

#### I-THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION SINCE 1947 TO 2000

A rise in literacy alone does not signify educational development. Educational Development should mean higher levels of achievement in general education, (i.e., matriculation, graduation, and post-graduation) professional and technical education. Further, education is not merely an end in itself; nor is it meant only for creating better citizens. It should also lead to better levels of employment and confer the public socio-economic benefits. Here we try to look at the performance of Mappila women in school and college level in last few decades.

#### **School Education**

The efforts that were made to spread modern and secular education for Mappilas have been on the way since British period. The Government first took initiative to create a few human resources among the community for colonial rule. After 1921 Malabar rebellion, the Government distinguished the importance of modern education and its immediate spread among the Mappilas. They assumed that imparting education to Mappilas on western pattern is the antidote of their problems. To fulfill the objectives, they allowed some elementary schools and appointed Muhammeden Inspectors to supervise the educational activities of Mappilas. We have discussed about their efforts and the plight of Mappilas especially Mappila women during the reign of British. Whatever may be their goal; their efforts resulted in creating a little awareness among the community about modern education and making a few educated persons among them. The disappearance of *Othupalli* system of education and the evolution of a new model religious education were the significant events in pre-Independence era. Here we discuss the performance of the Muslim women of Kerala in the field of education in post Independence era.

The post-Independence era witnessed the strengthening of progressive activities among all communities. Education becomes the priority of all communities, religions and regions. All are thinking about better education and its improvement according to

the contemporary developments in the field of education. As a part of the society, Muslims have to respond to these developments. By the dying years of British rule over the region, Malabar had only a nominal presence of Muslim girls in secular schools. The hesitation of Mappilas to allow their children to participate in modern and secular education has been overwhelmed by their involvement in progressive environment of Kerala society. However, the opposition of orthodoxy continued as a major set back to Muslim women education in the early decades of independence.

Interventions in educational matters by progressive local elements of socio- religious movements have triggered off educational expansion in conservative communities and backward regions. Localities that experienced such interventions in the past have marched ahead of their counterparts. Since earlier periods, the progressive and reform movement started their hectic campaign against superstitions and prejudices of the community. They invite people to accept the pure ethos of the religion. Their urge for accepting modern education along with religious education and the exhortation for female education were jolts for conservatives. The conservative elements came up with strong opposition against the activities of Islahi movement that initiated campaign for popularizing female education in Malabar. Despite the fierce opposition from orthodoxy, the reformist movements have been getting foothold in some areas of the region. Moreover, it is a matter of fact that all educated people entertained the spirit of reformist agenda.

Infact, Islahi movement had a profound influence on specific areas in Malabar. The girls from these areas started to attend schools even in the 1940s. The souvenir of the Mujahid girls' movement (MGM) 1995, underlines the fact by providing the history of girls' education of Edavanna, an area influenced by Mujahid movement. It says, "The girls were, who went to school for the first time in Edavanna included Ayisha, Biriyaikutty and Ayisu. In the initial years, most girls stopped studies on completion of the fifth standard. Ayisha became a teacher in 1943 under the Malabar District Board School for a salary of Rs 15 and retired in 1979."<sup>100</sup> It continues, "In 1960, the first lady from Edavanna, PV Mariyumma passed the matriculation examination. For high school education, she used to walk miles to the next village, Thiruvalli. Today

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<sup>100</sup> Mujahid Girls movement Souvenir, Edavanna, 1995., P. 88.

majority of girls in Edavanna completes at least high school education.”<sup>101</sup> As an effect of progressive activities, in late 1952, a girls’ madrasa was started in Kuttichira, Calicut to teach only Arabic and the Quran on a full time basis.

By 1950, visible changes were noticed in those places where the Mujahid had some influence; boys and girls started attending schools in large numbers. In 1960, a meeting held by Mujahid movement vociferously declared the necessity of girls’ education and its great leader and renowned scholar K M Maulavi released a decree that unambiguously declared permissibility and the necessity of women’s education. The assertion of scholars and the tireless efforts of Islahi movement activists have been touching the attitude of community and their prejudice towards female education. The presence of highly educated female members from the reform movement influenced areas proves that the objective of movement has achieved far-reaching impact.

After independence, under the supervision of popular governments, Kerala has had several commendable achievements in the field of education. There have been several supportive legislations to ensure the reforms in education. An example for this is the Kerala education Act of 1958 that empowered the Government to establish and maintain schools or permit any person or body of persons to establish and maintain schools or recognize any school established and maintained by any person or body of persons. Under the Act, the Government is also vested with the power to constitute a State Education Advisory Board for advising the Government on matters of aided schools. The Kerala Education Act and Kerala Education Rules came in force with effect from 1 June 1959.<sup>102</sup> As an immediate effect of the act, there was a proliferation in the number of new schools across the state. Many persons and organizations came forward to establish schools in the villages. The proportion of the schools was one primary school for 500 families and one high school for a Panchayat. Universality of schools resulted in the widespread acceptance of education in the society irrespective of region or religion. The table given below shows the growth rate of school and girls students during the period of 1960-61 to 1990-91 in Malabar region.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., P. 25.

<sup>102</sup> Educational Statistics since Independence, Department of General Education, Government of Kerala, 2004.

Table: 10 Growth of schools and the progress of female education.<sup>103</sup>

Districts	1960-61			1970-71			1980-81			1990-91		
	No of Schools	No of Girls	Total students	No of schools	No of Girls	Total students	No of schools	No of Girls	Total students	No of schools	No of Girls	Total students
Palakkad	1100	1,11,776	2,60,533	859	139924	311274	883	188805	402611	915	244018	500240
Malappuram	*	*	*	1058	152456	400442	1269	247376	521126	1324	370668	762075
Kozhikode	1899	1,78,137	4,19,863	1256	206440	448821	1189	297145	621069	1218	280796	574200
Kannur	1526	1,32,287	3,06,918	1637	216513	476888	1670	290527	614338	1258	243203	502232
Wayanad	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	258	71,253	145205
Kasargod	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	504	113845	239164
Total	4525	4,22,200	9,87,314	4810	715333	1637425	5011	1023853	2159144	5477	1,323,783	2723116
State total	9533	14,89,291	32,67,301	10814	2247888	4799522	11590	2706179	5602953	12134	2888793	5901101

\*Districts not formed.

<sup>103</sup> Directorate of Public Instruction, Government of Kerala, Educational Statistics since Independence, 2004.



As per the data, the percentages of girl students in Palakkad, Kozhikode and Kannur districts were 42.90, 42.42 and 43.10 respectively in 1960-61 academic year. The percentage of Malabar girls constituted only 28.34 percentage of the state total. The percentage of girls was low in Kozhikode, a Muslim dominated district when compared to Christian dominated Kottayam in south, where girls constituted 48.17 per cent of total students. The total number of schools in Malabar area was 4525 out of 9533 of the state total. During the 1970-71 period, Malabar witnessed a slight progress in female education. In this period, the percentages of girls in Malabar were 44.92, 38.07, 45.99 and 45.40 respectively in Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Kannur districts. The total strength of Malabar girl students went up to 31.82 per cent.

During the period of 1980-81, the strength of girl students in Malabar districts were 46.89 in Palakkad, 47.46 in Malappuram, 47.84 in Calicut and 47.29 in Kannur. The decade saw a steep rise in the percentage of girl students in Malappuram district the only one Muslim dominated district in the state with 65 per cent of total population. There were many reasons for the growth of students during this period. One of them was the expansion of schools. The total number of schools in the district was 1269. In this period, the Malabar girls constituted 37.83 percent of total girl students of the state. The next decade witnessed a rapid growth in the percentage of girls in Malabar. It had gone up to 47.60 percentages of the state total. During the period, the total number of schools in Malabar was 5477 out of 12134 of Kerala.

The latest study conducted by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon underlines the above fact that expansion of schools helped the educational progress of Kerala state. They say, "Even though Kerala is not a prosperous state, it is educationally ahead of other parts of the country, due to the availability and accessibility of schools, signifying that even a less prosperous state with appropriate policies and strong political will can overcome hurdles to women's education. Kerala is spending 6.3 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education. Over 60 percentage teachers in Kerala and over 40 per cent primary school teachers in the south zone are women, in contrast to 18 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. This is the lowest proportion among all Indian states. Further more, road transport is

reliable and readily available in Kerala enabling female teachers to travel long distances to teach in rural schools.”<sup>104</sup>

By the end of 1964, the Kumara Pillai Commission, appointed by the Government of Kerala to look into the educational problems of backward communities in the state, pointed out that out of one thousand high-schools going girl students only 2.83 are Muslims. The commission says, “Although there are a few cases of wealthy persons among the members of the community, speaking generally, Muslims as a class appear to be very backward both educationally and economically.”<sup>105</sup>

The plight of Muslim students in 1960 was pathetic. Merely 47.83 percent of total Muslim children attended schools. Considering social and educational backwardness in educational institutions, the Government announced in 1957 a 35 reservation of seats for backward classes and 5 percent reservation for the scheduled castes. As per the order, Muslims constitute 9 percentages out of 35 percentage backward reservation. In 1964, the first girl student graduated from an ordinary high school. She was from the Aristocratic Mappila centre of Kuttichira, situated in the heart of Calicut.

Kerala is the only State that has achieved the goal of universal education envisioned in the Constitution of India. To ensure the active participation of students in educational process, the Government had taken decision to make education compulsory for all in 1960s. The decision ensured the presence of students in school, at least in primary classes. The Muslim community responded impressively to the decision of the Government. The political presence of Muslim League gave much inspiration for the community to make sure their participation in educational process. League has been the part of various governments of Kerala since 1956 and its leaders have handled the education ministry for years. The eminent leader CH Muhammed Koya, who was the first Education Minister from the party, was inducted in 1967. After that, the party handled the ministry office from 1967 to 1979 continuously.

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<sup>104</sup> Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon., *Unequal Citizens, A Study of Muslim Women in India*, PP. 72- 73.

