

**Development and Modernisation of Religious  
Education in Kerala: Role of Samastha  
Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama**

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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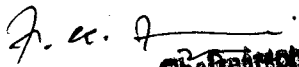
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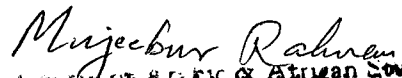
## DECLARATION

24<sup>th</sup> July 2006

I declare that the dissertation entitled "Development and Modernisation of Religious Education in Kerala: Role of Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama" submitted by me is in the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or of any other Universities and is my own work.

  
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**Dedicated to**

all those sincere hands behind my spiritual home

**Darul Huda Islamic Academy**

which gave me the right notion of education

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Zubair

CHAPTER I  
**INTRODUCTION**

## Introduction

Muslims who make up a major chunk of the world population are geographically distributed in almost all part of the glob, and despite of many basic characteristics unifying them as an international religious community, there are apparent differences in the social, economic, cultural, educational and religious features of particular Muslim societies. These differences can be better explained by the nature of the arrival of the religion in an area, ways it adopted to grow and expand there, role it played in the social change of the host community, character of its engagement with other religions and ideologies and the contemporary situation of the Muslim community in that area. However, 'one of the major deficiencies in the historiography of Islamic civilization has been the absence of research which satisfactorily accounts for the growth of individual Muslim communities.'<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the large body of sophisticated scholarship on the history and culture of the Muslim world as a whole, there is a dearth of studies, which explain how the regional and geographical, and thus cultural and social variations, interacted to shape the evolution of particular Muslim societies.

The field of education is the best variant that can amply highlight the contrasts and distinctions of the individual Muslim societies. Being the followers of a religion that gave vital importance for seeking and disseminating knowledge, Muslims across the world in all ages have adopted various ways and modes of imparting education. As in all fields, there are variations in system and setups of education in particular individual Muslim societies around the world based on differences in sectarian lines to regional cultures, despite having a set of basic principles and patterns that stand as a fundamental unifying force. Though the education parted ways as religious and secular in the later centuries and Muslims generally lagged far behind in the secular education while persisted on the medieval lines in the religious one, there have been many attempts among different Muslim communities to develop various systems to impart education in both lines.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India*, *Studia Islamica* No.71 (1990).



While the modern trends started influencing all spheres of life with the onset of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it did not spare the Islamic education system as well, and, as a result, a host of modernisation process transformed and has been transforming both religious and secular education of Muslim communities around the world at various levels and in different colours. Some of them preferred the secular at the expense of religious, viewing the later outdated and pre-modern. Some ventured to discard the secular for religious viewing the former immoral and anti-religion. Meanwhile, many individual Muslim societies braved to experiment a synthesis of both, thus bringing back the approach of great Islamic scholars of the golden age and turning away from the dichotomous outlook derived from western philosophies of education.

However, most of the experiments were limited to primary levels, and even at higher levels, there has been lack of a well-defined philosophy that will clearly guide the organisation, aims, content and curriculum of Islamic education. Moreover, various approaches towards Islam - traditionalist, modernist and fundamentalist – were instrumental in determining the pace, mode and results of these experiments. These can well explain why most of the synthesizing experiments are still pre-matured and fail to yield the projected results. The present study is an attempt to explore the development and modernisation of religious education among individual Muslim community of Kerala and to analyse the role of a traditionalist *Ulama* organisation in the process.

Much has been talked about the extraordinary anthropological, demographic, ecological, economic, educational, historical, political, religious, etc. features of the small South Indian state of Kerala, which is the integration of three regions, Travancore in the south, Cochin in the Centre and Malabar in the North. The peculiar traits of Kerala culture mark it off from all other Indian regional cultures. The Malayalam language, the life style of the Malayali, the arts and the literature, the faiths and the political consciousness make Kerala a different cultural region that sets itself apart as much from the north Indian cultures as from the other south Indian cultures.<sup>2</sup> Kerala Muslims, who constitute 24.7%<sup>3</sup> of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.keralahistory.ac.in/culturalformationkerala.html>

the total population of the state and who are known as Mappilas, have also their own characteristics and peculiarities that distinguish them from other Muslim communities in India.

Many features give Kerala Muslims a special identity. The Muslim community in the state originate as one of instance of a widespread phenomenon, the peaceful expansion of Islam along well-established trade routes in parts of Africa, India and Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> Islam came in South peacefully compared to the North. Arab traders propagated their faith by persuasion and example rather than by conquest and force. They intermarried with Hindu women and produced the Mappilas of Malabar, the Navayats of Kanara and the Labbais, Marrakayars and Rawthers of Madras.<sup>5</sup> A careful reading of the sources leads to the conclusion that this community grew primarily through peaceful conversion, which initially, at least, resulted from the interaction of a dynamic, egalitarian Islamic mercantile society with an exceptionally conservative version of Hindu caste society.<sup>6</sup>

According to the observations of the itinerant North African Ibn Battuta, Kerala Muslims shared the Arabic, Islamic culture, which characterised most of the Muslim communities, which were scattered along the Indian Ocean trade routes, extending from East Africa to Arabia to India and Indonesia and even to Canton on the South China coast. Most of the individuals whose homelands he identified were either merchants or *Ulama* from Arabia or the Persian Gulf region, although some came from as far away as East Africa and the interior of Iran. Traders from Iraq, Bahrain and *Qadis* from Baghdad and Oman are specifically mentioned.<sup>7</sup>

The direct relation of Mappilas with Arabian Islam is as significant as its isolation from Indo-Persian Islam. Not only the political hegemony and tradition of the latter, but also its emotional tenor, theological developments, and cultural heritage passed the Mappilas by. The original relationship with Arabia, on the

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<sup>3</sup> Census Report of India, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India*, *Studia Islamica*, No.71, (1990).

<sup>5</sup> Theodor P. Wright, Jr. *The Muslim League in South India since Independence: A study in Minority Group political Strategies*, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 60 (Sep 1966)

<sup>6</sup> Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India*, *Studia Islamica* No.71 (1990).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

other hand, continued and grew, and that intercourse has gone on into modern times. The Arab affinity has affected and continues to affect the language, religion and culture of the Mappilas more profoundly than those of any other Indian Muslims do.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to all other Muslims in India, Kerala Muslims observe the Shafi'i school of law, which was and is the predominant *madhab* in the Muslim communities throughout the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian region.<sup>9</sup> More studies are needed to find out the seemingly strong and substantial resemblance the Kerala Islam has with the Islamic culture and history of Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> According to Dale, the study of Malayali Muslims offers a relevant guide to understanding certain facets of South East Asian Islam during the European period. The ecology of Kerala is itself more nearly similar to South-East Asia than most regions of the South Asian subcontinent, and in terms of their Arab-derived Islamic culture and long history of conflict with European powers, Malayali Muslims are more nearly similar to several of the Islamic communities of South-East Asia, which originated as trading settlements.<sup>11</sup>

The absence of a ruling Muslim power in South India except on some rare occasions<sup>12</sup> is another feature of South Indian Muslims as they remained self-reliant merchants, fishermen and peasants throughout the centuries. In addition to this, there were no linguistic barriers to alienate Muslims from their non-Muslim co-habitants, as all Keralites speak the Dravidian language of Malayalam, and Muslims never used Urdu as their mother tongue.<sup>13</sup> And in the post independence period the leadership of South's Muslim community was not

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<sup>8</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends* p 51.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen F. Dale, *Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India*, *Studia Islamica*, No.71, (1990).

<sup>10</sup> It is clear from books written on Indonesian Islam that the cultural evolution of Muslims there and the religious discourses being held among them on the lines of traditionalist and modernist or fundamentalist lines are almost same to that of Kerala Muslims.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Frederic Dale, *Islamic Society On the South Asian Frontier, The Mappilas of Malabar 1498- 1922*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Only during the brief rule of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan in Mysore, the Sultans of Madurai in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Nawabs of Arcot in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Arakkal rajas of Cannanore have Muslims dominated parts of the South politically.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Theodor writes that in the North, Urdu developed as a *lingua franca* between the Persian-speaking Muslim conquerors and their Hindu subjects, but this tongue has now come to be identified largely with Muslims and is rejected, along with the Persian alphabet, by many North Indian Hindus in favour of Sanskritised Hindi, written in Devanagari script, so Urdu has become a bone of contention instead of a bridge between communities.

drained off to Pakistan in marked contrast to the North, and consequently there has been less erosion of Hindu's confidence in the Indian loyalties of Muslims there.

However, compared to North India, it is embarrassing to know that relatively little has been written on the social, educational, cultural and economic history and evolution of Muslims in Southern states of the country despite the fact that Islamic tradition formed in the coastal South India, particularly Kerala, long before it made its appearance in the north. Meanwhile, there are substantial works on the advent of Islam in Kerala, history of Mappila Muslims and of their revolts and struggles with the colonial powers.

Though there is a conflict of opinions on the actual timeframe of Islam's arrival in Kerala, according to the most prevailing tradition, it occurred in the prophet's period itself through Arab Muslim merchants and preachers. Studies have revealed that Muslims in Malabar lived as an influential community with honour and dignity during their initial period, mainly seven hundred years from eighth to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, in which they developed to a well-knit community. The rulers, ruled, rich and poor, and upper castes and lower castes welcomed the Muslims alike due to their piety, honesty and enthusiasm in trade. This golden period ended with the arrival of Portuguese in 1498 AD, which gravely spoiled the monopoly of Muslims in sea trade as well as pushed them to a four-century long struggle to exist as a community and to preserve their identity. 'The result of Portuguese period for the Mappilas may be summarized as economic retrogression, estrangement from Hindus, bitterness against Christians and a new militancy.'<sup>14</sup> Portuguese cruelty was followed by British colonialism and both were at the top of their enmity and bitterness while dealing with Muslims, thanks to the European rivalry to 'Moors' caused by years long crusades.

During the British power, Mappila Muslims made their first contact with a modern western culture and this facilitated the developments followed. The British introduced the westernizing process primarily through educational efforts and administrative reforms. Resisting the new influences Mappilas adopted and

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<sup>14</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*, p. 75.

maintained a steady, unyielding opposition to the western, and therefore, it was felt, un-Islamic influences. 'Nevertheless, the insidious influence of the ruling culture could not be totally resisted. The Rebellion of 1921 was both an endpoint and a turning point in the life of the Muslim community. It was the first stage in a new development.'<sup>15</sup>

Mappila Muslims waged one of the strongest freedom and anti-colonialist movement the country has ever seen, and this steady struggle against the mighty imperialists made their condition worse and pathetic in all fields. However, while the North India witnessed one of the bloodiest communal violence and largest exodus of refugees across the borders at the dawn of independence, Kerala Muslims could set their progress target in a confident and harmonious atmosphere along with other communities. An unusual combination of irresistible pressures on the Mappila community - like the new democratic political situation, challenges of other communities, the problem of unemployment accompanied by the communist attack on traditional forms of belief and action and the growth of western-style education - altered their situation dramatically. 'These pressures touched on Mappila character, faith, social life and leadership, and in the process revealed that they contained the strength to receive these impulses, to mould them to a certain extent, and to enable the community to maintain its sense of continuity with Islamic tradition'.<sup>16</sup>

While looking back after about 60 years of independence, it is remarkable to see that Kerala Muslims have achieved a lot and progressed more in comparison to their counterparts in other parts of the country, thanks to a host of reasons like their active and peaceful involvement in the state politics by becoming an influencing force, better exposure to education, good adherence to the religion and cordial existence with other religious communities. Miller sees Mappila's ability to survive as a minority Islamic community under non-Muslim rule for more than ten centuries and their conception of this period as the golden age of Kerala Islam far from considering this an un-Islamic situation, as one of their outstanding merit. While concluding his detailed study on Kerala Muslims, he

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 158.

said that 'the primary importance of the Mappilas for the Muslim world is the demonstration that it is possible under the right circumstances for a Muslim community to make necessary change' without hampering the spirit of Islam.

The educational achievements of Kerala Muslims have also a long history that dates back to the advent of Islam in the state. One can read out from the lines of Mappila Muslims' documented history that how they developed various systems and setups to disseminate knowledge and to educate successive generations. While referring to the sources it is easily understandable that Mappilas had moved ahead in the olden days along with the changes in the educational trends of international Muslim community, but with adjustments and accommodations needed in their cultural atmosphere. To have a general idea about these international trends that designed the pace and form of the Islamic education as a whole, a brief outlook has been given on the philosophy, organisation, curricula and contents of Islamic education in the first chapter of this study under the title 'System of Islamic Education'.

In a bid to trace out the reflexes of the international Islamic educational trends of the first centuries on the individual Muslim community of Kerala, the second chapter of this study, entitled 'Development and Evolution of Islamic Education System in Kerala', tries to find out the developmental history of their religious education systems. The chapter also tries to give a small account about the spiritual leadership led Kerala Muslims throughout the centuries and about their contributions to the development of religious education in the state. A final part of the chapter briefs the substantial role the particular hybrid language of Arabi-Malayalam played in the spread of religious education among Mappilas.

It is interesting to note that none of the ideological conflicts that emerged in the various regions of the Islamic world time and again could make inroads into the Kerala Muslims until the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the strong hold of spiritual leadership on the community. All the modernist and fundamentalist as well as puritanical versions of Islam arrived in the state, like in most of the Southeast Asian countries where traditional interpretation of Islam had been intact, only with the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The disastrous and hapless condition of the

Malabar Muslims in the aftermath of tragic 1921 incidents gave the reformist scholars and many secularly educated members of the community a space for the first public proclamation of the above-mentioned versions of Islam that were new to Mappilas. They accused Mappila Muslims of deviating from the original path of Islam and called for radical changes in their religious observances in order to overcome the current crisis.

At this juncture, the religiously educated traditional *Ulama*, who always enjoyed the supreme authority among Mappilas, came forward against the new interpretations defending the traditional Islam that was followed unopposed for centuries. They called for reviving Islamic traditions and advised the community to approach all reformist and modernist movements with utmost vigil and caution. This paved the way to exist among Kerala Muslims throughout the last century and beyond a dual-faced discursive tradition in each and every issue, one in the line of traditional revivalism and the other in fundamentalist reformism.

The reformists asserted the emphasis on the centrality of practice of the Prophet as the pre-eminent standard for belief and practice. In their search for this standardized tradition, they insisted on returning to the Qur'an and the Sunna anew. They also rejected any form of esoteric interpretation (*tawil*), which was followed by the traditionalist *Ulama*. Reformism thus meant nothing more than the rejection of classical authority and their claim to be capable of reviving the pure, unadulterated *Sunna* of the Prophet with a very critical stance against most of the transmitted knowledge, practices, customs and rituals. By insisting that any person who knew Arabic need not rely on authorities, and that texts can be approached without intermediary, they wanted the conservative *Ulama* stripped of their dominant role in religious education and the process of identity making.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Faisal. K.P., Unpublished MPhil Dissertation, JNU, (2005), *Tradition and Modernity among Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Sociological Study*.

One remarkable feature of Mappila Muslims in the post-1921 period, other than the arrival of different versions of Islam, was the transformation of their leadership from the hands of individual scholarly and outstanding personalities to the fold of organisations formed on the basis of various ideologies. While the reformists associated first under organisations like *Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* and the *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham* (group for unity among Kerala Muslims), traditional *Ulama* formed *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* (All Kerala *Ulama* Organisation) and successfully gave an organisational setup to the majority traditional Mappilas.

The decades followed witnessed radical changes in both organisational lines. While *Samastha* strengthened their hold among the majority Mappilas and the scholars among them, the reformist organisations seemed more appealing to the newly educated. However, the advent of the ideas of Abul Aa'la Moududi, who interpreted Islam with political orientation, did a split in the ranks of reformists and resulted in the formation of *Kerala Jamaat-e-Islami*. The old reformists who stood for theological orientation reorganised after the split and renamed their union as *Kerala Nadwat ul-Mujahideen*, and they are known in Kerala as *Mujahids*, *Salafis* and *Wahhabis*. The *Mujahids* underwent another split in the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the causes of which are analysed as more organisational than ideological. Though both *Mujahids* and followers of Moududi represent the reformist platform, they differ on the political participation in the democratic political system of India. While *Jamaat* initially argued that any kind of participation in the democratic setup of the country, even doing job under secular government, is *haram* and un-Islamic<sup>18</sup>, *Mujahids* actively participated and advocated for it.

The reformist approaches towards interpreting religion, like the scepticism against the *Hadith* literature and liberal and rational attitude in approaching Qur'an and Sunnah in the matters of faith, paved the way for the emergence of a couple of other modernist outfits among Mappilas, though they were less appealing to Mappilas. The modernist movement of

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<sup>18</sup> Prabhodhanam Weekly, May 15 1950 and Prbhodhanam December 15, 1953.



Muslim Educational Society (MES) in sixties and the liberal and anti-Hadith movement of 'Islam and Modern Age Society' in seventies emerged in these lines. While some highly educated professionals represented the first, the second was the initiation of Maulavi Muhammad Abul Hasan, popularly known as Chekanur Maulavi, a graduate from Vellore's Baqiyyat Arabic College who had served as religious teacher in Islamia College at Shanthapuram and later in Jamia Nadviya at Edavanna.

The organisational splits did not spare *Samastha* as well, who represented the majority traditional Mappilas known as '*Sunnis*'. In sixties, some scholars opposed the opinion of *Samastha Mushawara*, the consultative body, against the puritanical movement of *Tableeg Jamaath*, and formed a new organisation named *Akhila* (all) *Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, which had a very short life. Another split occurred in the *Sunni* organisation when one of its outstanding leaders, who had gifted with a number of religious disciples across the state, viewed the use of loudspeaker in prayers un-Islamic. He resigned from *Samastha* when it officially opposed his views, and organised his followers under *Smasthana Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, which still survives, even after his death, with a handful of followers here and there. At the end of eighties, *Samastha* underwent a major break-up that prompted a significant amount of *Sunnis* to organise under a new group named *Smastha Kerala Sunni Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, which draws an undeniable support base among traditional Mappilas. Though a host of organisational as well as ideological reasons are said to have led to the latest break-up, conflicts of opinions regarding *Samastha's* favourable attitude towards the political ideologies of Muslim League, and regarding co-operation with the reformist organisations in matters concerned to all Muslims were the main causes of the split. Generally, Kerala Muslims belong to any of three ideological divisions; *Sunni*, *Mujahid* and *Jamaath*, with *Sunnis* enjoying a lion's share in the Muslim population, thanks to the systematic 'Mahallu' system that keeps the majority away from the new ideologies.

All the above-mentioned organisations claim the credit for the relatively better condition of Kerala Muslims in all fields including the education, and it is true

that all have played their roles, whether big or small, in achieving the present status. However, while referring the books written on the movements that brought changes among Mappilas, it is easy to find out that most of them are prepared on same perspective that the modernisation process was the result of attempts made by reformists and modernists, and the traditional *Ulama* and the majority Mappilas followed them were always antagonistic towards the reforms. The traditional *Ulama* have been depicted in most of the studies as anti-modern, anti-English, adamant, defenders of outdated educational views, blind opponents of all reform movements, enemies of women education, and wary at secular education. Few academic explorations have been made to the objectivity of these arguments and as a result, the mainstream literatures have blacked out the other part of the story despite the fact that majority *Sunnis* are not far behind in both religious and secular education. The third chapter tries to look into the modernisation process of religious education system of Mappila Muslims in 20<sup>th</sup> century along with the role played by *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, the organisation of eminent traditional scholars representing the *Sunnis*.

The study also looks into how Kerala Muslims developed an ideal system to incorporate religious and secular educations at primary levels, and tries to give an account on the experiments it adapted to synthesis both at higher levels. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the development of primary *Madrasas* in all villages with Muslim population under a centralized system parallel to One to Ten classes of regular schooling, but allowing every Muslim boys and girls to attend both in *Madrasa* and in school. It will be interesting to know how *Samastha*, who has been criticized by reformists for being less adaptive to modern trends, reached far ahead of other organisations by scientifically running more than 8,000 *Madrasas* under a centralized system.

CHAPTER II  
**ISLAMIC SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

ORGANISATION AND INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

CURRICULUM AND CONTENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

## Islamic System of Education

*Read in the name of thy Lord, who created – Created man, out of a leech-like clot. Read and thy Lord is most bountiful. He who taught (the use of) pen. Taught man that which he know not. (Qur'an 96 1-5)*

Since the inception of Islam as the last revealed religion in Arabia, a particular pattern of diffusing and disseminating knowledge has started, the development, evolution, transformation and survival of which can be dealt under the title of Islamic System of Education. Being followers of a religion that gave vital importance for acquiring knowledge and made it mandatory for all men and women, Islamic communities around the world have developed various ways and modes of imparting education throughout the forgone centuries. While analysing the history of this development with all its religious, economic, political and social dimensions, one can easily find out that there are certain features that distinguish the Islamic System of Education from that of non-Islamic.

Moreover, even under the Islamic, there are variations in the educational set-up of particular individual Muslim societies around the world based on differences in sectarian lines to regional cultures. However, it is evident from a cursory study of the multiple facets of Islamic education system around the world in all the eras, that a set of basic principles and patterns have been instrumental in its development and evolution. In spite of an international diversity and its adaptation in different ages and in different social climates, it has managed to preserve a fundamental unifying force<sup>19</sup>. This explains what we call the philosophy of Islamic Education.

As the clashes between the tradition and modernity prominently emerged in the academic discourses of the post-industrial revolution, the traditional education system of the Islamic world and its compatibility with the modern trends also came into focus. This led to extensive studies, both by western and Islamic scholars, on the sources of knowledge for Muslims, the evolution of Islamic

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<sup>19</sup> Syed Ali Muhammad Khusro, *Education in Islamic Society, in Education and Society in The Muslim World* ed. Muhammad Wasiullah Khan, Hodder And Stoughton, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah. 1981.

system of education, the aims, objectives, purpose and nature of Islamic education, its content, curriculum and organisational forms, and the Islamic classification and categorisation of various educational fields. Explorative and analytical studies were also held on what extend the Islamic educational systems of various individual Muslim communities assimilated to, integrated with or replaced by regional or modern and western educational systems. The basis of these discourses was the existence of a persistent and conflicting educational dualism in the Muslim world throughout the modern era. The apparent bifurcation of knowledge among Muslims on religious and material lines was generally perceived as a result of this dualism, which has its roots in the ideological and philosophical conflicts as well as the political backlash that Muslims witnessed in medieval period, but was intensified by the rigorous modernisation waves disseminated by the western colonial powers.

As part of Muslim responses to the challenges of modernity that followed the colonialism, many innovations took place in the Islamic educational systems through out the world. While some adopted the western style completely discarding the traditional system, others stood firm on the traditional ways as they saw the new trends anti-Islamic, immoral and dangerous. However, there was a wide range of efforts to establish new educational institutions standing between the traditional and western models and including a synthesis of the old and the new, of the inherited and the imported<sup>20</sup>. Even though, most of this sought to find accommodation through adding some Islamic content in modern schools, or modern content in Islamic schools. Experiments in a balanced synthesis of the two traditions have been rare and typically limited to individual institutions<sup>21</sup>.

Most of the above-mentioned attempts failed to live up to the anticipated goals because of their failure to efficiently deal with the (1) conceptual considerations that would provide an overall perspective on how the differences in epistemology, goals, and content of the two system can be related, and (2) pragmatic considerations on the educational measures and support conditions that

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<sup>20</sup> David C. Kinsey, *Efforts for Educational Synthesis Under Colonial Rule: Egypt and Tunisia*, *Comparative educational Review* ( June 1971)

<sup>21</sup> David C. Kinsey, *Toward Reformulation of Islamic Education*, *Comparative Education Review* (Jun 1982).

are necessary to implement and maintain a reformed system.<sup>22</sup> Later studies in this regard are focussed on the fact that differences between the Western and Islamic styles are not based on two kinds of education or knowledge known as religious and material, but are between the philosophy and concept of education in both sides. The first world Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977, in which more than 300 scholars from across the world participated, was one of the most significant attempt to develop a comprehensive approach for reforming Islamic education and integrate it with modern education. The conference invoked discussions on Islamisation of knowledge as well as paved the way for international Islamic universities and institutions that approached the knowledge through an Islamic perception.

Among a number of individual scholars who contributed to the philosophical base of the Islamic educational reformulation in the post-colonial period, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Fazlur Rahman assumes prominence. Nasr, who is a pure traditionalist, effectively asserts how the traditional Islam should be viewed in the modern world and what are the tensions between tradition and modernity in various cultural domains including Islamic education, philosophy and science. Tracing the evolving history of Islamic education, he carves out the Islamic philosophers' view on education as well as sheds light on teaching the neglected subject of philosophy under the shadow of the Islamic educational ethos<sup>23</sup>.

Rahman, a modernist who faced much criticism and even death threats in Pakistan for his rational thinking and alleged adoption of Mu'tazilite views, has written a general work on the medieval Islamic educational system, with its major features and deficiencies, and on the modernisation efforts undertaken during the past century. For him, Islamic education is not the physical or quasi-physical paraphernalia and instruments of instruction such as the books taught or the external educational structure, but it is the 'Islamic intellectualism', the growth of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World* (KPI, London and New York). Nasr has extensively written on the plight of traditional Islam and its compatibility in the modern, scientific world. His other eminent works include *Ideas and realities of Islam, Science and Civilization in Islam, Man and Nature: the spiritual crisis of modern man, Islamic philosophy and science among others.*

a genuine, original, and adequate Islamic thought that must provide the real criterion for judging the success or failure of an Islamic educational system. After analysing classical Islamic modernism and education, and the contemporary modernism, he puts forth prospects of and some suggestions on how the Islamic sciences, from *Qur'anic* interpretations and traditions to theology and philosophy, should be reconstructed in the modern world and how Muslims should treat the relatively modern natural, pure and social sciences.<sup>24</sup>

Before observing the development and modernisation of religious education among the individual Muslim community of the tiny South Indian state of Kerala, it would be helpful to have a general outlook on the educational trends of the entire Muslim society in the world throughout the history and the nature of its institutionalisation. The useful way to perceive the educational trends of any society, and the philosophy behind it, is to analyse it from the points of its aims and objectives, curriculum, content and organisation.

### **Philosophy of Islamic education**

In different historical eras and in different cultures a variety of conceptions has been put forward concerning the nature of mind, truth, knowledge, moral goodness, aesthetic beauty, and the purposes of life. These views carry implications for the purpose and nature of the educational process, the ends toward which one should educate, the means by which one can best achieve those ends, the degree of consistency between the ends and the means, and the model, if any, of the ideally educated person that one has in mind when engaging in the educational process<sup>25</sup>. Major among these perceptions and philosophies that shaped the history and regulated the trends of world education are platonic view, Thomist view, Lockean view, Naturalistic view, Marxist view, Pragmatist view, Behaviourist view and existentialist view. Though all of them save that of Thomist are based on pure materialism, there are certain peculiar variations in their conceptions of education, its role and objectives.

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<sup>24</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & modernity; Transformation of an Intellectual tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

<sup>25</sup> Education, Philosophy of, p. 409, Encyclopedia Britannica. Vol. 6.

Plato, who first made a great attempt to create a philosophically coherent model of the educated person, envisaged an intellectually segregated education. In a stable and permanent hierarchical society anticipated by him, those most adept at education would rule the country, those moderately adept would become warriors and carry out the orders of the rulers, and those least adept would fill the lowliest worker functions in society. The platonic scheme has been enormously influential in the last 25 centuries especially in the west, where most of the educational programmes have consistently reflected this hierarchical pattern. The dichotomy existed between the so-called liberal arts, which have been considered suitable educational fare for potential leaders of society, and the so-called vocational studies, which have been considered more suitable for potential followers, was the fallout of the platonic philosophy<sup>26</sup>.

St Thomas Aquinas, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Christian philosopher and reformer whose views have been the official basis of Catholic theology since 1879, tried to amalgamate reason and faith, philosophy and theology, university and monastery, and activity and contemplation. He viewed moral excellence as a must in his model educated man, and asserted that the highest happiness of a well-educated man is the contemplation of the God.

John Locke, the 17<sup>th</sup> century English philosopher who spoke for individual freedom against oppression of the State and Church, outlined a heavily experimental education, synthesising science, reason and experience, that would be appropriate for a 'practical gentleman'; a reformulation of the model of the gentleman that traditionally had been the English ideal of an educated person. His cardinal aims of education, in order of importance, were virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning. His puritan individualism has played a major role in shaping of the American educational ideals<sup>27</sup>.

The romantic naturalism, the chief spokesperson of which was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was emotional and spontaneous reaction to the excessive formalism and rationalism of the 18-century enlightenment movement of France. Its model-

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 410

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 412



educated person had the values of romanticism, intuitive spontaneity, freedom, simplicity and subjectivity against the prevailing civilized values of rationalism, conscious reflection, control, complexity and subjectivity. The naturalists insist that the child should be kept apart from premature intellectualisation of emotion so that the child's intellectual powers could develop without distortion<sup>28</sup>.

Marxian view, developed by Karl Marx in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, has gained a prominent place in the educational philosophy as an ideology that changed the course of the history in 20<sup>th</sup> century. For Marx, who explained everything under the sun using the variants of material dimension and economic structure, the model of the educated person was neither the irresponsible individualist nor the coerced collectivist but the accountable communal man<sup>29</sup>.

The pragmatism, the dominant American philosophy that exerted a strong influence on the shape of education in the US and affected educational ideals and practices of Europe and Japan, saw man as formed through interaction with his natural and social environment. For John Dewey, the influential pragmatist, the model educated person is the reflective man, one who was critical of authority and tradition as the determinant of belief and action and who preferred the method of science, of 'organised intelligence' as the best way to solve his problems. He argued to give vital importance for child's interest and insisted neither to repress nor to humour it<sup>30</sup>.

Behaviourist view, which was the outcome of the extensive use of science in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, envisages the use of scientific knowledge about the control of human behaviour to create a planned man, one who will be conditioned to behave in the way best calculated to achieve society's goals. The philosophy of behaviourism compels one to examine carefully the issue of control in education<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 413.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 413.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 414.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 414.

Finally, the existentialist view was the reaction to the application of science to ever more aspects of the study of man. The exponents of this view criticised the scientific way of viewing man as an object to be categorized, studied objectively or subsumed under generalization. The central focus of their educational philosophy was dialogue and the educated person is one who could listen and talk as because responsibility, in terms of one's response to another, was their vital concept<sup>32</sup>.

The educational theories were described above in little detail for two reasons. (1) To mention that little attention was given to the Islamic philosophy of education in spite of Islam being a major religion with a blend of scholastic heritages that took over and enriched the Greco-Byzantine heritage combined with elements of Persian and Indian thought and transmitted it to the modern world.<sup>33</sup> Though a relatively large amount of attention has been devoted to institutions of higher learning in medieval Islam, other aspects of the history of Islamic education, such as educational theories, have not been dealt with thoroughly. Educational thought – based on the theological, anthropological, psychological, ethical and epistemological concepts of its proponents – is in many cases an epitome of their general outlook, so that its importance exceeds the confines of the history of education. Not a single monograph has been known as published in the west on the educational philosophy of any Muslim thinker, and the kind of attention devoted to the theories of like Plato and St Augustine was never given to their Muslim counterparts.<sup>34</sup> (2) To mention that most of the theories have partial roots to the Islamic educational views, especially the Thomist view of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that tried for a synthesis between rationalism and faith. This may be clearer if we study his theoretical background and environment based on the established historical fact that the Islamic learning had an undeniable influence on medieval and modern Europe. The translation into Latin of most Islamic works during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries had a great impact upon the European Renaissance. As Islam was declining in scholarship and Europe was absorbing the fruits of Islam's

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 411.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 332.

