
Chapter III

REFORM MOVEMENT AND EFFORTS FOR A SEPARATE IDENTITY

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The growth of a collective consciousness among *Mappilas* has two definite stages, the first as a religio-cultural community and then as a political community. While the available literature on *Mappilas* scantily deals with the first phase, the final stage when *Mappilas* emerged as a political community has been covered widely in these studies. Hence, this chapter is devoted to the first phase of the emergence of the collective consciousness of *Mappilas* .

As we have seen in Chapter I, the practice of Islam in Malabar and many of the popular mentalities, which supported it, were shaped and moulded by the 'folk' and 'elite' religions of wider Hindu society. As people with narrow horizons and limited world view, *Mappilas* were supposed to be given to 'lax' and accommodated variants of folk worship because they were close to the forces of nature, their religious life was parochial and localized incorporating spirit cults and other traditions derived from non-Muslim sources. But once, as pointed out by Barbara D. Metcalf in another context, Muslims began to have their horizon widened through the experience of overseas trade or through other forms of economic and social modernisation which gave rise to greater physical mobility and an opening up of contacts and world views, they began to loose this attachment to local cults.¹ The religious reform movements, which started in Malabar by the beginning of 20th century, regarded this syncretic cults and rites as debasement of the pristine purity of Islam. According to the reformists, the practice of Islam by the majority in Malabar was 'deviant' and 'corrupt'. Hence, the most venomous condemnation of such debased Islam in Malabar came from large

¹Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton, 1982, p.124.

volumes of polemical and didactic writings of the reformists and revivalists in 20th century. In a discussion on the formation of a Muslim identity in Malabar, it is of vital importance to have a critical evaluation of the impact of those anti-syncretic fundamentalist movements of 20th century in Malabar on the changing perceptive of identity. A much clearer understanding of the reform movement in Malabar may be derived from analysing the 'cultural' and 'societal' aspects of its impact both ultimately converging on the process of formulating and strengthening the collective Islamic consciousness of Malabar Muslims.² By the middle of 20th century the reform movement of Malabar brought about revolutionary transformation of the religious and cultural self-image of Muslims of Malabar.

The reformists, right from the last quarter of 19th century onwards, launched a vicious and sustained attack on the non-Islamic accretions and excrescences of Malabar Islam and urged Muslims to return to the purity of Islam. This forced on the *Mappilas*, both individually and collectively, a growing awareness of what they believed and practiced as Muslims. The first motive power towards this was supplied by the reform efforts of Sanaula Makti Thangal, who was the pioneer among the Muslim reformers of Kerala.

Makti Thangal and the Early Reform Efforts

Reforms in Muslim society mean getting rid of all un-Islamic habits and customs that were lingering on in the life of Muslims as survivals of ancestral traditions or as a result of acculturation. The necessity of the reform of *Mappila* community was felt under the influence of British rational traditions. Reformers like Makti Thangal (1847-1912) emerged to rationalize Islam according to the change in the society.³ By the dawn of 20th century, the urge for reform of the existing society was visible among almost all

²The religious aspect of the reform among Kerala Muslims has been discussed in M.Abdul Samad, *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in 20th century*, Kollam, 1998.

communities of Malabar, but the pace of change was relatively poor in the case of *Mappilas*. Makti Thangal was a product of colonial modernity and he was exposed to colonial values. At the same time, he anchored on Islamic scriptures, when he attacked the blind beliefs and archaic practices of *Mappilas*. Thus, the early reform movements were both reformist as well as revivalist. On the one hand they tried to purify Islam from all later accretions, which run contrary to its original teachings, on the other, tried to uplift the community through secular education, stressing even on the education of women.

The Reform movements contributed much to strengthen the community identity as these reforms were directed against un-Islamic practices and customs. Neither the early reformers, nor the later reformers were against the tenets of texts of Islam - *Quran* and *Hadith*. What they attempted was to bring *Mappila's* life in conformity with textual Islam rather than to regulate their life according to the standards of colonial modernity.

Makti Thangal was influenced by western values, ideas and methods and showed a keen interest in cleansing Islam of impurities. But, for him, the necessity of reform arose from *Quran* itself and not from modern ideas. It was the modern ideas that pushed Muslim intellectuals to turn to *Quran* itself to find answers to the problems of the community.

Makti was born at Veliyamkode in 1847, as the son of Sayid Ahmad Tangal, the disciple of Veliyamkode Umar Khazi. He belonged to the Sayid family, the descendants of Prophet Mohammed.⁴ He acquired both secular and religious education from Ponnani. Besides Arabic and Malayalam, he

³Fortunately, the complete works of Makti Thangal, have been collected and compiled by K.K.M. Abdul Kareem with the title *Makti Thangalude Sampoorana Krithikal* (Mal), Kerala Islamic Mission, Tirur, 1981, (hereinafter *MTSK*).

⁴ K.K.M. Kareem, *Sayid Sanaulla Makti Tangal* (Biography- Mal), Kerala Islamic Mission, Tirur, 1981, p.11.

was proficient in English, Hindusthani, Persian and Tamil. He served the British government as an Excise Inspector for a short span of his life, which he resigned for concentrating on his missionary work.

The second half of 19th century witnessed the hectic Christian missionary activities in Kerala and umpteen tracts were published denigrating Islam and Muslims. They published such tracts even in Arabi-Malayalam to attract the *Mappilas*. Another means for propagation adopted by these missionaries was the street sermons. Through both oral and print means, they attacked Islam and used extremely objectionable language in describing the prophet and other heroes of Islam, deriding the personal character of prophet Mohammed. One such tract wrote that 'Mohammed's character was worse than his religious teachings and there was no one equal with him in licentiousness and doing wicked acts. He did not consider age or relationship in gratifying the cravings of flesh. He was a notorious robber.'⁵ There were two missionary societies in Kerala, which actively indulged in missionary works- Bible society, and Tract society.⁶ These Christian missionaries represented Muslims in pejoratives and in the most uncivilized language. Even a liberal missionary like Herman Gundert spoke about prophet Mohammed in derogatory terms like 'womanizer' or 'opium eater' etc.⁷ It was in this backdrop, *Jaridha Rozgar*, an urdu journal from Madras commented, 'The opponents of Islam especially Christian missionaries attack our religion and publish stupid canards, trumped-up stories and unfounded statements against Muhamedan religion and prophet.'⁸ The paper then requested the co-religionists to help in furthering the cause of Islam against its opponents.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.11.

⁶ K.K.M Kareem, *MTSK*, *op. cit.*, p.573.

⁷ M.R. Raghava Varier, *Ammavazhi Keralam*, (Mal) Kerala Sahithya Academy, Trichur, 2006, pp.147-48.

⁸ *Juridha Rozgar*, (Urdu) Madras, 13th May 1893, MNNPR, TNA.

It was against this background of missionary bitings that Makti endeavored to create a kind of literature designed to restore Muslims' confidence in the faith of Islam and arouse consciousness in them of the superiority of Muslim culture. He was agitated by this debasement of missionaries and resigned his government job in 1882, at the age 35, and started his crusade against Christian missionaries.⁹ He used his pen and tongue, both sharp as razor, to counter the arguments of Christian missionaries against Islam.