<sup>105</sup> *Report of the Commission.*, P. 51.

During the 12 years period, the ministers of League had taken many decisions, which helped the people of state especially Muslims and other backward sections of the society to improve the prospectus in the field of education. The significant among them was the compulsory education. Although the response of the community was impressive to education, their attitude towards female education was dismal. As a solution for the problems of Muslims and other minority girls, the Government decided to give special annual scholarships from primary to college level. It was the idea of CH Muhammed Koya and he took initiative to implement it with immediate effect. The decision resulted in the widespread presence of Muslim girls in schools.

Nevertheless, the dropout among the students especially among Muslim students was common. Huge number of students went out the schools soon after their failure in annual examinations. It created the scarcity of students in schools especially in the areas of Muslims and other downtrodden sections. Such kind of situation exerted the Government to respond appropriately to ensure the presence of students' upto 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Finally, the Government decided to give 'All pass' upto 9<sup>th</sup> standard. At that time, Chakeeri Ahmed Kutty Sahib, who was the successor of CH Muhammed Koya, was the minister of education. In addition, he had taken decision to give free education upto 10<sup>th</sup> standard. When the order came in to effect, it helped the students to continue their study upto 10<sup>th</sup> standard and reduced the burdens of parents. Parents became enthusiastic to send their sons and daughters to schools. The table given below will show the progress of Kerala Muslim girls in primary level education. We took the strength of Arabic and Urdu students as an example due to the lack of religion wise data. Most of the students, who study Arabic and Urdu languages, are Muslims.

Table: 11 Progress of Muslim girl students in Primary schools 1965-66 to 2000-01 (1<sup>st</sup> standard to 7<sup>th</sup> standard)<sup>106</sup>

Year	Muslim Boys	Muslim Girls	Total	Percentage of girls	Growth of girls
1965-66	131,082	106,378	237,460	44.79	100
1971-72	300,745	241,718	542,463	44.55	227.22
1974-75	315,991	254,982	570,973	44.65	105.48
1981-82	407,947	345,786	753,733	45.87	135.61
1985-86	499,909	436,761	936,670	46.62	171.29
1989-90	524,346	496,425	1,020,771	48.63	113.66
1995-96	534,966	492,911	1,027,877	47.95	99.29
2000-01	505,851	472,236	978,087	48.28	95.80

Even though the data may be inadequate to find out the total strength of Muslim students in the state and their number in respective districts, it is clear that the number of Muslim students especially the girl students is increasing after the independence. As far as the education of Muslim community is concerned, their growth is steady and constant. Their performance was dismal in pre-Independence era especially in Malabar area, where they dominate. The data shows the number of students in primary level i.e. from first standard to seventh standard. In primary level, mainly upto 4<sup>th</sup> standard, all Muslim students are taught Arabic in schools where it is available. Right from fifth standard students can choose Arabic, Urdu and Sanskrit as optional language if they want. The total number of girl students of the state in primary level in 2000-01 is 1757245 and the total number of Muslim girls who studied Arabic and Urdu languages is 472236. The percentage of Muslim girls in primary level is 26.87. It implies that they have overcome the 23.33 per cent of Muslim population of the state. The total number of schools in the state, where Arabic is taught as a language, is 3414 in LP level and 1631 in UP level in 2000-01 academic year. The number in Malabar region is 2365 in Lower Primary and 1136 in Upper Primary levels. It constitutes 69.27 and 69.65 percentages of state totals respectively.

<sup>106</sup> Directorate of Public Instruction, Government of Kerala Educational Statistics since Independence, 2004.

Recently, the enrolment of children in standard one is falling steadily due to the fall in birth rate. However, the fall began in the Malabar region much later than in Travancore and Cochin due to the head start of the latter areas in the process of demographic change in Kerala. The latest reports show that the sex ratio of male and female child population is declining in the age level of 0-5 even in Malappuram district, which is the highest populated district in the state. The sex ratio of child population in the district is 979 female for 1000 male. The state average is 955 female for 1000 male in all age level.

The table will show the strength of Muslim girls who study Arabic and Urdu as an optional language in high school level during the period of 1965-66 to 2000-01.

Table: 12 Progress of Muslim girls in high schools 1965-66 to 2000-01<sup>107</sup>

Year	Muslim Boys	Muslim Girls	Total	Percentage of girls	Growth rate of girls(100)
1965-66	5,971	1,348	7,319	18.41	100
1971-72	9,936	2,939	12,875	22.82	218.02
1974-75	14,818	6,319	21,137	29.89	215
1981-82	40,393	30,288	70,681	42.85	479.31
1985-86	65,966	54,241	120,207	45.12	179.08
1989-90	78,973	65,074	144,047	45.17	119.97
1995-96	110,275	108,322	218,597	49.55	166.45
2000-01	136,702	127,948	264,650	48.34	118.11

The high school education was not the preference of Muslim girls in earlier periods. It would be apparent from the above data. As per the data, the total strength of Muslim girls, who study both Arabic and Urdu language in high schools in the academic year 1965-66 was 1348 and it would be merely 18.41 per cent of total Muslim students and 0.07 per cent of total girl students of Kerala. During the academic year of 1985-86, it had gone upto 45.12 per cent of total Muslim students and 1.94 per cent of total girl students of Kerala. The strength of Muslim girls went upto 48.34 per cent of total Muslim students and merely 5 per cent of total girl students of Kerala during 2000-01 period. The steep rise in the growth rate of Muslim girls was seen in 1981-82 period with 479.31. It was the

<sup>107</sup> Directorate of Public Instruction, Government of Kerala Educational Statistics since Independence, 2004

highest ever recorded. The growth rate was fluctuating some times from the period of 1965-66 to 2000-01. Nonetheless, it has never gone below 100 of the basic period of 1965-66. Obviously, the average rate would be 199.49. The total number of high schools, where Arabic is taught in the state, is 1020. Among them 538 schools are located in Malabar region and the percentage will be 52.74 of total Arabic schools in Kerala.

Here, we could find out many reasons for the dismal performance of the Muslim girls of Kerala in the field of education in earlier periods after the independence. At the same time, we are able to ascertain the motives behind the immediate acceptance of modern education by the community within few decades. The enquiry for understanding the educational problems of particular communities that remain educationally backward is always a pointer towards the societal and household-related factors. The socio-cultural and economic factors account for the low level educational performance of particular social groups and regions. The same reasons had been haunting the Malabar region in its earlier experience. At that time, early marriages, prejudice and the increasing trend of the dropout at the higher stages of school education were prevalent in the region.

The significant motive behind the attitudinal change is that the inter-relationship of the community with sister communities mainly with highly educated Christian community. They are the minority community in Kerala with merely 20 per cent of total population. However, their commitment to achieve higher status resulted in the all round development of the community in the state. Now they possess many higher posts in Government and public sector and keep high literacy rate and high educational status. They never turned their face away from modern education. The missionary activists paid due attention to establish all kinds of educational institutions since the modern education was introduced in the state. The tremendous performance of Christian community in the field of education has become much inspiration for other backward and minority communities in the state. The educational performance of women from sister communities has influenced the Muslim women of Kerala to a large extent. Still they have miles to go to reach their level. This is contrary to the experience of Muslim women in north India, where the majority of women, both Hindu and Muslim, do not attend schools regularly.

### Higher Education

If the status of Mappila women in higher education in earlier periods being subjected to examine, one will be able to find out the fact that they were completely in darkness at the time of British and the early decades of post independence era. The attitude of Muslim community towards higher education was pathetic even on the eve of independence and early reforms. They never wanted to send their children especially girls beyond primary level. Community forbade even high school education for girls. It had to wait until 1964 to see a high school graduated girl in Malabar region.

Individual Mappilas had achieved higher education from Madras and other places on their own, but all of them were male members of the community. In contrast to Malabar, the southern region of Kerala had witnessed sweeping changes in higher education since British period due to the presence of progressive reform movements among various communities including Muslims. Even few Muslim women were sent to intermediate schools and colleges by their parent's. Eminent among them were Nafeesath Beevi and Ayisha Bai. Both of them were the Deputy Speakers of Kerala Assembly in 1960 and 1956 respectively. However, higher education and particularly college education was considered as a danger point by the conservative leadership in Malabar. Secular college education was thoroughly discouraged, and the education of girls of older age was forbidden.<sup>108</sup> For instance, when the Madappally Government College was started in 1958, a big conference under the leadership of Mullas convened near Badagara and passed a resolution that Muslim children should not be sent to schools and colleges before they completed a course of religious education for 8 to 12 years.<sup>109</sup>

The first Muslim college in Malabar region started at Farook in 1948. The college admitted students to inter mediate and degree classes. In the first decade of functioning, the college never faced a demand for the admission of the girls from the community. The first demand came in 1959 when a girl from Mappila community was admitted to M.Sc

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<sup>108</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op cit*, P. 206.

<sup>109</sup> It was cited in the report of Kumara Pillai Commission, appointed by the Kerala Government to look the educational backwardness of various communities in 1964. Savan Kutty Sahib, one of the members of Nettur B Commission, which also was appointed to suggest the solution of backwardness, cited the circumstances how they were forced to add this incident into the report of commission.

Mathematics along with five others from sister communities. This was the turning point in the history of Mappila girls' college education in Malabar. At that time, Farook College was the only one college of Muslims in Malabar area. However, Malabar witnessed sea changes in the field of higher education especially in female education. Due to the lack of comprehensive research materials, one has to prove the profundity of these changes on the basis of available sample studies. Here, we seek to analyze the performance of Muslim girls in two famous colleges in Malappuram and Kannur districts of Malabar region.