<sup>34</sup> Avner Giladi, *Islamic Educational Theories In the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes With Special Reference to Al-Ghazali*, Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies), 1987.

three and half centuries of creative productivity, signs of Latin Christian awakening were evident throughout the European continent.<sup>35</sup>

It is interesting that as result of all these perceptions on education, the latest trends in the education have become completely materialist as the education is conceived as a process that helps man to live well in this material world. The total educational systems in the west and east and even in the Muslim countries have been set up on career and Job orientation. The frequent modernisation calls made by so-called secularists and modernists on the guardians and preservers of the traditional Islamic education system are mainly based on this notion. It is evident from their substantiated points that the products of *Madrasas* and other religious institutions have no place in the ever-competitive global job markets and their curricula have no relevance or scope in the modern world. Here is the need to clearly understand why Islamic education is different from others and why even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, religious institutions are flourishing based on ideals and views that date back to 14 centuries. However, it is undeniable that there have been flaws in the educational perceptions of individual Muslim societies that can well explain the apparent stagnation that gripped the Islamic educational systems worldwide after centuries of Islamic golden era in the medieval period.

Meanwhile, Islamic education and Islamic sciences, which cover a vast expanse of intellectual space, and which developed in Islamic civilization over the centuries, are related in the most intimate manner to the principles of the Islamic revelation and the spirit of the *Qur'an*. The *Qur'an* contains, according to the traditional Islamic view, the roots of all knowledge but not of course its details.<sup>36</sup> The word of God has always been the *alpha* and *omega* of all Islamic education and sciences; being at once their source and goal, their inspiration and guide<sup>37</sup>. The form and spirit of the *Qur'anic* revelation as contained in the sacred Book and reflected in the very substance and being of the Prophet is designed in a way to give a perpetual and continuous education for a Muslim. From the *shahadah* uttered into the ear of the newly-born child until the moment of death, the orders

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<sup>35</sup> Education, History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica, p.333.

<sup>36</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World*, (KPI, London and New York), p. 122

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

of the Book and the sayings of the prophet moulded the mind and soul of the Muslim, providing for him the primary content as well as the ambience of his education and the principles and goals of the sciences<sup>38</sup>. The quest for knowledge and its veritable celebration were dominated from beginning to end by its sacred quality and nature. In Islam, knowledge was never divorced from the sacred and both the educational system and the sciences that it made possible breathed in a universe of sacred presence. Whatever was known possessed a profoundly religious character, not only because the object of every type of knowledge is created by God, but most of all because the intelligence by which man knows is itself a divine gift<sup>39</sup>.

Moreover, Islam conceives acquiring knowledge and all the works related to education as a sacred worship. One prophetic tradition reads; 'Acquire knowledge, he who acquires it in the way of Allah performs an act of piety; he who speaks of it praises the Lord; he who seeks it adores God, he who dispenses instruction in it bestows alms; he who imparts it to the deserving persons performs an act of devotion'<sup>40</sup>. There are hundreds of *Qur'anic* verses and prophetic traditions in which the supreme value of knowledge is emphasised. Both of Islam's basic sources not only stressed the necessity and value of knowledge but also urged the cultivation of the scientific spirit of reasoning, enquiry and investigation. Thus, Islam in principle amply synthesised the reason and faith, philosophy and theology and the worldly life with the life hereafter. It called for extensive thinking, researches, explorations, experiments, observations in and about everything from one's own physical body and soul to anything in the universe; animals, birds, plants, earth, sky, stars, etc. Nevertheless, reminded that the ultimate goal of all seeking is to find out the ultimate truth, to pursue the presence of the Almighty and to strengthen the belief in his eternity and supreme power. This educational system trained over the ages the most celebrated Islamic philosophers and scientists as well as Muslim philosopher-scientists, who were at once philosophers and masters of some field of science. For centuries, Islam

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in S. M. Hossain in *A Plea for a Modern University: Resolution of the Dichotomy in Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, ed. Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas, Hodder and Stoughton, King Abdul Aziz University, 1981.

moulded men who were at once the most devout Muslims and the foremost thinkers in various intellectual disciplines.<sup>41</sup>

For Islam, education is a life-long process of preparing an individual to order his own life in accordance with Islamic injunctions and to fully contribute to the reconstruction and development of the society in order to implement these injunctions. So the process involves both formal education in schools and colleges of various levels and types, as well as non-formal education through such social institutions as the family, neighbourhood, peer groups, the mosque and communication media<sup>42</sup>. Its goal is not only the training of the mind but also that of the whole being of the person. That is why it implied not only instruction or transmission of knowledge (*ta'lim*), but also training of the whole being of the student (*tarbiyah*). The teacher was not only a *mu'allim*, a transmitter of knowledge, but also a *murabbi*, a trainer of souls and personalities.<sup>43</sup>

Knowledge and virtue used to go hand in hand in the traditional education system. Not only did the students acquire worldly knowledge, they were also trained intellectually and emotionally to be religious. There was no objection to scientific knowledge but the scientists believed that by acquiring knowledge about the phenomenal world they were only strengthening their belief in the greatness and power of the Creator. In contrast, knowledge in the present system is an intellectual acquisition, which may or may not have direct relationship with the traditional concepts of virtue<sup>44</sup>. Because of this emphasis on moral aspect in education, Syed Ali Ashraf, the general editor of the Islamic Education series published after the Mecca World Conference on Muslim Education 1977, tried to demarcate between education and instruction. He said that while Education helps in the complete growth of an individual's personality, instruction merely trains an

<sup>41</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World* (KPI, London and New York), p. 148

<sup>42</sup> Muhammad Wasiullah Khan, ed., *Education and the Society in the Muslim World*, Hodder And Stoughton, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, 1981.

<sup>43</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World* (KPI, London and New York) page 123. Nasr also mentions that to this day education in circles in most of the Arab world is called *al-ta'lim wal-tarbiyah*, while in Iran; the name of the education ministry itself is its Persian counterpart, *Amuzish wa parwarish*.

<sup>44</sup> Syed Sahjjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, Hodder and Stoughton, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. 1979.



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individual or a group to do some task efficiently. He further explains that a man may be a great achiever in many material fields, but remains a semi-educated, ill-mannered, immoral, unrighteous or unjust man. Therefore, we can say that people who have specialized in certain educational fields are well-instructed persons not as truly educated<sup>45</sup>. The history of Islamic scholarship tells that it never considered the transmission of knowledge or its possession to be legitimate without the possession of appropriate moral and spiritual qualities<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, knowledge without these qualities was considered dangerous. Nasr quotes a Persian poet who depicted a person who had knowledge but without moral or spiritual virtues as a thief saying, 'If a thief comes with a lamp, he will be able to steal more precious goods'<sup>47</sup>.

So the contemporary Muslims, who are actually facing an ideological crisis in educational field, like many other fields, and who want to recreate an authentic Islamic education system, cannot avoid an understanding of views of above-mentioned Islamic philosophers concerning all aspects of education, ranging from its goal to its content and from its curriculum to its method.

As the education was not a particular subject in the medieval period, Nasr has taken pain to carve out the ideals and views of Muslim scholars in this regard. He says that various schools of Islamic educational philosophy have appeared over the ages and each school has produced some outstanding figures. He chose the views of Ikhwan al-safa, Ibn Sina, Imam Zuhrawardi and Mulla Sadra representing the Isma'ili and Hermetic – Pythagorean, Peripatetic (*mashsha'i*), illuminationist (*ishraqi*) schools and the 'transcendent theosophy (*al-hikmah al-muta'aliyah*).

Though the *Rasa'il* of Ikhwan al-safa was a synthesis of Shi'ite learning presented in an encyclopaedic fashion, it possessed an educational impact that influenced the whole for the Islamic community across sectarian confines.

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<sup>45</sup> Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas, ed., *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, Hodder and Stoughton, King Abdul Aziz University, 1981.

<sup>46</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World*, (KPI, London and New York), p. 124

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Ikhwan al-safa, who integrated the Greek elements (Neoplatonic, Hermetic and Neopythagorean) into Islamic esotericism, actually compiled the *Rasa'il* for educational purpose and it dealt the questions of its goal, stage, content, methods and other elements in its 51 treatises. Its seventh treatise of first volume, entitled *fil-sana 'i' al-'ilmiyyah* (the second *fil ilm wal-ma'lumi wal-ta'lim: on Knowledge, the known teaching and learning*) deals with education. The ninth treatise, called *Fi bayan al-akhlaq wa asbab ikhtilafiha* (concerning the description of ethics and the cause of differences among its schools) deals with the influence of the environment, the home and the school, professors and other pertinent factors bearing upon the education of students. According to them, the goal of education is to enable the soul, which is a 'spiritual, celestial, luminous, living and knowing substance potentially and active by nature', to actualise these potential possibilities, thereby perfecting it and preparing it for eternal life.<sup>48</sup> Refinement (*tahdhib*), purification (*tathir*), completion (*tatmim*) and perfection (*takmil*) are the important stages of this actualisation. Ikhwan has also considered the stages of life for imparting this kind of education. From birth to the age of four, the senses and instincts are to be strengthened. From the age of four through fifteen, the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics etc. are to be mastered in school (*maktab*) with the help of a teacher (*mu'allim*) through the process of dictation (*imla'*). After this age, the mental powers become more mature and the student begins to learn from a master (*ustad*) using the intellect (*aql*) by means of demonstration (*burhan*) and also through inspiration (*ilham*). So for them, even one is mastering the sciences of nature, the education in true sense is a journey from exoteric to esoteric to experience the eternal truth of divinity<sup>49</sup>.

Nasr then traces the educational legacy of the famous Muslim philosopher-scientist, Ibn Sina, who, according to him, was the first to have treated the question of education in a substantial manner. For Ibn Sina, education begins at the moment of birth – and even before: at the moment that a man chooses a mate whose moral and intellectual character will deeply affect the child who is yet to be born. Mother is everybody's first teacher and the home is the first school as

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

one learns manners and morals and builds up his character (*ta'dib*) in the earliest stage of the life. The teaching of sciences should begin when the body of the child begins to form fully: when the joints are becoming firm and the ears and tongue functioning properly. Each child should be given individual attention and brought up according to his or her particular make-up. 'In his Canon of medicine, Ibn Sina describes the stages of the education further. At the age of six, he may be given tuition by a master, who will teach him step by step and in order. He should not be compelled to stay in school continuously. (Relaxation of the mind contributes to the growth of the body.) At this age, bathing and rest should be less frequent and the exercise before meals should be increased.<sup>50</sup> Grammar study starts at age of 13 and mathematics at 14, followed by philosophy. The goals at the first stage (home) and second stage (school, *maktab*) are strengthening faith, building good character, health, teaching literacy and the rudiments of correct thinking and learning a craft. Ibn Sina advises to be careful while choosing the teacher for a child. The teacher should be pious, knowledgeable, wise and one with high morality who can judge the aptitude of his students in different fields so as to be able to advise them which subjects to pursue in later stages of life<sup>51</sup>. Concerning the method of instruction, the teacher should be moderate in dealings, neither lenient nor harsh. Ibn Sina encourages healthy rivalry and competition among students and emphasises on the importance of discourse and disputation. For him, the *maktab* is an eight-year programme beginning with the study of *Qur'an*, religious instruction and language, followed by ethics and some kind of art or craft according to student's interests and capabilities. It is interesting that the study of craft and art was in view of what is necessary to a living. He says that sports should also be taught and students should spend certain hours of the day participating in some of sports items. After this stage, he says, students should start some kind of livelihood, while those who are mentally fit and intellectually able should continue education specialising in various fields like medicine and other sciences. The education process continues until the student attains the highest level of intellectual perfection and learning at higher level is an endeavour to actualise this perfection, a stage that will illuminate the soul and

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<sup>50</sup> Ibn Sina, A treatise on the Canon of Medicine, trans. O.C. Gruner, London, 1980, quoted by Nasr in Traditional Islam in Modern World .

<sup>51</sup> Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World*, p. 152-153.



enable it to experience the vision of God and fulfil the ultimate goal of all education and in fact human existence itself.<sup>52</sup>

For Sheikh al-Ishraq Shihabu al-din Zuhrawardi, the founder of *Ishraqi* (illuminationist) school, all life is oriented toward the attainment of knowledge through a process, which is none other than educational in the universal sense of the term. This process starts when one experiences first thirst to seek knowledge (he calls him *talib*, seeker), followed by stages of developing mental faculties (seeker of discursive thought), disciplining the passions and purifying the soul. This stage of perfecting discursive faculties will prepare the student to seek philosophy and theosis, and he will become first a philosopher (*al hakim*), then theosopher (*al-hakim al-ilahi*) and finally both. The final goal of education, according to Zuhrawardi, is the attainment of illumination, which in turn requires the perfection of all the faculties of man, both mental and psychological, involving both the rational element and the soul in all its aspects and dimensions. For him, education is inseparable from the spiritual life, and it will eventually illuminate the soul with veritable knowledge that is itself light, according to the already-cited prophetic tradition, 'knowledge is light (*al-ilmu nurun*), and that enables man to experience God who is the Light of Lights (*nur al-anwar*)<sup>53</sup>.

Mulla Sadra has extensively treated education in the annals of Islamic philosophy in which he successfully synthesised philosophy, Sufism, *kalam* the *sharia* sciences. His doctrine of growth and development of the soul underlies the whole question of education. For him, knowledge transforms the being of the knower, so that the whole process of education is the means whereby man ascends in the scale of being and moves toward the state of perfection for which he was created, the purpose of attaining the knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allah*). So education lies at the heart of religion and is the basic concern of Islam, which in its totality, embracing both the *Sharia* (exoteric) and the inner ways of *Tariqah* (esoteric), consists of a vast programme of education for all aspects of the human being, from the corporeal to the highest faculties of the spirit<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 153

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 155-157

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, pp. 158-160

Other than the above mentioned Islamic thinkers, the issue of education has been dealt by many other scholars over the centuries. Ibn Miskawayh (*Tahdhib al-akhlaq*), Al Jahiz (*Kitab al mu'allilin*), Ibn Qutayba (*Uyun al Akhbar* and *al kutub wa- hifz*) and Ibn Abd Rabbih (*Funun al I'lm* and *Haifz al-ilm wa- isti'maluhu*) are worthy of note among them<sup>55</sup>. The famous Muslim historiographer Ibn Khaldun, has also spoken in detail on education in his masterpiece preface for world history, *Muqaddima*. Three chapters in this legendary book is remarkable in dealing educational issues; *Fasl fi ta'lim al-wuldan wa-ikhtilafi madhahib al-amsar al-islamiyya fi turuqihi*, *Fasl fi ann al-shidda 'ala al muta'allimin mudirra bihim*, and *Fasl fi anna al-rihla fit alb al-u'lum wa-liqa' al-mahsayakha mazid kamal fi al-tai'lim*.

**Importance of Al Ghazali:** The views of Abu Hamid Muhammad al Ghazali (d AD 1111), the most celebrated thinker and the most prolific theologian Islam has ever produced, have a great impact on the Islamic educational philosophy. He was instrumental in saving the medieval Muslim thoughts from pure rationalisation and in brilliantly synthesising the exoteric with esoteric. His writings encompassed all the areas of knowledge in the domain of *Ulama* and educated people in general in the medieval Islamic world.<sup>56</sup> He himself studied and taught in such schools in Tus, Nishapur and Baghdad.<sup>57</sup> In two chapters of his magnum opus *Ihya' ulumu al-din – Kitab al-ilm* (the book of knowledge) and *Kitab riyadat al-nafs* (the book on training the soul) and in his another book - *Mizan al-amal* – Al Ghazali describes his thoughts on education based on *Qur'an* and Prophetic tradition. However, his educational ideas can be also seen in dozens of his other books like *Ayyuha al walad*.

Most of his pronouncements relate to the moral education of children, to advanced theoretical studies and especially to the training of Sufi mystics.<sup>58</sup> As a scholar, who spent greater part of his life in religious teaching and wrote

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<sup>55</sup> Avner Giladi, *Islamic Educational Theories In the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes With Special Reference to Al-Ghazali*, Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies) 1987

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

tirelessly on various topics, his approach is mostly pedagogic<sup>59</sup>. However, in the opening chapter of his monumental volumes, *Ihya'*, he gives a detailed picture of the curriculum and teaching and learning methods then prevalent in centres of higher learning<sup>60</sup>. In its third quarter, he has given specific principles and ways of formation of character in the mystic spirit.<sup>61</sup>

According to Giladi, Imam Ghazali's writings deal mainly with four aspects of education, namely, the aims and significance of education, questions connected with curriculum, education directed towards virtues, and finally, methods of learning and teaching<sup>62</sup>. His classification of the sciences reflects his view of curriculum. Being familiar with the Aristotelian divide between 'practical sciences' and 'theoretical sciences'<sup>63</sup>, Imam Ghazali classified the religious sciences into '*ilm al-mu'amala*' which deals with the traits and deeds of man, and into '*ilm ak-mukashafa*,' the science of revelation<sup>64</sup>. However, the criteria of the classification distinguish Imam Ghazali from Aristotelian system. As the philosophers classify the sciences on the basis of their epistemological nature, Imam Ghazali applies their usefulness in attaining religious ends beyond themselves<sup>65</sup>.

Further, Imam Ghazali makes another important educational division basing on the prophetic tradition; the search for knowledge is a religious obligation for every Muslim. He explains the nature of this obligation by classifying the total sciences to *Fard 'ayn* (personal religious obligation) and *Fard kifayah* (community religious obligation). He further classifies the knowledge as desirable sciences (*al 'ulum al mahmoodah*) and prohibited<sup>66</sup>. In both chapters of *Ihya* we mentioned above, he has prescribed the curriculum of the compulsory category that the children should be given both in the parental home and in the *maktab*. It includes

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> al-Ghazali, Kitab *Ihya'* ulumi al-din, Vol. 1

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Avner Giladi, Islamic Educational Theories In the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes With Special Reference to al-Ghazali.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> al-Ghazali, Kitab *Ihya'* ulumi al-din.

<sup>65</sup> Avner Giladi, Islamic Educational Theories In the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes With Special Reference to al-Ghazali.

<sup>66</sup> al-Ghazali, Kitab *Ihya'* ulumi al-din

the articles of faith and knowledge relevant to compliance with the precepts and acquisition of virtues. This means that according to him, education at both home and *maktab* is compulsory<sup>67</sup>. There is an apparent correspondence of a sort between what al-Ghazali defines as ‘personal obligation’ and the main points of the curriculum in elementary education, and also between what he called as ‘general obligation’ or which he termed as allowed, and the content of Muslim higher learning during the middle ages.<sup>68</sup> These views pave the way to the development of a full-fledged community in which everybody has gained obligatory religious knowledge and there is division of knowledge at higher level. Each member of the community would develop his skills in disciplines allowed by religion in a way to fulfil the community obligation. At the same time, the community gets all those experts it wanted from prolific religious scholars to doctors, engineers, teachers, public officials, mechanics, workers, artisans, etc. whose religious and social morality will be high.

The ultimate goal of education for Al Ghazali is also to attain true knowledge (*ilm al-mukashafa*). However, he presents two ways to achieve these truths – the scholarly and the ethical –, and that is perhaps one of his principle contribution to the synthesis of the mystic and orthodox approaches in Islam. Both ways separately or together, are legitimate for him as means of attaining the believer’s goal and the purpose of his life, and even if one of them, the ethical way, is preferable, the other is not totally rejected.<sup>69</sup>

**Iqbal’s contributions To Educational Thought:** Muhammed Iqbal, the poet and philosopher and one of the rare personality illuminated the Muslim minds in 20<sup>th</sup> century, did write no philosophy of education, but has left behind some extremely powerful thoughts that would be helpful in reformulating the educational system as well as in identifying the deficiencies of the existing forms – the orthodox, the Sufi and the modern. He appreciated positive Sufism that inculcates a dynamic personality in service of truth, but criticised the negative

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<sup>67</sup> Avner Giladi , Islamic Educational Theories In the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes With Special Reference to al-Ghazali.

<sup>68</sup> G. Makdisi, the rise f Colleges, quoted by Avner Giladi.

<sup>69</sup> Avner Giladi. Islamic Educational Theories In the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes With Special Reference to al-Ghazali.

one, which is an escape from the problems of the world. He criticised the orthodox system, saying that little have left with them beyond meaningless philological discussion and hair-splitting details of questions more or less irrelevant to life. His lines read, *'I have a complaint O God! Against the schoolmen: they are training the children of falcons to roll in dust'*.<sup>70</sup> His pen did not spare the modern education as well, which seemed to him almost wholly weighted toward technology and materialism and destructive of higher human values. He was looking for an educational system that would render the human personality no just 'informed' but creative and dynamic.<sup>71</sup>

Rahman quotes lines from his poem *'Pir-i-Rumi wa Murid-i-Hidi'* where he selects appropriate answers from Rumi's *Mathnavi* for his questions on various issues. In the opening lines Iqbal says, *'the seeing eye sheds tears of blood; Modern knowledge has become destructive of religion'*. Rumi answers, *'if you apply knowledge (only) to your body, it is like a poisonous snake. If you apply it to your heart, it becomes your friend'*. Later, he complains about the bad effects of British education having on Muslim minds. *'Alas! The young and hot-blooded schoolboy : Is falling a helpless victim to the Western sorcerer'*. Rumi responds, *'A bird caged for long, when it tries to fly, Becomes an easy victim for every rending cat.'* Here he slams both the traditional, which has chained the mind and spirit, and the modern, which gives a materialistic education that is away from higher human values as well as the spiritual culture of Islam, and which indoctrinates the youths with the superiority of Western culture<sup>72</sup>. He was also critical of the educational dualism between religious and secular subjects in the Muslim world, due to which the religious scholar and material scholar become experts in their fields but unable to cope with the problems they face from the other sides. Rahman quotes his question to Rumi in this regard. *'My lofty thoughts reach up to the heavens; But on earth I am humiliated, frustrated, and agonised. I am unable to manage the affairs of this world, And I constantly face stumbling blocks in this path. Why are the affairs of the world beyond my*

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<sup>70</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & modernity; Transformation of an Intellectual tradition*, The University of Chicago Press 1982, p 56

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 56-57.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 57-58.

*control? Why is the learned in religion a fool in the affairs of the world?' To this question Rumi answers, 'Anyone who (claims to be able to ) walk on the heavens; Why should it be difficult for him to walk on the earth?'<sup>73</sup>*

Shortly, 'in present-day discussions of Islamic education, far too little attention has been paid to the views of those Islamic philosophers and sages, who, over the centuries, have meditated upon the meaning of education in the light of such fundamental questions as who is man?; What is his nature?; Where does he come from?; and Where is he going? They proposed an educational philosophy, which, while remaining faithful to the nature of man in the light of his nature, served as background for the creation not only of Islamic philosophy but also Islamic sciences. No serious concern with Islamic education today can afford to remain oblivious to this millennial heritage, nor can any account of Islamic education be considered as being complete without consideration of the remarkable depth, amplitude, universality and also practical significance of the Islamic philosophers' educational concepts and views.'<sup>74</sup> Though we can see, while analysing the educational setup of individual Muslim communities across the world, inculcation of some aspects of these philosophies, especially in the field of primary education (personal obligatory), the totality of the Islamic educational view has lost mostly in course of time. The result was, of course, the post-medieval age stagnation of Islamic civilization and the current crisis of tradition and modernity as well as dichotomy of religious and material education.

### **Organisation and Institutionalisation of Islamic Education**

*'To be present in a circle of learned men is better than prostrating oneself in prayer a thousand time or visiting a thousand sick persons and attend a thousand funerals'. (Prophet)*

The above-mentioned prophetic tradition along with hundreds of other *Qur'anic* and *hadith* verses amply explains how important have been educational institutions and its organisation for Muslims. The spark of educational

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<sup>73</sup> Muhammed Iqbal, Bal-i-Jibril, quoted by Rahman in Islam & Modernity; Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition.

<sup>74</sup> Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World*, p. 160

enlightenment lit by Prophet in Arabia glowed the Muslim minds and planted a burning desire for knowledge and learning in the entire community, the result of which was an amazing ascendance to world power and massive contributions to all fields of education. Prophet himself was and has been the first and greatest teacher for Muslims. His initial preaching classes at *Dar al-arqam* (house of Arqam) in Mecca before Hijra and at Madina mosque later are considered as the first seats of Islamic learning.

Apart from general instructions and advices to all, a particular group of Prophet's Companions, known as *Ahl al-Suffa*, stayed at the Medina mosque to get expertise in knowledge. As Muslims spread across the world from Spain to Central Asia and Islam rapidly expanded across east and west, there was increasing need to set up learning centres to teach the newcomers about basics of the religion as well as to mould learned scholars. This led to organisation of various kinds of educational institutions in the Muslim world like, *halaqah* (circle schools) *maktab* or *Kuttab* (writing schools), the palace schools, the *masjid* or mosque schools, the bookshop schools, the Madrasah or schools of public instructions, *Jamia* (universities) and etc<sup>75</sup>. Though most of the terms were loosely used to denote educational setup in various kinds and forms, a general survey would reveal that 'the entire teaching system of Muslims fell into two groups, the elementary and the higher education'.<sup>76</sup>

Generally, a Muslim child went through various educational phases. After the primary period of early family education, in which the father and mother both played the role of teacher and educator in religious matter as well as in matters relating language, culture, social customs, etc, a period that is usually longer than the pre-kinder-garden phase in the secular system today, he went to *Qur'an* schools or *Maktab*s. This, more or less, corresponded to elementary and early high school. Then he went to *madrasah*, which can be said to correspond to secondary school and undergraduate college, and finally to the *jami'ah*, or place of highest formal education. In many parts of the Islamic world, the *madrasah*

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<sup>75</sup> Education, History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>76</sup> S. M. Hossain, 'A Plea for a Modern Islamic University: Resolution of the Dichotomy' in 'Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education', ed. Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas, Hodder and Stoughton, King Abdul Aziz University, 1981.

incorporated the *jami'a* and provided what would at once correspond to secondary, as well as to college and university education.<sup>77</sup>

One of the significant features of the Muslim educational system is a magnificent experiment of public enterprises in education, free public instruction, freedom of teaching and freedom of studies<sup>78</sup>. Popular support has been the backbone of most of the system, especially in the financial sphere, which rendered it a kind of freedom. Metcalf has pointed out the significance of this popular support in educational system in her monumental study on Darul Uloom, Deoband, one of the major learning centre of traditional Islam.<sup>79</sup>

In the initial stage, the total system was informal and, more significantly, the educational sector was not considered as job market; neither the teachers received any kind of remunerations for their services nor the students paid any fee, moreover both were provided with all the available means, food and lodging. Acquaintance of any of one craft or art along with studies, as mentioned above, has been the way to meet the life needs. It is evident from the history that the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the Islamic education system was a post-tenth century phenomena when the states and rulers started flooding funds to the educational sector, allegedly to establish the supremacy of certain schools of thoughts<sup>80</sup>. However, according to Hossain, the state had very little to do in the public efforts for the diffusion and promotion of learning, and extended necessary financial support without imposing any restriction and control in the matter of teaching.<sup>81</sup>

*Halqahs* were at the helm of the informal system and it was the simplest type of early Muslim education. It was named so for the teacher was, as a rule, seated on a dais or cushion with the pupils gathering in a semicircle before him. The

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<sup>77</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*.

<sup>78</sup> S. M. Hossain, 'A Plea for a Modern Islamic University: Resolution of the Dichotomy'

<sup>79</sup> Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press.

<sup>80</sup> Joan E, Gilbert, *Institutionalisation of Muslim Scholarship and Professionalisation of the 'Ulama' in Medieval Damascus*, *Studia Islamica*, No 52, 1980. Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*, The Middle East Institute, Washington DC 1962

<sup>81</sup> S. M. Hossain, *A Plea for a Modern Islamic University: Resolution of the Dichotomy in Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*.



circles, which were held mostly in mosques, varied in approach, course content and quality of teaching. Teachers were as a rule looked upon as masters of scholarship and their lectures were meticulously recorded in notebooks, which were periodically examined, corrected and approved for use in teaching others. Discussion and debates between teachers and students and among students were largely encouraged<sup>82</sup>. Since the age of Prophet's Companions itself, various mosques across the Islamic world were famous for learning circles of particular scholars who were specialists in one or more religious sciences. In a number of instances more than one circles of different scholars were held in same mosques, even at the same time. Students held long journeys to catch precious educational dictations provided by experts. The circles of Abdullah bin Abbas, Hasan al Basari, Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafi'i and the likes are remarkable for its popularity and large gathering. Various transformed forms of such learning circles mainly aimed at popular teaching, are found still existing at different parts of Islamic world, though it has lost its pomp and show as well as creativity of the olden days.

Writing schools (*maktab* or *kuttab*), in which pupils learned to read and write, date back to the pre-Islamic period in the Arab world. After the advent of Islam and the introduction of instruction in religion and the *Qur'an*, these schools developed into centres for instruction in elementary arithmetic, penmanship, ethics (manners), elementary grammar, horsemanship and swimming. *Maktab*s were quite common in almost every town or village in the Middle East, Africa, Sicily and Spain<sup>83</sup>. This elementary popular system was widely adopted by the middle of the eighth century. Although the classes were sometimes held in a shop or private house they were much more often attached to a mosque<sup>84</sup>. This kind of preliminary educational system still exists in almost all individual Muslim societies. Its name, organisation, quality, curriculum all vary accordingly. Many call it as *Qur'anic* schools, while in Kerala the term '*Madrasa*' is widely used to denote an institution which is having primary and secondary, and sometimes

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<sup>82</sup> Education, History of , Encyclopaedia Britannica

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*, The Middle East Institute, Washington DC, 1962.

higher secondary, level of classes and which is running parallel to the 'One to Ten' classes of formal schooling, but without hampering the functioning or attendance of the formal one. We shall discuss the organisation and content of this system in detail in the last chapter. Along with acquainting children with the religious foundation of their life, society and civilization, the *Maktabas*, as the name denotes served as an introduction to the mastery of language with teaching the process of reading and writing<sup>85</sup>. Assuming that the chief goal of the *Maktabas* was to teach everybody to read *Qur'an* and the necessary prayers and other rites, and these studies were a must for a performing Muslim, we can say that the literacy rate among Muslims was high.

Schools conducted in royal palaces were not the just copy of *Maktabas*, but taught social and cultural studies designed to prepare the pupil for higher education, for service in the government of the Caliphs. The instructors were called *Mu'addibs*, or instructors in good manners. Oratory, history, tradition, formal ethics and the art of good conversation were often included in the curriculum<sup>86</sup>. Almost all royal palaces since Abbasid period courted scholars and expert of each subjects at their *darbars* to render the princes and princesses the best available education. The palaces of Indian Muslim kings are remarkable for the schooling it provided for the grooming rulers<sup>87</sup>.

Mosque schools and mosque colleges are the longest lasting educational system in Islam. This system developed and transformed in various forms. Other than the above-discussed learning circles, the mosque schools adopted institutional forms in course of time. Mosques increased in number under caliphs, particularly the *Abbasids*. In the first decades of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, there were reportedly 3,000 mosques in Baghdad alone while as many as 12,000 were reported in Alexandria. These and other thousands of mosques at Isfahan, Mashhad, Ghom, Damascus, Cairo, Granada and hundreds of other Muslim cities employed as institutionalised

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<sup>85</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*.