In 1884, he brought out his first book *Kadora Kudaram* (The Ferocious Axe) which literally cut the Christian allegations in to sizes. He laid bare the hollowness of the Christian belief in 'Holy Trinity'. As expected it triggered off a controversy throughout Kerala and one Christian missionary, Vidwan Kutty came with a counter-tract. In reply to this, Makti brought out another pamphlet titled *Kadora Vajram*.¹⁰

It has to be noted that Makti shifted his centre of activities to Travancore and from there, he moved to different centres of Kerala cutting across the boundaries of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, propagating his arguments against Christianity by organizing debates and distributing religious tracts. He was the first, who effectively used print media for disseminating his ideas. It was for this purpose that he established a printing press called Muhammadiya Press at Aleppey, by collecting a *Kasu* each from his well-wishers at Cochin. He published a journal called *Nabinanayam* (Prophet's coin) from Cochin. The idea behind its publication was to publish counter arguments to the allegations against Islam by rival sects and to establish the truth of his *Uppappa* (grand grandfather i.e., prophet

⁹ K.K.M. Kareem, Note No.4, p.14.

¹⁰ Detail of his books have been given in chapter on 'Print and the Imagined Community of *Mappilas*'.

Mohammed).¹¹ Through this term *uppapa*, he was indicating his pedigree which could be traced back to prophet.

For about 35 years, he led the life of a missionary giving 'tit for tat' to Christian missionaries. He trained youths to propagate Islam at his own expense. He engaged in many polemical debates with Christians all over Kerala and was cunning enough to give curt reply to the questions of Christians. Once, in one such debates held at Changanassery, he was asked, 'if god is omnipresent, where will you piss? He retorted, 'I will do it on cross where Jesus (your God) was crucified'.¹² Again, at Trivandrum during a court session, he made an objectionable remark *Kazhuveri* about Jesus, which in Malayalam is a derogatory term. While the judge asked him to withdraw the term, he replied, 'As per Richard Collin's dictionary, *Kazhu* means 'cross' and *Eri* means 'to climb' and hence, the term meant nothing but one who 'died on cross.' The court stood aghast.

In a pamphlet *Iman Salamath* (Protection of Faith) he wrote, 'prophet was always worried about his '*Ummath*' (community) till his last breath.... But being part of that *Ummath*, you are not worried about prophet, being abused as *Rakshasan* (demon) and his wife Aysha as 'whore'. How will you get the mercy of prophet in the next world?'¹³ This kind of sentimental appeals did create a kind of community spirit in the minds of *Mappilas* .

The attack of Christian Missionaries against Islam in market places, through sermons and religious tracts, created a sense of danger to one's cultural identity. *Mappilas* cutting across economic divisions, were agitated

¹¹ Makti Thangal, *Nabi Nanayam*, pp.2-3 as quoted in K.K.M Kareem, Note no. 4, p.19.

¹² K.K.M. Kareem, Note no: 4, p.75.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.24. Compare this with the words of Mehrulla, the counterpart of Makti at Jessore in Bengal. In 1899 Mehrulla wrote, 'Men, whilst professing Islam, can put up with the denigration of prophet, are not worthy of the name of Musalman'. As quoted in Rafudhin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims; 1871-1906 : A Quest for Identity*, OUP, Delhi, p. 98

by the barbed slights at their faith by Christian missionaries. Hence, the cultural defence against Christianity led by Makti Thangal, did help to arouse a community consciousness among *Mappilas* of Malabar.

Against Sufi Tarikas

A major concern of Makti during this period was to liberate the Muslim masses from the clutches of the Sufi influence. In 1909, he published a tract *La Maujudin Law Point* (The law point of the philosophy of *La Maujud*', the philosophical monism in Islam).¹⁴ This work is a staunch critique of the Sufi cult in Malabar. A heated debate was raging among Muslims of Kerala with regard to the provisionality of the *dikr* (hymn) *la Maujud illallah* (None exist other than Allah). The *Ulema* of Kerala were divided in to two warring groups, one arguing that it was permissible to recite this *dikr*, while the other group, argued that Islam does not permit it. Even Mappila songs were composed legitimizing both the positions.¹⁵

Makti vehemently opposed this *dikr*, which he argued was against the spirit of Islam and an adoption from eclectic Sufi philosophy. He toured throughout Malabar speaking against this Sufi philosophy. He was against all Sufi *Tarikas*, popular in Malabar. He wrote, 'these ignorant fools (Sufi pirs) prevail upon the ignorant *Mappilas* to accept their leadership, telling them that not to accept the leadership of a *Imam* (leader) is anti-Islamic, enroll them in their register and collect the dues from them annually'.¹⁶ Thus, he had realized that it was the Sufi *pirs*, who kept the Muslim masses in eternal darkness. He was rebuked and manhandled at Tellichery and Valapattanam by the *murids* of Sufis. Those who supported the 'Islamic monism' published a tract called *Maktiyude Mudanthanvadam* (The False argument of Makti) in

¹⁴ K.K.M. Kareem, *MTSK*, pp.648-658.

¹⁵ *La Moujid illallah Pattu* and *Radd la Mauju du illallah Pattu*, were popular among *Mappilas* during the first decade of 20th century.

¹⁶ Makti Thangal, *La Maujudin Law Point*, p.2 in *MTSK* , p. 649.

Arabi-Malayalam.¹⁷ Through this attack on intercessionary Sufism, Makti was determined to rid the world of its enchanted places, that is of anything that might diminish the believers' sense of responsibility. He was determined to assert the principle of *Tauhid* (oneness of God).

Against Marumakkathayam

Another issue, which Makti took up, was *Marumakkathayam*. As we have seen in Chapter I, this was prevalent among the *Mappilas* of North Malabar and certain coastal towns of South Malabar. He criticized it in the light of Quran. He published umpteen pamphlets both in Malayalam and Arabi-Malayalam, criticizing the system as a remnant of Hindu culture. In *Parkaleetha Porkalam* he wrote, 'on material basis, this people (Northern *Mappilas*) follow the system, introduced by Sankaracharya. Even the Hindus realized the injustice involved in the system. It is a wonder that the Muslims, who are money minded, do not feel so. ... His beloved wife does not obey or honour him. He is compelled to leave the *tarawad*, once wife or her father insists. ... Islam does not permit this kind of injustice. Muslims don't feel ashamed of permitting wives to act as husbands. Even in terms of human nature, a man cannot admit this system'.¹⁸ Here, Makti spoke about the system from a patriarchal point of view. In February 1902, in a sermon at Shaduli mosque at Koothuparamba, he told the Muslims that 'even the animals would not practice Marumakkathayam and those who practice it are not eligible for the grace of God and prophet'.¹⁹

Once he was manhandled at Kannur while speaking against the system. At this hour of despair, it was the Hindus who came to rescue him from the mob.²⁰ At Taliparamba, he spoke to Muslims to get rid of the evil system of

¹⁷ KKM Kareem, Note no. 4, p.30.

¹⁸ *Parkaleetha Porkalam* in *MTSK*, pp.224-225.

¹⁹ KKM Kareem, Note no: 4, p.48.

²⁰ Makti Thangal, *Makti Manaklesam*, (Makti's Mental Worries), p.65 in K.K.M. Kareem *MTSK*, p. 1035.