### **Profile of the Districts**

The two districts have their own peculiarities, both social and cultural. Malappuram is the Muslim dominated and highly populated district in Kerala. Where, Muslims make 67.37 per cent of total population. Hindus constitute 30.28 per cent and Christian make 2.33 per cent of total population of the district. It was established in 1969 by adding some part of Calicut and Palakkad districts, after the constant demand from political quarters especially on the part of Muslim League. It consists of an area of 3550 square kilometres. According to 2001-census report, the total population of district is 3,629,640 and the sex ratio of general population is 1063 female for 1000 male. Nevertheless, the sex ratio of child population is 979 female for 1000 male. The total literacy rate of the district is 88.61, having 91.46 and 85.96 for male and female respectively.

In contrast to Malappuram, Kannur is a Hindu dominated district in the northern part of Malabar. The district was formed in 1957. The total size of the district is 2966 sq km. According to census report of 2001, the total population of the district is 2,412,365. In Kannur district, Hindus constitute 62.94 per cent of total population. Where, Muslims make 26.27 per cent and Christians make 10.27 per cent of total population of the district. The sex ratio of general population is 1090 for 1000 male and the ratio of child population is 956 for 1000 male. The total literacy rate of district is 92.8, making 96.38 and 89.51 for both male and female respectively.



### **Profile of the Colleges**

**Sir Syed College:** The Canannore District Muslim Educational Association (Regd) established Sir Syed College in 1967. Muslims in Kannur and Kasargod districts and Mananthavadi Taluk of the erstwhile Kannur district were educationally backward, and the college was established in Taliparamba mainly to cater to the educational needs of Muslims of this region. The college is named after Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to perpetuate the memory of this great leader, who was the pioneer of Muslim educational movement in India.

The college was begun as a junior college in 1967 under the University of Kerala. After the establishment of new Universities in Kerala, the college came under the University of Calicut in 1968 and under the Kannur University in 1996. This college has completed 36 years of its glorious existence. Now it is a premier institution under Kannur University. The college has established its name through the excellent performance and service to the community in particular and the society and nation at large. The college has its own hostels for girls and boys and all are opened to students of all castes and creeds. Ultimately, the college is secular in spirit and cosmopolitan in out look.<sup>110</sup>

In graduate level, the college offers BA in Arabic, English (Functional), Hindi, Malayalam, Urdu, Political Science, Economics, History and B.Com. In Science subjects, the college offers B.Sc in Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Statistics, Zoology, Botany, Forestry & wood technology and Bio- technology. In postgraduate level, the College offers M.Com and M.Sc in Chemistry, Botany and Physics. Apart from these courses, the College offers P.G Diploma Courses like PGDCA and PGDCE under Continuing Education Centre of Kannur University (CECKU). A number of scholarships are awarded to students every year by various agencies.

The college has a good library; UGC aided career guidance centre for minorities and a counselling centre. By giving opportunities to participate in extra curricular activities like NCC and NSS, the College pays attention for the all round development of students. The total strength of teaching staffs in the college is 79, which comprises 14 Muslim female

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<sup>110</sup> Brochure of Sir Syed College, 2004-05.

teachers, and the strength of non-teaching staff is 67 out of which one is Muslim female. The total number of students in the college in 2004-05 is 1428 and the number of Muslim girls is 608.

Table: 13 Progress of Muslims girls in Sir Syed College 1967-68 to 2003-04<sup>111</sup>

Year	Total students	Muslim girls admitted to college			Total No of Muslim girls	Percentage of Muslim girls	Growth rate.
		PDC	Degree	PG			
1967-68	320	1	-	-	1	0.3	100
1971-72	1204	10	4	-	14	1.7	1400
1975-76	1342	14	3	-	17	1.7	121.42
1979-80	2020	29	9	-	38	2.0	223.52
1983-84	2570	72	24	-	96	3.7	252.63
1987-88	2666	112	45	4	161	6.03	167.70
1991-92	2716	207	90	3	300	11.04	186.33
1995-96	2799	260	149	10	419	15.0	139.66
1999-00	2557	302	292	17	611	24.0	145.82
2003-04	1432	*	586	22	608	42.45	99.50

\*Pre Degree delinked from college in 2000.

The college had admitted the first girl student from Muslim community in its starting year. At that time, the number of total students was 339. One among them was a Muslim girl, who joined pre-degree.<sup>112</sup> There were no girls from Muslim community in degree courses. After one decade, during the period of 1979-80, their number did not increase much. From the table, it is very clear that the number is below forty. This indicates the reluctance of the Muslim community towards female higher education.

The social factor was crucial in the progress of women's education. Early marriage was common among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar. As part of an ethnical group, Muslims in Kannur also practiced it. However, the average year of marriage was between 12 and 14 even in pre-Independence era. After independence, the situation changed rapidly in north Malabar than south Malabar. Here, the inter relationship of community with more

<sup>111</sup> Students' Statistics of Sir Syed College.

<sup>112</sup> In Kerala, students, who passed 10th standard in school was joining in college for pre degree courses for two years; it was equal to higher secondary education. In 2000, the Government finally decided to de-link PDC from colleges.

developed and progressive communities like Christians and Hindus has helped at a very large extent to alter their attitude. This factor has contributed much to the performance of Muslim girls in Kannur in total and Sir Syed College in particular.

**MES College Mampad:** Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Memorial MES College is situated in Mampad, a village in Malappuram. The district owes much to this stalwart institution for the educational, social and cultural enlightenment of its people, irrespective of caste, creed and other social barriers. The college offers the choicest courses both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in Arts, Science, Commerce and modern job oriented subjects. The Eranad Educational Association started the College in 1965. Later, the more capable Muslim Educational Society adopted it in 1969. It is affiliated to the University of Calicut.

The College was upgraded in 1970 with degree courses in Economics, Commerce and Zoology. Later, new degree courses were introduced in Arabic & Islamic history, Chemistry, Food technology, Physics with Computer Application, English with Journalism and Public Relations and History. Postgraduate courses were introduced in Zoology in 1978, Arabic (1980), Mathematics (1981), Economics (1984), Chemistry (1993) and Commerce (1999) and offers certificate and diploma courses in computer sciences. Many scholarships are awarded for eligible students in every year by various agencies.

The college has a library, UGC aided coaching centre for minorities and Career Guidance Bureau. By giving opportunities to participate in extra curricular activities like NCC and NSS, the College pays attention for the all round development of students. The College provides separate hostel facilities for men and women irrespective of caste and creed. The total strength of the students in 2004-05 academic year is 1379 out of which 426 students are Muslim females. Now, there are 70 teaching staff out of which eight teachers are Muslim females, and 57 non-teaching staffs out of which 16 are Muslim females.

The college has already recorded remarkable progress and achievements in its aims and objectives including general uplift of the socially and educationally backward classes,

with special focus on Muslims. It shows light to a large section of society in and around the locality, which is largely inhabited by the minority groups, tribals and scheduled castes.<sup>113</sup>

Table: 14 Progress of Muslim girls in MES College 1965-66 to 2003-04<sup>114</sup>

Year	Total boys	Total girls	Muslim girls	Grant total	Percentage of Muslim girls	Growth rate of Muslim girls
1965-66	257	12	4	269	1.48	100
1969-70	341	60	12	401	2.99	300
1975-76	701	222	41	923	4.44	341.66
1978-79	975	321	101	1296	7.79	246.34
1985-86	1387	624	352	2011	17.50	348.51
1990-91	1552	764	443	2316	19.12	125.85
1995-96	1190	843	445	2033	21.88	100.45
1999-00	905	865	452	1770	25.53	101.51
2003-04	743	555	339	1298	26.11	75

According to the table, the progress of Muslim girls right from the establishment of college until 2004 is gradual and steady. In every year, a substantial number of students have been joining in the college for various studies. Before 2000, most of the students joined the college for pre-degree courses. They used to join and leave the college before or after the completion of the courses. However, since the late 1980s trend has been undergoing a rapid change. As per the data, the proportion of Muslim girls in the year of the establishment is only 1.48 per cent. Now the proportion of Muslim girl students has gone upto 26.11 per cent of total students.

During the four decades of its existence, the college has witnessed various kinds of development in the field of education. In the initial stage, the college could not attract more female students from the community and their presence was nominal as compared

<sup>113</sup> Brochure of Dr. Ghafoor Memorial MES Mampad College, 2004-05.

<sup>114</sup> Statistics of Students, MES College Mampad.

to their counterparts in other religions. In spite of many favorable factors for the improvement of girls' education in this locality including reform movements, the area remained backward for a long time. Prejudice and conservatism dominated both public and private spheres. Girls' education was unnecessary thing for them in the sense that it will bring disgrace of the society upon her and family. Although they were firm on their stand for decades, the changes that have been taking place in the society forced them to accept the challenges of modern world. Eventually, they have been changing their attitude towards female education and want to give better education to their new generation.

Table: 15 Variations of progress in Sir Syed and MES colleges since 1965 to 2004.<sup>115</sup>

Year	MES		Sir Syed		Difference in numbers
	No of Muslim girls	Growth rate	No of Muslim girls	Growth rate.	
1965-66	4	100	*	*	*
1969-70	12	300	5	125	7
1975-76	41	341.66	17	340	24
1978-79	101	246.34	29	170.58	72
1985-86	352	348.51	106	365.5	246
1990-91	443	125.85	230	216.98	213
1995-96	445	100.45	419	182.17	26
1999-00	452	101.51	611	145.8	109
2003-04	339	75	608	99.50	269

The above data from two colleges shows the growing tendency among Mappila women to get higher education. The temptation for getting higher education is steadily increasing among the Mappila women in last few decades. The two colleges situate in two different socio-cultural atmospheres. Even though both are Muslim colleges, their environment is quite different from other. MES College is located in Muslim dominated Malappuram district and Sir Syed College is located in Hindu dominated Kannur district. According to data, both colleges have admitted girls since its establishment. Although the initial growth of girls in both colleges was almost the same, Mampad College had a slight edge over the Taliparamba College.

<sup>115</sup> Students' statistics of MES and Sir Syed colleges.