<sup>86</sup> Education, history of, Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>87</sup> Education in Muslim India: Being an inquiry into the state of education during the Muslim period of Indian History 1000-1800, written by Jaffar S. M (Idarah-I Adabiyat-i Delli, New Delhi 1973) gives a well-referred account of Islamic education system prevailed during Muslim scholars from Muhammed Ghazni to the last Mugal ruler.

learning centres, where students from all over the Muslim world stayed and studied multiple subjects<sup>88</sup>. When the new territory was conquered, mosques were established and basic instruction in Islam was given. Once established as cathedral-mosques in larger towns, they could develop into well-known places of learning, often with hundreds, sometimes with thousands of students. Frequently they contained important libraries.<sup>89</sup> Even after *Madrastas* and colleges had become a popular form of education, the old mosques continued to serve as seats of higher learning. There was no prescribed provision for entrance requirements, staff appointments, courses or examinations. There was really no clear-cut distinction between the faculty and student body, as an ambitious young man often taught one subject at the same time that he was studying another one<sup>90</sup>. The aim of the education in mosque-colleges was not to make discoveries or to seek the truth by means of research and experiment. It was felt to be a pious duty to memorize ancient texts, subscribing to the orthodox doctrines. Its principle purpose was to teach the students to accept the truths, revealed to the prophet and interpreted by eminent scholars<sup>91</sup>. However, with the advent of time some mosque colleges adjusted themselves or due to pressure to modern trends and underwent remarkable transformation. The Al-Azhar mosque of Cairo (opened in 972 by Shi'ite rulers and later dominated by *Sunnis*), the *Qarawiyin* mosque in Fes, Morocco (founded in 859) and the *Zaituna* mosque in Tunis (set up in 732) are most important in this regard. All of them are currently serving as well-known modern universities of the Muslim world while keeping their religious moorings intact<sup>92</sup>. Mosque schools of various kinds existed until later periods in different parts of Muslim world from Morocco to Algeria, Yemen and Iraq as the defenders of the traditional knowledge. Interestingly, Kerala Muslims still keep the tradition of the mosque schools in an institutionalised manner and in amazing quantity. We shall also shed light on these learning centres, known as *Darses* (literally lessons) later.

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<sup>88</sup> Education, history of, Encyclopaedia Britannica

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, *Some Institutional Aspects of Muslim Higher Education and Their Relation to Islam*, Numen, Vol. 12 (April 1965)

<sup>90</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*, The Middle East Institute, Washington DC 1962

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, *Some Institutional Aspects of Muslim Higher Education and Their Relation to Islam*.

Bookshop schools, which have been also mentioned in forms of Copyist Bazaar (*suq al-warraqin*)<sup>93</sup>, were significant learning centres of the medieval Islam. Bookshops, copyists and book dealers were abundantly developed in large, important Islamic cities such as Damascus, Baghdad and Cordoba as a result of the high degree of learning and scholarship in Islam, particularly during the Abbasid period in eastern Islam and the later Umayyads in western Islam<sup>94</sup>. Book dealers travelled to famous bookstores in search of rare manuscripts for purchase and resale to collectors and scholars and thus contributed to the spread of learning. Many such manuscripts found their way to private libraries of famous Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Al Ghazali and Al Farabi.<sup>95</sup> Major libraries founded in the Islamic world where large number of knowledge seekers frequented also can be dealt in this category. Because of the shortage of books, high government officials established great libraries, while the *Madrasas* and mosques made more modest collections of books and written documents. Some of the largest libraries were in Bayt al-Hikmah at Baghdad, the royal palace Mosques of al-azhar and Dar al-Hikmah in Fatimid Cairo, the great mosques of Fez and the intellectual centres of Spain<sup>96</sup>.

*Madrasas*, which bear the tag of fundamentalism and blind traditionalism, and which are accused of being hate centres and grooming dens of terrorists, have been, in fact, a marvellous organisational system of Islamic learning. Though currently slammed for stagnation, deterioration and lack of creativity and innovations, the so-called outdated centres were actually established to accommodate the secular subjects along with pure religious ones. As the *maktabs*, mosque schools and palace schools embodied certain educational limitations with limited curricula and physical facilities and conflicts between secular and religious aims, *Madrasas* were initiated creating a curriculum of studies more representative of the progressive diffusion of knowledge and organizing a body of better paid and better trained teachers to handle this

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Education, History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*

enlarged curriculum more efficiently<sup>97</sup>. These institutions were instrumental in the civilisational enlightenment and intellectual supremacy that Muslims enjoyed for centuries. The *Madrasa* system developed into a fully-fledged college and university system by 10<sup>th</sup> century and in fact played a fundamental role in the foundation of the European centres of higher education<sup>98</sup>.

There were many factors that led to the establishment of *Madrasas*, including a wide-spread perception that a system of institutionalised religious higher education can control the education of the religious leaders and so implementing a centrally-directed policy. The need of reorganised administration of the empire for personnel, and the *Sunni* competition with the contemporary *Fatimid* centres in Egypt were other important factors. The famous *wazir Nizam al-Mulk* (in power 1063-1092) was the first who realized these factors and founded the first *Madrasa* in Khorasan, to defend Islamic doctrine against the *Qaramatian* teachings in that region. He then founded nine *Nizamiyya Madrasas* across his provinces<sup>99</sup>. G Maldisi, who wrote the book 'Origin and Character of *Al-Madrasa*', is among the major writers who highlighted the sectarian aspects of medieval *Madrasas*. However, refuting this point, A L Tibawi says that the *Nizmiya* was meant as a public institution dedicated to *ahl al-'ilm* and the *maslaha*, for the study of religious science and the training of state functionaries<sup>100</sup>.

The emergence of *Madrasa* system into the forefront of the Islamic educational system paved the way for the crystallization and institutionalisation of the entire educational streams in most of the Muslim world in between eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The period witnessed a network of Islamic scholars and an unabated flow of scholarship across cities and provinces of the Islamic world that spanned into the boundaries of India, Spain, North Africa and Central Asia, thus organising an international system of Muslim learning. Religious scholars typically studied first in their native city and began to travel, usually to several

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<sup>97</sup> Education, history of , Encyclopaedia Britannica

<sup>98</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*

<sup>99</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, *Some Institutional Aspects of Muslim Higher Education and Their Relation to Islam*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

places, in order to continue their education.<sup>101</sup> The international scholarly system provided the mechanism for standardization of portions of Islamic education, society and culture. In an environment where scholars in Khurasan and Spain read books by *Muhaddiths* of Iraq, Damascenes filled law professorships in Baghdad and scholars from all over the Islamic world were journeying to meet and study with one another, the result was the creation of a strong, cosmopolitan, influential elite<sup>102</sup>. In contrast to the first five Islamic centuries, in which '*Ulama*' developed their own practices and organisations independently of the state, and the rulers, both *Umayyad* and *Abbasid*, did not establish any enduring institutions with staffs devoted to the study of the religious sciences, the medieval centuries witnessed rapid institutionalisation of the international Islamic scholarship. Institutionalisation meant permanent provision of special places of instruction, residence and employment for a majority of scholars and lasting endowments to pay the salaries of the personnel and building costs<sup>103</sup>.

The flourishing of *Madrassa* system as the centres of Islamic higher education and the innovative studies it invoked in all fields of sciences, incorporating the available Greek-Persian-Indian heritages and enriching all of it, led to the establishment of famous Muslim research centres and universities that were the crown and glory of the medieval Muslim education. Important among them were the universities of *Nizamiya* and *Mustansiriyah* in Baghdad, and those developed in Spanish cities of Cordoba, Seville, Toledo, Granada, Murcia, Almeria, Valencia and Cadiz. The contribution of these centres to the advancement of knowledge was vast<sup>104</sup>. They applied technological expertise to the development of irrigation systems, architectural innovations, textiles, iron and steel products, earthenware and gunpowder, and the enhancement of commerce and the maintenance of a merchant marine<sup>105</sup>. It is almost interesting to see that all the known scientists and scholars had pursued their studies in the sacred shadow of *Qur'an* and prophetic traditions.

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<sup>101</sup> Jhon. E. Gilbert, *Institutionalization of Muslim Scholarship and Professionalization of the 'Ulama' in Medieval Damascus*, *Studia Islamica*, No. 52. (1980)

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Education, history of, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

*Madrasa* education system developed in Central Asian countries and Indian subcontinent also during this period. The religious educational system prevalent in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan has the same legacy and transformational courses its counterparts in the Middle Eastern and Western Muslim world have. Prestigious and high quality *Madrasas* were established and looked after in large numbers in these areas under court as well as private patronages.<sup>106</sup>

Many factors are assigned to the deterioration and stagnation of once vibrant *Madrasa* system and to its transformation to the present condition where only the so-called religious topics are studied and where certain textbooks and its various interpretations based on particular school of thoughts are transmitted to the next generation, actually missing the real meaning of experimental and thought-provoking studies. According to Bayard Dodge, because of the downfall of *Fatimids*, the Crusades, the Mongolian invasions, the Christian conquest of Spain and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, only a few enterprising spirits kept alive an interest in secular subjects. War tyranny and exploitation made life so painful that most of the scholars shrank from the affairs of this world, seeking admission to paradise by means of religious studies, ascetic living and mysticism<sup>107</sup>. Rahman is of the opinion that the stagnation was also the result of religious scholars' staunch attack against rationalism that enlivened the Islamic philosophy, theology and other fields of intellectualism and their antagonism to the innovative approaches in religion.<sup>108</sup> However, when the denominational interests dominated higher learning, academic freedom and practical studies gave way to religious and literary pursuits, Arabic language and grammar, and intolerance toward scientific innovations, secular subjects and creative scholarship<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> Education in Muslim India: Being an inquiry into the state of education during the Muslim period of Indian History 1000-1800, written by Jaffar S. M (Idarah-I Adabiyat-i Delli, New Delhi 1973) gives a well referred account of Islamic education system prevailed during Muslim scholars from Muhammed Ghazni to the last Mugal ruler.

<sup>107</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*

<sup>108</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, 1982

<sup>109</sup> Education, History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica

The *Madrasa* educational system prevalent now, mostly in the subcontinent, is actually part of a religious revivalism that was part of a protective response by traditionalists towards the giant waves of western modernism and its spokespersons in the Muslim world. Metcalf and Robinson have attempted well to canvass the features and courses of this revivalism<sup>110</sup>.

No discussion on Islamic education system would be complete without mention of the role played by Sufi centres, called *Zawiyah* and *Ribat* in Arab world and *khanaqah* in the Persian, Indian and Turkish worlds. *Tekke* is also used in Turkish<sup>111</sup>. In Islam's darkest hour, it was the Sufis who kept the light of faith burning. The Mongols could destroy the *Madrasas* and kill the scholars, but they could not touch the heart of the believer. The work of Abdul Qader Jeelani of Baghdad (d 1186), Kwaja Moeenuddin Chisti Of Ajmer (d 1235), Ibn al Arabi of Damascus (1240), Sheikh Shaduli of Cairo (d 1258), Moulana Rumi of Konya (d 1235) and Sheikh Bahauddin Naqshaband of Samarqand (d 1389) not only kept Islam alive but carried it deep into India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>112</sup>. It must be remembered that in certain periods of Islamic history, such as after the Mongol invasion when the formal educational system was destroyed, *Sufi* centres also took the task of formal education upon themselves and in some areas of the Islamic world for long periods, they were the sole educational institutions, which were still functioning<sup>113</sup>. According to Bayard Dodge, who called it *Dervish Monastery*, the Sufis were one of the important members of Muslim society in the medieval times. They devoted themselves to ascetic practices and mysticism, and organised brotherhoods and founded monasteries to provide homes for the members of their orders. As they considered the study of the *Qur'an* as a valuable means of attaining sanctity, these institutions did a great deal to encourage education.<sup>114</sup> The function of these *Zawiyahs* was the transmission of the highest form of knowledge, namely Divine

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<sup>110</sup> Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, Francis Robinson, 'The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia', Permanent Black, 2001, 'Islam and Muslim History in South Asia', Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>111</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*

<sup>112</sup> The Seven Lives of Madrasah, [WWW.irfi.org/articles](http://WWW.irfi.org/articles)

<sup>113</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*

<sup>114</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*



Knowledge (*al-Ma'rifah* or *irfan*). Sufism has always been concerned primarily with the training of the human soul to enable it to become a worthy receptacle of Divine Presence<sup>115</sup>. Inspired by the classical Islamic universities, the *Zawiyahs* were elaborate religious community centres including a mosque, a *Madrassa*, a rest house and a cultural centre<sup>116</sup>. Gilbert has mentioned the existence of many institutionalised *Ribats* and *Zawiyahs* in Damascus and other major Islamic educational cities during medieval period.<sup>117</sup> Explaining another function of Sufi centres, Nasr says that since Sufism has usually expressed its teaching in the form of literature and music of the highest order, it has been also places for artistic educations<sup>118</sup>. However, Sufism has been accused of being the chief cause of the intellectual stagnation in the Muslim world<sup>119</sup>.

### **Curriculum and Content Of Islamic Education**

It is common with all system of education in the past and present that its content and curriculum will be set according to an ideological vision it wants to inculcate in the society. In another words, a philosophical and ideological foundation is instrumental for any educational curricula as the transmission of culture, of skills and of values and beliefs being the main social functions of the education in any society.

Plato was very strict on controlling institutions according to his ideas. In the third part of his Republic, he says in the tongue of Socrates, "If a party of players were to visit our Republic and ask permission to show their art before us, we should ask them to let us see it first. If it be in concord with our principles we should accept their show in our society. Otherwise, we should ask them to go elsewhere; we have no use of their art".<sup>120</sup> Plato has asked all educators to teach children things that are conducive to the quest of the highest qualities. This is true in modern education as well. In many countries like Great Britain, law requires a

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<sup>115</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*

<sup>116</sup> The Seven Lives of Madrasah, [WWW.irfi.org/articles](http://WWW.irfi.org/articles)

<sup>117</sup> Jhon E. Gilbert, *Institutionalization of Muslim Scholarship and Professionalization of the 'Ulama' in Medieval Damascus*, *Studia Islamica*, No. 52. (1980)

<sup>118</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*

<sup>119</sup> Rahman, Bayard Dodge.

<sup>120</sup> From Plato's Republic, as quoted by Basheer El Tom, 'Education and Society' in *Education and Society in The Muslim World*, ed. Muhammad Wasiullah Khan, Hodder And Stoughton, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. 1981

certain amount of instruction in the established faith. Even in the countries where education is declared very secular, like the US and France, political and ideological beliefs may be inculcated to varying degrees. Such is the case in all Communist countries, in which Marxism-Leninism is taught in the manner of an official faith.<sup>121</sup> In the erstwhile Soviet Russia, educationists were constrained to cater for a society whose members are supposed to be communists who believe in Marxists thought and ideology. According to Nigel Grant, a British educationist who spent three years in the Soviet Union to study education there, the communist credo was firmly implanted directly or indirectly at every level of education.<sup>122</sup> In non-Communist states, governments may resort to transmitting propaganda through state controlled schools in an attempt to secure the future commitment of youth to the regime.<sup>123</sup>

As the first and foremost aim of the Islamic education being the inculcation of *Qur'anic* and prophetic teachings in the life of a person and moulding of a well-mannered society, the content and curriculum of Islamic education system throughout the centuries have been based on or stemmed out of these two primary religious sources. Although the curriculum has not been the same during all periods of Islamic history, and in all parts of the Islamic world, there has been a general ideal order, which has always remained in the background, and has often been followed.<sup>124</sup>

*Qur'an* and *Hadith*, and its oral interpretations as heard from the Prophet were the content of the early educational congregations held by Companions. The next generation also followed the suit. However, with the advent of Islam and emergence of new problems and needs, new disciplines were founded mainly to support the study of *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. As Muslims reined the empire of knowledge in its classical period all fields of sciences became part of the curriculum in some or other institutions or learning centres. Nevertheless, there have been divisions in the group of disciplines according to its origin and nature.

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<sup>121</sup> Education, History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica

<sup>122</sup> Basheer El Tom, 'Education and Society' in 'Education and Society in The Muslim World ed. Muhammad Wasiullah Khan, Hodder And Stoughton, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. 1981

<sup>123</sup> Education, History of, Encyclopaedia Britannica

<sup>124</sup> Syed Sajjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf, eds., *Crisis in Muslim Education*

In the later period, Islamic education shrunk to what is called as pure religious subjects, which is said to be the root cause behind the backwardness of contemporary *Madrasas*.

The major classification of the disciplines is into *Naqli* (transmitted) sciences and *Aqli* (Intellectual sciences). According to Nasr, the *naqli* sciences dominated the curricula of most of the *Madrasahs*, as the main activity there was instruction in the religious sciences, especially Divine law (*al-Shari'ah*), its principles (*al-usul*), jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), etc. This was based on the careful study of the *Qur'an* and its commentaries (*tafsir* and *ta'wel*), of the traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*), and of the sacred history of Islam. These studies in turn required complete mastery of Arabic and all the literary disciplines connected with it. They also led to the study of theology (*kalam*) in its manifold schools, which developed from the first Islamic century and which reached a period of intense activity in the Baghdad of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. There were, however, *naqli* sciences like logic, mathematics, the natural sciences and philosophy.<sup>125</sup>

Ibn Khaldun has detailed this division naming the subjects studied under each category. Under the philosophical or Intellectual Sciences, he listed (1) logic (2) Natural Sciences or Physics; Medicine; Agriculture (3) Sciences of being beyond Nature, or Metaphysics; Magic and Talisma: science of the occult properties of letters of the Alphabet; Alchemy and (4) Sciences dealing with Quantity; Geometry, Arithmetic, music and astronomy. In transmitted one, he listed *Qur'an*, its interpretation and recitation, *Hadith* and their chain of transmission, jurisprudence theology Sufism and linguistic science such as grammar, lexicography and literature.<sup>126</sup> It should be remembered that not all the mentioned sciences were had always been taught in all of the institutions in the Islamic world. But they have been transmitted to generations through either formal learning or private teaching.

Talking about the medieval curriculum, Bayard Dodge, like many others, classifies the disciplines into Revealed and Rational Sciences. He has enjoined

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<sup>125</sup> SH Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*

<sup>126</sup> Syed Sajjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf, eds., *Crisis in Muslim Education*

the sciences of the Arabic language like, grammar, rhetoric and literature, to the revealed one, while mathematics, division of inheritance and logic were listed with rational ones<sup>127</sup>. He says, “The curriculum in the *Madrasas* not only included the traditional linguistic, legal and religious subjects, but also arithmetic and the division of inheritance, land surveying, history, poetry, hygiene, the care of animals and plants and other phases of natural history. There was also a course in medicine with a physician in charge<sup>128</sup>. Meanwhile, the subjects taught in Sufi centres included the *Qur’anic* sciences, *Tasawwuf*, martial arts, basic technical and trade skills, spiritual discipline, good manners (*adab*) and the languages.<sup>129</sup>

Interestingly, the curricula of Islamic research centres and universities flourished in the medieval period were consisted of both comprehensive programmes of vocational studies and advanced studies in the professions. It included courses in algebra, trigonometry, geometry, chemistry physics astronomy medicine (including surgery, anatomy, pharmacy and specialized medical branches), logic, ethics, metaphysics, geography, political disciplines, philology, poetry, grammar, prosody, law, jurisprudence and all braches of theology.<sup>130</sup>

After the vibrant and active middle ages, due to the above-explained reasons, Islamic education generally limited its focus on the so-called pure religious disciplines. Most of the subjects were discarded from the curricula giving it secular or non-Islamic colour. The long period of post-medieval deterioration strengthened the dichotomy between religious and material or secular subjects. The western colonialism along with its modern and scientific education added to this dichotomy, as most of the *Madrasas* and Islamic institutions transformed to centres of transmitting some written books and its interpretations and commentaries on interpretations. This period witnessed the classification of Islamic subjects into *Manqulat* (transcribed or copied) and *Ma’qulat* (rational) sciences. The subjects of *Qur’an* and Hadith included in the first while subjects ranged from Arabic grammar and rhetoric to logic mathematics philosophy and

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<sup>127</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> The Seven Lives of Madrasa, [www.irfi.org/articles](http://www.irfi.org/articles)

<sup>130</sup> Education, History of, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

theology to books of legal commentaries and jurisprudence included in the second.

However, it is important to mention that there have been massive but mostly uncoordinated efforts to revamp the content and curricula as well as the mode and method of the Islamic education across the world. The works on Islamisation of all knowledge being held in some institutions and newly founded Islamic universities in line with the successful and effective applications of the methods applied in golden Middle Ages are remarkable among this. In addition, we can find a host of educational innovations in many individual Muslim societies as part of their endeavours to synthesis Islamic and secular fields of studies, making the Islamic educational system more relevant in the modern period. Many such innovations can be seen among Kerala Muslims about which we will discuss in detail in the next chapters of this study.

The importance of the teacher and the sacred teacher-student relation in the dissemination of knowledge is one of the most significant characters of the Islamic education system, though such bondage has been gravely affected by the application of the western education system. The beginning and spread of Islamic learning in the early days of Islam is centred around individuals rather than schools. The content of Islamic thought is also characterised by individual effort. Certain outstanding personalities, who had learned the tradition and had built round it their own legal and theological systems, attracted students from far and near who sought knowledge from them. The individual importance of the teacher is evident in the tradition of rendering *Ijazah* (certificate) for the student by the teacher after giving his full course, thus allowing him to teach what he was taught. Sometimes the *Ijazah* was given to teach a particular subject, say *Hadith* or *fiqh*, or to teach specified books. Even after the spread of *Madrasas* with several teachers dictating the students that reduced the individual importance of the teacher, 'the biographies of illustrious men and scholars usually give the names of their teachers and it is relatively rare to find the names of the colleges where they studied'.<sup>131</sup> Fazlur Rahman claims that it would not be far from the

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<sup>131</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, Weidenfled and Nicolson

truth to say that even in the later Middle Ages, the majority of celebrated savants were not the product of the *Madrasas* but men who had been informal students of individual teachers. If one were to write a history of great and original thinkers in Islam, one would not find many recruits from the *Madrasas*.<sup>132</sup> He connects the central importance of the teacher with the widespread Islamic phenomenon of 'seeking knowledge (*talab al-'ilm*). Itinerant students travelled over long distances, sometimes over the length and breadth of the Muslim world, to follow the lectures of famous teachers. The study of *Hadith*, the putative reports of deeds and sayings of the Prophet and his Companions, gave the earliest and the most powerful impetus to these scholastic journeys.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid*

<sup>133</sup> *ibid*

CHAPTER III  
**DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC  
EDUCATION SYSTEM IN KERALA**

INTRODUCITON

OTHUPALLI

'WA'AZ' PROGRAMMES

'DARS' SYSTEM

CONTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

ROLE OF ARABI-MALAYALAM IN SPREAD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## **Development and Evolution of Islamic Education System in Kerala**

In the foregone chapter we found that there are certain features that distinguish the Islamic System of Education from that of non-Islamic, and a set of basic principles and a unifying force that design the philosophy, content and curricula of the Islamic Education System. However, apart from this basic unity, there are variations in the educational set-up of particular individual Muslim societies around the world based on differences in sectarian lines to regional cultures. Studies have revealed that the system of education in individual Muslim communities has an international diversity, and the adaptation of particular Muslim societies into different social climates in different ages has produced amazing varieties of educational systems that were adopted to disseminate Islamic knowledge into successive generations.

The Muslim community in Kerala also provides its own contribution to this international Islamic educational diversity. The history of Islamic education in Kerala starts right from the onset of Islamic propagation in the state. Tracing back the historical evolution of the educational systems adopted by Kerala Muslims throughout the centuries, one can find that Muslims in this part of the world have been keeping their own educational identity from the rest of the Muslim world in the same manner they preserved their social, political, religious and cultural identity. However, the trends and ideological differences that managed and designed the pace and form of the global Islamic educational system have influenced the development, evolution and modernisation of religious education among Kerala Muslims. In other words, just like the global evolutionary phases, the Islamic educational history of Kerala also had the phases of steady development, golden period, stagnation and deterioration, and a hurried rush towards revivalism in both traditionalist and modernist lines.

According to the most prevalent tradition, Muslims in Kerala have an almost 14-century old history. A detailed and well-written history is available only that of post 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, studies have revealed that Muslims in Malabar lived as an influential community with honour and dignity during their initial period,



mainly seven hundred years from eighth to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, in which they developed to a well-knit community. Miller sums up the specific factors involved in the growth of the Muslim community up to the European encroachment as: immigration, intermarriage, missionary activity, the support of the Zamorine and personal advantage.<sup>134</sup> The rulers, rich and poor, and upper castes and lower castes welcomed the Muslims alike due to their piety, honesty and enthusiasm in trade. CA Innes has written in his Malabar Gazetteer that Zamorin definitely encouraged conversion in order to man Arab ships on which he depended for this aggrandizement, and he is said to have directed that in every family of fishermen in his dominion one or more of the male members should be brought up as Mohammedans.<sup>135</sup> The positive and sympathetic atmosphere allowed Muslims give more time in missionary activities as well as religious teachings. This golden period ended with the arrival of Portuguese in 1498 AD, which gravely spoiled the monopoly of Muslims in sea trade as well as pushed them to a four-century long struggle to exist as a community and to preserve their identity. 'The combination of Portuguese control and religious aggressiveness severely impeded the advance of Islam in Kerala'.<sup>136</sup> 'The result of Portuguese period for the Mappilas may be summarized as economic retrogression, estrangement from Hindus, bitterness against Christians and anew militancy.'<sup>137</sup>

Portuguese cruelty was followed by British colonialism and both were at the top of their enmity and bitterness while dealing with Muslims, thanks to the European rivalry to 'Moors' caused by years long crusades. In between, Malabar experienced the reign of Mysore Muslim rulers, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, there was no respite from an apparent feeling of alienation that gripped Mappila Muslims as a result of antagonistic measures. Though Mappilas never put their hope in an Islamic statehood and did not keep political aspirations, the alienation and aggressive religious policies of the colonisers forced them to wage pitched battles, many of which were spontaneous outbreaks. This long lasted anti-colonial defensive

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<sup>134</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*, p. 74.

<sup>135</sup> CA Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, Vol. I, quoted by Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*.

<sup>136</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*, p. 74.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p. 75.

struggle weakened Malabar Muslims and led them to a complete deterioration that culminated in the tragic Rebellion of 1921. 'The causes of the Rebellion have been variously stated to be; Mappila economic discontent, Mappila fanaticism, the Khilafat movement, the freedom movement, British administrative oppression, British 'divide and rule policy', religious insults by British, or a combination of these.<sup>138</sup>

'The Rebellion of 1921 was both an end point and a turning point in the life of the Muslim community. It was the first stage in a new development'.<sup>139</sup> It was for Mappilas what 1857 mutiny was for Muslims in North India, as it shattered the society as a whole but evoked trends of resurrection, reformation, awakening and religious revivalism from within. 'Having travelled an eight-century road of steady progress and four-century of steady decline, they arrived at the dawn of a new day'. Nevertheless, the journey towards social, educational, political and economical modernisations was not easy as the society setup underwent radical changes, mainly in the community leadership, which was taken over from particular outstanding respected religious personalities by various organisations formed in line with traditionalist and modernist views. All of them took their own routes towards modernisation and tried to revamp the society according to their own ideologies. So while tracing the religious educational history of Mappila Muslims, its development, progress and multi-faceted modernisation, we have to study it in the context of their anti-British encounters, including the developments before and after 1921.

There are different opinions on the actual timeframe of Islam's entry into the state. The conflict of opinions revolves around the emigration of Cheraman Perumal, a Kerala ruler who is believed to be the first native Muslim in the region, to Arabia, and on the period of the arrival of first missionary group under the leadership of Malik bin Dinar. Though the Muslim and Hindu traditions are in agreement about the emigration and conversion of the Perumal, there are serious differences of opinion regarding the date of the event. If the Muslim tradition that Perumal visited the Prophet and accepted Islam at his hands is

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 125

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p. 124

correct, it must have happened between 622 and 632 AD, when the prophet said to have written to the crowned heads of several countries, with which the Arabs had close trade relations. Two major legendary books on the origin of Kerala, *Keralolpathi* and *Keralappazhama*, have backed this tradition. Famous Muslim historian of Kerala, late PA Said Muhammad, has proved that Perumal was a Companion of Prophet based on some reliable historical documents.

An inscription found from the *Juma Masjid* of Madayi, situated in the territory of the Perumals, that reads '*sanatha khamsin*' (fifth year of Hijra), a report in an important book found in the library of Arakkal family (the only but nominal Muslim ruling family existed in Kerala) that calls Perumal a Companion, and the opinions in the history books of '*firdousul hikmah*' and '*thareeq firishta*' and in the writings of renowned Muslim scholar Sheikh Ahmad Koya Shaliyati, all denote that Islam has reached in Kerala during the Prophet's period. In addition to this, there are dependable proofs for the coming of noted Companion *Mugeerath bin Shu'ba* to Calicut during the reign of *Hazrath Usman bin Affan*.<sup>140</sup>

Talking about the pre-Islamic trade relations between Arabs and Kerala, Roland E. Miller says that as pre-Islamic traders, Arabs were provided a friendly situation that facilitated the introduction of Islam, and as Muslims, they introduced the faith. Although the evidence is not conclusive, in view of these circumstances it may be safely assumed that Islam, following the path of Judaism and Christianity, began in Kerala at a very early date, almost certainly before the end of the seventh century, and Qureshi's view<sup>141</sup> that "Islam entered within a few years of the proclamation by the Prophet of his mission' is circumspect and worthy of strong consideration.<sup>142</sup>

'Another significant evidence to prove the existence of influential trading communities in the port-town of Kerala is provided by the *Tarisappalli* copper-plate grant (849 AD). This grant proves the influence these trading groups (including Arab Muslims) in the affairs of the local kingdoms. The grant was

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<sup>140</sup> There is a place in Calicut called *Mukhadar*, believed as derived from Mugeerathu Dar, named after the house where Mugeerath stayed in the city.