Marumakkathayam, which was introduced in Kerala by Parasurama. He added that 'as *Allah* instructed through *Annisah* (Chapter in Quran), those who practice it would be punished for negating the rights of one's parents'.²¹ Thus, Makti was cutting the roots of the shared traditions of Malabar and thereby, dragging the community to an exclusivist identity. These discussions in public, backed by printed discourse, sharpened the Islamic consciousness as well as greater differentiation of Muslims from non-Muslims. The early two decades of 20th century was, thus, the formative period for developing a scripture based conception of religion in Malabar.

Makti against the *Mullas*

Makti was also in the forefront of the attack against the traditional priesthood of Malabar. The slogan, which was printed in the front page of Arabi Malayalam journal, which he started from Cochin in 1895, was,

He has'nt the hearth or home

Nor has he met any learned

He has'nt learnt any lores

Still, *fatwas* are not in dearth.²²

These four lines was a true depiction of the inadequate knowledge of the *Musaliyars*, in true religious teachings of Islam. Through out his life, he remained as the betenoire of the traditional *mullas*. Quite naturally, the orthodox *Ulema* utilized every opportunity to oppose him. They even acted as witnesses against him in certain civil suits filed by Christian missionaries.²³ They also issued *fatwas* stating that religious sermons were not permissible in Islam and those who hear and attend his sermons were outside the fold of

²¹ Makti Thangal, "Nammude Sancharam" *Salahul Iqwan* (Arabi Malayalam) (ed.) C. Saidalikutty, Tirur, Vol.3, Issue 4, 1903.

²² KKM Kareem, *MTSK*, p.4.

²³ KKM Kareem, Note no:4, p.68.

Islam.²⁴ At the same time, there were some among the traditional *ulema* who issued *fatwas* in favour of religious sermons initiated by Makti Tangal. For instance, Puthiyakath Abdurahiman alias Bava Musliyar, the then *Maqdoom* of Ponnani had issued a *fatwa*, stating that the religious sermons with the intention of educating *Kafirs* (infidels) about Islam was mandatory on the part of every Muslim.²⁵ As seen earlier, at this juncture also, he was supported by the Hindu friends. They were much impressed by his scholarship in Hindu philosophy and mythology and hence, in his struggle against Christian missionaries, they stood with him firmly. He had acknowledged this in his autobiographical work, *Makti Manaklesam* (The Worries of Makti). He says 'As my attempt was novel and the might of my enemies was stronger, my own relatives and well-wishers were afraid of supporting me. I was waging a lone battle, without being supported morally or financially. In my endeavour to start the first journal *Paropakari*, the help came from my Hindu friends'.²⁶

The trials and tribulations that he encountered in his efforts to eradicate the evils of Malabar society are vividly described in his autobiographical work *Makti Manaklesam*. He was a true *Mujaddid* (reformer). He stood against *shirk* (worship of any object other than God) and *Bidaath* (innovation) with firm conviction. Kunhippokkarkutty Sahib says, 'He spoke to the people that those who pray to anybody other than God and those who believe in the intercessionary powers of *Auliyas*, are not true Muslims. He said all this on the basis of Quranic injunction and it was this that infuriated *Musaliyars* (priests) against him'.²⁷

Makti's Efforts in the field of Education

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.69.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.70.

²⁶ K.K.M. Kareem, *MTSK*, p.1034.

²⁷ P. Kunhippokkarkutty, *Satya Prabhodhanam*, preface, Amina Book Stall, Trichur, 1963, p.4.

Education was another domain, which Makti was concerned about. He realized that only through education, the *Mappilas* could be liberated. It was with this intension that he organized a *sabha* at Kannur in 1889, with the support of Sultan Ali Raja.²⁸ He reminded the Muslims of the rich heritage of ancient Muslims in the development of modern education. He argued that the cause of the revolutionary growth of Islam in each period was not sword, but their contribution in the field of science and philosophy. They translated many works of physics and science from Greek to Arabic. It was from the Arabs that Europeans got all this progress. During this golden age of Islam, *Madrasas* were not centres of religious learning but secular subjects like Geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Maths, Logic, Medicine, Craft, Sculpture, Science, Philosophy etc were taught there'.²⁹ The message he tried to drive home was that it was the progress in secular knowledge that led to the progress of Islamic societies in the past and the *Mappilas* had to regain that heritage of their brethren in the past.

He was also worried that the Muslims of Kerala were reluctant to study English and Malayalam. Regarding this he wrote, 'Malayalam is the language that satisfied the material needs as well as the *guru* that teaches all knowledge about God and the Islamic practice, knowledge in English empowers one to enter politics and to acquire knowledge to earn money and prestige. They who argue that the study of these languages is against Islam, are ignorant about religion'³⁰. He was happy to see *Mappilas* reading or writing articles and making public speeches in Malayalam.³¹ He made scathing criticism against the 'Malayalam' spoken by *Mullas*, who used to speak and write without bothering phonetics, meaning and tense. He mocked at the *Mullas* for using

²⁸ KKM Kareem, Note No:4, p.56.

²⁹ Makti Thangal, Pamphlet 5, in KKM Kareem, *MTSK*, pp. 700-704.

³⁰ KKM Kareem, *MTSK*, p.709.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.1006.

terms like *lacha* (Raksha) *chicha* (Shiksha) *Manoharam* (cleaning after pissing) *Naskathram* (Nakshatram) etc. When, once he was asked by a Muslim youth about his opinion regarding the Musaliyar's *fatwa* that English was the language of Hell, his reply was that one should learn English for if he happened to be in Hell, he could ask the angels in Hell for a glass of water in their language.³² A recurring prayer in the night sermons (*wa'az*) by *Musaliyars* was, 'Oh God, save us from the sin of speaking in Malayalam as it is the language of *Kuffar* (infidels) and hence the language of *Jahannam* (Hell)'.³³

Through this kind of scathing criticism, he could get rid of the blind notion prevalent among *Mappilas* that English was the language of Hell and Malayalam, the language of Hindus. He felt that all the books on Islam and its *fiqh* had to be rendered in Malayalam, so that pupil could easily comprehend it. It is in this context, he made the following observation about the traditional educational system of *Mappilas* in a pamphlet 'Muslims and Education'. "Children at an early age are entrusted in the hands of *Mullas*. For about three years they teach them to read *Quran*, which is followed by *Pathu Kitabs* [a collection of Ten Arabic books including *Mutafarid* and *Nurul Absar*, probably the lecture notes of *Maqdoom* scholars]. Since these are in Arabic, the students are taught the meanings of each Arabic word in Malayalam and this Malayalam is ridiculed even by the aborigines of highland.....Throughout the course, Malayalam is not taught.... If the *Pathu Kitabs* are translated in to Malayalam the students can learn it within two months, instead of a year. For the last 700 years this system continues....".³⁴ By exposing the hollowness of the existing system of religious education, he was arguing for a structural change in the religious education of *Mappilas* .

³² KKM Kareem, Note no: 4, p.79.

³³ K. Umar Moulavi, *Ormayude Theerath* (Autobiography), Cochin, 2000, p.8.

³⁴ KKM Kareem, Note no:4, pp.40-43.