There was reason for the initial difference of both colleges. As far as MES College is concerned, it situated in the middle of reform movements. Mampad and its suburban areas had witnessed more reformist efforts than Taliparamba. Mampad is quite near to Edavanna, where the reformist leader KM Maulavi declared that education should be given to both male and female. In contrast to Mampad, Taliparamba was the stronghold of conservatism and superstitions.

The highest growth rates in both colleges are observed during the periods of 1978-79 and 1985-86. Then, the growth rate in both colleges is almost similar and the highest ever seen. After 1985-86 period we can see that the growth of Mampad College is slow than that of Sir Syed. Since 1985, the Sir Syed reduces the difference by increasing the number of students. The increase in the number of students in Mampad is 91 in 1990-91, 2 in 1995-96 and 7 in 1999. In Sir Syed, it is 124, 189 and 192 respectively. There could be seen a decrease in the number of students during the academic year of 2003-04. The de-linking of pre-degree from the colleges accounts for this decrease. However, Sir Syed College maintained its status quo even after the de-linking of pre-degree. The number of students in the period of 2003-04 indicates the growing trend among Muslim females to higher-level education.

The migration plays a crucial role, as equal to any other factors, in orienting the attitude of community towards education. Since 1980s, the alarming unemployment among the youth forces them to find out job outside the state. The prevailing situation exerts pressure on them to migrate to Middle East Countries mainly Arab Gulf countries. In the beginning, the majority of the migrants were unskilled labors. They got low class jobs, but the salary was adequate for better livelihood. The mingling with educated people from various countries has created a new awareness in them regarding the importance of education. A kind of concern began to emerge about their future and the future of new generation. Eventually, the self-created concern compelled them to impart better education to their children and create better opportunities for them. The influence of migration on higher education would be apparent in the Malabar region since 1990s.

## II-SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVISM AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT

### **Role of Organizations and Institutions**

The progressive socio-religious movement and the initiatives of successive governments could bring desirable attitudinal changes in the community and triggered off a process of educational expansion in the region. This process has been accelerated since independence by several facilitating factors such as strong political processes and inflow of remittances from Gulf migrants. However, in some places educational progress had remained insignificant due to religious orthodoxy and hatred of both secular and female education. This chapter tries to explain the role of political, social and religious organizations and the role of individuals and the institutions.

### **Muslim League**

The establishment of Muslim League was very significant in the history of Malabar. K.M. Seeti Sahib, who was a lawyer in Eranakulam and a leader of Muslim Aikya Sangham, was one of the founding leaders of Muslim League. Earlier, he was a congress leader and became member of Cochin assembly in 1928 and 1931. In 1932, he shifted practice from Eranakulam to Telicheri. While in Telicheri, he played a significant role in forming 'Muslim Club' for the benefit of Muslim community. For this purpose, they started a weekly called 'Chandrika'. Later, it became a newspaper and mouthpiece of Muslim League.

In 1934, Seeti Sahib, along with some influential Muslim personalities, officially shifted his loyalty from Congress to Muslim League. Before that, Muslim League had nominal presence in Malabar. He became a full time active worker of the party and strived to make it popular in the region. A unit of Muslim League was formally established in the Malabar district in 1939. Since then, it had been deepening its root in the community especially in the northern part of Kerala. The attitude of Congress towards the victims of 1921 Malabar rebellion created disillusion among the Muslims. These circumstances helped the League largely for extending its support among the Malabar Muslims. The

party lent its helping hand to them and took patronage of orphans. League leaders like Seeti sahib and M.K. Haji took initiative to establish orphanages in worst affected areas.

In the beginning, a large number well known leaders of the party in Malabar area were educationalists and reformers. Having dreamed the renaissance of the community, these leaders had been working for educational reforms along with their political activities. These leaders were Mahin Chemnad, Mahamood Chemanad, K.M. Maulavi, M.K. Haji, A.K. Kunhi Mahin Haji and K.M. Seethi Sahib.

Popular among them was Seethi Sahib, whose fame spread not only in Kerala but also outside Kerala. He was a philanthropic activist throughout his life. In fact, he had utilized the party platform for this purpose. He tried his best to establish a Government high school at Malappuram for the eradication of backwardness among the community especially in Eranad and Valluvanad Taluk. As a result of his efforts, a Government Girls high school was established at Vettom, Puthiyangadi. It has been playing a significant role by producing educated women among the community. In addition, he had closely associated with establishment of Government Girls High School, Himayathul Islam High School and M.M. High School Parappil in Calicut. He had played a vital role in the establishment of Mubarak High School at Telicheri. His plan was to make it a Girls high school, but the opposition from the orthodoxy forced him to give up. He was the frontrunner of the 'Hussankasam Dada Trust', founded for providing scholarships for students from poor family backgrounds in Telicheri Taluk and Edakkad.

Seethi Sahib had forced pressure on Madras Government to upgrade Brennen College as a degree college from inter mediate college. For Seethi Sahib, it was a necessary for the uplift of educational activities in north Malabar. He was the guide and helper in establishing many educational institutions in the Malabar area such as Farook training college, Tirur polytechnic and Taliparamba High school. In 1921, when Diwan offered him a higher post in educational department to work for eliminating the backwardness of Muslim community in Cochin state, his reply was that "I am sad; I like to be free and to work for the community."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> T.M. Savan Kutty., *Seethi Sahib*, Kerala books and publications, Kakkanad, Cochin, 1992, P. 92.



After the partition of country in 1947, there was some uncertainty about the existence of Muslim League as a political party. At that juncture, Seethi Sahib, along with Muhammed Ismayil Sahib, played a significant role in the historic conference in March 1948 in Madras. He and other prominent leaders formulated the objectives and programs of the Indian Union Muslim League, which came into existence as a full-fledged political party in 1951. Ever since its establishment, the League has been a crucial force in Kerala politics. It has been the part and parcel of many coalition Governments in Kerala so far. It handled many high portfolios in all Governments, in which it has been part of it. In 1979, CH Muhammed Koya had become the chief minister of Kerala, even though its ministry did not last long. Ever since 1967, when the eminent leader and educationalist CH Muhammed Koya was inducted as an education minister in the ministry of EM Shankaran Nambutiripad, the League has contributed six education ministers and has held the post for more than 21 years so far. During the long period, the party has paid due attention for the all round development in the field of education. As far as female education is concerned, the party had taken initiatives to provide scholarship for Muslim and Nadar girls to attract them to school. In order to attract Muslim students especially girl students to schools in Malabar area, Arabic was introduced in schools and colleges. By stressing the importance of Arabic language in its first manifesto, party had proved its commitment to the community. When it came to power, a law was promulgated to protect the language. The achievements of the party include the legal sanction on the salary of Arabic teachers appointed in schools and Arabic colleges.<sup>117</sup> In order to protect the right of Muslims to study Arabic language, the party had given three martyrs on 30 June 1980 at Malappuram.

The old circulars and records of the party speak that it had strived much for keeping the political interest of Muslim community alive. The party had initiated scholarship programmes and established many libraries and reading halls in Muslim populated areas.<sup>118</sup> The achievements of the party after independence are:

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<sup>117</sup> P. Muhammed Kuttesseri., *Flourish of Arabic Language and Muslim League*, Muslim League state conference souvenir, 1984. P. 65.

<sup>118</sup> Raheem Mechery., *Muslim League and Kerala Politics*. Prabodhanam Special Pathippu (edition), 1998, P.91.

- The establishment of Calicut University in 1967
- Free and compulsory education for all up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard
- Direct salary for college teachers
- Recognition of Arabic teachers as language teachers
- Establishment of educational institutions especially primary and secondary in all educationally backward areas
- Encouragement of Muslim female education by sanctioning special scholar ships
- Allowing student representation in University senates
- Allotting new and more courses to institutions

In the field of Muslim education, the League has been contributing largely. The party had direct involvement in establishing many institutions from primary level to higher level. It has been more conscious to allow many courses in these colleges and other institutions during the tenure. Popular among them are Farook, MES Mampad, Sir Syed Taliparamba, PSMO Tirurangadi, and EMEA Kondotty and MES Valanchery colleges. Apart from these, it had taken initiative to establish many Arabic colleges and professional institutions across the region.

### **Islahi Movement**

The early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century had witnessed many kind of social reform movements among the Muslims of coastal region of southern Kerala. The insistence on modern education for men and women and demand for better facilities for education were the common features of the all the reform movements.<sup>119</sup> On the part of Muslims, the first attempt to organize the community was the formation of 'Muslim Aikya Sangham' (organization for Muslim unity) in 1922 at Kodungalure, and then the Kerala Jami'atul-Ulama in 1924. This was the beginning of organized efforts to educate people and to spread the message of reform. These concerted efforts helped to spread the spirit of reform among the Mappilas<sup>120</sup>.

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<sup>119</sup> M. Gangadharan., *Emergence of the Muslim League in Kerala- An Historical Enquiry*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer., *Op ct*, P. 210.

<sup>120</sup> E. K. Ahamed Kutty., *Islam and Social Reform Movements in Kerala*, Calicut, 1982, P. 10.

The Mujahid movement took its organizational shape in 1950, When the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen (KNM.) a parent body of KJU, ISM, MSM and MGM (Mujahid Girls Movement.) was set up by prominent scholars like KM Maulavi, MCC Abdurrahman Maulavi and others. They had a close link with Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham. The main objective of the movement is to propagate true Islam and introduce its purity to others through serene means. They are cognizant to fight against all superstitions and misbelieve by emphasizing the 'oneness of God'.

Having drawn instances from the words of prophet Mohamed who had supported people who seek knowledge even from distant destinations, the leaders of the Mujahid movement counselled people to attend schools in 1940s. They exhorted people to seek education to read the Quran in their mother tongue. The ultimate goal of the organization is the harmonious integration of both secular and religious education. It lays special stress on the education of women. When the movement was in a tender stage, Muslims had not much madrasas, Arabic colleges and similar institutions for religious education.