<sup>141</sup> IM Qureshi in his 'The Muslim Community in the Indo-Pakistan Sub continent - 610-1947'

<sup>142</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

made to a Christian group and was attested by a group of Muslim merchants in Kufic characters of Arabic. It is evident that to be called upon to witness such an important document, the Arab Muslim community must have been residents of Quilon for a pretty long time. If that were so, the community must have been residents of Quilon at least from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD'.<sup>143</sup>

According to the second view, Islam's arrival was in 22 Hijra, (AD 643), when Malik bin Dinar and his companions held wide range of propagation activities and built many mosques across the coastal areas of the state. An inscription on the door of *Malik bin Dinar Masjid* that reads '*sanatha isnaini wa ishreen (22 AH)*' substantiate this perception. The most renowned Islamic scholar Kerala ever produced, Sheikh Zaynuddin al-Makhdoom, says in his '*Thuhfath-ul-Mu'mineen*' that *Malik bin Deenar* and his group arrived in 200 AH. British historian CA Innes has supported this view. Meanwhile, Umer Zuhrawardi says in his '*Rihlathul Mulook*' that Islam came to the region in 300 AH. Arab traveller Sulyman has backed this opinion. There is even another very recent view that Islam arrived only in 6<sup>th</sup> century of the Hijra. Renowned historian MGS Narayanan and Elamkulam Kunjanpillai are of this view. Nevertheless, MGS has noted that 'there is no reason to reject the tradition that the last Chera King embraced Islam and went to Mecca, since it finds a place not only in Muslim chronicles, but also in Hindu Brahminical chronicles like *Keralolpatti*, which need not be expected to concoct such tale, which in no way enhances the prestige or further the interest of the Brahmin or Hindu population'.<sup>144</sup>

After giving a detail on different opinions, Miller concludes that the Mappilas as a Muslim community originated shortly after the beginning of Islam itself as part of an ongoing process of peaceful communication and economic relationship between Arabia and Kerala, that Islam found receptive soil in the circumstances of existing Arab colonies and the religious toleration of the natives, and that the

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<sup>143</sup> AP Ibrahim Kunju, in *Kerala Muslims : A Historical Perspective*, ed., by Asghar Ali Engineer, Ajanta, 1995

<sup>144</sup> MGS Narayanan, *Perumals Of Kerala*, quoted by AP Ibrahim Kunju

growth of Islam may have relieved an added encouragement through the conversion of Malayali ruler.<sup>145</sup>

Analysing the various historical perceptions, it is generally assumed that though Islam arrived in Kerala as early as fifth Hijra year, the formation of a Muslim community started after Malik bin Dinar and his group landed in port of Muziris (Cranganore or Kodungalur) in 21 AH (641 AD). Between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (AD), they are believed to have developed their large-scale community settlements and high-level concentrations in certain regions or parts of major towns, mainly in coastal areas. 'It is beyond doubt that Arabs had by the ninth century AD penetrated beyond India and as far as China for purposes of trade and it is notable that all the nine places where mosques were erected were either the headquarters of the petty potentates of the country or places affording facilities for trade. Arabs engaged in trade had no doubt settled in these places long previously. Malik bin Dinar and his party, even with the exceptional advantages they possessed, would hardly have been able in so short a time to found and establish mosques at these places, unless the ground had been prepared beforehand for them to some extent at least. And the fact that Arabs had settled for trading purposes carries with it the further probable assumption that some of them at least had contracted alliances with women of the country, and the beginning of a mixed race, the Mappilas, had been laid.'<sup>146</sup>

The tradition about Islam's arrival and the conflict of opinions around it would help explain the initial educational activities of Muslims in Kerala. It is beyond doubt that Malabar Muslims have started their educational activities from the first date of Islam's arrival in the coast of Malabar. With the vital significance that Islam gives to teaching and learning of religion, and the unavoidable situation of Muslims to learn many things even to perform their compulsory prayers, one can easily assume that the initial missionary group of Malik bin Dinar<sup>147</sup> would have engaged in educating the new entrants about the religion. The group established

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<sup>145</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

<sup>146</sup> Logan, W, Malabar, Vol. 1, quoted by Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*.

<sup>147</sup> The number of members in his group is reportedly varied as 12 and 18. Umer Zuhrawardi says they were 41 members in the group (SYS Golden Jubilee Souvenir 2004)

the first mosque in India in Kodungallur. Later they travelled north and south of the state and attracted a number of locals to the new religion within a small timeframe through entirely peaceful means, and set up mosques in different parts of the state, like Quilon, Chaliyam, Pantalyini, Dharmadam, Srikantapuram, Madayi, Kasarkod Mangalore and Barkur. There are reports that they had built about 18 mosques in places between Quilon in South and Mangalore in North. At all the places, they appointed a Qadi<sup>148</sup> and imam to lead the prayer, mediate in the social matters of the newly emerged community as well as to engage in educational activities.

‘It is possible that as a result of their missionary activity, the new religion spread far and wide. The trading activities of these new Muslims in the interior parts of Kerala naturally helped in the spread of the new religion and the establishment of new interior trading centres.’<sup>149</sup> ‘Consequently there came into being new cities like Calicut, Veliyankot, Tirurangadi, Tanur, Ponnani, Parappanangadi, Paravanna, in the neighbourhood of Chaliyam, then Kappad, Tikkodi, and other towns in the vicinity of Pantalayini; then Kannur, Edakkad, Pazhayangadi, Madayi and Chemmalod round about Dharmadam and to the South of these Baliapatanam and Nadapuram; then towns like Cochin, Vaippin, Pallippuram to the south of Kodungallur, besides many other sea port towns.’<sup>150</sup> Zuhrawardy has introduced names of 18 Qadis who were appointed in the above-mentioned places.<sup>151</sup>

It is evident that the early missionary delegation not only built mosques but also prepared the primary facilities needed for the upbringing of an Islamic community in each of the places. Each and every mosque stood as learning centres in the same way Prophet’s mosque in Madina did. In addition to this, gradually there formed a group of students in each mosque, like those of Ahl-ul-Ssuffa in Masjid al-Nnabawi, who were dedicated to specialise in Qura’n, Hadith

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<sup>148</sup> The Arabic word Qadi means judge, it is generally used to denote the person whom Muslims consider the authority in any socio-religious matter.

<sup>149</sup> AP Ibrahim Kunju, in *Kerala Muslims : A Historical Perspective*, ed. by Asghar Ali Engineer, Ajanta, 1995

<sup>150</sup> Shykh Zaynuddin, *Tuhfat ul-Mujahiden*

<sup>151</sup> Maqdhum and Ponnani, Souvenir published by Ponnani Juma Masjid Committee in 1998.

and related Islamic subjects in order to carry out further propagation activities. Therefore, in early times, when there were no institutions like schools and colleges to impart education, mosques served as the main centres of education. Missionaries and religious teachers taught adults and Muslim youths Arabic and Islamic studies. Detailed and explorative studies about the early mosques built in Kerala can shed more lights on the content, curricula and organisation of the religious educational system in this initial period. As of now, the existing documents and prevailing written histories do not give us much information about this. However, 'it could be noticed that the educational activities started by early Muslims were essentially religious in character'<sup>152</sup> and both preliminary religious education for the general public and higher education for a selected few were given in *Darses* held in the mosques.

From the available history, we can understand that Mappila Muslims had developed in their early periods three kinds of educational activities, which can be generally found in most of the Muslim communities around the world in their pre-modern history, especially in their initial stages. They are (1) places where public learned recitation of *Qur'an* and preliminary Islamic teachings that are compulsory on every Muslim (*Fard 'ayn* or personal religious obligation), (2) arrangements to teach public more about Islam and various Islamic subjects which are not compulsory but counted under the category of *Fard kifayah* (community religious obligation) or praiseworthy knowledge (*al-I'lm al-mahmudah*), and (3) places where a selected few received higher religious education in order to become scholars and to engage with propagation activities.

### ***Othupalli***

*Othupalli* was the name Mappila Muslims called the first category, which is known as Quranic schools or *maktabs* in most of the Muslim communities and *Madrasas* in some places. Though the exact organisational setup of the early *Othupallies* as well as the history of their developmental period is not known well, it is plausible to believe that *Othupalli* has originated during early phases of Muslim settlements. Because everywhere in the world, individual Muslim

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<sup>152</sup> Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*

societies have founded their own systems to teach and learn *Qur'an* in their preliminary stages of development itself. Most of the *Othupallies* were established outside and adjacent to the mosques and it was a sort of primary school for religious and Arabic education for young Muslim boys and girls.<sup>153</sup> 'As the very name 'ottupalli' denotes, the method of teaching in these schools was oral. The teacher who was called 'Musliyar' or Mullakka'.or Mulla, would recite the lesson and the students would be asked to repeat the same again and again until they memorized it.<sup>154</sup> 'The curriculum was limited to learning, the recitation of *Qur'an* and memorizing some of the '*Adhkar*' (hymens and invocations used in prayers and religious rites). The student was not required to write anything, but just to read and memorize. The teacher would teach Arabic alphabets and words to children by writing them on a wooden slate polished with white clay, with a pen made of bamboo dipped in ink, which was made of some kind of charcoal or certain other substances. No other writing materials like book pencils, pen black boards and chalks were used.'<sup>155</sup>

All the sources say that there were never the tradition of learning the art of writing in othupallies, and the *Qur'an* studies were simply learning to recite it fully or rote memorisation of some *Surats*,<sup>156</sup> and because of that these institutions cannot be seen mentioned as *Maktabs* or *Kuttab* (writing schools)

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Logan, W, Malabar, Vol. 1, quoted by Dr KT Muhammad Ali.

<sup>155</sup> Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*.

<sup>156</sup> *Surats* mean Chapters from Quran. Mappila Muslims keep the tradition of memorising many small *Surats* from the last part of the Holy Book to recite those during their five time prayers as Shafi'i law school prefers recitation of a complete *Surat* in the prayer than reciting part of chapter as seen in many part of the Islamic world. This tradition can also explain why Muslims in Kerala lagged behind in producing many Hafiz people, who memorise the Quran completely. The establishment of Thafeedul Qur'an colleges in large numbers is relatively a recent phenomena in the state, and the earlier achievements were mostly by personal efforts. Still during Ramadan, Hafiz people are specially called from north India where Huffaz are seen in large numbers and where enough number of mosques and Makthabs take special interests in producing Hafiz people. As religious scholars well versed in Islamic law and jurisprudence staffed Kerala mosques, memorisation of Quran completely is not considered as a prerequisite for leading prayers in mosques. Other than small *Surats* in the last part, Mappilas, mainly women, also used to memorise some particular *Surats* like Surt Al Kahf (recited in all Fridays before Juma prayer), *Surat Ya-Sin* (recited during almost all special religious occasions and especially during death rituals), *Surat Al-Sajada*, *Ad-Dukhan*, *Ar-Rahman*, *Al-Waqi'a*, *Al-Jumu'a*, *Al Munafiqun* and *Al-Mulk* which are recited before going to sleep, or between the prayers of Magrib and I'shaa' which is considered as precious time for worships. These tradition is followed because of many reported sayings by the Prophet or leaned men on the their importance.



anywhere in the sources. Meanwhile, it is evident that the art of writing was taught in such preliminary schools in North India and many other parts of Muslim world and this can explain the amazing development of calligraphy as a special art field in these parts of the world as well as its bare minimum presence in Kerala. Moreover, one can see influence of a local culture in the set up of Othupallis as an institution imparting only oral education. Other than Muslims, the religious studies existed only among Nambuthiri Brahmins, who were less in numbers and who used to recite many hymens and invocations in prayers and religious rites. Therefore, they taught their children those Sanskrit prayers in their childhood itself, and the tradition was to recite it in a special rhythm, called 'oath' means oral articulation. Muslims also adopted almost same style to teach Islamic prayers and *Qur'an* to their children. Being all the prayers and *Qur'an* in Arabic all boys and girls were trained to read Arabic and memorise these prayers. This training also called as 'oathu padikkal' (learn to recite).<sup>157</sup> 'The origin of the name 'othupalli' also derived in this way. The word 'Palli' was used to denote prayer and teaching centres of Buddhists and Jains. Muslims also adopted this name for their primary learning centres, which were set up to meet the needs of the time.<sup>158</sup>

However, one can assume that teaching writing skill would have existed in some of the pre-modern primary educational systems for many reasons. Religious scholars had engaged more in writing books and treatises on a variety of subjects during this period than modern period, especially the first 5-6 decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and students studied in mosques had certainly possessed the writing skills. So it cannot be said that they all studied alphabets and primary knowledge of language<sup>159</sup> from *Darses*. Secondly, from the above mentioned *Tarisappalli* copper-plate grant of 849 AD, in which Muslim merchants of Quilon signed as witness writing their names in Kufic characters of Arabic,<sup>160</sup> we can understand that writing skill was not limited to religious scholars but public as well,

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<sup>157</sup> Professor K A Jaleel, in Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1998

<sup>158</sup> Ibid

<sup>159</sup> It was Arabic only in the religious circles. We will later shed light on a special language of Arabic-Malayalam that was developed to ease the studies as Malayalam as a language was not studied in the pre-modern period though they talked in the local tongue.

<sup>160</sup> AP Ibrahim Kunju, in *Kerala Muslims : A Historical Perspective*, ed. by Asghar Ali Engineer, Ajanta, 1995

including merchants, though their numbers may be very minimal. 'The spoken language of the Muslims were the local tongue, but there were a good number of people who learned to handle Arabic language, for purpose of trading with the Arabs.<sup>161</sup>

Until the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Othupallies served as the sole institution for Muslims in Kerala to learn *Qur'an* and to get primary religious instructions. It existed in different areas in different forms. Mostly, it was a single-teacher institution found adjacent to the mosques, and sometimes in or near the teacher's house. These teachers were called 'Seethis' in Tellichery regions of northern Kerala, 'Mullas' in South Malabar and 'Labbas' in Travancore-Cochin regions.<sup>162</sup> Their remuneration was a nominal sum of amounts each students paid at the time of their admissions as well as special occasions like, Eid, Ramdan.<sup>163</sup> They were paid in kinds also like food grains, crops, dress etc. There was no prescribed syllabus for the primary studies. However, in latter stages, a book published from Ponnani in the name of *Kaifiyyathu al-Salaat* (directions for the prayer) was taught in many othupallies<sup>164</sup>.

The othupalli system was widely criticised for its unscientific way of teaching and it was considered by the British administration as one of the major impediments in spreading modern education among Mappila Muslims, especially in Malabar area. 'They assumed that the solution of what they termed the 'Mappila Problem' lay in secular education on the western pattern' and it was suggested that in the long run the best safeguard against a recurrence of Mappila outbreaks will be the spread of education in the caste.<sup>165</sup> 'In the light of this opinion a special government educational effort on behalf of the Mappilas was started in 1871, which included inducements in the form of small salaries and grants for each successful student given to Mullas to encourage the provision of elementary

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<sup>161</sup> Professor K A Jaleel, in Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1998

<sup>162</sup> Mufathish (inspector) C Kunchi Muhammed Musliyar in an interview published in Souvenir of *Samastha* Kerala Jamyi'thul Muallimeen state Conference 1993.

<sup>163</sup> Prabhodanam Special Edition on Reformation History of Kerala Muslims, April 1998

<sup>164</sup> Mufathish C Kunchi Muhammed Musliyar, Souvenir of *Samastha* Kerala Jamyi'thul Muallimeen State Conference 1993.

<sup>165</sup> Miller, citing quotes from Ines, Mlabar, p. 300.

instruction in Malayalam along with religious training in the mosque. The effort failed because of religious opposition to the educational programme, Mappila indifference, and the lack of training.<sup>166</sup> Another British attempt to revitalise othupalli system was made in 1894 when they officially recognised Mappilas of Ernad and Walluvanad regions of South Malabar as 'backward caste' and made them eligible for special grants. In the fresh initiative, they separated vernacular schools for Mappilas from the mosque and placed it under the jurisdiction of local boards<sup>167</sup>. Nevertheless, progress was at slow rate, mainly due to Muslims' utmost enmity towards the colonialists and fear of western cultural impacts on Muslims.

In the aftermath of the 1921 outbreak, British government appointed a commission to investigate the reasons that led Mappilas to take part in the rebellion. The commission reported after conducting detailed field studies in Valluvanadu and Eranadu Taluks that the absence of modern material education is the major cause that invoke adventurous responses among Mappila community. Soon after the report, the government declared it mandatory in the Mappila regions to teach secular subjects along with religious one.<sup>168</sup> To give impetus to the educational development of Mappilas a special educational officer was appointed in 1926.<sup>169</sup> To supervise this process they appointed Muslim additional deputies like, MP Bava Moopan, Abdul Gafoor Sahib, Qadir Sharif and Sinkandar Haji.<sup>170</sup> These officers visited Mullas of othupallies in South Malabar and offered them posts of managers and teachers with government salaries if they allow transforming their othupallies as government schools. Many of them came forward and they were provided with 9-month training in Malappuram, after which the selected teachers were appointed for a monthly salary of Rs 5.<sup>171</sup>

Thus, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many othupallies served as schools to learn both preliminary religious and secular subjects. In 1947, after the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Mufathish C Kunchi Muhammed Musliyar, Souvenir of *Samastha Kerala Jamyi'thul Muallimeen State Conference* 1993.

<sup>169</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala -- A Study in Islamic Trends*

<sup>170</sup> Mufathish C Kunchi Muhammed Musliyar

<sup>171</sup> Ibid

independence and before the formation of Kerala state,<sup>172</sup> Madras Chief Minister Rajagopalachari, who was also the education minister, banned teaching of religion in state-supported schools. In this critical situation eminent religious scholars discussed at length to find out new ways to impart the preliminary and compulsory religious education to each and every Muslim boy and girl. Though there had been many innovative educational movements among the community due to the pressure of modernity since the onset of 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditionalist *Ulama* organisation, *Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulama* (All Kerala Scholars Association), was the pioneer in adopting a systematic and centralised public Madrasa education movement under one syllabus. ‘*Samastha* reorganised religious education under its own Doard of Education and set out to establish a madrasa in every Muslim village area. It produced new textbooks, appointed inspectors, granted leaving certificates, and successfully effected a saturation programme in religious education for Mappila children. Virtually all Muslim children attend madrasa for a minimum period equal to the first five year of public schooling, some continuing for eight years, the classes being conducted for two hours in the morning prior to the starting-time of government schools.<sup>173</sup> We will discuss the operational process of *Samastha*’s religious public education system, which can be seen one of the best ideal way of synthesising religious and secular education in the primary level, in detail in the last chapter. Other organisations also followed the suit though *Samstha* stands far ahead in scientifically co-ordinating madrasa education.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there has always been a negative trend to blindly criticise all traditional systems by explaining its weaknesses and minus points comparing with our age. The so-called reformist writers and historians have mostly followed this trend, and we can see them depicting these traditions sarcastically. We have to understand that ‘Othupalli was a system adopted by early Muslims when they faced a need. We have to see it as a product of a most creative society in that period, though we find out a number of deficiencies for it comparing to our time. No any societies in Kerala, except a small number of

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<sup>172</sup> Kerala state was formed in 1956. Before that Malabar (South Kerala) was under Madras state, Cochin and Travancore were princely states with the ruling powers left with Travancore raja

<sup>173</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

Nambuthiri Brahmins, have made such an attempt to create a foundation for a universal education system.<sup>174</sup>

### **‘Wa’az’ Programmes**

Few explorative studies have been made on the seemingly exclusive tradition of Mappila Muslims in conducting systematic and institutionalised public religious oratory services called *Wa’az* programmes. *Wa’az*, literally means preaching and sermon, is an amazing institution adopted by Muslims since their early times to teach public more about Islam and various Islamic subjects and to frequently remind them about the believed facts of life here and hereafter. It is true that exponents of all religions and ideologies are utilising such public sermons as the prime media of their preaching, but what is peculiar with Mappila Muslims in this regard is the ways and methods of their *Wa’az* programmes as well as the social function it performs.

*Wa’az* programmes are a series of public speeches held in each Muslim Mahallu<sup>175</sup> annually, mostly in month of Ramdan, conducted either by Mahallu committee or by local religious youth organisations with their support. *Wa’az* series, which sometimes continue to a full month or more, are conducted in nights starting after Magrib or Isha’ prayers and lasting until late nights. The committee will specially invite guest speakers, who happen to be well-known scholars or famous religious orators, for delivering speeches on a variety of topics decided for each day. In olden days when such programmes were conducted with much glow and pomp as well as with enormous public enthusiasm, same scholars used

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<sup>174</sup> Professor K A Jaleel, in Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1998

<sup>175</sup> Mahallu, Arabic word meaning locality, Muhalla is used in North India. In Kerala, other than the official divisions of Panchayaths and wards for public governance, Muslims have been clustered by their own into Mahallu Jama’ats. It is concept of a Muslim village centred around a Juma Masjid with all Muslim houses in the locality registering their names with the mosque committee selected or elected by themselves. Each house contributes a monthly amount, mostly decided upon according to the financial capacity of the householders, for running the mosque, Madrasa and the related arrangements, like payment of staffs at both places, maintenance of a public cemetery, etc. In villages where Muslim population is less, Muslims living in two or more nearby villages make up a Mahallu and they converge in the Juma Masjid on Fridays despite keeping a Masjid in their locality for daily prayers. The Mahallu governance is involved in all rituals related with births, deaths, marriages and other functions of the residents belonging to it, and always takes special interests in the welfare of the Muslims in the locality. Many Mahallus conduct their own public schools, vocational institutions, business ventures, educational and career guidance and many other social services. Further studies are required on this system to find out its merits and demerits, its resemblances and differences with Muslim localities elsewhere.

to continue their Wa'az programmes for weeks and even months<sup>176</sup>. Renowned traditionalist scholar, Poonthavanam N Abdullah Musliyar has the fame of delivering wa'az for six months continuously.<sup>177</sup> Abdullah Musliyar and Koottanandu KV Muhammed Musliyar, both of whom were known from among the traditionalist scholars of 20<sup>th</sup> century for their efficiency in pure literary Malayalam language, were the speakers in alternative years at the six-month long Wa'az programmes conducted by *Ansarul Muslimeen Sangam* of Kuttichira in Calicut.<sup>178</sup>

Almost all religious subjects from those related to belief, rituals, thasawwuf, and jurisprudence to social life, education, personal and social responsibilities were discussed in these wa'az programmes. Some times days-long programme will be depending on single popular religious text like Zainuddin Makhdoom's renowned book of Shafi'i law school, *Fathhul Mue'en*, and Imam Al-Gazali's masterpiece *Ihya'u Uloom al-din*.<sup>179</sup> These 'open air services in the nights, which have a strong emotional impact'<sup>180</sup> were well attended by locals, both men and women, and people from the nearby villages. The attendance also depends upon the fame and oratory skills of the speaker. Wa'az does a yearly wake-up call to locals to renew their faith and better their service to Allah the Al mighty, and 'the religious leaders more and more depend on a combination of Ramadan programmes and religious educational activities to nurture the community. The open air services take the form of extended pedagogical addresses by Maulavis, often guest speakers, combined with antiphonal responses by those assembled.'<sup>181</sup>

The widespread tradition of Wa'az programmes, which was an oral education of high quality based upon the *Qur'an* and traditional literature, can amply explain why, in the earlier times, the general public including laymen, business people, rich and women had deeper knowledge of Islam, its history, Quranic injunctions,

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<sup>176</sup> Interview with Adrisheru Muhammed Musliyar, one of the famous Wa'iz (orator) in Kerala who started religious sermons by end of forties, and spent more than fifty years in the field performing days and weeks long wa'az programmes.

<sup>177</sup> Islamic Encyclopaedia (Malayalam) published by IPH, Calicut, Vol. II, p.176

<sup>178</sup> PP Muhammed Faisy, *Samastha*, Prakasham Publications, Kottakkal

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Adrisheru Muhammed Musliyar

<sup>180</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

<sup>181</sup> Ibid

prophetic traditions and jurisprudence related to even minute matters. Contemporary reformist writers call them illiterate and ignorant, but 'literacy was not at all synonymous with formal education. The remarkable literary knowledge of certain illiterate Muslims even today testifies to the strength of the less formal, oral education, which has usually started at an early age.<sup>182</sup> 'In traditional society a book was not confined only to the reader but usually encompassed many people through the fact that, in most cases while one person read aloud many listened. This practice is still to be seen in certain parts of the Islamic world, such as Persia, where many people who have never had a formal education know not only verses of the *Qur'an* but also poems from Fidawsi's *Sahh Namah* or Sa'di's *Gulistan* as a result of listening to traditional story-tellers, who often actually recite stories and poems for them from the greatest literary master pieces of the language.'<sup>183</sup>

Nasr's this description on Persian society is almost true about older Mappila community as well. The wa'az programmes had also famous literature as topics for discussion like those golden treasury of Arabic-Malayalam literature which has a number of war songs that depict Prophet's battles of Badr, Uhud etc or emotionally written stories of anti-British conflicts and of the 'martyrs' lost their life in such outbreaks. Biographical songs written on major sufi scholars like, Abdul Qadir Jeelani, Sheikh Ahmed Rifai'i or Nafeesath Al-Misriyya are also part of the subjects. Even many of the older Mappila generation living today are well-versed in these literatures that they learned from such annual programmes.

Wa'az programmes also played many important social and financial roles. Stages of these programmes were one of the major sources to collect contributions for establishing buildings of mosques, *Madradas* and business establishments or complexes, which is built to find out a permanent income for running the religious institutions of the Mahallu. Funds were also collected from these stages for social and community charities like building houses for poor in the Mahallu, assisting them in meeting their needs, availing good and needed hospital treatments, get their daughters married, etc. The organising committee will also

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<sup>182</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World* (KPI, London and New York).

<sup>183</sup> Ibid

give a good remuneration for the guest speaker for their service and travel expenses. Most of the mosques and *Madrasas* in Kerala Muslim Mmahalls were built by collecting funds from wa'az stages<sup>184</sup>. The first major fund for running *Samastha* Kerala Islamic Educational Board, which has crores of assets now, was collected by organising a wa'az series in Koyilalndi under the auspices of Sayyid Abdurahman Bafaqi Thangal<sup>185</sup>, involving important scholars of the period.<sup>186</sup>

Wa'az programmes were not flawless. One can point out a variety of deficiencies and demerits in this traditional system that started in the pre-modern period. Sometimes it had functioned as a story telling stage where many exaggerated stories were served. It cannot be denied that some of professional speakers in the field utilised such programmes for their financial benefits or only for the purpose of meeting their financial needs without showing any piety or sincerity to the topics they delivered. However, here also we can see modernist Muslims waging blind criticism against this tradition in the name of reformation and renaissance. 'Though the glow and quality of this tradition has been on decline as of now, it is very appreciative that a system of disseminating religious knowledge for public had been founded very early. Muslims had pioneered centuries ago in such systems as 'Informal Education' and 'Lifelong Education', which we see as modern ideas. Still these traditions continue but it has lost its strength and effectiveness due to inefficiency of its holders or because of their departure from the actual aims and objectives of such programmes.'<sup>187</sup>

### ***'Dars' System***

*'Dars'* system, which started from the advent of Islam and continues to exist even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is yet another exclusive characteristics of Mappila Muslims. It has played an important role in preserving the originality of Islam in Kerala. *Dars*, literally means class, is the educational system attached with mosques. It is

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<sup>184</sup> PP Muhammed Faisy, *Samastha*, Prakasham Publications Kottakkal, Interview with Adrisheri Muhammed Musliyar. Information on wa'az has been also collected from articles published in various souvenirs, the names of which will be written in bibliography. Many things are written on the basis of personal experience as well.

<sup>185</sup> An influential religious political leader, who had been President of Indian Union Muslim League State Committee as well as treasurer of Islamic educational board until his death in 1973.

<sup>186</sup> PP Muhammed Faisy, *Samastha*, Prakasham Publications, Kottakkal

<sup>187</sup> Professor. K A Jaleel, in Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1998



the most fundamental type and the longest lasting educational system in Islam pioneered by the Prophet himself who arranged facilities for a selected few, called Ahlu al-Suffa, to stay in his mosque at Medina to learn more about Islam from him and to be expert scholars who can play a major role in disseminating religious knowledge. *Dars* system, which is Known in the Islamic history in the name of 'mosque schools' and 'mosque colleges', developed and transformed in various forms throughout the centuries. Muslim propagators promoted Prophet's system of mosques school in the new areas they reached resulting in the expansion of 'Dars' system across the Islamic world. Hundreds of mosques in Baghdad, Alexandria, Isfahan, Mashhad, Ghom, Damascus, Cairo, Granada and several other Muslim cities ran effective and quality *Dars* systems in the golden era of Islam. In course of time, most of mosque schools either ceased to exist or adopted institutional forms like formal colleges and universities. However, as we discussed in the previous chapter, *Darses* existed in various kinds until later periods in different parts of Muslim world from Morocco to Algeria, Yemen and Iraq as the defenders of the traditional knowledge. Meanwhile, despite of extensive study on secondary sources, it was unable to find out the existence of *Dars* system today in its traditional fervour and zeal except in Kerala. Though the traditional quality and grace has been absent, Mappila Muslims run mosque schools in an institutionalised manner and in amazing quantity.

The exact time frame of the development of the *Dars* system of education is not available, but one can assume that it was started along with the spread of Islam in Kerala, because the first thing that the early missionaries did there was establishing a number of mosques at various places. 'It is probable that '*Dars*' classes were started in these early mosques, immediately after their construction, as there is no evidence to prove the existence of any other arrangements for religious instruction of Muslims in Kerala those days. In the centuries following the advent of Islam, the number of *Darses* went on increasing in mosques in every nook and corner of Kerala.'<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*

Darses played the role of higher secondary and collegiate education. Students willing to learn more about religion or to be religious scholars joined in Darses held at various places after getting their primary education in Othupallies or such preliminary facilities available in their locality. Mosques where Darses held served as classroom and hostel for students coming from outside the village. This fact can explain why mosques in Kerala are built multi-storied. The ground floor is used for prayers and the first floor is set apart for the lodging of the inmates who study in Dars.<sup>189</sup> The hall of Juma Masjid was used as classroom. Generally, the students lived in the first or second floors. Ground floor was used for prayer and teaching.<sup>190</sup>

The organisational setup of Darses is amazing for its role in imparting quality education at minimum expense. 'Since the mosque is already there, there was no expense on accommodation of students or on classrooms. Since the teacher was the priest of Mosque there was no additional expense on teacher. Since the senior students helped the teacher, the number of teachers was confined to one or two. Since food was supplied by villagers from their homes allotting one student to each house, there was no expense on students. Each family adopted a student. Poor families offered either breakfast, lunch or dinner. Since the teacher and students resided in mosque, there was full utilisation of investment on mosques. Since students were given food from houses, the students were considered to be member of the house. He would encourage the children of the house in their education. The women would ask the students their religious doubts. So there was diffusion and encouragement of knowledge thus darses helped adult education and diffusion of religious knowledge. Since the students remained in mosques, mosques were alive. Since the mats are used to sit down, there was no expense on furniture, moreover it sitting down on earth gave more exercise to Dars students than those use bench and desk. There was no expense on staffs like clerk, peon, and administrator like in colleges. In colleges, class system is compulsory and

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Dr, Dr, Mustafa Kamal Pasha in *Kerala Muslims - A Historical Perspective*, ed, Asghar Ali Engineer

there is no reduction on expenses if students are less in one class, and in Darses as there is no class system such problems never come up.<sup>191</sup>

Dr Kamal Pasha, after his study on this traditional system, has enumerated about 20 apparent benefits of Darses: (1) Good teacher-student relation, because of both being together in the mosque for 24 hours. (2) Maintenance of good discipline in Msajid's atmosphere (3) Cultivation of good character because of the grouping along with teacher and other students in the mosque (4) Better learning style in which clearing doubts from the teacher is possible always, and facilities to arrange discussions (5) Education at minimum cost (6) Spiritual atmosphere (7) Possibilities for mass education and for (8) diffusion of knowledge to the public (9) training for a religious life<sup>192</sup> (10) Benefit for health through systems of sitting on the floor and having a good surroundings and open air (11) Monitorial system where higher level students teaching lower ones through which one can clearly understand without doubts the portions he studied earlier (12) Training for teaching while one teaches those at small level (13) Facility to expand as per necessity as there is already at least one mosque in each Muslim village (14) Darses make the masjid alive always (15) Implementation of the actual Islamic vision of transforming mosques to knowledge centres (16) better chance to nurturing a humane culture devoid of immorality and indiscipline seen in colleges (17) practical and fruitful way of education proved by experiences so far (18) Chance to maintain and to raise according to the mental capacity and (19) chances to do jobs according to their ability in the religious field without pressure of class system or degrees.<sup>193</sup>

Sources clearly point out the existence of many higher education centres in early Kerala mosques, especially in the coastal cities. Highly qualified teachers had attracted hundreds of students in to Darses they held in masjids of Kodungallur,

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<sup>191</sup> Dr, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, (former professor, Chair for Islamic Studies and Research, University of Calicut, *Why Should We Popularise Dars?* (Malayalam), Blossom Books, Edayur, 2005

<sup>192</sup> With the life in the mosque the student gets training to maintain the mosque, offer Adhan (call for prayer) and to lead the prayer as Imam, thus dealing with the mosque in good manner becomes a life style

<sup>193</sup> Dr, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, *Why Should We Popularise Dars?* (Malayalam), Blossom Books, Edayur, 2005

Quilon, Calicut, Ponnani, Chaliyam and Tanur. Traces of their history in its early periods seems difficult, for there are no Mappila sources presently known that predate the 14<sup>th</sup> century as the earliest known Muslim who attempted to deal with the subject of Mappila origin is Shaik Zein-ud-Din (1498-1581). Nevertheless, there are earlier references to the Muslims in Malabar in the notes of Arab travellers and geographers.<sup>194</sup> 'Nainar'<sup>195</sup> correctly maintains that Muslim geographers are the main source for information regarding the eight to twelfth centuries of Malabar history, and they continue to be an important source for history up to the fourteenth century.<sup>196</sup> It is said that a *Dars* more than eight hundred years old was held in the *Valiya Kulangara Palli*<sup>197</sup> at Tanur, where eminent scholars from Yemen, Egypt, Hadharmouth, Hijaz had conducted classes.<sup>198</sup> 'According to available documents, Sheik al-Imam Muhammed Abdullah al-hadhramiyy al-Qahiriyy, who taught in the mosque in 675 AH, was the first *Mudarris*<sup>199</sup> and *Mufti*<sup>200</sup> of this mosque.<sup>201</sup>

During the period between 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century i.e., until the colonial encroachment started with the arrival of Portuguese at Calicut in 1498, a time in which Muslims enjoyed the obvious advantages of a favourable alliance with the ruling power, Ponnani<sup>202</sup> rose to fame as the juma masjid there adopted a collegiate education system. The completion of the course provided there can be compared to the modern education system of graduating from a college. Almost all of the eminent scholars Kerala produced since 14<sup>th</sup> century until the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century had graduated after securing their seats around the famous lamp that still lights inside the mosque. '*Vilakkathirikkal*' (to sit around the lamp in Ponnani mosque,

<sup>194</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

<sup>195</sup> Nainar, S Muhammad Husyn, *Arab Geographers*, University of Madras 1962

<sup>196</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

<sup>197</sup> Valiy Kulangara Palli, the name used now is the Malayalam translation of its actual Arabic name, *masjid sahili birkat al-Kubra*, which is seen in historical documents. *Sahil: Kara: Bank, Birkat: Kulam: pond, and Kubra: Valiya: Big – the mosque on the bank of a big pond...* Spndanam, Tanur Panchayath Sunni Conference Souvenir, 1996.