He initiated a crash programme for the improvement of religious education. In *Makti Manaklesam*, he made certain suggestions for the improvement of religious instruction.³⁵ He believed that the current system was a waste of energy and time. Hence, he made the following suggestions for improvements. (a) A Board in each class where the teacher writes the alphabet and pupil copy it. (b) To institute the system of divisions instead of single class system. (c) To improve the Arabi-Malayalam taught in *Othupallis*, he published *Thahleemul Iqwan*, in which he tried to evolve certain new alphabets equivalent to the Malayalam sounds. He also suggested that not only religious knowledge, but secular knowledge also had to be disseminated through *Othupallis*. He realized that only through education the blind and obnoxious beliefs of the community could be eradicated. He held the view that the reluctance of priests to speak to the people in public and their preference of midnight hour for religious sermons, was due to their ignorance of proper Malayalam. Again, he believed that the ignorance of Muslims about civil law caused much economic loss to them. He exhorted Muslims to study Indian classics and epics.³⁶

It was connected with this that Makti fought for *Khutuba* (Friday Sermon) in vernacular language. *Khutuba* was delivered only in Arabic, though it actually was meant for educating the worshippers about the day-to-day affairs connected with the community. In *Salahul Iqwan* of 21st December 1900, Makti wrote, 'As per *fiqh* books, except the *Sharth* (compulsory section) the advisory part of *Khutuba* could be in any language'.³⁷ Later C. Saidalikutty Master of Tirur, published the Malayalam translation of Ibn Batatul Misri's *Khutuba*, which was widely used in Malabar in its Arabic form. This was translated by Vailathur Moideenkutty Musaliyar

³⁵ KKM Kareem, *MTSK*, pp.1025-1034.

³⁶ Makti Thangal, *Muslims and Education in MTSK*, p.45.

³⁷ KKM Kareem, Note no: 4, p.83.

and approved by 40 leading *Khatibs* (those who read *Khutuba*) of Malabar, Cochin and Trivandrum. This was really a revolutionary movement as far as the first decade of 20th century was concerned.

Translation of Quran

Makti also tried to bring out the translation of *Quran* in Malayalam. As early as 1894, *Kerala Sanchari* of Calicut, in its editorial, suggested that *Quran* should be translated in to Malayalam and the Government should render help in doing it. This was an urgent matter as in South Malabar, the *Mappilas* did not know Arabic and the *Quran* was taught by *Thangals* and *Mullas*, whose words the Mappils regarded as gospel truth.³⁸ In *Thandan Kondamala*, Makti said that 'though 1120 years have passed since the introduction of Islam in Kerala, not even a single chapter of *Quran* has been translated in to Malayalam and the complaint that no one among Kerala Muslims knew the meaning of the basic text exists. As nobody studies the *Quran* through vernacular, it becomes an impediment to the progress of religion, proper perception of *Khutuba* and effective religious sermon'.³⁹

Though he tried to publish the first *Quran* translation of Mayin Kutti Elaya of Kannur by improving its language, it did not materialize. The notion that translation of the holy book in to Malayalam is forbidden, was strong among *Mappilas*. About this Makti wrote in *Makti Manaklesam*, 'In the absence of proper command over Malayalam language, the idea that *Quran* cannot be translated into it, is quite justifiable and even laudable too. But even after the lapse of 1000 years, it is pathetic that no one realizes the urgency of translation of *Quran* into the vernacular.'⁴⁰

Makti on Gender Equality

³⁸ *Kerala Sanchari*, Calicut, 23rd May 1894, MNNPR, TNA.

³⁹ Makti Thangal, *Thandan Konda Mala* (1894) in *MTSK*, p.43. *Thandan Konda Mala* is a tract published by Makti as a reply to the questions of one Kesavan, a convert to Christianity.

⁴⁰ KKM Kareem, Note no:4, p.62.

Makti was ambivalent regarding his position about women's education. When Moosakutty (died in 1930), a contemporary of Makti, argued for the education of women, both religious and secular, Makti wrote *Nareenarabhichari* and countered the arguments that women are equal to men. He considered women "an object of pleasure for men, wombs to deliver off his children and as a fertile field for sowing the seeds of men".⁴¹ Again, his critique of Marumakkathayam was not only on the basis of scriptures but also on the basis of his patriarchal moorings. He also held the view that women are to be secluded in their houses because when they go out, they would attract the attention of other men. Hence he recommended only the *ilm ul farz* (compulsory knowledge related to tenets of Islam) for women. Later Moosakutty wrote a critique to this fundamentalist position of Makti in *Swadeshabhimani*. Makti contested these through two tracts *Moosakuttikkorutharam* (A reply to Moosakutty) and *Moosakuttikoru Mukhuthi* (A nose ring to Moosakutty). Anyhow, later in the second edition of *Nareenarabhichari*, he revised his earlier position on women's education and argued that 'women should get education but should not cross the limits of *Shariath*'. Though he was not as progressive as Moosakutty, in a milieu where education of women was considered forbidden, this was really a step forward.

At a later stage, in an article *Rajyabhakthiyum Desabhimnavum (Loyalty and Patriotism)* he even ridiculed those who stood for separate schools for girls. He argued that without causing any ruins to Islamic norms, Muslim girls could study in common schools. Hence, such separatist demands were meaningless and contrary to the rights of citizens and would be branded as disloyal by the Government.⁴² By this time, the colonial

⁴¹ Makti Thangal, *Nareenarabhichari*, MTSK, pp.924-925.

⁴² Makti Thangal, *Loyalty and Patriotism*, (Mal) in MTSK, pp.726.

authorities might have prevailed upon him, for changing his position regarding women and women's education.

Makti and Malayali Identity

In *Desabhimanam* (Patriotism), he exhorted *Mappilas* to have patriotic feeling towards one's country. 'Though Keralites are divided into many religious groups, their birthplace is Kerala and hence forms a community. It is the bounden duty of every Keralite to honour the motherland and to strive for its progress. All Muslims of Kerala have to be patriotic and work for the progress of the Malayali community.'⁴³

Even when, the idea of a united Kerala was a remote dream, he had a vision about it and he travelled through out Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, wherever people spoke Malayalam and exhorted them to develop a Malayali identity. He was the first Muslim writer to speak and write in standard Malayalam. Titles of his books reveal that he used a peculiar Malayalam mixing Sanskrit and Malayalam words (eg: *Kadora Kudaram*, *Dampachara Vichari*, *Moodahankaram Maha Andakaram* etc.)

Makti's ire was also turned against atheists and *Qadiyanis*. He published a tract in 1912 exposing the arguments of one Kunhikanaran, an atheist, in the columns of *Kerala Sanchari*.⁴⁴ Similarly in *Hindu Muhammadan Samvadam*, he exposed the hollowness of Ahmadiya concept about prophethood. In that tract, he praised the British authorities for taking action favourable to Muslims, when they were involved in a dispute with *Qadiyanis* in North Malabar.⁴⁵

⁴³ Makti Thangal, *Desabhimanam*, MTSK, p.730.

⁴⁴ KKM Kareem, MTSK, p.973.

⁴⁵ KKM Kareem, MTSK (Revised edition), Calicut, 2006, p.788.