In such a situation, the primary aim of the organization was to propagate the importance of both secular and religious educations among the masses. On the initiative of the movement, they established many primary schools, high schools and Madrasas. By 1950, visible changes were noticed in those places where the Mujahid had some influence. Motivated by its call, boys and girls started attending schools in large numbers and many of the Muslim youth went to colleges and universities for acquiring modern education.<sup>121</sup>

The objective of the movement to impart modern education for girls was sharply criticized by the orthodox Muslim scholars. The ignorant people were suspicious about modern education and its promoters and they refused to send their daughters to schools. The leaders of the movement revised the old system of Islamic education and modified it in modern and scientific lines. In 1960, the first Muslim Women's Conference was held at Edavanna. The meet, among other things, stressed the necessity of girls' education. K M Maulavi, a respected religious scholar and reformer released a decree that emphasized

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<sup>121</sup>E.K. Ahmad Kutty., *The Mujahid Movement And Its Role In The Islamic Revival In Kerala*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer., *Op ct*, P. 73.

the need of ceaseless efforts to make education of women permissible in the community.<sup>122</sup>

Under the supervision of KNM, there are 500 madrasas and 27 Arabic colleges to provide better and scientific education in Arabic and Islamic studies for boys and girls. Among these, the Government of Kerala recognizes six colleges including one woman's college. Approximately more than half of the total students in madrasas are girls and they outnumber boys in Arabic colleges too. For managing madrasas, they have constituted an 'Education Board'. The responsibilities of Board are preparing curriculum and syllable, compiling textbooks in modern and scientific method of education, conducting examinations and providing necessary instructions and directions.

The student wing of KNM (started in 1967) has been undertaking several welfare activities for the weaker sections of the community. Other programmes include coaching classes for students appearing in Medical and Engineering tests. The KNM also gives awards to Muslim girls who secure ranks in various examinations and provides scholarships for poor and needy students.<sup>123</sup> For these activities, it gets funds from several sources including foreign countries. An Education Finance Fund was formed in August 1997 for helping poor students.

### **Muslim Educational Society (MES)**

A group of young intellectuals from Muslim community in 1964 sat together for contemplating on the solution of Muslim community's problems at Calicut. They deeply explored all possibilities to chalk out a permanent and stable solution. Their thoughts and efforts were consolidated when they decided to form an educational society: 'Muslim Educational Society'. It is popularly known as MES. The founders of the movement, led by Dr. PK Abdul Ghafoor a professor of medicine, were professional men who had personally experienced the benefit of secular education.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Mujahid Girls Movement Souvenir, Edavanna, 1995., P. 87.

<sup>123</sup> Mujahid State Conference Souvenir, Palakkad, 1992., P.115.

<sup>124</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 211.

The motivation behind the formation of society was their love for community and its uplift in all fields like others. They wished to share their experience with mass. By doing so, they thought that it would help to stimulate the feelings of community in the right direction. The distinct qualities of the Society were its disinterest in politics and dissatisfaction to interfere in religious disputes. Thus, the organization got warm acceptance from all quarters. Financial supports were quickly accommodating for its social and philanthropic efforts from inside and outside Kerala.

Focusing on the youth, the society established a student wing and youth hostel. Their first aim was to help needy students from poor family to get better education. The objective of society was clear in the words of Dr: Ghafoor “What the MES was interested in was the amelioration of the educational, social and economic needs of the poorer section of Muslim society.”<sup>125</sup> Further, the MES wanted to create revolution in the mind of people and exhorted the youth to create a good communication with community and to make them better. The Society asserted the fact that no community could keep pace with new world unless it has attained salvation from superstitions, malpractices and injustices that barred its road to progress. The society resolutely declared that there is nothing to make a man noble being but education.

Arguing firmly for the uplift of Mappila women, who are lying in “ignorance, darkness and disease”, Dr: Ghafoor blatantly condemned the efforts, which were made by some quarters to separate the male and female education. Those evil forces had tried to put the responsibility of their futile attempt on the shoulder of Islam. The society, through its ‘MES Journal’ poured criticism on those who let the Mappila women engage with men in the field and beggars on the street while hesitating to allow them to work with men in an office or study with them in a college. A women wing of the organization was constituted for the eradication of illiteracy among the Mappila women and for the spreading of education and the uplifting of their status in the society. For that purpose, MES Women’s College at Calicut was established under the management of Ladies wing. It also maintains Hostels for working women at Calicut and Tirur College.

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<sup>125</sup> The Hindu, April 15, 1972 quoted by Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 219.

In 1967, it opened first college at Mannarghat. In 1969, foundation stone for its first hospital was laid. It was obviously the beginning of a series of development in the fields of education and health service in subsequent years. Both better education and good health service are crucial fields as far as any society is concerned. Now it is the leading society with more than 7000 members, several units not only in Kerala but also in other states and countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. The society runs 15 hospitals, and seven Arts and science colleges that offer many courses. Along with these, there is one medical college, one engineering college, three orphanages, many cultural centers, hostels and technical institutions. Moreover, MES is the big distributor of educational scholarship for the needy students of the community. It gives some special scholarship for professional students. The total amount of scholarship is approximately one million rupees in a year. By establishing these institutions, hospitals and other such ventures the MES provide employment for hundreds, most of them are from Muslim community. The youth wing of the MES concentrates to convince the youth the importance of education and its prospects in the welfare of community and society as a whole. The youth wing conducts seminars and campaigns for the fulfilment of the ultimate aim. It had started a journal called 'MES Journal' in 1969 and it continued till 1986.

### **Farook College**

Wherever an educational reform had taken place, an institution would have played a major role. In fact, the similar experience can be seen in the establishment of Farook College and the educational development of Malabar. One of the founding leaders of the college KM Seethi Sahib remembers that "The establishment of a college in Kerala on the line of the old MAO College, Aligarh, which is now the Aligarh Muslim University, has been the aim and ambition of the leaders of the Muslim community for a quarter century."<sup>126</sup> The leaders of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham gave all possible help for the establishment of Farook College.

In 1942, an Arabic college was founded at Farook near Calicut. Abussabah Ahmad Ali, a scholar studied in Al Azhar University, Cairo came back to Malabar to educate

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<sup>126</sup> T.M, Savan Kutty., *Op ct*, P. 94.

indigenous people as he was inspired by Moulana Muhammed Ali Jouhar. He was the founder father of Farook College. He took initiative to constitute an association called Rouzatul Uloom Association. The association aimed to establish an Arts college. The liberal policy of University of Madras too gave an appropriate environment to establish a Muslim college.

It was the cherished ambition of the Abussabah and other Muslim leaders like Seethi Sahib. They filed an application in the University of Madras for the opening of the college. Leaders like Muhammed Ismail Sahib urged the people to extend all possible help. Over coming initial hindrances, the college came into being on August 12 1948 with four students in junior BA, 28 students in junior intermediate and five faculty members. Now the campus comprises one Arabic college, higher secondary school, English medium higher secondary school, Lower primary school, B.Ed College and an Educational centre. Besides, a Health centre works for students and staffs. Now the college has started a coaching centre for civil service aspirants. It has a good library too. Now the campus is popularly known as the 'South Indian Aligarh' and its fame has been reaching everywhere. A managing committee under the Rouzatul Uloom Association runs the college. Originally, the college was affiliated to University of Madras; it came under the University of Kerala following the state reorganization in 1957. Since 1968, it has been under the University of Calicut.

The founders of the college desired to make it a residential institute because of the unpredictable benefit of such model. Unlike other institutions, the college offers accommodation for all students in its hostels. For providing hostel facilities, it maintains four men's hostels and three women's hostels. The institute offers various courses in Arts and Science subjects. In arts subjects, it offers graduate degrees in Malayalam, English, Arabic, Sociology and Economics and postgraduate degrees in English, Arabic, History, Economics and Library science. In science subjects, the college offers graduate degrees in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Statistics and Computer science and postgraduate degrees in Physics, Chemistry, Statistics, Mathematics and Zoology. Besides that, it provides B.com, BBS and M.com courses.

For a one decade after the establishment of college, only boys were admitted to the institution. However, first girl student was admitted in 1959. In the said year, there were five girls, out of whom one was a Muslim. The subsequent years has been witnessing the gradual improvement in the number of Muslim girl students for various disciplines. Roland Miller commends on the improvement “Over the years it grew steadily in physical facilities, staff and number of students, in 1992 enrolling about 2500 students, the majority of whom are Mappilas. In 1988 forty-two percent of the students were women.”<sup>127</sup> The college pays due attention to religious practices by giving prayer halls in hostels apart from college Masjid. By providing hostel for girls, the college is able to attract a large number of girl students. The parents are keen to send their daughters to such an institution. Now they outnumber the boys in almost all subjects. The latest students’ statistics reveals the trend. The table 16 shows the progress of Muslim girls in various disciplines during the periods of 1999-2005.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Roland E Miller., *Op ct*, P. 208.

<sup>128</sup> Statistics of students, Farook College, 1999-2005.



course	1999-2000				2001-02				2003-04				2004-05			
	Muslim		Total	% of Muslim girls	Muslim		Total students	% of Muslim girls	Muslim		Total	% of Muslim girls	Muslim		Total	% of Muslim girls
	M	W			M	W			M	W			M	W		
BA	121	150	434	34.56	145	194	507	38.3	151	239	619	38.6	151	260	645	40.3
B.Sc	114	201	512	39.25	123	304	635	47.9	169	322	742	43.4	188	337	757	44.5
B.Com	75	34	169	20.11	73	50	178	28.1	67	61	177	34.5	75	48	175	27.4
BBA	17	21	62	33.87	31	22	87	25.3	48	28	117	24	48	31	120	25.8
MA	37	43	133	32.33	32	45	127	35.4	41	59	134	44	44	62	136	45.6
M.Sc	20	41	131	31.29	17	58	141	41.1	15	69	145	47.6	15	79	150	52.7
M.Com	4	10	35	28.57	9	12	39	30.8	13	8	39	20.5	13	12	39	30.8
BLI.Sc	1	4	10	40	2	4	9	44.4	4	3	14	21.4	2	10	19	52.6
Total	389	504	1486	33.91	432	689	1723	40	508	789	1987	40	536	839	2041	41.1

Table: 16 Progress of Muslim girls in Farook College 1999-2000 to 2004-05

The table reveals the truth that the women of Malabar is all set to overcome their brothers in the field of higher education in near future. Students' statistics of the last few years is the clear evidence of the fact. According to the table, a tendency that we can see in Muslim girl students in the college is nothing but an ardent desire to get knowledge in all most all subjects. It is a good thing that they are keen to get a chance in science subjects than arts. They are not much in favor of Commerce. There may be some special kind of reason for their apathy towards it. The calm and serene atmosphere may be playing a crucial role in attracting students into the campus. The role of Farook College in spreading education among the Mappila women is indispensable and undisputable.