<sup>198</sup> Islamic Encyclopaedia (Malayalam), Vol. 6, IPH.

<sup>199</sup> 'Musliyar' is the name generally used for all Sunni religious scholars in Kerala and those who are teaching in the Dars is called Mudarris, literally meaning teacher.

<sup>200</sup> *Mufti* is an Arabic word used everywhere in the Islamic world to those people who are qualified to give religious verdicts (*fatwa*) on various issues referring to Quran, Hadith and the books of early eminent scholars.

<sup>201</sup> Spndanam, Tanur Panchayath Sunni Conference Souvenir, 1996

<sup>202</sup> A historically important town in South Malabar, now in Malappuram district

vilakku – lamp, irikkuka – to sit) was the major qualification of then religious scholars.<sup>203</sup> Ponnani Dars supplied scholars for whole Kerala and students from all parts of Kerala came to Ponnani for higher education.<sup>204</sup>

It is believed that this mosque was constructed eight centuries ago at the behest of Sheikh Fariduddin Bin Abdul Qadir Al-Khurasani, a well-known disciple of Sheikh Mohiyudden Abdul Qadir Jilani. But it was after the coming of Makhdum Zainuddin Bin Ali (1467-1521) to Ponnani that it became an educational centre,<sup>205</sup> and came to be called “little Mecca of Malabar”. The Dars which were conducted by celebrated scholars in the Big Juma Masjid at Ponnani attracted students not only from different places of Kerala and other parts of India but also from foreign countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Ceylon Yemen and Java.<sup>206</sup> Since 14th century, eminent scholars from Makhdum family headed the Ponnani Dars, attracting more and more students each year. In 1887, there were about 400 such persons belonging to various and distant places pursuing their studies in the Ponnani mosque. The number in 1906 was about 300. ‘Great savants like Shykh Ahmed Zainuddin, the author of ‘Tuhfathul *Mujahidein*’, were associated with this educational centre thereby adding to its glory.<sup>207</sup> The stagnation and deterioration gripped Mappila Muslims in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had its negative impact on Ponnani also as it lost its traditional glory, despite still keeping a Dars and the lamp there.

‘There was no division of classes as such. Students were taught on the basis of big text books. Those who study one textbook or *Kitab* could be considered as one class. *Students who learn on Kitab would meet their ‘Ustad* (teacher) usually at 10 am. They would sit in a semi circle. There was no bench, table or blackboard. The teaching was oral. The teacher would read the text, word by word and would give meaning and explanation. Students were encouraged to ask

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<sup>203</sup> Dr, Mustafa Kamal Pasha in *Kerala Muslims - A Historical Perspective*, ed, Asghar Ali Engineer

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Professor KV Abdu Rahman, *Ponnani, A Brief Historical Account*, MES Ponnani College Souvenir, quoted by Dr, Mustafa Kamal Pasha

<sup>206</sup> Kerala Muslim Directory, p 305, cited by K. T. Muhammad Ali

<sup>207</sup> Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*.

questions. The teacher would explain. Generally, there would be only one teacher, even if there were many students studying in different classes. The senior students helped the junior students. This system was adopted from the Hindu traditional system of education known as monitorial system. There was no fixed period of education. Students learned *Kitab* after *Kitab*. If one could learn a *Kitab* quickly he could start the next one.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, 'in Dars system intelligent students could complete their course within a short time. So there was no waste, as found in western educational system.'<sup>209</sup>

In the early period of 'Dars' system, its curricula were very broad, designed to give an almost comprehensive education covering both religious and secular subjects. The curricula of their education included all subjects that would help the material moral and spiritual well being of man.<sup>210</sup> Thus the subjects studied included Quran, hadith, Fiqh, Arabic language and literature, Grammar, Rhetoric, Geometry, Astronomy, Arithmetic, Logic, philosophy, Medicine, History and Tasawwuf. Books like *Uqlaidis (Euclid)* in geometry, *Tashreehul Aflak* in Astronomy, *Tashreehul Mantiq*, *Sharahuttahdeeb*, *Qutbi* and *Mulla Hasan* in logic, *Maibadi* in Philosophy and *Al-Rahmat* in medicine were used as textbooks.<sup>211</sup>

The subjects taught in Ponnani were higher than subjects studied in any world university existed then. All the universities existed then, like universities of Paris and Oxford were teaching mainly three subjects namely, Theology, Law and medicine, and the medium of instruction there was Latin. So, while analysing the facts one can understand that the education centre existed in Ponnani was one of the international university.<sup>212</sup> However, many Darses were not teaching all these subjects together. Students instead used to approach scholars who were famous as specialists of particular subjects like medicine, astronomy etc to get expertise in those subjects.

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<sup>208</sup> Dr, Mustafa Kamal Pasha in *Kerala Muslims - A Historical Perspective*, ed., Asghar Ali Engineer

<sup>209</sup> Ibid

<sup>210</sup> V. Muhammad, Mappila Education, Farook College Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1974, Quoted by KT Muhammed Ali

<sup>211</sup> KT Muhammed Ali, Dr, Kamal Pasha

<sup>212</sup> Professor K A Jaleel, in Farook College Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1998

Due to many reasons, the broad curricula of Dars were mostly limited to Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh (jurisprudence) and Arabic grammar. Later Darses followed a syllabus generally accepted which starts with a book known as '*Pathkitab*' or '*Ashratu Kutub*', which means ten books. It dealt with faith (*Aquaid*), Moral science (*Akhlaq*), and Islamic mysticism (*Tasawwuf*). Along with this, grammar books *Zanjan* and *Ajnas*, were taught respectively. The next set of books is *Alfiyya in Grammar*, *Fathhul Muin* (by Zainuddin Mākhḍum) in jurisprudence and *Mishkat* in Hadith. In a later stage, big books written on these subjects were taught, like *Tafseer al-Jalalain* and *Tafseer a-Baidhawi* in Quranic interpretation, *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* in Hadith, and *Mahalli*, *Thuḥfatul Muhtaj* in shafi'i jurisprudence. We will briefly discuss later the recent progress and developments adopted in Dars system.

The traditional system of Dars also has received severe blind criticism from modernists, who projected only its defects, completely ignoring its merits and the role it played in preserving the Islamic culture and tradition among Kerala Muslims at a high quality. Though there were some negative features and deficiencies in Dars system, one cannot say it is totally 'an unscientific and defective system of religious education'. The main demerits pointed out against the Dars system are that the teaching method in Dars was defective, Arabic was not taught as a living language and since the meaning of the texts were taught word by word there was much waste of time. Even after the education for years, the students were not in a position to speak in Arabic language. They were not in a position to read new books or periodicals. The students were completely cut away from day to day life. Since the students took food from houses, some of them developed an inferiority complex.<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, 'It must be said to the credit of the Dars system that it had been able to hold high the torch of Islamic learning and religious awareness among the Muslims of Kerala for centuries. It produced many great scholars, theologians, religious leaders and reformers to whom the present Muslim community of Kerala owes their religious, intellectual and educational revival.'<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Dr, KT Muhammed Ali, Dr Kamal Pasha

<sup>214</sup> Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*.

## Contribution of Spiritual Leadership

The history of Kerala Muslims amply testifies that an influential spiritual leadership has played a massive and tremendous role in the spread of Islam in the state, and in the development and progress of religious education as well as dissemination of religious knowledge. Significant personalities who emerged from Sayyed families<sup>215</sup>, scholar community and Sufi missionaries, alternatively or together without conflict, took the community leadership and contributed substantially to the evolution of an exemplary society.

Around 30 Sayyed Qabilas have reached in Kerala<sup>216</sup> from different parts of the Islamic world, mainly from Yemen and Bukhara<sup>217</sup>. Malabar Muslims as well as non-Muslim rulers of Kerala received them happily and in most cases, they were gifted lands and houses. Many rose to the fame through their leadership qualities as many of them were big scholars, *sheikhs* or *Mureeds* of Sufi *thareeqas*, or influential and pious *umara*<sup>218</sup>. Ahmed Jalaluddin Al-Bukhari, the 27<sup>th</sup> descendent of the Prophet, who came from Bukhara of Russia in 800 AH was the first Sayyed to reach in Kerala. He stayed in Northern Kerala, married from the Qadi family of Valpattanam after death of his wife, and later he and significant members of the Bukhari Qabeela succeeded the post of Qadi. Many outstanding personalities from this family, like Sayyed Ismail al-Bukhari, Sayyed Ahmed, Sayyed Moula Bukhari Sayyed Muhammed Bukhari, worked hard in propagation activities and conducting Islamic teachings across the state and Lakshadweep. Many of them have also contributed well to Islamic literature.<sup>219</sup> Jifri Qabila was another major Sayyed family arrived and inhabited in the state taking important roles in religious leadership. Sheik Jifri, who landed to a warm welcome in Calicut in 1159 AH, was a great scholar and a sheikh of Qadiriyya Sufi sect. He

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<sup>215</sup> Ahlu al-Baith or Sayyed families, the descendents of Prophet through his daughter Sayyidah Fathimah and son-in-law as well as fourth Khalife Ali bin Abi Talib. Around 75 Sayyed Qabilas are known to be existing around the world.

<sup>216</sup> SYS Golden Jubilee Souvenir 2004.

<sup>217</sup> Panditha Keralam, *Ulama* Conference Souvenir 1997.

<sup>218</sup> *Amir*, the word literally means leader, not necessarily caliphs. In Kerala, the phrase '*al-Ulama wa al-umara*' (plural of '*Ameer*') is widely used to denote the existing combined leadership of scholars and influential leaders who come from business class or respectable families being accepted by the public for their piety and sincerity in religious affairs. It is conceived that the creative and healthy leadership of both together has been instrumental in the success of Kerala Muslims in many spheres. More explorations to this topic are needed.

<sup>219</sup> Panditha Keralam, *Ulama* Conference Souvenir 1997.



wrote many books including one against the ideologies of Muhammed Bin Abd al-Wahab. Mamburam Sayyed Alawi and his son Sayyed Fadhl were two of the most important figures descended from this family, both of whom were famous for their role in defending the region against British colonisers. The former, who was born in Thareem of Yemen in 1166 AH and who is famous by the name of Mamburam Tangal<sup>220</sup>, was a big reformer who spent his whole life for social service and to save the society from the clutches of British cruelty. He and his son, who was later exiled to Arabia due to his anti-British attitudes, set up many mosques and religious institutions in Muslim villages and played a leading role in awakening the community against the colonisers and in reviving their deteriorating religiosity and piety.<sup>221</sup> Other families like, Bafaqeeh, Ba a'lwi, Saqaf etc has also contributed to the religious growth and educational developments of Kerala Muslims. Still Mappilas respect scholarly and pious members from Sayyed families, and the first leadership of almost all traditionalist organisations and educational institutions in the state lay in their safe hands.<sup>222</sup> Panakkad Sayyeds, whose forefather Sayyed Ali Shihad came from Yemen in 18<sup>th</sup> century, are the most influential contemporary Sayyed family who give religious and political leadership for the majority of Muslims in Kerala.

One of the important factors that facilitated the spread of Islam in Kerala was the work of missionaries and Sufis. In fact, most of the important Sufi Thareeqas that led a spiritual revivalism in the Islamic world starting from the deteriorating phase of its golden period have reached Kerala and attracted many people. Besides, according to one opinion, Malik Bin Dinar, the first missionary leader arrived in Kerala, was a disciple of the famous Sufi, Hasan al-Basari who died in 130 AD.<sup>223</sup> However, only scanty information is available about the Sufi activity in Kerala during the early period, and the available Arabic works, being mainly on theology, have completely ignored their ideologies and activities. This has made scholars like I.H. Qureshi to assert that, "the extensive Sufi missionary

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<sup>220</sup> Tangal is the word used by Mappilas for members of Sayyed families. It is said to have been derived from Malayalam word *Thaangal*, a respectable tone of the word you.

<sup>221</sup> Wadi Nur, SKSSF State Conference Souvenir 1999.

<sup>222</sup> The contributions of various Sayyed families to and the roles they played in the development of Mappila society is yet another subject on which few fruitful studies have been held.

<sup>223</sup> Farid Ud-Din Attar, *Tadhkirat ul-Auliya*, A.J. Arberry (Tr.), *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p.260 quoted by Dr KT Muhammad Ali

activity found elsewhere in Indian Islam is not evident in South India.<sup>224</sup> Meanwhile, 'traditional accounts, like *Malas* (tadhkiras) sung extensively extolling the activities of Sufi saints preserve the names and activities of several Sufi saints and missionaries.'<sup>225</sup> Sheikh Fariduddin Bin Abdul Qadir Al-Khurasani, who came from Multan in 600 AH, is said to be the first who came with message of *Qadiriyya Thareeqa* which belongs to Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani. He extensively travelled in Kerala, voiced against the existing caste system, attracted many down trodden to Islam and founded many mosques across the region including one in the historical city of Ponnani. The most celebrated 'traveller of Islam', Ibn Battuta (1304-1369), who traversed the Muslim world covering 124,000kms in 22 years<sup>226</sup> and who is one of our main source of information for the period before 15<sup>th</sup> century Kerala as he toured different parts of Malabar six times,<sup>227</sup> has mentioned about the influence and activities of Sufi sheikh Qadi Faqurddheen Usman, who was then Qadi of Calicut.<sup>228</sup> Sufi sheikhs in the Purathiyil family of North Kerala have played a major role in Islamic missionary and education. They are the descendents of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Sani, who arrived in Kerala in 10<sup>th</sup> century AH from Persia's Hamdan. He said to be the son of Hamadan's Khalifa Usman Kahla and to have chosen a complete spiritual life instead of royal luxury after joining *Zuhrawardi thareeqah*. He was the first Sheikh of this esoteric sect in Kerala.<sup>229</sup> Many other Sufi sheikhs like Ali al-Kufi, Sheikh Al al Bakri, Farid Ud-Din Khalwathi, Muhammed al-Himmasi are among those who led missionary activities in the state and contributed to the educational development of the Muslims there. While analysing the activities of Sufi thareeqas in Kerala, one can see a significant point that there was always a healthy relation between scholars and Sufi sheikhs, which effectively checked the growth of a cult Sufism in the state. Moreover, almost all of the Sufi sheikhs were eminent scholars well versed in Sharia, and almost all major scholars since the early periods had joined any of real thareeqas, including Makhdums of Ponnani.

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<sup>224</sup> Dr KT Muhammad Ali, *The development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800-1965*

<sup>225</sup> Ibid

<sup>226</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica

<sup>227</sup> Parappil Muhammed Koya, *History of Calicut*, Focus Publications, Calicut, 1994

<sup>228</sup> Ibid

<sup>229</sup> SYS Golden Jubilee Souvenir 2004

Meanwhile, *Ulamas* strongly came forward against many pseudo-thareeqas that emerged time and again mostly under the guidance of so-called sheikhs less educated in Sharia.<sup>230</sup>

Religious scholars, called Musliyors, have always been enjoyed massive popularity and tremendous authority among Mappila Muslims. Traditional history talks about a number of eminent scholars or scholarly families who migrated to Kerala from across the Islamic world like Makkah, Madina, Samarqand, Bukhara, Yemen, Kufa, Basra and Constantinople and engaged in Islamic propagation activities as well as ran prestigious *Darses* and educational centres at different Kerala mosques. The indigenous Muslim society also produced a number of legendary scholars who travelled to the premier learning centres of the medieval Islamic history like Mecca, Medina, Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo where they meet eminent scholars of the time, studied great Islamic literature and took part in the development of religious education back home. Even mentioning of the Kerala Islamic history is unable without remembering the Makhdum family who served the Muslim society with their unique scholarship and leadership for almost five centuries starting from 15<sup>th</sup> century. The family descended from Sheikh Ibrahim Bin Ahmed Makhdum and brother Ali bin Muhammed Makhdum, who migrated from Yemen's Ma'abar first to Tamilnadu coastal area of Kayalpattanam then to Cochin in Kerala in 9<sup>th</sup> century AH.<sup>231</sup> Zainuddin Makhdum One, son of Ali makhdum, travelled to Mecca, Medina, and Egypt for specialisations after procuring available higher education from Kerala Scholars. On his return, he settled in Ponnani, established the 'Big Jama Masjid', and set up a world-class Islamic learning centre there. He has written a number of books in Arabic including *Murhsid al-thullab*<sup>232</sup>, *Hidayathul Adhkiya*<sup>233</sup>, and an interpretation for the world-famous grammar book *Alfiyya*. The renowned

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<sup>230</sup> Francis Robinson has pointed out in his *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* to the need of a study on this healthy relation between Sayyids, Scholars and Sufi Sheikhs in keeping the leadership of Malabar Muslims.

<sup>231</sup> *Panditha Kudumbam*

<sup>232</sup> Moulana Muhyuddin al-Qahiri has written a three-volume interpretation for this book.

<sup>233</sup> His son Abdul Azeez Maqdam has written a commentary on this. Another commentary named *Kifayt al-adkiyaa' fi minhaj al-asfiyaa'* has been written by famous Arabic writer Sayyid Abu Bakr al Bakri al Makki. Indonesian scholar Allama Muhammed of Java has also written an interpretation for this Tasawwuf book in the name of *Salimi al-fusalaa'*. This also points to the presence of foreign students at Ponnani dars.

Zainuddin Makhdum Second was his grand son. After his initial studies in Ponnani, he went to Mecca, spent 10 year of study and research at *Masjid al Haram*, received *Ijazahs* from a number of eminent scholars of the time in various subjects and returned to Ponnani to carry on the light of knowledge lit by his grandfather. He taught at the Little Mecca of Malabar' for 34 years, produced many legendary scholars and wrote a lot of authoritative books like '*Thuhfatul Muhtaj*' and world-famous Shafi'i law book of *Fathual-Mu'een*. He was instrumental in starting of a centuries-long anti-colonial struggle in India as he wrote extensively against Portuguese cruelties as well as induced the public for waging battles against the colonisers in defence of their faith, honour and land. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ponnani was the last word of any thing Islamic in Kerala. Its products were *Khatheeb*,<sup>234</sup> Qadis, and Imams for entire mosques and Muslim villages between Kayalpattanam in South and Mangalore in North.<sup>235</sup> It will take volumes of big books to write down the history of Makhdums and their contributions to the Muslim society, and to the Kerala community in general.

There are also contributions of other scholar families that produced continues generations of eminent scholars, like that of Odakkal family inhabited at various places of South Malabar, and of many great outstanding personalities like Veliyankod Umar Qadi. The Qadi family of Calicut, which has a history as old as the history of Islam in Kerala, also to be mentioned. In fact, most of the earlier scholars and respectable personalities had an Arabian or Persian background and it is mentionable that emergence of large scale indigenouse religious scholars occurred when the 'European blockade effectively cut off from the Mappilas the source of their preachers and holy men, who had come from Arabia to guide and encourage them in the faith'.<sup>236</sup> According to PA Seyd Muhammad, it was during this time that Muslim religious leaders began to revitalize religious education. This was only an attempt to point fingers to a vast area of study through which one can find out more about how deeply the Sayyeds, scholars and Sufi Sheikhs have contributed to the development of Islamic education in Malabar, and how

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<sup>234</sup> Khatheeb, one who leads Friday's special prayer including the (Khuthuba) sermon

<sup>235</sup> SYS Golden Jubilee Souvenir 2004

<sup>236</sup> Miller, p. 84.

much they were instrumental in preserving pure Islamic culture and civilisation among Kerala Muslims.

### **Role of Arabi-Malayalam in Spread of Religious Education**

One cannot ignore the substantial role the particular hybrid language of Arabi-Malayalam played in the spread of religious education among Kerala Muslims. 'Arabi-Malayalam is a special literary achievement which was the vehicle of religious materials and Mappila songs. It emerged on the scene about five centuries ago as a blend of Malayalam base, Arabic script, and Malayalam plus some Arabic, Tamil, Urdu and Persian vocabulary, a few additional orthographic symbols being utilized according to need.'<sup>237</sup> It was the product of a necessity apparently developed through a combined effort of Kerala Muslims, who were not well both in Arabic and local tongue Malayalam, to make the study of religious knowledge, prayers and forms of rituals easier.<sup>238</sup> O Abu, author of '*History of Arabi-Malayalam literature*' (Malayalam), and T Ubaid, who extensively studied about Arabi-Malayalam literature, believe that Muslims should have started writing in this language in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10 century. CN Ahmed Moulavi and KK Abdul Kareem Sahib, co-authors of '*The great tradition of Mappila literature*' (Malayalam), claim that this language has history that stretches to Prophet's period, when Islam supposedly reached Kerala.

Anyway, it is true that the language had fully developed during the heydays of Darses in Ponnani and elsewhere and the language was widely used to the dissemination of religious education among Muslims. According to available history, a lot of literature has been written with predominantly religious themes since the onset of 17<sup>th</sup> century. Many religious *fatwas* and translations of a number of major religious literatures in Arabic were written in this language, and handwritten copies of many such books are still available at various libraries and archives. Literatures in this language 'found particular favour with those Mappila women whose education has been largely confined to the *madrassa*.'<sup>239</sup> Interestingly, if the skill in reading and writing of Arabi-Malayalam was counted

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid

<sup>238</sup> Islamic Encyclopedia (Malayalam) Vol. 2, p. 546-7, IPH

<sup>239</sup> Miller, p. 289.

in the criteria for the literacy one can doubtlessly assert that traditional Mappila Muslims were highly literate.

The script of Arabi-Malayalam got many face-lift and renovation in course of time at the hands of eminent reformist personalities like Sanaullah Makti Tangal (d 1912), Chalilakath Kunchahammed Haji (d 1918) and Vakkam Muhammad Abdul Qadir Moulavi (d 1932). Many religious as well as political and secular magazines were published in this language starting from late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 'modernists turned off their attention towards this great tradition, stamped it as a mark of anti-modernity, and adopted a policy that worked against this golden treasury of literature developed by early Mappila Muslims. However, *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* has been doing a great job in this regard as they still publish a major chunk of Madrasa textbooks in Arabi-Malayalam, and half of the articles in each edition of *Mu'allim* monthly, it publishes mainly for Madrasa teachers, are written in this language.<sup>240</sup>

Shortly, the religious education system of Kerala Muslims has a rich history as old as their emergence in the state. They have developed various forms of schools to impart Islamic knowledge to the community at different levels. From the beginning itself, there were systems to impart primary education, universal education, secondary and higher education and even collegiate educations, all at a sophisticated condition compared to that period. In course of time, all the systems underwent radical changes due to internal or external pressures. The modernisation trends that swept the entire globe starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which has been still in the process did not spare the religious educational systems of Muslims as well. We will discuss about it in the next chapter.

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<sup>240</sup> KK Muhammed Abdul Kareem in Prabhodanam sepecial edition April 1998

CHAPTER IV  
**MODERNISATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION**  
IN KERALA, ROLE OF SAMASTHA KERALA  
JAM'EYYAT UL-ULAMA

INTRODUCTION

SAMASTHA KERALA JAM'EYYAT UL-ULAMA

SAMASTHA'S EDUCATIONAL VIEW

MADRASA REVOLUTION

SAMASTHA KERALA ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL BOARD

EXPERIMENTS IN PRIMARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ISLAMIC COLLEGES FOR WOMEN

## **Modernisation of Islamic Education in Kerala, Role of *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama***

In the forgone chapter, we tried to briefly trace the developmental history of religious education among the Muslim community of Kerala, and found how they achieved in setting up a variety of educational systems to impart Islamic knowledge to each and every sections of the society in a way best suited to and compatible with the contemporary period. Starting in different phases of Muslim's early periods in the state, all the above-mentioned set-ups for the dissemination of knowledge - Othupallies for primary education, *Darses* in the mosques for higher and collegiate education, and *Wa'az* programmes for universal education - functioned at varied qualities and quantities until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. When the modernisation trends that swept different parts of the world during the 18<sup>th</sup> century reached Kerala in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it did not spare Muslims here from being pressurised for changes. Their educational system was the major sphere that witnessed drastic modifications, as for the first time Mappila Muslims thought of an education other than religious, which was termed as secular or material. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both religious and secular education underwent various radical changes and a host of innovations.

For those who take the stock of educational progress of Mappila Muslims in the dawn of new millennium, almost a century after the wind of change started flowing, it will be amazing to see the long and laborious road they walked through to reach the present condition, though there is a feeling that much has to achieve yet. However, while referring the books written on the movements that brought changes among Mappilas, it is easy to find out that most of them are prepared on same perspective that the modernisation process was the result of attempts made by reformists and modernists, and the traditional *Ulama* and the majority Mappilas followed them were always antagonistic towards the reforms. The traditional *Ulama* have been depicted in most of the studies as anti-modern, anti-English, adamant, defenders of outdated educational views, blind opponents of all reform movements, enemies of women education, and wary at secular



education. Few academic explorations have been made to the objectivity of these arguments and as a result, the mainstream literatures have blacked out the other part of the story despite the fact that majority of Kerala Muslims are *Sunnis* and they are not far behind in both religious and secular education. In this context, it will be interesting to look into the modernisation process of religious education system of Mappila Muslims along with the role played by *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, an organisation of eminent traditional scholars representing the *Sunnis*.

### ***Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama***

*Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, known as *Samastha*, was a traditionalist response to the critical and desperate conditions of Mappilas in the aftermaths of their encounters with mighty British Army that culminated in the tragic incidents of 1921, a resemblance of which can be seen in the Deoband movement of North India that followed the 1857 mutiny. The four-century long struggle for existence and to keeping the religious culture and identity intact had weakened the Muslim community, and the calls for change have been in the air since the dieing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the *Ulama* who always enjoyed the supreme authority among Mappilas were suspicious towards the ongoing modernisation trends, which meant getting western education and adopting their values as well as deserting the traditional culture and identity. Adding to their worries, the post-1921 atmosphere facilitated the first public circulation among Kerala Muslims of the fundamentalist and puritanical views of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab<sup>241</sup> (1702-1793), Salafism of Rashid Rida (1865-1935), Islamic modernism of Muhammad Abduh (1819-1905), pan-Islamism of Jamaluddin Afghani (1939-1897), and the Tahreek e-*Mujahideen* in North India.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Angel Rabasa who studied about the Islamic Education in Southeast Asia has mentioned that the relative absence of 'extremist' Wahhabi variant of the religion until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than one century after it spread elsewhere in Muslim world, is one of the striking characteristics of Southeast Asian Islam. We have mentioned that Kerala Islam has much in common with its Southeast Asian counterpart than the Islam spread in North India, mainly Islam spread in both through early missionaries, scholars Sufi Sheikhs, Sayyeds and pious traders who arrived from Arabia.

<sup>242</sup> Faisal. K.P., Unpublished MPhil Dissertation, JNU, (2005), *Tradition and Modernity among Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Sociological Study*.

The exponents of the fundamentalist reformism asserted their presence first through the *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham* ( group for unity among Kerala Muslims), which was founded at Kodungallur of Cochin state in 1922 by leaders like KM Seethi Sahib, KM moulavi and EK Moulavi to bring the scattered and unorganised reformist activists together<sup>243</sup>. Later, clearly inspired by the North India-based *Ulama* organisation<sup>244</sup>, an *Ulama* organisation was formed, namely *Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*, at a two-day conference of Aikya Sangham held at Alwaye in 1924 where a large number of scholars were invited.<sup>245</sup> However, it is evident from the reformist history that the *Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* started active working only in 1933 and until then it was working as an advisory board of Aikya Sangham. There was no separate agenda or working committee for the *Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* and it carved out a scientific and active working field only after Aikya Sangam was disbanded in 1933<sup>246</sup>.

Though the outstanding members of the traditional *Ulama* kept themselves away from the *Ulama* conference, they did not openly reject the *Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* at first, and even some scholars, who were later in the forefront of *Samastha's* activities, supported the movement<sup>247</sup>. However, when they saw the reformists utilising the organisation's platform to attack the traditional Islam that was followed unopposed for centuries and which was nurtured under the guidance of eminent scholars headed by Makhdums of Ponnani, they felt the need to organise to defend and protect Kerala's Islamic tradition and to wage a

<sup>243</sup> EK Ahmad Kutty, in *Kerala Muslims A Historical Study, ed.*, Asghar Ali Engineer

<sup>244</sup> Most of the traditional as well as reformist writers have mentioned about a bid by KM Moulavi and his scholarly friends to form an organisation of Kerala *Ulama* in 1920 during a Khilafath conference held at Erode of Tamil Nadu where they represented Kerala along with traditional scholar Moulana Abdul Bari Musliyar. Musliyar, who was one of the founding leaders of *Samastha* and who served it as president for two decades, rejected the idea that time saying that we can go back to Kerala now and form such an organisation only after consulting our scholarly teachers and spiritual leaders there.

<sup>245</sup> Islamic Encyclopaedia (Malayalam) Vol 6, IPH, Calicut

<sup>246</sup> PP Abdul Gafoor Moulavi, Shabab Seminar Special Issue, 1997. It is rarely mentioned in the reformist literature that the major cause behind the failure of Aikya Sangam was its unsuccessful attempt to set up a Muslim Bank based on a modified form of interest. Though it was designed to ameliorate the terrible economic condition of Muslims, its attempt to legalise interest through a trick (*heelath ul riba*) faced staunch criticism not only from traditional *Ulama* but also from reformist circles and personalities like renowned political leader and acclaimed freedom fighter Muhammed Abdurahman Sahib, who wrote an editorial against the bank in his *Al Ameen* newspaper.