Makti himself had assessed his contributions to the Muslims of Kerala thus: 'Protected Islam from the Christian danger; wiped out the evils crept in to the *Iman* (belief) of Muslims and their religious education; protected Muslims by dragging them away from the path of violence; opened the doors of progress for Muslims; provided the materials for religious sermons and wiped out the stagefright of Muslim preachers'.⁴⁶

Thus, at the one hand, Makti tried to improve the material condition of *Mappilas* through education and employments and on the other, he tried to bring them to the path of doctrinal Islam or Textual Islam. For the former, he sought the help of the British government and even exhorted Muslims to be loyal to the British. He asked the Muslims 'to have respect for the crown which is equal to devotion to God, as far as the dictates of the Crown did not contradict with the will of God'.⁴⁷ He acknowledged the help rendered by the Government and appealed the Muslims to utilize the opportunities provided by it to join the Government services.⁴⁸ One can notice a striking resemblance between the reformist ideas of Makti and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, inspite of the disparities in their views on western culture and Christianity.⁴⁹ Due to this loyal attitude of Makti, his service was sought by the Government to pacify the *Mappilas* in South Malabar during the outbreak of 1896. He travelled throughout Malabar organizing speeches urging them the hollowness of the belief that 'getting killed in an attempt to sue his enemy leads to salvation'.⁵⁰ He provided new interpretation to *Jihad* (holy war) as it was widely misused in Malabar during 19th century. According to him, *Jihad* was

⁴⁶ KKM Kareem, *MTSK*, p.559.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 722.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 722.

⁴⁹ Ashraf K.K, *Reform and Revival among the Muslims of Kerala- A Study of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam, 1922-34*, An unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, JNU, New Delhi, 1998, p.47.

⁵⁰ Makti Thangal, *Rajabhakthiyum Desabimanavum*, in *MTSK*, p. 722.

a fight not with sword but through educating the non-Muslims about religion and there by winning them to the side of Islam.⁵¹ Thus, Makti adopted the idioms of modernity without disavowing the basic grammar of Islamic learning. He was interested in demonstrating Islam's capacity to absorb modern science, though it drew acerbic comments from orthodox sections of the community. The press formed the transmission belt for conveying his ideas to larger segments of Muslim population.

K.N. Panikkar's observation about 19th century cultural defence in India is pertinent in this context. He held the view that this cultural defence was manifested in two ways; to create an alternative to the colonial cultural practices and the revitalization of traditional institutions. While the concern about education and language underlined the former, inquiry in to traditional knowledge and an effort to translate it into contemporary practice formed a part of the latter.⁵² Makti's attack against Christian missionaries through umpteen tracts, his efforts in the field of religious education and improvement of Arabi-Malayalam, his position about women, and his attack against *Marumakkathayam* are but different shades of the cultural defence he undertook in Kerala.

Other Early Reformers

Makti, the poineer of Muslim Reform Movement, had inspired many in Kerala during his life time and after his death in 1912. As Moidu Moulavi put it, 'the later reformers of Muslim community were either disciples or legatees of this great *Mujaddid* (reformer)'.⁵³ Other reformers like Chalilakath Kunhahamad Hajee (died in 1919) Shaik Hamadani Thangal (died in 1922)

⁵¹ Makti Thangal, *Hindu –Muhammadan Samvadam* in *MTSK*, (Revised edition) Calicut, 2006, p.790.

⁵² K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectual and social consciousness in colonial India*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1995, p.105.

⁵³ E. Moidu Moulavi, Preface, *MTSK*, p. 4.

Vakkom Abdul Qader Moulavi (died 1932) came to the forefront of reform in their respective states of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Since all of them were using the print media as a vehicle for disseminating their new ideas, their works had a direct impact on Muslims of Malabar also.

Chalilakath Kunhahamad Haji (died 1919)

Chalilakath Kunjahamad Hajee was the second important Muslim reformer of Kerala. In the backdrop of his efforts to improve the system of religious education, he is called 'Sir Sayyid of Kerala'.⁵⁴ Born in Tirur, he was educated at *Dars* (seminaries) in Kozhikode and Ponnani and later at Latheefiya College Vellore. He was the first Malayali Muslim to take degree from Vellore. From Vellore he studied philosophy, astronomy, astrology and languages like Urdu, Persian, and Tamil.

It was his scholarship in astronomy that led him to write *Risalathul Hisab*, a treatise for determining the timings of *namaz*, the daily prayers. His tract regarding the direction of mosque triggered off a controversy in Malabar known as *Qibla* dispute'.⁵⁵ Chalilakath, on the basis of an Arabic text *Risalathul Maradini* argued that the mosque should be directed to west straightly but with slight deviation to north.⁵⁶ At Pulikkal, a polemical debate was organized on 20th December 1910 between two schools known as *Kibla Ain* (the group of Chalilakath) and *Kibla Jihath* (the opposite camp)⁵⁷. He issued a number of *fatwas* in this regard, which were compiled and published

⁵⁴ C.N. Ahmed Moulavi and K.K. Kareem, (eds.), *Mahathaya Mappila Sahitya Paramaryam* (Mal.) (hereafter *MMSP*), Calicut, 1978, p.68.

⁵⁵ Mecca is the *Qibla* (direction) of Muslims all over the world. Hence mosque are built heading towards *Ka'ba* (the holy shrine of Mecca) which lies to North West of Kerala.

⁵⁶ K. Moidu Moulavi, *Ormakurippukal*, IPH, Calicut, 2001, p.56. Also see KKM Kareem, *K.M. Moulavi Sahib*, Tirurangadi, 1985, p.38.

⁵⁷ *MMSP*, p.484.

as *Tuhfathul Ahbab* (A.M) by Sulaiman Musaliyar.⁵⁸ This dispute rocked the Muslim community in Malabar in the early decades of 20th century and initiated the reform movement in Malabar. It helped the *Mappilas* of Malabar to realize that many a practice prevalent among them were not according to the norms of Islam and had to be changed.

In 1909, he was invited to *Darul Uloom*, a prominent institution of religious learning in Vazhakkad, where he joined in 1909, as the chief instructor. He was given full freedom by the management, and he initiated a series of reforms in the basic structure of the system of education.⁵⁹ His first reform was the introduction of class system as per the level of knowledge of students. Benches, desks and black boards were introduced. Malayalam was adopted as the medium of instruction. He wrote *Aksharamala* in Arabi-Malayalam for the students of lower classes.⁶⁰ For the upper classes, he wrote books like *Tahleemul Quran*, *Diniyath*, *Amaliyath*, *Al-luguthul Arabiya*, *Madarijul Qurath*, *Kitabul Surf* and *Kitabul Nahv*.⁶¹ Besides religious instruction, Arithmetics, General Science and Malayalam were taught at elementary level itself while logic, geography and astronomy were taught in higher classes. He also introduced modern devices like globe and maps for effective teaching. At a time when orthodox Ulema denounced newspapers and journals as *lahvul Hadith* (meaningless utterances), Chalilakath advised his students to read newspapers in different languages.⁶² He even advised the students to study *Kerala Paniniyam* of A.R. Raja Raja Varma. He introduced all these changes at a time when the orthodox *Musaliyars* stood against any changes in the traditional system of pedagogy in

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ M. Abdul Samad, *op.cit.*, p.50.

⁶⁰ K.K. Kareem, *K.M. Moulavi Sahib*, (Biography- Mal), Al-Khatib Publications, Tirurangadi, 1985, p.62.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.63

⁶² M. Abdul Samad, *op. cit.*, p.50.