### **Role of the Individual**

As far as the educational development of Muslim women is concerned, the role of individuals cannot be neglected. The qualitative leadership given by the eminent scholars and political stalwarts had a crucial impact in the educational development of Kerala Muslims. Ironically, in other states Muslims failed to follow the guidance given by leaders, "The actual problem besetting Muslims is not the lack of leadership but the failure to follow the right leadership. Many leaders capable of giving sound guidance have been born among Muslims, but the community has ignored their words of wisdom."<sup>129</sup> There are many Individuals, who had played an important role in promoting education among the people of Malabar. Eminent leaders like KM Seethi Sahib, KM Maulavi, Vakkam Abdul Khader Maulavi, Abussabah Ahmed Ali, and many others should be remembered. Here, we focus our work on only one person, CH Muhammed Koya, who has been the fountain of inspiration for the Muslim youth in Kerala.

### **CH Muhammed Koya**

As far as the educational attainments of Muslims of Malabar are concerned, CH Muhammed Koya is the torchbearer of all attainments. He was born into a poor family at 'Atholi', a remote village adjacent to Calicut on July 15 1927. His father was a religious teacher as well as a Unani Physician. He was the elder child in his family and had one brother and sister. At first, he was sent to Othupalli. It was a time, when the importance of Othupallis was steadily diminishing by the decision of Government to give religious

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<sup>129</sup> Maulana Wahiduddin Khan., *Indian Muslims, The Need For A Positive Outlook*, P. 57.

education in schools. In 1933, he was officially admitted to elementary school at Kongannur for one year. After that, he joined Mappila elementary school at Velur.

In elementary school, he was the disciple of Easa Kutty Master, who was the philosopher guide of CH in his childhood days. He used to give newspapers and periodicals to students to read. After elementary education, he joined Government high school Koyilandi, where he started his political affiliation to Muslim League by joining MSF (Muslim Students Federation), a student outfit of the party. After that, he joined Zamorin College at Calicut for intermediate in 1943. Syed Abdurrahman Bafaki Thangal extended all help to his further studies. While he was a college student, he was the correspondent of famous English news daily *Dawn*, which was the mouthpiece of Muslim League. When Chandrika began publishing from Calicut, he was the sub editor and later he became the chief editor. While he was an editor of Chandrika, he had written many articles and editorials to urge the people to come forward and to get the benefit of education.

After the formation of Kerala state in 1956, many Governments were formed. CH Muhammed Koya became a full time political activist as well as a social worker. He had a vision to solve the problems of the community. When he was inducted as the minister of education in Kerala in 1967, he got an opportunity to work for the realization of his vision. The first thing he did in the office was to put sign on the order that gives back the recognition of the Madrasatul Islamiya UP School at Kuttiyadi.<sup>130</sup>

Since 1967 to 1983, he continued as the minister of education in Kerala for eight years in different governments. He had a say over education ministers, whether he was part of Government or in opposition. He had helped the ministers to make efforts and implement them in time. The plight of Malabar was worse in the field of education than that of Tiru-Cochi state in the early periods. Even in Tiru-Cochi state, no college was under Muslim management upto 1954. Nevertheless, his tenure in office witnessed

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<sup>130</sup> Surendran Moorkanad., *Contribution of CH in the Field of Education*, Thulika Monthly, September 1992, P. 26.

immediate proliferation of all kinds of educational institutions in Kerala. His emergence as the minister of education of Kerala is the milestone in the history of Malabar.

During his tenure, he had taken a number of significant decisions related to education. The most important one among them was the creation of University of Calicut. Before 1968, there was no university other than University of Kerala. It was his cherished ambition to establish a university in Malabar area for the immediate access of educational needs in the region. Having faced opposition from some quarters, CH Muhammed Koya went ahead with his dream. A committee was constituted to explore the feasibility of a university. Finally, the committee had given its report to the Government on 28 July 1968. The report convinced the government of the need of establishing a University in Calicut. The UGC accepted the suggestions and as a result, the University of Calicut came into being in 1968. The establishment of the University has contributed much to the all round development of educational activities in the region. Besides, he had taken initiative to establish a law college at Calicut. Now 58 Arts and Science colleges, six B.Ed colleges, seventeen Engineering colleges, one Law College, two Medical colleges, one Dental college, seven Nursing colleges, five Ayurveda colleges, one Homio college and one Music & Fine Arts college are affiliated to University of Calicut. The establishment of Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) too was during his tenure.

A comparison between the year 1967 and 1983 (from CH Muhammed Koya was inducted as a Minister of Education of Kerala to his death) will show the all round development of education in the state. During the sixteen-year periods, CH had become minister of education for more than seven years. In the remaining years, he had considerably helped his successors like UA Beeran, Chakeeri Ahmed Kutty, TM Jacob and Baby John. The data reveals the sea change in the field of higher education in Kerala as a whole after he took the charge.

Table: 17 Progress of higher education in Kerala during the periods of 1967-83.<sup>131</sup>

	Basic Year	Number	Compared year	Number
Universities	1967	1	1983	5
Departments	1967	24	1983	66
Arts& Science colleges	1967	100	1983	172
Total No of students in colleges	1967	62,530	1983	2.6 lakh
No of students in Degree classes	1967	19,873	1983	98,231

The data clearly shows the rapid progress in the field of education during the aforementioned period. Merely within 16 years, the number of universities, departments, colleges and the number of students in colleges had unprecedentedly increased. He had given special consideration to the educational needs of Malabar region and tried his level best to bring it to the level of Travancore-Cochin areas. Before 1967, the number of colleges in Malabar was 21 it had gone up to 51 in 1983. In addition, the number of high schools was 298 in 1964 but in 1983, it was increased to 746.

Table: 18 Progress of education in Malabar during the periods of 1964-83.<sup>132</sup>

	Basic year	Number	Compared year	Number
No. of colleges	1964	21	1983	51
No. of students in colleges	1964	9869	1983	71,657
High schools	1964	298	1983	746
Students in high schools	1964	1,25,083	1983	4,48,203
Students in 10 <sup>th</sup> standard	1964	27,163	1983	1,06,851

<sup>131</sup> Dr. CA. Abdussalam., *Era of CH and the Field of Education (Malayalam)*, Chandrika Sunday Supplement, 21 May 1995.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

The regional disparity in the education was common in Kerala in the early decades. Malabar region was far behind the southern region of Kerala in the number of institutions and other related facilities. Prof. U Muhammed says, "A quick look at the historical background of the Malabar on the one hand and Travancore-Cochin areas on the other reveal that these regions had different 'case-histories' leading to the present situation."<sup>133</sup> CH Muhammed Koya intended to improve the level of primary and secondary education by allotting more schools in rural and urban areas throughout the state. His decision paved the way to diminish the regional disparity in school level. At present, the ratio of schools in primary level is one for 500 families and one school for a Panchayat in secondary level. To popularize the education, he had taken initiative to make education compulsory for all upto tenth standards. His initiative to make education free for all reduced the dropout rate especially among Muslims and other backward communities. Due to the measures taken by the Government, the number of students, teachers, and schools increased rapidly since 1967. By making education free for all, the total expenditure on education increased. The table given below shows the progress of education in primary and secondary schools during his tenure.

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<sup>133</sup> U. Muhammed., *Op cit*, P. 143.

Table: 19 Progress of education in Primary and Secondary schools during the tenure of CH Muhammed Koya<sup>134</sup>

	Basic year	Number	Compared year	Number
No of LP schools	1967	6842	1983	6940
No of UP schools	1967	2479	1983	2822
No of high schools	1967	1282	1983	2331
No of students	1967	44.52 lakh	1983	56.81 lakh
No of students Primary	1967	36.89 lakh	1983	43.16 lakh
No of students high school	1967	6.4 lakh	1983	13.42.lakh
No of students 10 <sup>th</sup> standard	1967	1.82 lakh	1983	3.57 lakh
No of boys passed SSLC	1967	49,281	1980	82,259
No of girls passed SSLC	1967	38,685	1980	89,520
Expenditure for a student in primary level	1967	65.07 Rs	1983	385.44 Rs
Expenditure for a student in secondary level	1967	143.07 Rs	1983	581.21 Rs
Expenditure for public education	1967	36.66 Cr	1983	250.68 Cr

The educational development of Malabar and Mappila community was the priority of CH Muhammed Koya throughout his life. He encouraged the community to impart better education. He strived hard to fulfil his great vision and uplift the status of community during his tenure. For changing the apathy and negative attitude of the community towards education, he appointed 'Muslim educational inspectors'. He guided his own

<sup>134</sup> Dr. CA Abdussalam., *Op ct.*

party workers especially youth and activists of students organization to convince the importance of education to the community. To attract the girls from Muslims and other backward communities to schools, he implemented special scholarships for the girls. When scholarships were introduced, the parents became enthusiastic to send their daughters to schools.