<sup>247</sup> Shabab Seminar Special Issue, 1997,

revivalist movement against the new interpretations.<sup>248</sup> In fact, the campaigns of Aikya Sangam and *Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* invoked more anger among the traditional *Ulama* when joined in its ranks the renowned politician and religious reformist, Vakkam Abdul Qadir moulavi, who had been stamped as Wahhabi<sup>249</sup> and who was introduced to Wahhabism and Salafism through Al Manar magazine of Rasheed Rida<sup>250</sup>.

In a bid to defend the traditional Islam against the ongoing reformist campaign which declared a host of Islamic cultural traditions as *Shirk*<sup>251</sup> and *Bidaa*<sup>252</sup> and which alleged the centuries-old scholarly and intellectual tradition of Kerala Muslims with deviations and alterations, *Ulama* joined forces and formed another *Ulama* organisation in a meeting convened at Calicut big Juma *Masjid*. The meeting was called by Marhum Varakkal Sayyed Abdurahman Ba Alawi Mullakkoya Tangal, who was a Sufi Sheikh, renowned religious scholar and a prominent figure of Sayyed family, after he was consulted by some *Ulama* under Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musliyar, who had already started counter campaigns against the 'Wahhabi ideology'. The newly-formed *Ulama* organisation,<sup>253</sup> which was in fact a temporary response to reformism, convened within a year many popular conferences, mainly at places where the reformists had received big attraction, and directed the masses to be aware of the leaders and followers of the 'Bida'i sects'<sup>254</sup>. *Ulama* were near successful in guiding the masses, and as a result the reformists faced a mass boycott from Mappilas, even shopkeepers refused to give drinking water to those came for the conferences of Aikya Sangam in Malappuram and Tirur, and taxi drivers refused to take its leaders from the railway station to the conference venues.<sup>255</sup>

<sup>248</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut

<sup>249</sup> Prabhodanam Special Edition on History of Muslim Reforms

<sup>250</sup> Mujahid State Conference Souvenir 1997

<sup>251</sup> *Shirk*, to join gods with Allah the Almighty, considered as the biggest sin in Islam which eventually oust the doer from the fold of Islam

<sup>252</sup> *Bid'ath* literally means innovation, and in Islam it is used to denote any kind of alteration or change. Scholars have dealt with two kind of *Bidath*; *Hasanah* and *Sayyia*, the former is appreciated for being in the interest of Islam and the later is rejected for being against its interest.

<sup>253</sup> Its President and Secretary was KP Muhammad Meeran Musliyar and Parol Hussain Moulawi respectively

<sup>254</sup> PP Muhammed Faizy, *History of Samastha*

<sup>255</sup> Shabab Seminar Special Issue 1997

A year later on June 26, 1926, after the organisation's message spread in to more scholars and all of them, who were disturbed with the new interpretations, offered their support, a bigger convention was called at Calicut Town Hall, where the *Ulama* organisation was reorganised and adopted a full-fledged organisational set-up in the name of *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama*<sup>256</sup>. The convention nominated Varkkal Mullakkoya Tangal as *Samastha's* first president while Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musliyar, Muhammed Abdul Bari Musliyar, KM Abdul Qadir Musliyar and KP Muhammad Meeran Musliyar became vice presidents, and PV Muhammad Musliyar and PK Muhammad Musliyar became secretaries in the first committee<sup>257</sup>. *Samastha's* supreme body including the working committee consisted of 40 eminent scholars of the time who were drawn purely on the basis of their scholarship in Islam, religious piety, faithfulness and devoutness.<sup>258</sup> They are called *Mushawara* members.<sup>259</sup>

On November 14, 1934, *Samastha* was registered as the government approved its bylaw, which was agreed upon after deep and wide scholarly discussions held in various *Mushawara* meets and in consultation with law experts. It promulgated the propagation of true Islam, impart of religious education and activities against superstitions and un-Islamic traditions as its primary and supreme objectives. Its bylaw also included encouragement for secular education compatible with religious beliefs, and calls for religious tolerance, interfaith friendship, peaceful existence and national progress.<sup>260</sup> According to the bylaw, the main aims and objectives of the organisation are (a) to propagate and spread the rites and beliefs of Islam according to the real view of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama'a*, (b) to legally prevent the organisations and campaigns which are against the rites and beliefs of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama'a*, (c) to look after all rights and powers of Muslim community, (d) to promote and encourage religious education and do the needful

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<sup>256</sup> *Samastha 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference Souvenir 1985*

<sup>257</sup> PP Muhammed Faizy

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> 'Mushawara members' mean members for consultation, drawn from the Quranic order to seek scholarly advices in matters. From its inception *Samastha* often convenes the *Mushawara* meeting to discuss various issues concerning the religion and community, and almost all the meeting deal with a host of questions received from across the state and from outside where Malayali Muslims reside seeking Fatwas on a variety of issues. Later *Samastha* formed a Fatwa committee from within the *Mushawara* to specially look in to the increasing queries on religious issues

<sup>260</sup> *Samastha Niyamavaly* (the bylaw of *Samastha*)

for the secular education that will be compatible with religious beliefs and culture, and (e) to work for the welfare and progress of the Muslim society in general by eliminating superstitions, anarchy, immorality and disunity.<sup>261</sup>

**Public Conferences:** Embattled with an opposition consisting secularly educated people, journalists, advocates and neo-scholars who had been fruitfully utilising all means from public meetings to publications to propagate their reformist ideologies and to brand traditionalists as courting *shirk*, *Samastha* leaders were compelled to come out to defend themselves against the allegations and to explain its views. The history of *Samastha* amply tells us that systematically held public conferences and anniversaries were instrumental in increasing its popularity as well as in keeping the majority of Mappila Muslims on their traditional views clearly restricting the inroads of reformist ideologies. In the first 25 years, *Samastha* focused its agenda on conducting public conferences, dialogues and ideological conflicts. Between 1927 and 1944, it convened 15 annual conferences at various places attracting immense public attention. The 16<sup>th</sup> conference held at Karyavattam was important as since then *Samastha* started to keep records and registers of all activities, resolutions and decisions scientifically. After that, the frequency of the huge public conferences decreased mainly because the organisation had tightened its foundation and fortress by 1950s and it had formed many sub committees and subordinate organisations to deal with different issues. In next 40 years, it conducted next eight conferences. The 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> conferences held at Calicut seashore in 1985 and 1996 were widely appreciated for the largest gatherings the town ever witnessed, for the discipline and obedience the huge crowd displayed, for the resolutions, topics and issues the conference sessions discussed, and for the attention both drew from non-Muslim, political and government circles. In 2002 *Samastha* celebrated its platinum jubilee holding public conferences at five major cities across the state – Kasargod, Calicut, Thrissur, Kollam and Tiruvanandapuram.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> The entire description was prepared referring various articles, souvenirs, books and newspaper reports, and all the sources would be named in bibliography .

**Resolutions:** *Samastha* waged its ideological battle against its multi-faceted opponents through its widely discussed resolutions adopted in each public conferences and decisions taken at *Mushawara* meetings, and the reformists were obviously the main target. At one side it passed resolutions against the views and policies of reformist organisations like *Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* (later renamed as *Kerala Nadwat ul-Mujahideen* and known as *Mujahids, Salafis and Wahhabis*) and *Jama'at-e-Islami* (followers of Abul A'ala Moududi), who have different opinions on issues like *Tawasul, Isthighasa, Taqlid, Ijtihad* and on a host of many other religious matters. On the other hand, it directed the public against the accretions in the rituals and beliefs and promulgated to perform traditions like visits to the graves of respected religious personalities in pure Islamic way discarding all un-Islamic cultures. Though most of *Samastha* leaders were either *sheikhs* or *Mureeds* of any of renowned Sufi *Tareeqah*, it never hesitated to rigorously oppose many pseudo *Tareeqahs* that emerged in the state time and again, and thus, following the path of their scholarly predecessors, effectively checked any bids to cultivate cult Sufism. Many *thareeqahs* like that of Chottur, Korur, Nurisha, etc had to face the wrath of the people after *Samastha* rejected them in the light of detailed studies on their ideologies, activities, strings of their *sheikhs* and the opinions of eminent contemporary scholars about them. *Samastha* was one of the first Islamic organisations in the world that declared the Ahmadiyya group (Qadiyanis, followers of Mirza Gulam Ahmed Qadiyani, who claimed prophethood) as non Muslims, embarrassing even the reformists who later followed the suit after the global Muslim scholars and organisations including Saudi-based *Rabitat ul-Alam al-Islami* issued the fatwa of 'kufriyyat' against them. *Samastha* voiced against Tableeg Jama'ath also when it started attracting the mass through its puritanical views and striking propagation activities.<sup>263</sup> It appointed a five-member committee to study about Tableeg referring its literature, views of its founders and analysing its activities, and *Samastha* counted the group in the list of *Mubthadi'is* after the committee reported that many of its views are contrary to the traditional views of Islam.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> PP Muhammed Faizi, *History Of Samastha*

<sup>264</sup> *Samastha 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference Souvenir*, 1985.

This was before Malaysia and many Gulf Arab counties and even *Rabitah* issued resolutions against Tableeg.<sup>265</sup>

Throughout the last nine decades, one can see *Samastha* actively involving in each and every matters related to Muslims, issuing its verdict on various issues strongly standing on the traditional views, and solving disputes in families, *Mahallus*, local Islamic groups and among personalities. It is undeniable that it has also drawn a wide range of criticism and invoked many controversies during these years due to its boldness to view and decide upon issues through pure traditional views. Moreover, in the post-1921 period that witnessed the transformation of Mappilas from the fold of individual leadership to the folds of organisations, Kerala Muslims always kept a dual-faced discursive tradition in every issue, one in the line of traditional revivalism and the other in fundamentalist reformism. While *Samastha* led the former stream of thought, *Mujahid* and Jama'ath dealt the other. However, it will be interesting to analyse and evaluate the result and outcome of this nine-decade long discursive tradition, to find out at what extend the generally appreciated ideas of reformism could influence the Mappila community, and to understand where the majority stands presently and what are their opinions on various contentious issues which underwent hair-split discussions in front of them in the light of Quran, Sunnah and views of Companions and early scholars. It can be said without any doubt that if the reformists could not get the hold of even one percentage of Kerala Muslim *Mahallus*<sup>266</sup>, which are the basic unit of Mappila Muslims, after a long and multi-faceted propaganda, it is the success of *Samastha* in keeping its fortress without many fractures. More studies are needed in this regard to find out the actual support bases of both traditionalists and reformists among the Mappilas as well as to find out why 'still traditionalist Muslims are the majority in Kerala'<sup>267</sup>.

### ***Samastha's* Educational View**

To understand *Samastha's* role in the modernisation of religious education among Kerala Muslims, it would be helpful to analyse it from the points of

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<sup>265</sup> Panditha Keralam (historical Study) *Ulama* Conference Souvenir, 1997.

<sup>266</sup> SYS Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 2004.

<sup>267</sup> Karuvalli Muhammad Moulavi, in *Mujahid* State Conference Souvenir, 1997.

educational perspective, and the aims and objectives, curriculum, content and organisation of the educational systems. We have seen that one of the major articles in *Samastha*'s bylaw was 'to promote and encourage religious education and do the needful for the secular education that will be compatible with religious beliefs and culture.'

In the last nine decades, all the educational ventures adopted by *Samastha* or under its organisational set-up have been according to this provision in the bylaw. Like the traditional *Ulama* everywhere in the world, they staunchly worked for the promotion of pure religious education and did whatever needed to maintain the traditional institution of *Darses*. These efforts were based on the then contemporary fashionable view that clearly divided the education and knowledge as religious and material or secular. The hesitation of *Ulama* for an unconditional support to the material education was due to their worry that the secular education, which was seemed synonymous to western education, would corrupt the religious culture and vitiate the traditional beliefs. An understandable enmity to everything British because of their repressive rule in Malabar had also added to this antagonism towards modern education. Moreover, some scholars were of the opinion that the secular education would grow even without their attention, as there are many governmental and non-governmental agencies to promote it, and there is an inclination among public to go for the modern as well. Meanwhile, the religious education is the field to be given enough attention, as there is more chance for it to be neglected than taken seriously.

Despite having provisions in the bylaw to do the needful for the promotion of secular education, *Samastha* did not come out with any initiatives or programmes for its encouragement in its first decades. Moreover, it was too cautious while adopting any thing modern. This cannot be viewed as their opposition towards material education or modernisation process; rather it should be explained as a general slowness and precautions inherent in all traditional community to change according to the modern trends. According to the new sociological discourse of tradition and modernity, tradition is not versus modernity and changes, but tradition itself facilitates changes, and the process is explained as selective



modernity. Traditionalists measure any modern change at its entire levels, value its positive and negative aspects and analyse its effects and counter effects on the prevailing traditions before adopting that change at an inevitable condition. *Samastha* was also doing the same in its response towards modern changes, and it is apparent from the activities of 21<sup>st</sup> century *Samastha* and its leaders who run many public schools, English medium institutions, colleges for women and even professional college of engineering.

Meanwhile, *Samastha* was the first to respond when the government banned public schools from providing religious education just after the independence. It called on the society to set up *Madradas* in every village to facilitate every Muslim boy and girl to get compulsory primary Islamic education along with their study in public schooling. It set the *Madrasa* timing and ran it without hampering the school proceedings thus wonderfully incorporating the primary level of both material and religious educations. We will discuss later in detail about the systematic and centralised *Madrasa* system under *Samastha*, about which Miller termed as ‘the wonder and strength of Mappila Islam’<sup>268</sup>. While many Muslim communities elsewhere in India and abroad had to choose either secular or religious ways of education resulting either in alienation from or complete assimilation with the non-Islamic cultures and communities, the harmonious integration and co-existence of Mappilas with non-Muslims along with keeping their Islamic identity and culture high can better explain the successful execution of *Madrasa* system. The students could understand their beliefs, morals, values, and rituals from *Madrasa* in the morning or evening and have their regular schooling at the same time mingling with students from all walks of life. Therefore, from the bid to regulate *Madrasa* timing to facilitate regular schooling almost sixty years back, one can easily understand what was *Samastha*’s view on secular education.

However, at higher education *Samastha* continued its view of secular-religious dichotomy until 1970s. Students had to select between the two for higher studies after having both at primary levels from *Madrasa* and schools. Its result was

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<sup>268</sup> Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims Of Kerala – A Study in Islamic Trends*

incompetence of religious graduates and their inability to cope with the modern trends and the failure of secularly educated to carry forward their religious ethos as they climbed the ladders of material knowledge and introduced with new ideologies and perspectives. Scholars of *Samastha* started responding to this issue by adopting various innovations and trying to effectively synthesis both streams of the knowledge in 1970s. It is remarkable that the reformist organisations had started many experiments in this regard by the end of 40s. A host of reasons can be seen in this change, from an apparent decrease in *Ulama*'s worry of accretions from alien culture, a new feeling of an urgent need to get expertise in modern education to prevent the reformist challenges, to the gulf boom that changed the economic lot of the entire community.

One outstanding figure who gave the ideological base and intellectual perspective to this change was Marhoom MM Basheer Musliyar Al-Baqawi (1929-1987).<sup>269</sup> His sound cleverness and thoughts can be seen instrumental behind all the new educational innovations took place among the *Sunni* community of Malabar in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He spoke of an educational philosophy aimed at reproducing the philosopher-scientist scholars who lived in the golden period of Islamic medieval history. In an article titled 'Our Arabic Colleges', he wrote.

“There are two types of Arabic colleges today. While one type aims at learning Arabic language, the other stands for teaching Islamic studies through Arabic medium. The former attracts more students, mainly due to availability of many government employments after graduating from there. We can say that there is no any job opportunity in government institutions for those completing courses in religious subjects, and as a result, the interest among students to join the second type of Arabic colleges has been on tremendous decrease. The efforts of some colleges to incorporate English and Urdu languages in the syllabus to overcome this challenge are appraisable. One impetus in language studies other than material benefits is that it would widen the spheres of Islamic propagation. Our

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<sup>269</sup> Bahseer Musliyar, who was known for his intellectual clarity, leadership quality and ability to scientifically co-ordinate the organisation and its activities, was selected to *Samastha* Mushawara in 1960 and contributed to its functioning until his death. He has served as a member in Kerala State Hajj Committee and Sate Waqf Board. He also served as chairman of *Samastha* examination board along with many other organisational posts.

Arabic colleges should not set their aim only at material gains but its aims should be religious education and its dissemination. If so, our institutions would get more progress with Allah's grace and the well wishes of pious people."<sup>270</sup>

He wrote in the same article regarding the Syllabus reforms, "We have to reform our syllabus and curricula taking lessons from the outstanding personalities came in the previous centuries, like Imam al-Ghazali. The prevailing knowledge branches of Islam, a religion famous for its great visions in the political, social and cultural spheres of the humanity, are very narrow. A strong defence against this is compulsory by preparing a more inclusive syllabus. Our Syllabus should be a point finger towards the progress of humanity in all fields. Our colleges have to introduce many subjects that are *Fard kifayah* (community religious obligation) like health sciences. Islamic perspective tells us that we should not be ignorant in arenas like building construction, transportation means, etc. When our colleges transforms as a treasury of many such professional and technical subjects, we would get Allah's mercy and thus the support of the society. We should be ready to get in to the deep and vast areas of religious knowledge other than limiting it to certain chapters. Islam is a religion forever and all-inclusive. According to its vision, the community is responsible if any of its members did not learn educational branches like agriculture, engineering, transportation, public works and industry. However, there are no facilities to teach these in Islamic institutions of the day. Is Islamic education too narrow and limited? Isn't it paradoxical?"<sup>271</sup>

He continues, "Isn't it *Fard kifayah* upon the Muslim community to produce experts to find solutions for its various issues related to vocational, professional or technical fields like preparing a plan for the construction of our mosques? Then we have to consider the above-mentioned arts as we consider *Manthiq* like subjects or more than that. So while preparing the syllabus for our pure religious subjects we have to prepare a wider and inclusive syllabus under the auspices of our scholars incorporating these subjects. If it is done in this manner, there will not be the worry of transforming religious institutions into secular ones for those

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<sup>270</sup> Al Bahjah Souvenir, Rahmaniyya Arabic College, 1983

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

who teach textbooks like *Thashreeh ul-Akhlaq*, *Cha'meeni*, *Khulasa Uqlidis* and *Risala* or to those who promote the *Fard kifayah* branches of knowledge described in Imam Ghazali's *Ihya uloom al-din*. Instead it will result in the uplift of religious teachers in the knowledge fields contrary to the temporary period gripped them and they can live without being disturbed with proverb, 'people are enemy of what they don't know'.<sup>272</sup>

### ***Madrassa Revolution***

The introduction of British education system was, of course, the chief motivator behind the transformation of religious education in India in to an institutional setup with planned buildings, separate classrooms, appointment of more than one teachers in one institution, arrangement of bench and desk, regulation of classes in periods, initiation of examinations and issuance of certificates after graduation. During the post-1857 efforts for religious revivalism, North Indian Muslims pioneered in this as they established some prominent institutions like Darul Uloom Deoband (1867), which "emulated the British bureaucratic style for educational institutions, accepted a fixed curriculum, separate classes for students of different level, well-defined academic year, annual examinations and networks of affiliated schools".<sup>273</sup> Deoband is still considered one of the premier centres of traditional Islamic learning in the world. The most important characteristic of these initiatives was its selective modernisation as they adopted the modern trends in physical arrangements of the institution to teach the traditional subjects without any modifications in the syllabus and curriculum. South India also witnessed the effects of this partial modernisation in traditional education with the establishment of Baqiyat ul-Saalihat Arabic College in Vellore of Tamilnadu, founded by Sheikh Abdul Vahab al-Veluri (1831-1918) in 1883.<sup>274</sup> Baqiyat soon became the prime centre of higher Islamic learning for South Indian Muslims as the glory of Ponnani's renowned collegiate education had been on decline by that time. Though many *Darses* at various mosques of Malabar were still imparting higher learning, many students went to Velur after their studies there mainly to

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revivla in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. Princeton University Press 1982

<sup>274</sup> Islamic Encyclopedia (Malayalam) p. 232, Vol. 2, IPH, Calicut.

pass out with MFB (Moulavi Fadhil Baqavi) title and to specialise in particular subjects.<sup>275</sup>

Malabar region also witnessed the influence of British education as Baqiyat and Deoband model experiments in religious education spread in the region by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, though at extremely nominal level. In 1871, the famous Koyappathodi family of Vazhakkad<sup>276</sup> set up the first Arabic college in the region, *Tanmiyathul Ulomm Madrasa*. However, the change was simply the transfer of the existing *Dars* into a special building and appointment of an eminent scholar to attract more students and by bettering the boarding and dining facilities of both students and the teacher. This trend of adopting a *Madrasa* name for the existing *Darses*, improving its building facilities and sometimes separating it from the *Masjid* can be seen elsewhere in Malabar. Moulana Abdul Bari Musliyar, who later became *Samastha's* president, was a teacher at such a place in Calicut, called *Madrasat ul-Jifriyya*, in the first years of 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>277</sup> years before the actual *Madrasa* revolution started.

Muslims in Calicut city was more enlightened during this period due to their exposure to modern education, friendly contacts with the British, involvement in prosperous trades as well as the presence of many outstanding scholarly leaders among them. They showed the first inclination to divert community attention into secular education without hampering the religious one. In 1891, they formed *Himayath ul-Islam Committee*, which constituted *Inthishar ul-Islam Committee* to establish a *Madrasa* two years later. They started a school in 1912 in the name of *Himayath ul-Islam Anglo-Arabic School*, the first Muslim Educational institution in Kerala<sup>278</sup>. In 1894, Pullithodi Said Muhammad Haji founded a *Madrasa* in Farook<sup>279</sup> market, which later became a Mappila school.<sup>280</sup> In 1918,

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<sup>275</sup> Both Malabar and Velur were under the Madras Presidency that time

<sup>276</sup> Koyappathodi family, was one of the major Muslim families in Malabar. Most of its members were famous for their outstanding performances in business as well as for their service to the community. The invaluable contributions of the family members to various ventures of Muslim communities, especially in setting up of educational institutions and in ameliorating the terrible financial and social conditions of the community during the British time is pretty remarkable. Ideal Publications, Calicut, has published a 'Koyappathodi Memmorial Book' in Malayalam.

<sup>277</sup> Islamic Encyclopedia (Malayalam) p. 76, Vol. 2, IPH, Calicut

<sup>278</sup> Parappil Muhammad Koya, *History of Calicut* (Malayalam)

<sup>279</sup> A historical town adjacent to Calicut founded by Tipu Sultan during his reign

Mohammedan Educational Society of Calicut started the historic *Madrasat ul-Muhammadiyya School*, the main aim of which was effective synthesis of religious and material education and which later became a Middle and High School.<sup>281</sup> In 923, *Madrasat ul-Ihaya* was founded in Chaliyam,<sup>282</sup> which was later renamed as *Madrasat ul-Manar* and run by a trust named *Thanmiyat ul-Islam Association*, and which later became the first registered Muslim educational institution and High-School in South Malabar.<sup>283</sup>

At the same time, many progressive leaders of the community started thinking about reforming the existing system in religious education, and adopting modern curricula, syllabi and textbooks and methods of instruction. AM Koyakunhi, who founded *Ma'danul Uloom Madrasa* of Cannanur in 1911, was one of the early leaders who tried to establish such *Madrasas*. His *Madrasa* provided for the study of Arabic as well as Malayalam<sup>284</sup>. In fact, he was the sponsor of the modern *Madrasa* movement. Many Muslim Mahallus in Northern Kerala took up his initiative, and the movement spread to other parts of Kerala and became a solid foundation for the education of the Muslim students.<sup>285</sup>

From the above account and an earlier description on Othupallies where it was mentioned that many Ohupallies were transformed into Mappila schools due to British persuasion before and after 1921, we can understand there was four kinds of trends in the educational arena during this time. (1) Improving *Darses* and naming it after *Madrasa* without any remarkable changes in the curricula. (2) Introducing secular education by adopting names receptive to the community (see names mentioned above like *Madrasat ul-muhammadiyya School* and *Himayath ul-Islam Anglo-Arabic School*), (3) Transforming Othupallies into Mappila Schools by incorporating the A B C D of secular education to the existing

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Another historic location adjacent to Calicut

<sup>283</sup> Parappil Muhammad Koya, *History of Calicut* (Malayalam)

<sup>284</sup> It is said that many traditional scholars had earlier considered learning of Malayalam language contrary to Islamic values saying that it was not good for Muslim to study *Aryan Ezhuthu* (the writing skill of Aryans) for it will be part of adopting its culture. Until recently Mappila Muslims were speaking Malayalam language in a special tune and with many special words unknown to non-Muslims, and Muslim language specialists like MN Karasheri (Malayalam Reader at University of Calicut) has wrote in detail about it.

<sup>285</sup> KT Muhammed Ali, *The Development of Education Among The Mappilas Of Malabar*, p. 41

nominal religious subject, and (4) attempts to revamp and reform the existing religious education systems.

However, the big revolution both in primary as well as higher Islamic education started with the arrival of eminent scholar Marhoom Chalilakatt Kunchammed Haji<sup>286</sup> (1866-1919), who is rightly called the father of the modern *Madrassa* and Arabic Colleges of Kerala.<sup>287</sup> In 1909, he was appointed as the *Sadr ul-Mudarriseen* (headmaster) of the *Tanmiyathul Ulomm Madrasa* at Vazhakkad. As he found a favourable environment under the auspices of Koyappathodi family to implement his ideas of a modern Islamic learning centre there, he started higher classes on modern lines and renamed it as Darul Uloom Arabic College.<sup>288</sup> He adopted many radical innovations in teaching methods by introducing use of tables, chairs, benches, desks and blackboards in the classrooms as well as enlivened the all-inclusive syllabus of early *Darses* in which the subjects like logic, astronomy and mathematics were suggested to be taught according to modern trend. Along with textbooks of *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, Grammar and *tasawwuf*, he brought a provision to teach Malayalam as a language. This was his modernisation effort in *Dars* System, and he modernised the primary education system as well introducing a well-designed scheme of study to teach local students the preliminary knowledge of Islam.<sup>289</sup> He utilised his college students to assist him in teaching the primary *Madrassa*. It is said that people from various regions of Malabar used to visit Vazhakkad to see the new system of education and were inclined to imitate the system in their areas. Thus, many such *Madrassas* emerged in the line of Vazhakkad *Madrassa*. Nevertheless, some of traditional *Ulama* had come out against the modernisation efforts due to various reasons, like the inherent cautious approach towards change and jurisprudential doubt of some that whether a *waqf* property set to run *Darses*

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<sup>286</sup> He was one of the first Malayalee graduate from Vellore's Baqiyat, and after spending one year in Baqiyat he spend six years in the nearby Latheefiyya college to specialize in various religious texts and topics. He was the product of Ponnani Dars and has taught at many Darses in Kerala. Many eminent leaders and scholars of both traditional and reformist organisations were his disciples.

<sup>287</sup> KT Muhammed Ali, *The Development of Education Among The Mappilas Of Malabar*

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

could be used for such modernisations<sup>290</sup>. It is not true, as the reformist sources say, that all the traditional *Ulama* and even *Samastha* were against the *Madrassa* movement of Chalilakath because his reforms took place in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and *Samastha* was formed in the third decade. Moreover, many of traditional *Ulama* and even later leaders and supporters of *Samastha*, like Qutubi Muhammed Musliyar and Cherusseri Ahmed Kutty Musliyar, were his students.<sup>291</sup> Besides, it was a group of the most eminent contemporary traditional *Ulama*, including Ponnani Makhdum Cheriya Bava Musliyar, Kattilasseri Ali Musliyar and Pallippuram Yusuf Musliyar with other scholars and community leaders, who declared that the reforms adopted at Vazhakkad college and *Madrassa* are satisfactory and not contrary to Islamic view, after they examined the students studying there. The inspection was held on a special request by its then manager who was disturbed with oppositions to the reforms from some traditional circles.<sup>292</sup> After the reform movements of Chalilakath, the educational arena did not display any remarkable events until the early forties despite the emergence of some new *Madrassas* that adopted textbooks and methods prepared by him. While othupallies, new type of *Madrassas* and *Darses* tried to meet the religious needs of primary and higher education in this duration, a number of Mappila Schools taught both secular and religious subjects at primary level, and many newly emerged middle and high schools provided for the available higher studies in material education.

### ***Samastha* Kerala Islamic Educational Board**

In 1945, at the 16<sup>th</sup> conference of *Samastha* held at Karyavattam, Marhoom Sayyed Abdur Rahman Bafaqi Tangal, who successfully held the posts of religious and political leadership for about 25 years, famously drew the attention of *Ulama* in to the urgent need of *Samastha* to take up a leading and active role in setting up *Madrassas* across the state. In his historic speech at the conference, he forecasted the upcoming administrative reforms and socio-political changes in the country, explained the deficiencies and defects of the prevailing education

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<sup>290</sup> I am grateful for this point to Janab Ali Moulavi Iringallur, Professor, Darul Huda Islamic Academy. ChEMmad, Malappuram.

<sup>291</sup> Prabhodanam Special Edition on History of Muslim Reforms 1998

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.



system, and suggested *Samastha* leaders to prepare a syllabus for primary religious education to be taught in One to Ten classes of *Madrassa* along with regular schooling. Sayyed Bafaqi's speech at the Karyvattam Conference was the major topic of all *Samastha Mushawara* meets and *Ulama* gatherings after that.<sup>293</sup> On September 1949, a *Mushawara* meet chaired by Sayyed Bafaqi decided to appoint two full-time organisers - Marhum KP Usman Sahib<sup>294</sup> (1919-1998) and Vallppuzha NK Ayamu (Ahmed) Musliyar - to campaign for the establishment of primary *Madrassas* and *Darses* in each Muslim Mahllu.<sup>295</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> *Samastha* conferences also, Sayyed Bafaqi emphasised on the immediate urgency of setting up primary *Madrassas*. His speeches immensely helped the organisers to go ahead with their campaign and as a result, many *Madrassas* started functioning in different parts of Malabar.<sup>296</sup>

When many *Madrassas* were set up and many teachers of othupallies agreed to transform them into *Madrassas*, *Samastha* started receiving letters and resolutions from across the state demanding a centralised form and syllabus for the *Madrassa* system. As talks and discussions got momentum in favour of a centralised *Madrassa* system, the 19<sup>th</sup> *Samastha* Conference held in March 1951 at Badagara in Calicut district, passed the historic resolution forming the educational board. "This conference constitutes a committee in the name of *Samastha* Kerala Islam Matha Vidyabhyasa Board (All Kerala Islamic Educational Board, known as SKIVB) with KPA Muhyiddin Kutty Moulavi<sup>297</sup> its convenor to work for the improvement of *Madrassas* and *Darses*, to set up those in *Mahallus* where they do not exist, and to prepare a syllabus and textbooks needed for centralising all

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<sup>293</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut

<sup>294</sup> A graduate from Tellicheri Brannon College, Usman Sahib contributed his entire life for the educational progress and social welfare of Muslim society. Though he was not a *Mushawara* member, he received tremendous recognition among the *Ulama* and the community and he was one of the brains behind systematic and scientific running of *Samastha*, mainly the day-to-day non-stop well-oiled functioning of its educational board.

<sup>295</sup> PP Muhammed Faizi, *History of Samastha*

<sup>296</sup> KP Usman Sahib in Sayyed Bafaqi Smaranika (memorial book), he has also wrote in his article that Bafaqi had personally given all the travel expenses of the two organizers including him.