Othupallis. They even composed a Mappila song, which says, "M' is the last letter of *Jahannam* (Hell). Since the first alphabet of '*M'adrasa* (M) is the last alphabet of *Jahanna'm'*, the path to *Madrassa* is the path to Hell'.⁶³

He also stood for education of women and he set an example by sending his daughter to schools, defying the dictates of orthodox Ulema.⁶⁴ They who were dare enough to send their children to schools were branded as *Kafir* by the orthodox *Ulema*.⁶⁵ These *Ulemas* turned against him and prevailed upon the management of *Darul Uloom*, urging that *Waqf* properties should not have been used for Madrasa education. They even held the view that the chalk-dust, fallen on the ground while writing the name of *Allah* on blackboard, would be treaded by human feet and this would be equal to dishonouring God himself. Finally, Chalilakath left *Darul Uloom* but established similar institutions at Mannarkkad, Valapattanam, Badagara, etc.⁶⁶

Through these *dars* at various pockets of Malabar, he fostered a gang of disciples who propagated his programme throughout Malabar. Through these *dars*, he could produce hundreds of erudite scholars capable of carrying on his ideas further. Among them, the notable were K.M. Maulavi, E.K. Moulavi, Chalilakath Abdurahiman, P.K. Moosa Maulavi, Sulaiman Musliyar, Cherusseri Ahmed Musliyar, E. Moidu Moulavi, P.N. Moulavi and

⁶³ K. Ummer Maulavi, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

'*Oru Kalathum la Thajalul Banina*

Madrassa Vazhiyil Yatha allamuna

Miman li Madrasathin Wamimu Jahannami

Onnanu Changathi Bila Thavahumi' (K. Moidu Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.86).

⁶⁴ *MMSP,op.cit.*, p.485.

⁶⁵ One Kunhi Mayan of Tellicheri was branded as 'Kafir Kunhi Mayi' for sending his daughters to colleges. (K. Moidu Moulavi *op.cit.*, p.44). Also see Kasim Irikkur, "Kafar Mayine Talasseri Vindum Anyeshikkunnu" in *Madhyamam*, Annual Issue, 2007.

⁶⁶ *MMSP, op.cit.*, p.486.

P.P. Unni Moideen Kutty. These were the scholars who spearheaded the *Islahi* (Reform) movement in Malabar during 1920s and 1930s. Following the footsteps of Makti, Chalilakath too propagated against *Qadiyanis*. He wrote a critique to *Tuhfathul Malabari* written by Ibn Hasan, an *Ahmadiya*.⁶⁷ Through this work, he distanced *Qadiyanis* from the fold of Islam. This strategy of exclusion was part of forging a new identity for the Muslims.

Hamadani Thangal (d. 1922)

Though Hamadani Thangal and Vakkom Moulavi were working in Cochin and Travancore respectively, their efforts to reform the community did have its impact in Malabar. Hamadani Thangal was the moving spirit behind the formation of *Nisphakha Sangam*, which was the forerunner of *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam*. Similarly, his efforts to translate Islamic Classics into Malayalam and his Arabic-Sanskrit-Malayalam Dictionary did influence the Muslims of Malabar. Like Chalilakath, he worked for educational emancipation of Muslims. For the progress of the community, Hamadani put forward a Five Point programme through *The Muslim* in 1916. It included, (a) establishment of Madrasa in all areas on the model of elementary schools, secondary Madrasas in towns and one higher centre for specialised studies in *Quran* and *Hadith* in each state; (b) Religious and secular education for women, as it was essential for a healthy society (c) establishment of companies and co-operative societies for the economic growth (d) Formation of welfare committee for weaker sections.⁶⁸

In his *Ilfath-ul-Islam*, he advised his fellowmen to desist from quarrelling with each other like pre-Islamic Arabs.⁶⁹ He said, 'Muslims should

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.485.

⁶⁸ Hamadani Thangal, "Chila Nirdesangal", (Mal) *The Muslim*, Vol. V. No.8, Meenam 1091 (1916).

⁶⁹ E.K. Moulavi, "Islahi Prasthanam" in *Al-Ithihad*, Vol. III, No.3, April, 1954.

consider *Quran* and *Sunnah* (words and deeds of prophet) as the basis of their life. *Muhammadiya Tarika* (the order of Prophet Muhammad) is beyond all *Tarikas* (Sufi orders). Any rituals, which are against *Sunnah*, have to be given up.⁷⁰ This book made profound impact among Muslims of Malabar. E.K. Moulavi considered it as the guide for his later reform activities.⁷¹ He founded many Muslim organizations like *Muslim conference* (Travancore) *Lajmathul Muhamadiya* (Aleppey) *Lajmathul Hamadaniya* (Azhikode) *Lajanathul Islam Sangam* (Eriyad). In short, he provided the framework for later Muslim reformers of Malabar. He was given eight acres of land at Alway for the establishment of a Muslim college on the model of Aligarh by Sir C.P. Rajagopalachari, the then Diwan of Travancore. Though he worked hard to establish this institution at Alwaye, his long cherished desire was not materialized, due to dearth of support from the community.

Vakkom Abdul Kader Moulavi

Vakkom Abdul Kader Moulavi (1873-1932), of Travancore, was another reformer of this period, who tried to revitalize the Muslim community through the print media. He firmly believed that 'revitalization of Islam meant bringing back to it the pristine purity and wiping out the accretions from outside.'⁷² Through his journals *Al-Islam* (AM), *Deepika*, and *Muslim*, his message reached the length and breadth of Malabar. As put in by Roland E. Miller 'There is no doubt that Vakkom Moulavi's five issues of '*Al-Islam*' sowed the seeds of Islamic reform in Kerala. They created a storm which swept through from one end of Kerala to the other'.⁷³ Through this

⁷⁰ K.K.M. Kareem, "Reform Efforts before Aikya Sangam" (Mal) in *Shabab*, Seminar issue, Calicut, 1997, pp.108-111.

⁷¹ E.K. Moulavi, *Al-Murshid* (Mal), Tirurangadi, September 1966, p.6.

⁷² Mohamed Abda (ed.), *Vakkom Moulaviyude Therenjedutha Krithikal*, (Mal), Vakkom Foundation, Vakkom, 1976, p.158.

⁷³ Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, Madras, 1976, p.271.

journal, he scathingly criticized all kinds of superstitious beliefs and *bidath* (innovative practices) of the Muslims of Kerala and naturally the ire of the traditional Ulema turned against him and they branded him as *Wahabi* (the follower of Ibn Abdul Wahab) which was a derogatory term in those days.