Table: 20 Educational Progress of Muslims during the tenure of CH Muhammed Koya.<sup>135</sup>

	Basic year	Number	Compared year	Number
Muslim colleges	1967	5	1983	15
Muslim students in colleges	1967	3,987	1983	25,214
Muslim students in degree classes	1968	1,329	1983	8,825
Muslim students in 10th standard	1968	15,109	1982	44,291

The data represents the gospel of his vision, who dreamed the progress of a society throughout his life. His aim was -at first and last- the rising of the Muslim community and their progress and prosperity in Kerala society. In his ceaseless fight against the negative attitude of Muslim community towards education, many prominent scholars and leaders from all quarters had helped him. As a result of their efforts, today the community has achieved a little progress in the field of education. The thirst of community to imbibe the modern education has been increasing day by day. Infact, he is the mentor of community.

## II-IMPACT OF WOMEN EDUCATION ON THE MAPPILA Muslim CULTURE

### Status of Women in the Society

The Kerala women do keep comparatively higher status than their counterparts do elsewhere in India in terms of literacy, sex ratio, and health. Unlike other states, certain

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.



specific sociological factors have played and have been playing crucial role in making a distinctive society in Kerala. Those are linguistic homogeneity, common myth of origin and collective memory, co-existence of three major religious groups Hindus, Muslims and Christians in a balanced numerical size and socio-economic standing.

As far as the status of Muslim women in Malabar region is concerned, the unchallenged supremacy of conservatives and patriarchy denied them educational, political and economic participation for decades. Organization like Samastha Kerala Jam-Iyyatul Ulama came openly, many times, against the public participation of Muslim women in Kerala. Earlier, dowry, improper divorce, polygamy and other social evils had played its role to give them a subordinate position in the region. However, they are subjected to sea changes recently.

A kind of consciousness about the necessity of women education and economic self-sufficiency has been growing among the community. The sweeping changes in the society mounted pressure on the community to reconsider their attitude towards female education and their public appearance. In the present scenario, parents have keen interest to send their daughters to not only schools but also higher institutions including professional colleges. Now the presence of Muslim girls in Arts and science subjects in both degree and postgraduate level, Engineering, Medicine and even in Commercial subjects is common in Kerala.

It will be noteworthy to remember the role of Mass Literacy Campaign (MLC.) 1991, organized by the Government of Kerala in motivating the importance of female education among the community. The main objective of the programme was to eradicate the illiteracy of adults from Kerala society. The wide spread involvement of educated people in teaching the uneducated on a certain way enhanced the prospectus of the programme. The slogan of campaign was 'Each One Teach Two'. Camps were started all over Kerala to teach the illiterates the basic lessons of Malayalam language.

Among the targeted 364,000 illiterate people between 5-60 age limit, approximately the two third was from Muslim community. The Muslim dominated Malappuram district was

the biggest beneficiary of the campaign and the successful district in the state in terms of its implementation. As symbolic result of the effort was expressed through the first words recorded by a newly literate Mappila woman named Nafeesa, who inscribed the following message on her slate: "Nafeesa's India."<sup>136</sup>

Educational progress has certainly strengthened the empowerment of Muslim women. They are now free to take up jobs in government and private sectors. The Muslim female teachers and doctors are common in the region today. Now the women of the community enjoy freedom in family affairs, social activities and politics too.

By the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, the Central Government ensured the political participation of women in three-tier Panchayat system. In March 1994, Kerala Government introduced the Panchayat Raj Bill in the state Assembly. The de-centralization of power enhanced the responsibilities of Panchayat in the developmental activities. Today, many Muslim women hold responsible positions in Grama Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Zila Parishads. According to the official information, the percent wise distribution of Block Panchayat presidents among the women of three major religions, Hindu, Muslim and Christian are 63.15, 19.29 and 17.64 respectively in 2000. In Grama Panchayats, the proportion of female presidents of Muslim community was 12.81.

The Bill exerted pressure on political parties and communities to reconsider their concepts about the participation of women in public. It is notable that the orthodox Muslim community, who could not imagine a woman going out for shopping ten years ago, now came out openly for their participation in public. Many of the scholars argued that women's active participation in politics is in no way a deviation from the tenets of Islam. Even in Malappuram, two of the five municipalities and six out of 14 Block Panchayats have Muslim women presidents.<sup>137</sup> The last decade had witnessed the emergence of capable women leaders among the community. Prominent among them are the former president of Malappuram district Panchayat, Adv. KP Mariyumma, Minu Mumtaz, Noorbina Rasheed, the present chairperson of Malappuram municipality, CH Jameela and the Block Panchayat president of Malappuram, TV Sulaikhabi. Besides,

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<sup>136</sup> Roland E Miller, *op ct*, P.321.

<sup>137</sup> K.P.M. Basheer., *Muslim Women Prove their Mettle in Local Bodies*, The Hindu, 03 July 2001.

other districts of Malabar too have many educated Muslim women holding high posts in Panchayats.

Though women like Ayishabai and Nafeesath Beevi were elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1956 and 1960 from the southern part of Kerala, the substantial influence of conservative scholars on parties like Muslim League has been an obstacle before Malabar Muslim women to be elected from the region. The League has a considerable mass base among the Muslims particularly in Malabar. According to the conservative Sunni sect, women should not be allowed to participate in public activities along with male. However, for the first time, Qamarunnisa Anwar, a Mappila woman (she is the State President of Muslim Vanitha (women) League and was the Chairperson of State Social Welfare Board), contested to Kerala assembly from Calicut II constituency under the banner of Muslim League, but lost for a narrow margin in 1996.

Moreover, the presence of Muslim women's religious organizations in the region is a significant factor for improving their status in the society. Their tireless efforts to make the Mappila women aware of the importance of education played a vital role in the participation of Muslim women in various developmental activities. The reformist and progressive religious organizations like Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen and Jama'ate Islami al Hind have their own women's wing to work among the women. Those are Mujahid Girls Movement (MGM.) and Girls Islamic Organization (GIO.).

#### **Attitudinal Changes in the Community**

The intensity of religious devotion is a characteristic of the people of Kerala in general and Mappila Muslims of Malabar in particular. Unlike the other Muslims elsewhere in India, the Mappila community responds to the challenges of the new age. The influence of modern education brought changes in the attitude of the community. Today, Muslim women regularly attend schools and colleges, become teachers and doctors, occupy government jobs and participate in social works and politics.

The plight of women was very miserable in early periods even after independence. They were discouraged from attending schools. The rigidly defined traditional gender norms

denied the girls even a little of education. Girls were sent to Othupallis in the morning. The orthodoxy perceived female education as an unwanted concept that brings disgrace upon the family and raised these questions: what is the use of her schooling? She has to look after a house; she has to be married after some years; it is difficult to get husbands for educated girls. Instead of spending long hours at school, she can do some useful work at home. In the earlier period, the conservative sections did not even allow their daughters to marry teachers of secular schools.

When Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji planned to establish a separate madrasa for girls, the conservative priests vehemently opposed and forced him to leave Vazhakkad, where he implemented his innovative ideas. As we mentioned before, in 1930, the leading conservative religious organization of Mappilas Samastha Kerala Jam-Iyyatul Muallimeen passed a resolution, which compared female education to consumption of liquor. They did not advance a single step from their stand until 1980s. For instance, in 1978, a Muslim girl named Sulaikha was killed by a Hindu called Ravi at 'Meenchanda' near Calicut town. An article was published in 'Al Mu'allim', an Arabic Malayalam magazine under the Samastha Kerala Jam-Iyyatul Muallimeen, which condemned the female education by composing a poem.

“Sulaikathuna ba’asath khututan ila Ravi,  
Va hal daka illa min burueil kitabati”

Oh! Because she was taught to write,  
Sulaikha wrote letters to Ravi.<sup>138</sup>

Because of the ceaseless efforts of progressive movements and the decisions of State Government to universalize education, the conservatives permitted girls to attend schools.

Though fiercely opposed the female education, after 1980s the orthodoxy began to establish girls' orphanages, madrasas and other educational institutions and send their children beyond primary and secondary education. Now, all most all girls complete

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<sup>138</sup> Abdur Rahman Iriveri., “*Kalam Ethra Maripoyi*”! (*How did the world Change!*), Shabab weekly July 30 1999.

secondary education. Majority of them continue their study at least in higher secondary schools. Many of them join Arts, Science and professional colleges. Apart from these colleges, a big proportion of Muslim girls join Arabic colleges under the Kannur and Calicut universities. Besides the modern and secular education, parents are keen to send their daughter to madrasas to get religious education. All most all Mappila girls in the region study upto fifth standard in madrasas.

Parents are concerned about their daughters and their future in a society like Kerala. Unlike earlier periods, parents do desire better education for girls as well as boys. A large number of students in many Muslim management institutions are girls, they outnumber boys in Graduate and Post Graduate level. In 1999, for the first time in the history, 'Badira' a Muslim girl got first rank in SSLC examination. Now, so many Muslims girls get ranks even in higher education every year. The percent of students involving in higher studies has been suddenly improving year by year.

As an influence of growing educational progress, the attitude of Muslim men in Malabar is subjected to change. The men of the community want educated woman as their wives, even if they are not well-educated persons. Ironically, even in Saudi Arabia, young men do not prefer educated women since they fear that they have to pay big bride price for marrying educated women. They prefer younger ones as a natural choice.<sup>139</sup> In the view of KT Muhammed Ali, a noted professor and historian in Malabar, the major problem that Muslim women in Malabar is going to face in near future is that they will not be able to get highly educated partners equal to their status in marriage life.

The attitude of community towards early marriage and polygamy is also subjected to change in last decade. 'Rasheeda Bhagat' writes a study conducted by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon reveals that the average age of marriage for a Muslim girl is 15.6 in India. In rural India, average age is a shocking 13.9. More than Pardah influencing a Muslim woman's mobility, it is the attitude of the men that puts shackles on their mobility for education or work.<sup>140</sup> The better educated women are usually able to influence decisions

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<sup>139</sup> Arvind Sharma (Ed.), *Today's women in world religions*, P. 21.