<sup>297</sup> Abul Basheer Paravanna KPA Muhyiddin Kutty Musliyar al-Baqawi (d 1957), who was Secretary General of *Samastha* (1951-57) and also the founding chairman of the educational board, was known for his vast knowledge and awareness about world and general issues, for his proficiency in Arabic, Urdu, English, Tamil and Persian languages, for his incredible contributions to religious education, and for his outstanding organising ability.

*Madrasas.*” The resolution also included an appeal to all community to provide for all needed helps in this regard.<sup>298</sup>

Six months later on September 17, 1951, *Samastha* convened an important meeting at Valakkulam Puthupparamba Juma *Masjid* in the patronage of Moulana Abul Haqq Abdul Bari Musliyar Al-Baqawi (1981-1965)<sup>299</sup> involving all eminent scholars and educational activists from across the state. After long discussions, the meet took the below decisions. (a) To improve *Dars* and *Madrasas* and to establish them where it do not exist, (b) to give a unified form to the institutions, (c) to prepare the needed syllabus and textbooks, (d) to start training classes for the teachers, (e) to register all *Madrasas* under the educational board, (f) to visit the *Madrasas* and (g) to establish examinations in all *Madrasas*. The meet also constituted a 33-member first working committee of the SKIVB including KPA Muhyiddin Musliyar (President), Abul Kamal Muhammed Musliyar Kaderi (Vic President), KP Usman Sahib (General Secretary), KM Kunhi Moosa Musliyar (Assistant Secretary), Sayyed Abdur Rahman Bafaqi Tangal (treasurer) and 28 others.<sup>300</sup>

The convention collected from among the participating members the first capital for the future functioning of the board. It is interesting to know the economic condition of the time, as they could collect only Rs 47 with 17 participants donating Rs 1 each whereas Abdul bari Musliyar and his brother-in-law Kunhi Ahmed Kutty Sahib donated Rs 25 and Rs 5 respectively.<sup>301</sup> Later in 1952, in a bid to expand the working fund of the board and to solve its financial crisis, a *Wa'az* programme was conducted in Koyilandi<sup>302</sup> under the suggestion and auspices of Sayyed Bafaqi involving eminent scholars like KPA Muhyiddin Musliyar. A big amount was collected from the *Wa'az* stage in contributions from

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<sup>298</sup> *Samastha* Resolutions, in 60 anniversary conference souvenir 1985.

<sup>299</sup> Abdul Bari Musliyar, eminent among the founding leaders of *Samastha*, was born in a very rich family as the son of Sheikh Ahmed alias Koyamutty Musliyar, who was a famous sheikh of Qadiriyya Tareeqah. After spending five years in Velur, he served as Mudarris at various Darses in Kerala and later spend 40 years of teaching at his native Valakkulam Dars. He built and ran an Arabic college and Masjid in his own expense as well as set up a public school all at his village. He had no children and contributed all his whopping riches for these institutions and for the administration of *Samastha*.

<sup>300</sup> PP Muhammed Faizi, *History of Samastha*

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> A historically important town near Calicut.

the audience and the amount was used for the works of the board, which now passes budget of crores of rupees every year.<sup>303</sup>

The same meeting constituted another five-member Textbook Committee<sup>304</sup> to prepare textbooks and syllabus. Within one month, the team prepared a syllabus for 1 to 5 classes, and the SKIVB's next meeting in Badagara approved and published the same.<sup>305</sup>

### **A) Aims and Objectives of the Board**

The Valakkulam meeting had also assigned KPA Muhyiddin Musliyar the task of preparing a bylaw for the board. The Badagara meeting reviewed the bylaw prepared by him, approved it and submitted the same for evaluation and legal advices to an expert team including former Supreme Court Judge V Khalid, Sayyed Bafaqi and others. The fifth section of the bylaw explains the aims and objectives of the board.

- 1) To unify all *Darses* and *Madrasas* running according to the ideology of Ahlus Sunna Wal-Jama'a, for which *Samastha* stands, under a single curriculum
- 2) To prepare and publish curricula and textbooks needed for such *Madrasas* and *Darses*
- 3) To recognize *Madrasas* and *Darses* applying for recognition in the prescribed form after conducting needed investigation, and issue the recognition certificates
- 4) To appoint required officials in order to inspect the recognised *Madrasas* and *Darses* to oversee if they run according to the directions
- 5) To give financial assistance to the recognised *Madrasas* and *Darses* according to the financial capacity of the board
- 6) To give financial assistance to poor *Dars* students who are clever and brilliant and encourage them for higher studies

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<sup>303</sup> PP Muhammed Faizi, *History of Samastha*

<sup>304</sup> The team consisted KPA Muhyiddin Musliyar, KV Sayyed Muthu Koya Tangal, KM Kunhi Moosa Musliyar, O Abdur Rahman Musliyar and P Abu Bakr Nizami. (*Samastha* records)

<sup>305</sup> PP Muhammed Faizi, *History of Samastha*

- 7) To do the needful to resolve problems emerge in committees running the recognised *Madrasas* and *Darses*
- 8) To try as much as possible to set up and run *Madrasas* and *Darses* where it do not exist
- 9) To set up training centres and run training classes to tutor *Madrasas Mu'allims* (teachers)
- 10) To set up *Range Jam'eyyat ul-Mu'allimeen*<sup>306</sup> and to control its activities as per rules
- 11) To conduct or encourage for convening public conferences, campaigns, religious speeches, oratory-training centres, etc for the propagation of the 'Tradition of Prophet and His Companions
- 12) To set up schools, colleges and technical institutions to encourage secular education

Regarding the organisational setup of the SKIVB, the bylaw stipulates the General Body of the board would consist not more than 80 members, including at least 20 *Mushawara* members, maximum 40 members from the public who are pious, educational experts and well-wishers of *Samastha*, and maximum 20 representatives of central *Jam'eyyat ul-Mu'allimeen*. The working committee of the board would consist of maximum 26 members with the President and General Secretary being *Mushawara* members.<sup>307</sup>

## **B) Recognition of *Madrasas***

In March 1952, the board decided to call for applications for the recognition of *Madrasas* and published the decision through its mouthpiece *Al-Bayan* monthly along with a prescribed application form. The board working committee held on August 26, 1952 recognised 10 *Madrasas* giving the Registration No 1 to *Bayan*

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<sup>306</sup> It is the organisation of *Madrassa* teachers in each educational sub districts called as 'Range' which comes under the central committee named *Samastha Kerala Jami'at ul-Mu'allimeen* (SKJM).

<sup>307</sup> *SKIVB Niyamavaly* (bylaw of the board)

*ul-Islam Madrasa*, Valakkulam Puthupparamba, which was set up and run by Abdul Bari Musliyar. Out of first 10 *Madrasas*, nine were from the Malabar region while one was from Thrissur district. Al-Bayan magazine reported the news of *Madrasa* recognition with great importance and in each of the following editions, it carried the names of *Madrasas* recognised in each board meeting along with articles and statements emphasising on the importance, need and benefits of recognising *Madrasas* under a centralised system<sup>308</sup>.

Initially, there was a mixed response from the public regarding the new system. While many appreciated the move and came forward to get recognitions for their institutions, many traditional circles were suspicious, cautious of or even antagonistic towards the new system.<sup>309</sup> The organisers and board representatives, who tirelessly travelled towns and villages with Muslim population across the state, at a time when foot-walk was premier means of transportation to most of the places, to promote the *Madrasa* system and to persuade *Mahallu* committee members about its importance, have detailed in their accounts about the varied attitudes they faced from different places. Many *mullas* in Othupallies not only refused to apply for recognition but also opposed the new system. However, by the end of the first year, the board recognised 42 *Madrasas*, and on December 11 1952, a meet of the board members and representatives of registered *Madrasas* reviewed the progress so far and discussed various measures needed to improve the lot of recognised *Madrasas*. The meet decided to appoint a *mufathish* (Inspector) to visit the recognised *Madrasas* and give the needful directions for the *Mua'llims* and the committee members, and to conduct a training class for the *Mua'llims*. The number of recognised *Madrasas* has been on an amazing increase since then. The Executive Council of the board meets second Saturday of every month and reviews the applications of *Madrasa* for recognition among others. The numbers given below will help understand the progress of the unique *Madrasa* System set up by *Samastha* for primary religious education; 1956 (149), 1961 (746), 1966 (1838), 1971 (2694), 1976 (3586), 1986 (5648), 1991 (6440), 1996 (7003), 2001 (7865), 10/06/2006 (8466).<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> PP Muhammed Faizi, *History of Samastha*

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> SKIVB Records at its Central Office, *Samasthalayam*, Chelari, Malappuram Dt.

All the *Madrasas* have classes at least until fifth standard. Many *Madrasas* have classes up to 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> so that the students can continue their religious education until the end of their SSLC classes. Recently, in a bid to give further religious education for students going to higher secondary schools and colleges, the board has introduced +1 and +2 classes and the initiative has reportedly received good response from various *Madrassa* managements.<sup>311</sup> As on 10/06/2006, there are 5523 *Madrasas* having seventh class, 16652 having 10<sup>th</sup> class, 98 with +1 and 69 with +2.<sup>312</sup>

It is clear from the board's *Madrassa* Register that *Samastha* could spread the message of *Madrassa* system to all Kerala districts and to various Indian states and foreign countries where Muslim Malayalees live. As on 11/02/2006, the SKIVB has recognised *Madrasas* out of Kerala in Andaman Nicobar Islands (18), Tamil Nadu (80), Karnataka (152), Lakshadweep (23), Maharashtra (1), Malaysia (9), UAE (15), Bahrain (2), Kuwait (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Qatar (1) and Oman (6).<sup>313</sup>

### **C) Examination Board and Public Examination**

We can see that the entire working system of the SKIVB was a better implementation and an effective execution of the bureaucratic and hierarchical system of public schooling in the state. In May 1958, the board meet decided to hold public examination in the fifth class of the *Madrassa* and nominated an Examination Board to do the needful in this regard<sup>314</sup>. In 1959, the board conducted the first Public Examination in which appeared 324 fifth class students from 25 *Madrasas*. Later the Public Examination was extended in to 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> SKIVB Circular No: VB/144/04

<sup>312</sup> Information from SKIVB Central Office

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> The committee consisted KP Usman Sahib, MA Abdul Qadir Musliyar, P Abu Bakr Nizami and KC Bappu Musliyar under the Chairmanship of Abu Bakr Labba who was from southern district of Alappuzha. TK Abdullah Moulavi al-Baqawi (1917-1977) replaced Labba as chairman within few months and he served the post until his death. TK, who was a prolific writer both in Malayalam and Arabic-Malayalam and who is the Malayalam translator of Tafseer ul-Jalalain, was one of the chief propagator of *Madrasas* system along with Usman Sahib and he was the sole brain behind the systematic implementation of public examinations. After his death, Basheer Musliyar held the post and he was followed by CH Hyderus Musliyar (1930-1994) and Cherusseri Zainuddin Musliyar (now General Secretary of *Samastha*).

classes. The students have to pay nominal fees for the exams, which is used for the expense of conducting examinations.

The Examinations Board is responsible for preparing question papers for the public examinations, appointing supervisors to each *Madrasas* in proportion to the number of divisions and appearing students, and in distributing question papers and other necessary materials to 375 'Ranges' through 122 Division Superintendents. Board members visit *Madrasas* during examinations and ensure that it is conducted with out any flaws. The board has adopted scientific methods to reach the answer papers to the office on the examination day itself, and to announce the results immediately after conducting a centralised evaluation. The results are published at each examination centres and online, *Samastharesult.org*. A brief result with the names of rank holders and their *Madrasas* are published in all major dailies of the state.

The board issues certificates for those pass the examinations, which are considered for admissions in higher educational institutions at various levels. The board gives RS 2500, 2000 and 1500 respectively for the first three rank holders in the 5, 7 and 10 classes, while their respective teachers receive cash awards of Rs 1500, 1000 and 750 each. Other awards from the board include: Rs 500 each for all those who get ranks between 4-9 in all these three classes, Rs 250 each for the first 75 students in fifth class, 25 students in seventh and 10 in tenth, and many books for all those who score more than 80% of marks.

Until 2005, the board has issued 18,47,385 certificates in fifth class, 4,86,228 in seventh and 27,987 in tenth. In 2005, 107,691 students appeared in the fifth class Public Examination out of which 83,579 passed, whereas 54,710 students out of 69,216 passed in 7<sup>th</sup> class and 10, 243 passed out of 11,153 students attended the 10<sup>th</sup> class exams. The respective *Range Jam'eyyat ul-Mu'allimeen* holds the annual exams of all other classes and the half-yearly exams of 5,7,10 classes, and

this helps to conduct exams in all registered *Madrasas* and to publish its result at same time.<sup>315</sup>

#### **D) *Mu'allim* Training Classes**

The educational board has set up outstanding facilities in order to improve the teaching ability and instructing quality of *Madrasa* teachers. The first move towards giving teaching training was made in 1958 when the educational board found out some stunning facts in the report of first *Mufathish* CK Abdullah Moulavi al-Baqawi, who visited the recognised *Madrasas* and studied its mode of functioning. As most of the *Mu'allims* were new to the field and ignorant of children psychology as well as the method of teaching in the primary classes, they followed the system of othupallies in teaching. They completed teaching of textbooks of *Amaliyyath* and *Deeniyyath*,<sup>316</sup> which were suggested to be taught in 720 periods of 240 working days, within 32 and 40 days by dictating each page a day. Though they were well in subjects, they were unaware of syllabus, periods and of how and how much should be taught in one period. The board held that it was necessary to give classes for *Mu'allims* in children psychology, teaching methods, and *Madrasa* management and administration. The board decided to form *Mu'allimeen's* union in each Range and to adopt model class system in which experienced teachers would present with the help of teaching materials and notes how to take a 40-minute class keeping in mind the mental and physiological ability of the child. After the class, experts in the field would review it and suggest the needed modifications.

Though this system helped *Mu'allims* understand the amount of lessons to be taught in each period to a certain extend, the other problems existed, and the board decided to conduct a more systematic and more inclusive training classes as well as *Hizb*<sup>317</sup> courses for *Mu'allims*. As an experiment, a training class and a *Hizb* class were held at *Busthan ul-Uloom Madrasa*, Badagara, in which more

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<sup>315</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut.

<sup>316</sup> *Amaliyyath* and *Deeniyyath* were books explaining religious rituals and religious beliefs respectively.

<sup>317</sup> *Hizb ul-Qur'an* is a branch of Qur'anic knowledge, in which the true and correct way of reciting the Holy Book is taught according to the laws of *Tajweed*, and as per the recitation styles of seven recognised *Qurraa'* (reciters) of Islam.



than 40 *Mu'allims* participated. The training class was planned for three hours each in 40 days with a syllabus incorporating books dealing with subjects like psychology, teaching methods and institution management, which are taught at government training colleges, with religious texts like *Ihya' uloom ul-ddin*. The result of the 40-day class was incredible, despite having many drawbacks like the inability of the *Mu'allims*, who mostly had near to nil experience of public schooling, to follow the class and write down the notes simultaneously. While evaluating the pros and cons of the experimental training class, the board decided to print training notes and appointed an expert sub-committee to prepare the same. Later the board published a 300-page *Mu'allim Training Notes* and selected some of the outstanding teachers as tutors to conduct the 40-day long training classes under various Ranges.<sup>318</sup> At present, there are 6 tutors and 7 official Qari's under *Samastha*<sup>319</sup>.

In a circular dated 12<sup>th</sup> July 1986, the SKIVB has prescribed the rules and regulations of conducting training classes. According to it, classes should be held in psychology (30 hours within minimum 36 days), teaching methods (12h), *Madrassa* management (12h), Record study (7h), study of writing skill (3)<sup>320</sup> and additional curricular activities<sup>321</sup> (8h), and the rest of the time is used for showing and taking model classes. The participants have to prepare many teaching materials like 10 charts, 50 cards and maps that will be considered in the final evaluation. During the training course, the participants have to write an essay on any of two subjects from (a) Problems in *Madrassa* system and its solutions, (b) Practical methods to direct guardians of the students, (c) Systematic and scientific ways to train students in prayers, religious morals and Islamic dressing, and (d) the training class I participated. The board will issue training certificates to those passing the exams with at least 40 marks in all.

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<sup>318</sup> VPM Abdul Azeez Master (former Secretary SKIMVB) in *Mu'allims Conference Souvenir 1993*

<sup>319</sup> Information from the office.

<sup>320</sup> Writing skill or *Likhitha Course* is a kind of calligraphic study not in the sense of an art but a course intended to teach *Mu'allims* the way of writing Arabic and Arabic-Malayalam languages as per its rules and with out any mistakes, and to expertise in preparation of charts used as teaching materials in primary classes.

<sup>321</sup> The number 20 of the circular has explained additional curricular activities as training in convening Students Parliament, Literary Conventions, Oratory Trainings, Social Service League and Prayer Assembly.

*Hizb ul-Qu'an* course is separately held under the supervision of any of *Samastha's* official *Qaari's*. The participants should be *Mu'allims* with training certificates, those having five-year experience in *Madrassa* teaching or scholars graduated from any of religious institutions recognised by *Samastha*. There is separate *Hizb* Certificate as well which is given after passing the Qur'an recitation examination following a 40-day training class of recitation as per rules.

Other than Training Course and *Hizb* course, there are special but optional examinations of Lower, Secondary and Higher, which are held under prescribed syllabus to make *Mu'allims* officially qualified for teaching in lower, secondary and higher classes of the *Madrassas* respectively. In Circular No 17 issued in 1965, the board called for applications to appear in the above-mentioned examinations and has given the detail of syllabus that would be covered in each level of the exams. In many circulars issued time and again the syllabus has been changed. However, generally it was parts of subjects taught in classes 1-5 for lower, while initial *Dars* syllabuses were prescribed for the secondary and higher *Dars* or Sharia' college syllabuses for Higher.

In a bid to produce well-equipped *Mu'allims*, the board has been running a special institution, *Mu'allim* Training Centre, since 2002 near its headquarters, where students with required qualifications<sup>322</sup> are trained to teach in *Madrassas* in a more scientific method. The syllabus of the one-year course includes classes in Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic studies, teaching methods, General knowledge, ideological knowledge, organisational science, English language and oratory training.<sup>323</sup>

### **E) *Samastha* Kerala Jam'iatul *Mu'allimeen* Central Council (SKJCC)**

SKJMCC is basically union of *Madrassa* teachers, generally known as *Mu'allim*, formed by the educational board in 1957 to co-ordinate the activities of the board, to enhance the service sector of *Mu'allims*, to better their teaching efficiency, and

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<sup>322</sup> The qualifications are to pass the 7<sup>th</sup> class of *Madrassa*, SSLC in secular education, aged between 15-21, and required mark in the written and oral tests conducted by the board

<sup>323</sup> Prospectus, MTC course, 2005

to provide for the welfare of thousands of teachers who are mostly poor and economically weak. At present, there are 375 range-level branches for the SKJMCC, and as on 19/06/2006, there are 78,570 *Mu'allims*, who have registered their names and got MSR (*Mu'allim* Service Register) certificate which is necessary for getting all grants and benefits provided by SKJMCC.<sup>324</sup>

The council has four administrative divisions (a) **Range committees**, which will be selected from management members and *Mu'allims* of *Madrasas* that come under the range as agreed upon by SKIMVB, and education board members in the area. Other co-ordinating *Madrasa* functioning activities in the Range, the significant task of these committees is conducting Model Classes, in which the ablest and more experienced teachers will take lessons in various subjects taught in the *Madrasa* classes according to the teaching model given in the *Mu'allim* Training Notes published by the board. (b) **Examination Board**, which is a 9-member committee under each range that is responsible to conduct yearly and half-yearly examinations in all classes except the Public Examinations, and also to help the central Examination Board in conducting Public Examinations smoothly. (c) **District Council**, which consists of presidents and secretaries of each Range in all revenue districts and which is responsible to look after and co-ordinate all functions of the ranges in the district. (d) **Central Council**, the General Body of which includes councillors of District Council selected in the respective years and representative nominated by SKIVB.<sup>325</sup>

**Financial Assistances for *Mu'allims*:** The SKJMCC has been doing creative and appreciable services in providing various kinds of benefits and welfare projects for its thousands of mostly poor teaching community. There are 14 kinds of service benefit schemes and 6 types of welfare funds under SKJMCC.

**(1) Allowances and Grants:** The council provides special allowances for all Range Model Classes, Special Model Classes, Written and In-Service Courses of *Mu'allims* and for Range-District anniversary meetings. It also provides special grants for Range-District activities, and special allowances for Chairman and Secretary. Grants are given annually for *Mu'allims* according to their training

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<sup>324</sup> Information from SKIVB Central Office.

<sup>325</sup> Bylaw of SKJMCC amended on November 3, 1998

courses and teaching services, and those who once received the grant will be getting the same during moth of Ramdan after three years each. Until 2004, the council has given about Rs 25 lakhs in grants for 11133 teachers according to the Service Beneficiary Scheme started in 1975. A special grant is given to all secondary *Madradas* where more than 10 students appear in 10<sup>th</sup> class Public examination.<sup>326</sup>

**(2) *Mu'allim Welfare Fund:*** It is an undeniable fact that most of the *Mu'allimeen* and *Mudarriseen* who teach in *Madradas* and *Darses* respectively are receiving too little in salary, despite doing a job considered by Islam as best, great, and having greater rewards hereafter. Miller wrote in his famous work on Mappilas, "Mauvlavis are respected, and sometimes loved, by the Mappilas for their faith, for their dedication, and for their willingness to work for the most meagre returns."<sup>327</sup> Though the life style has gone high and life expenses have skyrocketed, most of the *Madrada* management, unfortunately, are sticking to the lowest salary to the *Mu'allims*, because of which many people hesitate to work in the field in recent years. To solve this problem to a certain extent, the council does an excellent and praiseworthy service according to its capacity. It provides amounts of Rs 10,000, 5,000, 3,000 and 2,000 in assistance for expenses like marriage, house construction, hospital treatment, well construction, Latrine construction, and in help for widows. The Welfare Committee meets on the first Tuesday of every month and passes the funds for applicants after thorough enquiry in to it. The scheme started in 1977 has distributed crores of rupees for various credible needs of the *Madrada* teaching community that has strength of around 75,000.<sup>328</sup> The main source of the fund is the balance amount of the examination incomes, meagre shares collected from student through stamp-like badge distribution, and one day's salary of all *Mu'allims*. The other sources are incomes from some buildings constructed by Al Ain *Sunni* Youth Centre and Abu Dhabi *Sunni* Students Centre, and timely contributions from Dubai *Mu'allim Welfare Fund*, Ras Al Khaima *Sunni* Circle and other *Sunni* organisations in

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<sup>326</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut

<sup>327</sup> Miller, p.262

<sup>328</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut

Sharjah, Oman and other gulf countries<sup>329</sup>. Under the emergency provision of Welfare Fund, the board has been giving Rs 3000 each in immediate assistance for the funeral expenses of registered *Mu'allims*, who dies while in service. The Range Committee of the particular place where the death has occurred ensures that the amount reached the bereaved family in time at any cost, as they can refund the amount from the central office later after producing required proof.<sup>330</sup>

***Mu'allim Investment Scheme:*** In this scheme run under the council, a *Mu'allim* who has passed Training Course Certificate along with *Mu'allim* Lower Examination can start investing 5% of his salary after two years of registering in MSR. The amount will be given back at the time of retirement<sup>331</sup> or when it is needed.<sup>332</sup>

***Mu'allim Pension and Service Awards:*** From 1999 onwards, the council has been providing a pension of Rs 300 for *Mu'allims*, who retire after 60 years of age with a teaching service of 35 years. Besides, the council has been giving a service award of Rs 2500 each for *Mu'allims* completing consecutive 15 years in teaching service.<sup>333</sup>

#### **F) *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Mufathisheen***

Just like *Jam'eyyat ul-Mu'allimeen*, *Jam'eyyat ul-Mufathisheen*, the union of educational inspectors, is one of the major component of the SKIMVB. When the number of registered *Madrasas* increased within few years of the onset of centralised *Madrasa* movement, the board decided to appoint officials to inspect each *Madrasa* to evaluate its functioning and to check if they are working as per the rules of the board. The first Mufathish, CK Abdul Qadir Musliyar al-Baqawi, was appointed in 1953, followed by the appointment of Haji K Abdullah

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<sup>329</sup> Welfare committees formed in Gulf countries by Malayalee Muslims working there who collect amounts from their and their friends' mostly average salaries purely to send back home for various community purposes, are one of the outstanding characteristics of Mappila Muslims. For each and every Muslim amhallus, *Madrasas*, Arabic and Religious colleges and other welfare committees in Kerala have parallel and supporting committees in Gulf countries.

<sup>330</sup> Information from SKJMCC headquarters

<sup>331</sup> There is no prescribed retirement age and mostly retirement comes due to ill health of aged people

<sup>332</sup> SKJMCC Circular No C/1/2005

<sup>333</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut

Musliyar in 1956, and of Mufthish Kunhi Ahmed Musliyar in 1957. These three personalities not only inspected *Madradas* and reviewed its functioning but also tirelessly tried to set up *Madradas* in Muslim villages of the regions they visited. Mufathisheen's union was formed in 1961 when *Samastha* recruited more experts from the field for the job in a bid to co-ordinate their work and to ensure that all recognised *Madradas* are visited twice a year. During their visit, the inspectors would test the competency and learning levels of the students in each class, watch and see the performance and attitude of *Mu'allims*, convene meets of guardians and management committees, try to resolve disputes and other problems in *Madradas* and in the *Mahallu* as well, and give a detail report about his visit to the board and about the merits and demerits of the *Madrasa* functioning to *Mu'allims* and the management.<sup>334</sup> As tutors, Qari'is, mufthisheen and *muballigs*<sup>335</sup> are officials under the board; all of them come under this union. Presently, 103 officials are working in this sector. They are also getting various service benefits, grants as well as pensions from the board.<sup>336</sup>

### **G) Curriculum and Content of *Madrasa* Education**

The educational board of *Samastha* has been giving enormous importance to the syllabus and curricula of the centralised *Madrasa* education as the *Madrasa* years have a great impact on the bringing up and future of a child. In the initial years, the board syllabus focuses on imparting knowledge necessary to know by all Muslims, and through the other seven classes up to +2, the syllabus wants the students to know something about everything Islamic. In the existing syllabus, both Arabic and Arabic-Malayalam are used as means of instruction. However, as a number of *Madradas* run under the board in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states for non-Malayali students, there are textbooks in Arabic-Tamil and Arabic-Kannada as well. Due to a remarkable increase in the number of English-medium schools under Muslim managements in recent decades and a big chunk of parents started sending their children to schools where both *Madrasa* and school education are given under same roof in same class, *Samastha* has prepared

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<sup>334</sup> *Mufathishumarude margarekha* (Malayalam, directions for inspectors), SKIVB, 2001

<sup>335</sup> *Muballigs* are organizers working to expand the service area and sectors of *Samastha*

<sup>336</sup> KT Manu Musliyar, *Samasthayum Keezhgadakangalum (Malayalam)*, Shifa Book Stall, Calicut.

English medium textbooks from LKG-UKG level to higher levels<sup>337</sup>. Due to frequent appeals from Urdu-speaking Muslims from other Indian states to start Kerala-model *Madrasas* in their region to facilitate their children to have better primary education of Islam, the board has prepared *Madrasa* textbooks in Urdu medium to all classes. As the Syllabus for Kerala focuses on Shafi'i school of law, the board has prepared special textbooks according to Hanafi school of fiqh for Urdu-speaking students and for students in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu who mostly follow Hanafi Maslak like the entire North India. Earlier there was not much emphasis on the study of Arabic as a live language and instead texts in Arabic were prepared for higher classes and the teachers would teach the word meaning and ideas of the lessons to the student, while Arabic-Malayalam used in lower classes. However, recently study of Arabic as a language has been adopted from second standard onwards, and still Arabic-Malayalam is the language for all textbooks up to fifth class while only Arabic is used in secondary and higher secondary level.

According to directions given in the book on Curriculum, which was last amended in 2005, the teaching subjects for the entire classes consist Arabic alphabets, Arabic-Malayalam<sup>338</sup>, Qur'an Sharif, Thajweed, Hifdhul Qur'an, thafseer ul-Qur'an<sup>339</sup>, Fiqh, A'qeedah, Akhlaq, Thareeq and Arabic language. The Curriculum, which follows an academic calendar based on Hijra year, stipulates six working days of three hours each with 240 working days a year. There are provisions to utilise school vacations and holidays as well for more classes and revisions. The academic year starts on the first working day after Shawwal 7<sup>340</sup> and ends in Sha'aban last, a week before the onset of Ramadan. The holidays are all Fridays, month of Ramadan, Shawwal 1-7, Dul Hijjah 7-

<sup>337</sup> SKIVB Circular No 121/1999

<sup>338</sup> Arabic-Malayalam is taught in the second standard after the student study Arabic alphabets in the first class and Malayalam alphabets from school's first standard. It is mainly to teach how the 23 out of 54 total alphabets in the mother tongue which have no exact parallel sounds in Arabic could be written using Arabic alphabets.

<sup>339</sup> Qur'an is studied at four levels. Classes for pure recitation as per rules in which the entire Holy Book would be covered reciting part by part within five years. Along with this, there is provision to study some parts by heart in each level thus memorizing all small and important *sura'ts* in the Qur'n as we mentioned above. The third is study of thajweed which is the science of laws on the Qur'anic articulation and those related to it. The fourth one is Qur'anic interpretations known as thafseer. It is taught in the secondary and higher secondary levels only.

<sup>340</sup> Shawwal first is celebrated as Eid ul-fitr following month of Ramadan, the month of fast

14<sup>341</sup>, Muharram 9-10, Rabi ul-Awwal 12, Rajab 27, Sha'aban 15, January 26 and August 15. As per board direction, only five-year-old child could be admitted in the first standard, and, as a matter of fact, there is no gender divide, and even at higher levels of +1 and +2 mixed classes are followed.