Early Reformers against faked *Tarikas*

Besides these known figures, there were many scholars who tried to wipe out the syncretic religious practices of Muslims in Malabar. A major concern of these scholars of late 19th and early 20th century was the rotten *Tarika* cult of *Mappilas*. Umpteen *fatwas* were issued in this regard as well as other non Islamic rituals by the leading *Muftis* of Malabar during 19th century itself.⁷⁴

During the 19th century, a series of *fatwas* were issued against the *Tarika* of Konditty Thangals, pointing out the un-Islamic side of the practice followed at the *Takia* of Kondotty. *Majmuathal Fatwa*, compiled in 1858 is a collection of *fatwas* of different *muftis* of orthodox Sunni fold against Ishtiaq Sha of Kondotty, who used to ask his *murids* to perform *sujud* (prostration) before him, at the time of *baiyath* (official pledge).⁷⁵ Kunjamutti Haji of Kozhikode (d. 1843), in his *fatwa*, advised that 'those who are eager to enter heaven, ought to keep away from such people (*Kondotty Tarika*) and those who have already fallen in to their trap, have to return to religion'.⁷⁶ Qasi Abdulla of Tellichery (d. 1838), *qazi* of north Malabar in reply to a question raised by Abdul Fatah, the *qazi* of Kondotty, issued a *fatwa* which says 'as per *Quran* and *Hadith*, prostration before humanbeing is *Kufur*'.⁷⁷ Similarly, Shaik Ahmed Makdoom of Ponnani (d. 1853) in reply to the query of

⁷⁴ KKM. Kareem, Note no: 72, p.110.

⁷⁵, *MMSP, op.cit.*, p. 280.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.282.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.283.

Muhyudin Musaliyar, a disciple of Kondotty *Tarika*, issued a *fatwa* which says 'your shaik (Ishtiaq sha) is outside the fold of Islam. Our protest against your practices like shirking of *namaz*, use of alcohol and ganja are not issues of peripheral importance or polemics related to minor issues'.⁷⁸ Again Puthiyakath Ahmad Musaliyar (d. 1878) qazi of Tirurangadi, issued a *fatwa* stating that 'prophet, *Ashabs* and *Ulemas* in the light of *Shariath*, *Haqaiqath* and *Mahrifath*, had made it clear that 'one who prostrate to human being, even if he is a prophet, or *Wali* would be a *Kafir*'.⁷⁹

Baithal Ahmed Musaliyar (d. 1897) the *qasi* of Payyanad, also issued *fatwa* against Kondotty *Tarika*. Chalilakath Ali Hasan Moulavi (d.1938) of Tirurangadi also opposed Kondotty and *Naqshabandi Tarikas* on the basis of Islamic scriptures⁸⁰. Moulana Chalilakath Kusai Haji, popularly known as 'Kutthayi Haji' (1818-1863) of Tirurangadi, a contemporary and friend of Umer Qazi, issued *fatwas* against Kondotty *Tarika*.⁸¹

All these *fatwas* testify to the fact that through out Malabar, a new awareness had developed with regard to what was Islamic and un-Islamic in the practices of Mappila Muslims. This created new consciousness among the Muslims to check every age old custom in the light of scriptures.

Against Un-Islamic Rituals

The early reformers also turned against other innovative practices of *Mappilas* of Malabar. In 1888, Moulavi Mammi Ibn Moosa (Manjeri) issued a *fatwa* called *Ilharul Haq* criticizing the rituals associated with death called *Chavadiyanthiram*. The same was approved by Mankada Unnin Moulavi.⁸²

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.284.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.328.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.280.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.110.

Umar Qazi of Veliyancode (1765-1857) was a social critic and ridiculed the elitist thought of big Muslim families of Malabar. He wrote a poem which cuts the very root of ethnic and communal consciousness of *Mappilas* and heralded the renaissance among *Mappilas*.⁸³ He did not spare the Ulemas and their group fights. He wrote 'The first syllable of 'Alim' (scholar) has changed in to 'la' which means *lalim* (villain) and hence religious scholars (*Alims*) have turned in to villains'.⁸⁴ He opposed *Nercha*, *Chandanakudam* and all kinds of *bidath* (innovations)⁸⁵ Along with his disciple Parappanangadi Abubacker Musaliyar, a reformer, he issued *fatwas* against *Kondotty Tarika* also.⁸⁶

Karipanakkal Kunhipokku Musaliyar, in his *Irshadul Amma*, took a similar position. He wrote, 'In Kerala some are claiming that the rites associated with death like *Kannuk* (3rd day death ritual), *Othikkal* (recitation at tomb) *Nalpath* (40th day of death) are part of *Sunnath*. Hiding the fact that these practices are forbidden by authorities in Islamic theology, they (*Ulema*) concoct new *Ibaraths* (evidence).⁸⁷ Another work of this genre is *Vaithulyam* (A.M), a work by Syed Fakrudhin alias Koyatti Thangal, which vehemently criticizes the faked *Tarikas* of Malabar. This was written during the last decade of 19th century. In it, he says 'Likewise certain ballads like *Mohiyidin Mala* are venerated as sacred texts by those who claim to follow *Ahl ul Sunnath* (the followers of prophet's path). But such practices are not permissible'.⁸⁸ Similarly Kottalungal Kunji Marakkar Musaliyar, in his

⁸³ See Chapter on 'The Phase of Popular Islam in Malabar'.

⁸⁴ Husain Randathani, *Mappila Malabar* (Mal.), Islamic Publishing Bureau, Calicut, 2005, p.130.

⁸⁵ C.K. Kareem (ed.), *Kerala Muslim Directory*, Vol.3, Cochin, 1991, p.253.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.253.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.110. Also see KKM Kareem, Note No: 62, p. 185.

⁸⁸ Syed Koyatti Thangal, *Vaithulyam* (p.278) as quoted in KKM Kareem, Note No. 72, p.111.

Thanbi hullalleen, printed at Tirur in 1915, argued that any new additions, even with good intentions, which contradict *Quran* or *Hadith* or *Imam's* injunctions, would be considered *Bidaath* (innovation).⁸⁹

Syed Abdulla Thangal, nephew of Mampuram Alavi Thangal was another early reformer of Malabar. He started the first Arabi-Malayalam Magazine *Hidayathul Iqwan* from Tirurangadi. He worked for the spread of modern education among the Muslims.⁹⁰ E. Marakkar Musaliyar (father of E. Moidu Moulavi) composed a poem called *Durachara Mardanam* in 1927, which exposed the blind beliefs, related to miracles of saints at Thanur and Muthupetta. He wrote:

'Those who were to Muthupetta
Cameback, realizing the hollowness of 'miracle'
Similar is case with 'Kuttayi water'
Fraud was the thing that prevailed there too
How many have fallen in that trap'⁹¹

Here, he exposes the irrationality of the belief in the healing power of Muthupetta *Maqam* and the 'sacred water' at Tanur *Maqam*⁹². Kattil Veetil Ahmad Koya popularly known as 'Awwa Musaliyar' was another scholar who fought against the un-Islamic practices of *Mappilas*. In 1923, at the time of *Appani nercha* in Calicut, he led a procession with burning torches against the *nercha* and picketed the *Maqbara*.⁹³ He also composed songs and distributed pamphlets to enlighten people against ritualistic religion. His

⁸⁹ KKM Kareem, Note no. 72, p. 111.

⁹⁰ K.K. Kareem, Note No: 72, p.110.

⁹¹ E. Marakkar Musaliyar, *Durachara Mardhanam* (Mal), Kodungallur, 1927. Also see, *MMSP, op.cit.*, p.513.

⁹² *MMSP, op.cit.*, p.513.