<sup>140</sup> Rasheeda Bhagat., *A Wake-Up Call*, The Hindu, September 5, 2004.

concerning their marriages. A study among the college students (aged 18-20) in Bangalore proves that the majority agreed that education had enabled them to have a say about prospective grooms and the timing of marriage.<sup>141</sup>

The Muslim women's experience in Malabar underlines the findings. Earlier, on account of the pressure from family, the Mappila women had to marry even before they reached puberty stage. However, the education gives them freedom to decide their prospectus. Now, the social evil has been eradicated from the region. At present, all most all girls are able to complete their secondary stage of schooling so that they can delay their marriage. Nowadays, the parents are ready to send their daughters for higher education even after their marriage.

In earlier periods, polygamy was common among the community. The girls were considered as material goods and the parents forced them to accept anyone without taking in to account his age and early life. In such a situation, women were treated as slaves and denied any privilege in life. Men were able to get wives, one after one and frequently divorced. Because of education, especially women education, the practice is condemned as an evil. Even today, very few conservatives among the community continue it.

The significant attitudinal change of community, which was bestowed by the development of female education, is growing awareness of religious practices. The Islamic dress code that the students and working women among the community keep in their public life and the success of women with headscarf in their respective fields attracted attention of social scientists. About two decades ago, only a few observed the dress code whereas today even medical college professors teach students in their hijab. "All the Muslim girls in my class at Calicut Medical College attended the classes in Hijab", says Dr Meena, who completed her MBBS from Calicut Medical College.

In the view of Adv KP Mariyumma, the spread of education is the real reason behind this new 'Pardah' culture. She added that educated women turned away from Hijab in the past. Only a few observed the dress code. Because of only a small number of Muslim

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<sup>141</sup>Shireen J Jejeebhoy, Women's education, Autonomy, and Reproductive Behaviour: Experience from Developing Countries, PP. 68-69.

women, who constitute a meagre 5 per cent of the total population, had the privileges of being educated. They considered themselves creamy layer of the society and they were not bothered about what was happening to the rest 95 of their community. Now education is in everybody's reach and educated one are no longer treated as a rare species.

Asked why she was dressed in an uncivilized manner despite being herself educated and hailing from an educated family, Qamarunnisa Anwar responded brilliantly to a District Medical Officer, who happened to be a Christian. Instead of giving a direct answer to the question, she asked her what was wrong with dress code of Mother Teresa who covered her whole body except the face and hands. The DMO became speechless.

In her view, one of the main factors that had played vital role in creating new awareness is Quran learning centers launched by various Muslim organizations. The peculiarity of these centers is that the students are coming from all walks of life from poor to rich and little educated to highly educated such as doctors, engineers and other professionals. The large turn out of Muslim women in these centers, where they are being taught under a systematic syllabus, cleared way to learn more about Islam. The Quran translations in Malayalam, which found its place in every household, also were a fillip to this trend.

Today, a large number of Mappila Muslim women work in different fields of profession in Hijab. The women in Islamic dress code, who once were depicted as the symbol of backwardness, are no longer considered so. Rather, these women have proved that the Islamic dress code is no way a hindrance to progress or attaining high offices.

The women's empowerment has bestowed greater importance to the education of their children. Now, the all round performance of community is gradually improving in all levels of education. Even though a significant number of girls go to schools, colleges and other professional institutes, there are some hindrances on the way of female education and the community has miles to go to realize its goal.

## Conclusion

Kerala is the only state in India that has achieved universal education. The regional disparities in educational achievements have narrowed down largely. The wide spread acceptance of education has been the reason for the rapid escalating of literacy rate of the state year by year. Now, the literacy rate of male and female is 94.20 and 87.86 per cents respectively, less than 7 per cent difference between both sexes.

By acting appropriately, the State has succeeded in reducing inter-community differences and differences based on socio-economic status in school enrolment. The net enrolment ratio has risen to almost 100 per cent in the case of both boys and girls. The decisive factor behind the increasing percent of enrolment is the realization that even with education life is difficult, but without it there is no scope even. Notwithstanding the high costs, the parents send children to schools and colleges. One of the other factors played in enhancing education among the people is the efforts of Government to establish educational institutions in large numbers since independence particularly in the Malabar region.

After independence, Kerala has witnessed drastic changes in its socio-cultural and political spheres. All communities in the state have been part of the transformation process in all spheres. Thus, Kerala has a distinct experience in its culture, tradition and customs. The impacts of these changes are visible in the social life of the people. As a part of the well-educated and high privileged society of the state, Kerala Muslims have been a role model of Indian Muslims in the fields of education, economy and politics.

The major finding of the study can be concluded as follows. The attitude of the community has undergone radical changes as far as the matter of education is concerned. As the British Govt introduced modern education in the region, Mappilas were reluctant to join the schools. The move was viewed as a challenge to their religion and tradition. It was the common phenomenon among the Muslims across the world during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. But, as a community that keeps a handful of credible qualities in its social life, it was not possible for Kerala Muslims to go on with their stubborn opposition. The solid attachment of the community to Kerala society and the geographical seclusion from



the majority of Urdu speaking Muslims exerted them to accept modern and secular education. Apart from this, it created a specific kind of attitude to face all challenges following the footsteps of sister communities especially Christians in the field of education.

Contrary to Kerala, North India had witnessed educational reforms and movements for educating Muslim women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Aligarh Tahrik. The movement tried its level best to encourage women education by passing several resolutions, publishing articles in journals and establishing a women's education section in 1896. In 1898, *Tahzib-e-Niswan*, an Urdu journal for woman was published by Mumtaz Ali to propagate the importance of female education. There were so many educational reformists like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Shaikh Abdullah<sup>142</sup>. Shaikh Abdullah was popularly known as "Sir Syed of women's education" because of his tireless works for promoting female education and to eradicate the prejudices prevailed at that time.<sup>143</sup>

However, Mappila Muslims of Kerala not witnessed such kind of movements and leadership in the last phase of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, Mappilas were a community that faced the lack of qualitative leadership. The second decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the rise of some dedicated leaders, who were either religious scholars or political stalwarts. Even though the leaders faced stubborn opposition from conservatives in the initial stage, they succeeded in making the people matured enough to accept the changes of the society. But, the experiences in north India were not successful upto the expectation. Even now, the plight of Muslim women has been miserable. For instance, the illiteracy rates of Muslim women in Hariyana, UP, Bihar and Delhi are 98, 85, 87 and 62 percents respectively. However, it is less than 20 percent in Kerala.

The last decades have been witnessing the growing desire of Mappila women to embrace higher and professional education. The trend has been very clear from the statistics of

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<sup>142</sup> He was popularly known as "Papa Mian" and was decorated with the title of "Padma Bhusan" in 1967 by the Government of India in recognition of his pioneering work and the great service he rendered in the field of women's education.

<sup>143</sup> Suhail Ahmad., *Women in Profession: A Comparative Study of Hindu and Muslim Women*, PP. 35-36.

students from three leading Muslim colleges of three Muslim dominated districts of Malabar. In many graduate and postgraduate courses, they have already outnumbered the Muslim boys in these colleges especially in arts and science subjects. The Muslim boys hold a slender majority over them in commerce subjects. Now Muslim girls have outnumbered boys in many Arabic colleges, where male had majority until recently. The trend proves that all, including conservatives, are willing to give women opportunities to study as long as they can. Verily in near future the Mappila women will be entertaining all privileges, which they could not even imagine two decades ago.

Religious harmony plays a significant role in the development of education. The most respectful and cohesive inter-religious relationship among the communities of Kerala has been a vital factor in the status of women. The reason for the dismal performance of north Indian women may be the lack of inter-religious relationship, which have been threatened by communal hatred and racial conflicts. The interaction between the communities in Kerala has been a reality since ancient age. Changes occurring in one community will be translated to other communities within immediate future. The rapid progress in the status of Christian and Hindu women has influenced the achievement of Muslim women in the fields of education.

Today the public appearance of Muslim women in Kerala is not a strange one. At present, they have showed their ability to do social services and participate in religious, political and social organizations. Qamarunnisa Anwar has represented the state in international social welfare conference held at Rotterdam in Netherlands on 24 to 28 June 2002. Rabiya, the recipient of national award for social work, Adv KP Mariyumma, former president of Malappuram district Panchayat, Minu Mumtaz, Adv Noorbina Rashid, councilor of Calicut Corporation, Khadeeja Nargees, president of MGM Kerala and many others who have been working in various fields represent the growing trend of Muslim women's participation in public life. They will be counted as the mentors of the new generation.

There is a tendency to condemn Pardah as the reason for ongoing backwardness of Muslim women. But, the Muslim women's experience in Malabar is contrary to these

findings. The increasing religious awareness among the educated Muslim women proves that all allegations are baseless and it is targeted to denigrate the dignity of the pure religion. By keeping religious practices and Islamic dress code, Mappila women have brushed aside all the fears of the community towards education. It is a matter of fact that the majority of learners in the School of Learning and Research Centers (SLRC) and Qur'an Learning Centers (QLC) are well-educated women.

Mappila women, however, face some problems regarding their educational status. One of the hindrances on the way of higher education is the scarcity of colleges and technical institutions. The Govt, social organizations and individuals should take an initiative to establish various kinds of colleges and higher institutions. Another obstacle that haunts them is the nightmare of unemployment. The society and community should sit together to contemplate on an enduring solution of the problem. Only government can make its women citizen self sufficient and self depended by providing them appropriate jobs.

One of the obstructions related to the marriage of educated Muslim women is the unavailability of qualified husbands. Parents have to pay due attention to find out educated males for their educated daughters. Otherwise, it will create difficulties in their married life. The declining number of boys in colleges is the clear indicator of the problem. The alarming rate of unemployment in the state and the style of life mount pressure on the male members of the community to migrate to Arabian Gulf Countries to earn their livelihood even before completing their college education.

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