The book on Curriculum direction has explained the aims and objectives of teaching each subject. (1) Alphabets: to learn articulation of each letters from its own articulating places in the mouth and to get the ability of reading each alphabets alone and joined and of writing it by seeing it and without seeing, thus to be able to recite Qur'an keeping all its rules. (2) In Arabic, to enable the student to write, read, understand and speak the language at an average level without mistakes. (3) To enable the student read and write Arabic-Malayalam at ease. (4) In Fiqh, to teach the students the forms of worships and rituals along with practical classes as well as necessary evidences from the sources, and to memorise the *dhikrs* (hymens) and prayers. (5) In Aqeeda, to emphasis on strengthening the matters related to beliefs in the minds of the students according to his mental capacity in each level. (6) The subject of Akhlakh aims at teaching the Islamic moral values and transforming the students to good human beings. (7) The study of Tareeq aims at having a good understanding of Islamic history and about its great legendary personalities, and at instilling a sense of sacrifice, hard work, tolerance in the students. The board directs the *Mu'allims* to be a role-model for their students, relate the lessons with the life-experiences, induce the students to wage an excellent, pious and systematic life that will be adorned by values of co-operation, mutual love, and respect to the old and affection to the young.<sup>342</sup>

#### **H) *Islamika Sahitya Kalamela*, (Islamic Arts And Literature Festival)**

It is well-known that the annual youth festival of Kerala government schools, where school students at sub-junior, junior and senior categories compete in various artistic and literary programmes from school, to district and state levels,

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<sup>341</sup> Month of Haj pilgrimage and Eid ul-Adhha

<sup>342</sup> *Manhaj ul-tha'aleem 205*, Amended version of Curriculum to 1-12 classes, SKIVB Central Office .



is one of the widely-covered art and literary programme in the country. The *Madradas* of Kerala has followed this festival also, but in an Islamic manner by adopting and Islamising the appreciable items of competition and avoiding the un-Islamic ones. Though the centralised form of Arts and literary festival is a selective adoption of the state school version started recently, competitions in speech, songs, story telling, *Kadha Prasangam*<sup>343</sup>, etc, had started since the inception of *Madradas* as part of the tradition of Prophet's birthday celebration. The *Islamic Sahitya Kalamela*, the SKJMCC started in 1991, brings together contestants representing all districts into a final competition after it conducts contests at *Madrasa*, Range and District levels. On the sidelines of the festival for students, a *Mu'allim Fest* is also held since 1995 aimed at judging and improving various skills of teachers. Though the *Sahitya Kalamela* under SKJMCC is a biannual event, state-level Islamic literary and art festival is held every year with the SKSSF, the student wing of *Samastha*, conducting the same in the name of 'Sargalaya' in alternative years, thus facilitating for *Madrasa* drop-outs and college and *Dars* students also to take part in such competitions. There are awards, gifts and trophies for the first three districts with highest points, and the first and second prize winners get cash awards and certificates as well.<sup>344</sup>

Students in 3 and 4 (up to 11 years) are considered in the sub-junior category while 5,6 and 7 classes make up the junior level (up to 14 years), and 8,9 and 10 classes come in senior levels (up to 17 years). The competition items include Qur'an recitation, Qur'an *Hifz*, Islamic songs in Arabic and Malayalam, (both single and group), hand writing in Arabic, Arabic-Malayalam, picture drawing, Quiz, *Adhan*, speeches in Arabic, Malayalam and English, *Kadha Prasangam*, *Qissappattu*,<sup>345</sup> essay writing both in Arabic and Malayalam with subjects being given only half-hour ago, word-war in Arabic, Poster drawing and many others. The competitions for *Mu'allims* include *Hizb*, speeches in Arabic, Urdu and

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<sup>343</sup> Story telling accompanied by musics and songs.

<sup>344</sup> SKSSF 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Souvenir, 1999.

<sup>345</sup> War songs and other songs which are the great treasure of Arabic Malayalam language, and which are written extolling respected personalities like Prophet, Companions, or Sufi Sheikhs, or written in elaborative, stylish and exaggerated manner about major Islamic events like Battles of Badr and Uhd or anti-colonial outbreaks like Malappuram war.

Malayalam, essay writing, Arabic Musha'ara, preparation of teaching note, Charts and Arabic *Khuthba* for Friday prayer.<sup>346</sup>

## I) Publications

Besides printing and distributing *Madrassa* textbooks, the educational board has also been trying to utilise its grass-root level organisational setup for the promotion of the various magazines and publications. The educational board came to the publication field with the launch of Al-Bayan monthly, first in Arabic-Malayalam and then in Malayalam in 1954. Al-Bayan was instrumental in disseminating the messages of *Samastha* and its educational board as well as the new system of centralised *Madrassa* education far and wide. Its pages carried reports of increasing centralised *Madrassas*, article on importance and necessity of such a system. However, the magazine ceased to exist after few years. In 1959, the *Jam'eyyat ul-Mu'allimeen* started its mouthpiece - al-*Mu'allim* magazine. *Al-Mu'allim*, started as *thrimasika* (quarterly), did not last long, but in 1977 it was restarted as monthly and still continues. *Al-Mu'allim* publishes articles written in Arabic, Arabic-Malayalam and Malayalam languages and it is sent free of cost to all *Madrassas*. The magazine serves as an organisational newsletter, and aims at preserving the heritage language of Arabic-Malayalam, and at brushing the writing abilities of *Madrassa Mu'allims* as well as inspiring them to read and widen their knowledge base.

In a clear display of *Ulama* organisation's urgent response to the changing needs of modern world, the board started two important magazines; one for children and the other for women and family. The children's monthly, *Kurunnukal*(kids), which, in apparent departure from views of early scholars, carries picture stories and novels, is targeting younger readers who will be otherwise addict of various children's magazine in the market with mysterious, superstitious and imaginary stories. The family and women monthly, *Santhushta Kudmbam* (Happy Family), was introduced to give the community, especially the female folks, a different taste of reading, and to diversify their areas of interest in to an Islamic way. The community has clearly given a warm welcome to both the ventures and both the

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<sup>346</sup> SKIVB Circular No C/2/2005 on 9<sup>th</sup> *State Islamika Kalamela 2005*

magazines are doing a great job in the identity formation of the community members.

## **J) Popular Financing**

Almost all *Madrasas* are run with the financial assistance of Muslim community members of the respective *Mahallus*. In each Muslim village, there are committees drawn from the *Mahallu* General body to look after the day-to-day affairs of *Madrasa*, *Masjid* and other community affairs. The ways of collecting funds for *Madrasas* vary locally. In most cases, it is collected through compulsory monthly contributions that are decided upon according to the capacity of the family. Many committees have founded provisions for permanent incomes by erecting rental buildings, like shopping complexes, marriage halls and convention centres, or by buying rental materials like party dinner sets, tables and chairs. People use to contribute for the running of *Madrasas* in kinds also, like particular volume of rice<sup>347</sup>, incomes from a plot, all incomes from one or more coconut trees, etc. These kinds, mainly collected rice and coconuts, will be sold out in public auction, generally held after Friday prayers. In each village, one can see many plots, trees or other properties given as waqf for incomes to run the religious institutions.

During a brief field study, it was evident that there are many rich *Madrasa* committees who run nursery and English medium schools and other institutions like parallel colleges, computer centres, etc, and who run collective business activities for the benefit of *Madrasas* and *Masjids* in their areas. Many *Madrasa* buildings itself are functioning as public schools, nursery schools, or computer centres after the *Madrasa* timing which comes maximum three hours on school working days.

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<sup>347</sup> In an interview with Adrisseri Muhammad Musliyar, who was as mentioned in the previous chapter one of the main campaigner for madrasas through his attractive wa'az, he said that in olden days whenever the womenfolk will take rice to prepare lunch or dinner they will put aside a handful of rice to a special pot and the collection of the month would be given to the madrasa rice collector. It is interesting that anybody would not take anything from that preserved rice even the family is starving.

## **Experiments in Primary Religious Education**

Boarding *Madrasas*, Orphanages, Destitute homes, and integrated schools are diversified, modified or modernised forms of primary religious educational system of Mappila Muslims. Though each of these innovations requires a detailed study revealing its organisation, mode of functioning, popular support and merits and demerits, this study wants only a brief look to shed a light on the modernisation trends took place among Mappila Muslims in the field of religious education.

**Orphanages and Destitute Homes:** Orphanages, generally termed '*Yatheemkhana*', are not a new or recent trend among Mappila Muslims. The first orphanage, JDT Islam Orphanage, Calicut, was established in 1922, a year after the tragic 1921 incidents in which thousands of children lost their fathers within a short span of time and the community leaders felt an immediate and urgent need of giving them food and shelter. It is remarkable that JDT Islam was established at the expense of a rich Muslim businessman from Amritsar of Punjab, Moulana Qusuri, who sent his sons to Kerala to help Muslims suffering from British brutality when he came to know about it from the newspapers of *The Hindu* and *Chronicle*. In 1940s, another orphanage was set up in Tirurangadi in the wake of a devastating cholera disaster that swept the region. Mukkam '*Yatheemkhana*', one of the important and most populous among the contemporary ones, was built in 1951.<sup>348</sup>

Later a number of orphanages started emerging here and there with the scholars and community leaders frequently reminding the community, especially the rich among them, about the collective responsibility in bringing up of orphans, and it was very common to see Musliyers elaborating the hereafter benefits that will be given to those help a *yatheem* make up his living. In the post-1970 period, we can see a boom of *Yatheemkhanas* due to remittance of Gulf money. Now Muslims are running around 250 small and big *Yatheemkhanas*'s, out of which 170 get government grants (Rs 150 per month for an orphan) through State Orphanage

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<sup>348</sup> Parappil Muhammad Koya, *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charithram* (Malayalam, History of Calicut Muslims)

Control Board.<sup>349</sup> However, the lion share of the expenses are met through community contributions only. There are separate orphanages for boys and girls, and nowadays, almost all orphanages are admitting destitute children as well, and they function as Orphanage and Destitute Home.

'*Yatheemkhana*' bears the entire expense of its inmates from free food, lodge, and dress to combined education and all the necessary materials. Many '*Yatheemkhanas* have their own schools and *Madradas* and the inmates get both education from there while some orphanages function as a boarding with Islamic atmosphere with the students getting both schooling and *Madrasa* education from nearby institutions. As the community is more generous towards orphanages, most of them are running smoothly without any financial crisis, while there are some '*Yatheemkhanas* that struggle to exist.

Many orphanage committees have widened their scope and fields of services as well as income-earning means by starting various other ventures. The JDT Islam is running a '*Yatheemkhana*' Central Technical School, a Polytechnic, Nursery School, Primary School, UP School, High school, *Madrasa*, Arabic College, Industrial Training Centre, Printing press, Computer Centre, Dispensary, Auditorium and a *Masjid* inside its 29 acres of land. It has received among others contributions from UNESCO and Central Government's Social Welfare Department. Every year a group of JDT inmates go as volunteers during Hajj pilgrimage on the special invitation of Saudi King.

In 1983, Muslim orphanages came under one umbrella organisation, Kerala State Muslim Orphanage Co-ordination Committee, which organises various programmes to improve the educational quality of orphans, and their performances in arts and sports fields, and to give needed direction to '*Yatheemkhana* activists and its teachers.<sup>350</sup> Though *Samastha* does not run any orphanage directly, its subordinate organisations and supporters are looking after many of these *yatheemkhanas*.

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<sup>349</sup> Information from Moulana Abdurahman Fazfari Memmorial Orphanage, Padinchttumuri near Malapuram, Kerala.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

**Boarding Madrasas:** In the Boarding *Madrasa* System, students aged between 5-16 are selected based on some prescribed qualifications and they are bread and brought up at a special centre of learning where they will get both *Madrasa* education and schooling of high quality in an entirely Islamic atmosphere. This system was introduced as an attempt to inculcate Islamic culture and values in children from rich families who mostly prefer public schooling at the cost of *Madrasa* education not because of their contempt towards religious one but due to their extra care for and aspiration in the secular education. The ualma, who were alarmed about this situation, thought high and started a boarding *Madrasa* namely Crescent Boarding *Madrasa*, in 1970.

The students have to pay for their food and for some other facilities in the boarding system. However, expenses in the boarding system is bearable even for average parents and there is a wide-spread trend among rich and upper-middle class religious families to send their children to boarding schools because it provides both education in an Islamic atmosphere. The results of boarding *Madrasas* clearly indicate that under this system more importance are given for secular education and most of its products reach higher levels of colleges and universities instead of becoming religious scholars. In fact, this was what the pioneers of boarding system wanted; to produce well-educated people with Islamic culture.<sup>351</sup>

**Integrated Management Schools:** The relative prosperous situation in the post-Gulf boom period and exposure of Mappila Muslims in to various kind of modern trends outside their native places invoked them to invest more in the secular education of their children hoping to get them better educated and better placed in the competitive job markets. This trend resulted in the booming of a number of both English and Malayalam-medium schools under Muslim managements. The tight schedule and relatively tough curricula of these schools made it unable for the students of these newly developed institutions to attend *Madrasas*, and as a result, there was a substantial fall in *Madrasa* admissions. Though falls in

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<sup>351</sup> SKJMCC State Conference Souvenir 1999. Many information on Yatheemkhanas and boarding madrasas are written on the basis of personal interviews with related personalities and field experiences

*Madrasa* admissions has still been a problem, provisions were taken to ensure that management school students are getting religious education as well. All the Muslim management schools, irrespective of syllabuses they are following CBSE or Kerala Syllabus, have designed religious periods for them. In schools run by *Samastha*<sup>352</sup> or by its organisations and supporters, the SKIVB syllabus itself is followed with the educational year and public examinations being held according to school calendar itself. In this way, the board try to ensure that every Muslim boy and girl is getting primary compulsory religious education.

### **Innovations in Higher Education**

So far, the discussion was more focused on innovations and modernisation trends took place in the field of primary and secondary religious education. *Samastha* and its scholars have equally contributed for the religious higher education as well. Though a multi-faceted change gradually gripped all sectors of the Muslim community in the post-1921 period and with a higher pace in the post-independence period, the traditional system of higher education continued in its old style without any change. Other than Baqiyat of Vellore, there were not any higher centres of traditional learning in the region since the decline of Ponnani's fame. However, the reformists brought in many innovations in a bid to change the prevailing 'outdated' traditional systems radically.

According to Miller, "Contemporary Maulavi training follows two paths; the first continuing the spirit of the Ponnani tradition, the second following a more modern direction. It is the former that still produces the rank and file of Mappila moulavis. In this orthodox tradition a minimal amount of general education, sometimes less than five year, is succeeded by five or more years of study at a mosque-related *Dars* or Arabic training school. This is followed by four years of further training at a major college for maulavi studies. A considerable number of students fulfil the latter requirement at the al-Baqiyat at Vellore, where about one-third of the student body is Mappila. Some have attended the Deoband, their

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<sup>352</sup> *Samastha* directly runs only one school named Crescent English Medium Public School near Calicut

number being severely restricted by such factors as distance and cost, language barriers, and the Hanafi emphasis of the institution.”<sup>353</sup>

This situation prompted *Samastha*, whose most founding leaders and *Mushawara* members for many decades were products of Vellore, to seriously think about the inception of a higher centre of religious education in Malabar. The dream was materialised after a long discussion with the start of Jamia Nuria Arabiyya at Pattikad, Malappuram District, in 1962, ‘which has now become the premier *Sunni* training college for Mappilas.’<sup>354</sup> The *Jamia* was in fact a late application of first modernisation trend touched the religious education like what happened in Deoband and Vellore; transferring the traditional mode of learning from mosques to separate building with divided classes and provisions for examinations and certificates. However, *Jamia* provided its students more exposure to the modern world, taught them necessary secular subjects, gave tuitions in English and maths thus making many of its products, who come out with the title of ‘Moulavi Fadhil Faizi’, very much influential among the traditional Mappilas. The annual convocation programme of *Jamia* has been one of the largest Muslim gatherings in the district where people will come from far and wide to hear speeches of *Samastha* leaders.

In 1970s there were many attempts to innovate *Darses* in the mosques under the auspices of Basheer Musliyar al-Baqawi, who had as mentioned above a great vision of innovating religious education. He tried hard to implement his vision of ‘Model *Darses*’ which was aimed at a fresh and live approach towards every subjects taught in the *Darses* along with teaching languages of English and Urdu. His point of contention was that the *Dars* products who are the future scholarly leaders of the community should not be left behind and they should be equally aware of modern trends and subjects and be able to relate it with Islamic perspectives. However, the attempt he made under the banner of *Sunni Mahallu* Federation and *Samastha* Malappuram District Committee did not yield the needed results.

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<sup>353</sup> Miller, p. 261.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.



In 1972, Basheer Musliyar joined Rahmaniya Arabic College at Kadameri of Calicut District, where he brought in many outstanding and attractive innovations. Rahmaniyya was the premier traditional college that started teaching of all Arabic, English and Arabic languages along with religious subjects. Later, notwithstanding the language studies and innovations it joined the chain of traditional colleges that flourished in post 1970 period. At present, there are plenty of religious higher educational colleges run by both traditionalists and reformists. While the reformists mostly avoid the great intellectual tradition of Islam and more emphasis are given on textual studies of Qur'an and Hadith, the traditional graduating institutions are mostly Fiqh-oriented and less importance is given to the study and research in *Qur'an* and Hadith. *Darses* function as chief supplier to the higher educational colleges, known as Sharia colleges and Arabic colleges.

*Darses* and sharia colleges follow a two-level syllabus known as *Mukhthasar* and *Muthavval*, which are formed as a mixed and revised form of both Ponnani and Nizami curricula and which are considered as degree level and PG level courses in religious education. Through thorough learning of a certain set of traditional books dealing with all religious subjects the student can complete these two levels. Nowadays, almost all *Darses* carry classes up to Mukhthasar level and send their students to Jamia-like higher centres of learning to have the Muthavval level and pass out with certificates. Many newly found Sharia colleges are also doing the same, as they give a 6-year or 8-year course and send their students to the Muthavval colleges with which they have affiliation. One remarkable change in the religious learning centres is that contrary to the olden days when a traditional student will be completely engaged with his studies unaware of everything around him and ignorant of intricacies of the contemporary world, the students and graduates of the present-day traditional institutions have much more exposure to the outside world, are getting instructions in important secular subjects and have more interaction with outside world and involvement in social services.

### **Latest Experiments in Higher Education; Hudawi and Wafy Courses**

It is mentioned above that the traditionalists take time to respond to the modernity and their responses would come only at a time of inevitability. It was also mentioned that the tradition is not anti modern rather it itself facilitates change, but cautiously and selectively. The educational systems named above are two outstanding example of traditional leadership responding to the need of modern world, and until later, the appraisal of both has suggested that both are appreciable innovations despite the two needing to rectify many drawbacks.

Both the courses try to effectively and practically synthesis religious and secular subjects to give a fresh and live outlook towards religious education keeping in mind the entire changes of the modern world. However, both the systems took different ways to achieve their aim of producing a community capable of propagating Islam in the modern world. As mentioned, Basheer Musliyar was the man facilitated this radical change in the traditional Mappila community of Malabar. It is interesting to read that still there had been many who stamped Basheer Musliyar's attempt as a Wahabist move and who asked questions like can English be taught in a religious institution, a view that has completely receded as of now.

**Hudawi Course:** When his frequent attempts to set up Model *Darses* of his vision did not yield the expected results, Basheer Musliyar tried to materialise his dream through a particular institution and he got substantial support for this venture from two other great personalities - CH Hyderus Musliyar and Dr U Bapputty Haji. After years long discussions they founded Darul Huda Islamic Academy in 1986 offering a 12-year course that integrates all relevant subjects taught from lower to top levels of contemporary religious education with all important secular subjects of Maths, Social Sciences, History, physics, Chemistry, Biology, and languages of Arabic, Urdu English and Malayalam<sup>355</sup>.

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<sup>355</sup> In secular subjects, CBSE syllabus from 6-12 are followed in DH classes between 1-7.; For English and Malayalam languages state school textbooks or some specially prescribed texts are followed.

At a time when there was a feeling that religious education is the choice of poor students or of those less-brilliant, under-skilled and 'good for nothing else' children, Darul Huda called for only brilliant students irrespective of their backgrounds, selected 80 students<sup>356</sup> each purely on the basis of merits after conducting tough written and oral examinations. The DH founders asserted that religious propagation is the service done by prophets who supposed to be the most clever and brilliant in the community, and the religious scholars who are their successors should be the most brilliant among the community.

Within the 12 year course (2 years Preparatory, 4 years Secondary, 4 years Degree and 2 years PG), the DH included a number of additional and extra curricular activities like debates, discussions, comparative studies, oratory training, computer studies, tailoring and sports. It should be mentioned that other than being an ornament in the Syllabus, the DH gives equal importance to all the named subjects, but without any contact with the government schooling. For the embarrassment of many, who think about government jobs, the DH authority strongly rejects suggestions to give its students facility to attend SSLC examinations, which is considered as the basic formal educational qualification, despite giving to its students high quality education that could be compared to those given at any prestigious convent schools.

According to DH, it gives good education in secular subjects not for its students to get a government job and not to produce Muslim professionals and technicians having Islamic culture. Instead, it is to produce pure Islamic scholars having a clear idea of the modern world, its trends and ideologies in order to perform his duty in a very convincing manner, without getting the stamp of 'outdated', 'old', 'medieval' and 'good for nothing'. However, at higher level, the college prepares the students for university degree examinations under the provision of Open University System and they graduate in various social science subjects. The college itself provides the needed classes for the university subjects along with the religious studies.

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<sup>356</sup> All boys of 11-years and below who passed or attended the fifth class Public Examination of *Samastha* with an equal standard of secular schooling can attend the entrance examination conducted by Darul Huda.

Interestingly, the fresh syllabus and its projected products invoked great interest among Mappila Muslims and soon many, even very rich or highly educated families, started vying for admissions to give their children this kind of education. As a result, many managements in different parts started affiliated institutions adopting the same syllabus and getting academic assistance from the DH. Now it has become a university like chain having around 20 colleges following the same syllabus under a co-ordination committee.

After producing 9 batches of students, the DH now urgently needs to review their performances and to evaluate if the graduates are actually the products it projected in a bid to understand the merits and demerits of such an integrated system that evoked emphatic response from the community. Education experts have started reminding that DH was an experiment implemented on a plan designed more than 20 years ago, and if it wants to be able to survive the challenges of the speedily changing world, it should redesign and redraw its academic planning keeping the drawback of the prevailing system in mind.

**Wafy Course:** *Wafy* course given under Co-ordination of Islamic Colleges (CIC), a conspicuous academic governing body functioning as a university, is the other outstanding example of traditional leadership's response to the need of modern world. To a certain extent, it was a different way of materialising Basheer Musliyar's idea of integrating modern education with traditional ones, though it was formed years after his death. In an eight-year course, the CIC offers Mukhthasar degree in religious level and BA English literature Degree from University of Calicut. The students are given special tuitions in Arabic English languages and computer. The course first started at *KK Hazrath Memmorial Islamic and Arts College* under *Markazutharbiyathil Islamiyya*, Valancheri, Malappuram, and later many Islamic colleges followed the suit. When there emerged a number of colleges following the same course, its managements came together and formed a university like co-ordination among them in 2000. With the convergence and integration of around 20 colleges under a single academic umbrella, the CIC has emerged as a robust academic authority of these colleges.

It has a Senate, a Syndicate, an Advisory Board and Publishing Bureau, the directives of which are binding on each affiliated college.

### **Islamic Colleges for Women**

No Mappila women, just like most of their counterparts in other parts of the world, did rise to the fame of being a renowned religious scholar capable of dealing with religious issues at higher level. However, the Mappila history notes down about some women who were well in many Islamic subjects and who had held classes of some major religious texts at their homes for other women. Besides, there were women who had studied various religious subjects from their scholar fathers, brothers or husbands. Meanwhile, most of the Mappila women until recently had a somewhat detail awareness about Islam, its rituals, beliefs, history and many other related issues, because of the tradition of informative and educative *Wa'az* programmes mentioned above.

At the same time, women from reformist background started going to Arabic colleges thus getting a good chance for a relatively better education. The traditional women's formal education mostly limited to 10<sup>th</sup> classes of both school and *Madrassa* and in what they acquired from *Wa'az* programmes and Islamic magazines. Those who went for secular higher education from traditional community in the olden days were actually braving the frowned eyes of *Ulama*, who were more worried about the corrupt atmosphere of secular institutions.

Here, the traditional *Ulama* faced two problems to solve. The first was an urgent need to bring in provisions for women to get higher Islamic education in a bid to make them able to mould a better family and society. The second was to streamline the secular higher education of Muslim women understanding that it is better to show and guide to the relatively good and harmless way than putting an entire blind ban on women education.

Solving the first problem, *Samastha* and its supporters developed many colleges for women which focuses on teaching sharia along with needed secular subjects, and most of which are five-year courses.

Fatima Zahra Islamic Women College, Chemmad, run by Majlis al-Da'wat al-Islamiyya, a supporting arm of *Samastha*, is one of the remarkable experiments in this regard. Started in 1993, the college offers a 7-year course in which a brief form of Mukhathsar syllabus as well as up to +2 level school syllabus are taught privately, with an aim of producing religiously educated women who have good understandings in material subjects as well. The college, which admits girls aged 11.5 and below and who passed fifth standard of *Samastha's Madrasa*, also gives its inmates special classes in Arabic and English languages, Home Science, Midwifery, Tailoring, Embroidery, and Nursing. Recently, the college has started facilitating for its students to sit in the SSLC examinations privately.

Since 2004, *Samastha* directly started a sharia college for women under its SKJMCC committee to solve the dearth of higher religious learning centres. The *Samastha* Women Islamic Sharia College offers a five-year course for SSLC passed students in which a good chunk of Islamic subjects would be taught along with carrying the university syllabus for *Afdhalul Ulama* certificate in Arabic studies. It is too early to evaluate the function of the sharia college as it is still in its grooming period. In addition to Sharia college, the SKJMCC has prepared a plan for a '*Samastha* Girls Islamic Study Centre', where students passed 7<sup>th</sup> standards of both school and *Madrasa* will be admitted and given both schooling and *Madrasa* education up to +2 level in an Islamic atmosphere. Those aspiring students to study more can continue their study in the above mentioned Sharia College thus a girl student would get an integrated education spanning 10 years.

*Samastha* scholars throughout its history kept themselves away from active service in the field of pure secular education for reasons we mentioned above. Its earlier scholars who kept an amazing amount of piety and fear of God in their life rejected government offers of even aided colleges to run thinking that it was not their field of service, and there are plenty of agencies to work for it, and, moreover, *Samastha* is more concerned about the religious studies. However, many of the agencies running secular institutions have been subordinate organs or supporting arms of *Samastha*.

Recently, *Samastha* directly ventured in to the secular educational field starting an English medium school and a Professional College of Engineering. As both of these institutions too are in its developing pre-matured phase, it is also too early to judge upon it though curious people have started looking to what *Samastha* has to offer differently in these fields and how it can inculcate Islamic culture in these institutions.

However, *Samastha* is in urgent need to find a solution for the second problem as it has yet to clearly make up and assert its stand on how to streamline the secular higher education of Muslim women.

CHAPTER V  
**CONCLUSION**



## Conclusion

All individual Muslim communities across the world have their own features and peculiarities that distinguish them from each other despite having the basic characteristics of Islam. This is due to the cultural, social, geographical and anthropological differences of the region they live in. Mappila Muslims of Kerala are also not different, and even a profile study about them can reveal that they have more differences than uniformities with their counterparts in India. Along with keeping the Islamic spirit well and high, they have almost completely adapted to the local Malayalee culture. They maintain a harmonious and cordial relation with the fellow communities and wage a healthy and peaceful competition with them in all walks of life. Their political enlightenment is a role model to all minority communities living under a democratic government system. Though they had never enjoyed a political power in the state at any time before the independence, they could emerge as decisive and often power sharing group in the political arena of the state by effectively making out coalitions with other parties.

Education is one of the major field Mappila Muslims have showed enormous progress compared to their counterparts in other parts of the country, despite the fact they are still far behind of other communities in the state. Their history of education starts right from the advent of Islam in the state, and throughout their historical evolution, one can see that they have adopted various forms educational systems to disseminate knowledge through generations. It is evident that Mappilas had moved ahead in the olden days along with the changes in the educational trends of international Muslim community, but with adjustments and accommodations needed in the cultural atmosphere, they lived in. They developed three kinds of educational systems to impart education at primary, higher and universal levels. Othupallies served as the schools of primary education teaching the children al the preliminary knowledge about Islam that are compulsory for every individual to know. Darses at mosques served as knowledge centres producing religious scholars who can lead the community, teach its next generation and maintain the intellectual tradition intact through centuries. Systematically held Wa'az programmes served as the effective setup

for universal education educating the mass in the general Islamic perspectives, its history and other related things.

One cannot deny the roles of many outstanding personalities, who emerged from Sayyed families, scholar community and Sufi missionaries and who graced Kerala Muslims with their excellent leadership qualities, in the educational achievements of Mappilas as well as dissemination of religious knowledge among them. It is significant that there was always a healthy relation among these three strata of leadership. Almost all of the Sufi sheikhs were eminent scholars well versed in Sharia, and almost all major scholars since the early periods had joined any of real Thareeqas. Many Sayyeds landed in the state to propagate certain Sufi ways. The hybrid language of Arabi-Malayalam has also an undeniable and substantial role in the spread of religious education among Mappilas.

Just like every region and all communities in the world, Mappila Muslims had also faced the waves of modernisation trends with the onset of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of reformist ideologies, the transformation of the community from under individual leaderships to the folds of organisations based on various ideologies, and increased attempts for adoption of secular western education are the remarkable incidents that changed the Mappilas in the aftermath of tragic incidents of 1921, especially in the post-independence period. Though there were many personal attempts behind the educational progress of Kerala Muslims, most of the educational developments took place under the direct involvement or guidance of various organisations. All the organisations worked in the education field according to their ideologies and worked out many educational systems to disseminate both religious and secular knowledge among the community. The effectiveness of all this systems still need an analytical cum evaluative studies to find out how each organisation, which claims the credit of the educational progress of Mappilas, could win in their attempts.

Religious education was at stakes when the modernisation calls turned the attention of community leaders towards secular one. While all the reformist organisations heeded the secular education, often at the expense of religious one,

it was *Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama* who focused their attention on defending the traditional religious education and worked hard for its progress. This organisation of traditional *Ulama* representing the majority community did not actively involved in secular education, but adopted an ideal religious education system that allowed all Muslim boys and girls to have their regular schooling as well along with religious studies.

*Samastha's* educational board is running a systematic and scientific system in primary education that has more than eight thousand *Madrasas* under its arm. The message of this ideal Madrasa system, in which a Muslim child can have 10-year religious education without hampering his regular schooling, has spread to all Kerala districts and to various Indian states and foreign countries where Muslim Malayalees live. As on 11/02/2006, the SKIVB has recognised *Madrasas* out of Kerala in Andaman Nicobar Islands (18), Tamil Nadu (80), Karnataka (152), Lakshadweep (23), Maharashtra (1), Malaysia (9), UAE (15), Bahrain (2), Kuwait (1), Saudi Arabia (1), Qatar (1) and Oman (6).

There are other organisations also who are running many such primary *Madrasas* under centralized system, but *Samastha* has reached far ahead of them all. It was the first to respond when the government banned public schools from providing religious education just after the independence by calling on the society to set up *Madrasas* in every village. One can understand that these *Madrasas*, about which Miller termed as 'the wonder and strength of Mappila Islam' and the concept of which are different from North India and other parts of the subcontinent where the term is used for all Islamic educational centers, have been playing a greater role in the better integration of Malayalee Muslims with other communities. While many Muslim communities elsewhere in India and abroad had to choose either secular or religious ways of education resulting either in alienation from or complete assimilation with the non-Islamic cultures and communities, this system facilitated the harmonious integration and co-existence of Mappilas with non-Muslims along with keeping their Islamic identity and culture high. The students could understand their beliefs, morals, values, and rituals from Madrasa in the

morning or evening and have their regular schooling at the same time mingling with students from all walks of life.

Primary religious education also developed into certain other fields like boarding *Madrasas*, orphanages, integrated public schools, etc in order to adjust with various challenges and accommodate to different situations. While *Samastha* streamlined the modernisation process in the education field by facilitating the integration of religious and secular education, it also ventured in later decades to synthesis both at higher levels. The recent emergence of many religious scholars among traditional community with higher educations both in religious and secular fields was the result of these attempts. The Hudawi and Wafi courses we talked about are the two relatively successful forms of experiments in integrated education among the traditional community. One cannot turn his attention among this all from the enormous attempts *Samastha* made to keep many higher centres for pure religious education to produce scholars well-versed in sharia.

The present study is a humble attempt to look in to the role of traditional *Ulama* organisation in development and modernisation of religious education among Mappila Muslims. Each readings during the study were in fact reminders that the attempt is very much preliminary and there are a plenty of related topics and issues which require further and elaborative cum analytical study. While submitting this work the researcher hopes it to be a helping hand into further studies.

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## DECLARATION

24<sup>th</sup> July 2006

I declare that the dissertation entitled "Development and Modernisation of Religious Education in Kerala: Role of Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama" submitted by me is in the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or of any other Universities and is my own work.

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