'*Paurohitythinte Maranamani*' (Death knell to Priesthood) was one such work with definite purpose. Valanchira Kunhahammed (1842-1912) of Manjeri was another Muslim reformer of South Malabar. He was a disciple of Makti Thangal and he wrote books comparing the beliefs of both Islam and Christianity and engaged in debates with Christian missionaries. He was a staunch critic of the blind beliefs of *Mappila*.⁹⁴ He was the brain behind the first Muslim organization in South Malabar called *Hidayathul Muslimeen Sabha* of Manjeri, established in 1897. He went to Madras to meet the governor and got permission to build two mosques at Manjeri.⁹⁵ His *Akbarul Hind* deals with the heroic fight of Hyder and Tipu against the British.

Saidalikutty Master of Tirur, (1856-1919) a school inspector and a multifaceted scholar of Malabar, was another reformer who tried to understand the real problems of Muslims. In order to awaken the Muslims from their slumber, he started two journals in Arabi-Malayalam. The first *Salahul Iqwan* was started in 1899 and continued till 1906 and the second, *Rafiqul Islam* lasted till 1910. The impact of these two journals was immensely high at a time when religious education was not properly managed and secular education was anathema to Muslims⁹⁶. He wrote textbooks for students, which were followed in schools for many years. His book, *Matavijnana Rashmi* ('Rays of religious knowledge') published in 1908, deals with the belief and principles of Islam. His journals published articles related to Turkey Sulthan and stories like Arabian Nights.⁹⁷ He was the man behind the publication of the translation of *Jamua Qutuba* in to Malayalam and he prevailed upon forty *Khatibs* of Malabar to follow the same in their respective

⁹³P.P Mammed Koya Parappil (hereafter Parappil Koya), *Kozhikotte Musalimgalude Charithram*, Focus Publication, Calicut, 1994, p.338.

⁹⁴ C.K. Kareem (ed.), Note no. 87, p.363.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.364.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

⁹⁷ *MMSP,op.cit.*, p.408.

mosques. He was also instrumental in the foundation of *Maunathul Islam Sabha*, the missionary organisation founded in 1900. His books like *Musligalum Naveena Vidhyabhyasavum (Muslims and New Education)*, *Musligalum Sasthravum (Muslims and Science)*, '*Mathavijana Rasmi*' etc did yeomen service in reforming Muslims.

Pulikottil Hydru (1879-1975), a native of Wandoor was a well-known Mappila poet of Malabar. Though he was loyal to the British and opposed to the Congress, he stood firmly with reformists in religious perspectives. With a reformist zeal, he wrote a number of poems, which had magical impact on average Muslims. The poems, which belong to this genre, are *Dhuracharamala*, *Kaliyugam*, *Kathukuthumala*, *Streemardhimala*, *Maranmarude Thakararu etc.*⁹⁸ Thazhekot Ahmadkutty (d. 1940) wrote a poem '*Kathukuthumala*' depicting the horrors and un-Islamic content of the ear piercing.⁹⁹ Similarly, M. Kunhava Musaliyar composed a song '*Bidath Mala*', criticizing the innovative practices crept in to Malabar Islam. Chalilakath Ali Hasan Moulavi of Tirurangadi (d.1938) was a staunch critic of *Chavadiyanthiram* and *Kodikuthu nercha*.¹⁰⁰

All these were efforts in the path of reform carried out by individual leaders. These were isolated attempts by individuals without any organizational basis. Very often, they failed to get the support of the Muslim masses. Makti Thangal was always complaining about the lack of support for his efforts from among the Muslims. One common thread that could be seen in all of them, was that they were against the superstitious beliefs among *Mappilas* and therefore strived hard to bring them to the fold of scriptural

⁹⁸ See M.N. Karassery (ed.) *Pulikkottil Krithikal* (Mal), Mappila Kala Sahitya Vedi, Wandoor, 1979. A detailed analysis of his poems is given, in chapter on 'Print and the Imagined Community of Mappila'.

⁹⁹ *MMSP, op.cit* p.507.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.325.

Islam. The early reformers felt that the basic cause of the spread of pagan beliefs among Muslims was lack of knowledge in the basic principles of Islam and hence, they adopted the method of teaching and preaching true Islamic tenets, as propounded in *Quran* and *Hadith*.

Due to different factors, these leaders could not bring about an extensive movement itself. One major block was the educational backwardness of the community. The state of Muslim education throughout 19th century and early decades of 20th century was pathetic, as testified by William Logan C.A. Innes etc. Similarly the absence of interaction with their fellow brethren inside and outside Kerala was another factor. They were cut off from Muslims of North India by the barriers of geography as well as language. While North India was severely influenced by puritanic ideology of Abdul Wahab in 19th century, Mappila Muslims remained aloof from it, and through their *Thangals* from Yemen, they remained under the conservatism of Arab Sunni Orthodoxy. The early reformist preachers, by their constant emphasis on exclusive character of Islam, urged Muslims to discard all un-Islamic accretions from local beliefs and practices.

Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam and the beginning of Organized Reform Movement

As we have seen already, the early individual efforts in the direction of reform of the Muslim community, brought about a distinct cultural consciousness among them, at least in a rudimentary form. But by about 1920's, this consciousness was crystallised in to a movement, with the formation of *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam*.

The traumatic experience of Malabar Rebellion prevailed upon the educated sections of Muslims to think about the ways in which they could overcome the pathetic situation and save the community from the stalemate.

They also realized that only through organized efforts, not through individual initiatives, they could chalk out a programme for improvement of the community. The real push came when the internal disputes between the leading families of Kodungallur reached its climax and began to threaten the unity of the community. In this background, a group of spirited leaders invited the Muslim scholars of Kerala to attend a conference at Eriyad (Kodungallur) in 1922, to discuss the main issues related to the Muslim community of Kerala and to form an organization to give vent to their grievances. Kodungallur was one of the few Muslim pockets in Kerala, where there was a wealthy and educated Muslim intelligentsia. During the Malabar Rebellion, most of the scholars of Malabar like K.M. Moulavi had been given assylum at Kodungallur. Thus, in 1922, the learned Ulema and the reformist leaders like K.M. Moulavi, Hamadani Thangal, Manapatt. P. Kunbahamed Haji, Seethi Mohamed etc. formed an association called '*Nishpaksha Sangam*', to settle the disputes among Muslim families of Kodungallur.¹⁰¹ Hamadani Thangal, the chairman of the meeting in his presidential speech (published later in Arabi-Malayalam as '*Kutubatul Hamadaniya*') urged the Muslims about the need for an organization. He said, 'It is obligatory on every Muslim, by the command of *Allah*, to support and help each other, to form an organization to advise the good and prevent the evil If such an effort is not made, the Islamic rituals will become meaningless and the vice will overpower the virtue'.¹⁰² In this speech, one can see a clear sign of the community identity slowly but steadily gaining ground in Kerala.

Though the *Sangam* failed to stop the family-feud in Kodungallur, which ofcourse was its initial objective, its activities began to spread in the

¹⁰¹ K.K.M. Kareem, Note No: 62, p.42.

¹⁰² Hamadani Shaik, "Kutubatul Hamadaniya" Presidential Address in the Formation Meeting of *Nishpaksha Sangam*. Kodungallur, 1922.

neighbouring areas. Following the advice of the chairman, the *Sangam* convened its first meeting at Eriyad in 1922 itself and decided to expand its activities and renamed it as *Muslim Aikya Sangam*.¹⁰³ Thus, the first Muslim organization representing the Muslims of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore was set up in 1922. The pan-Kerala stamp of the organization is evident from the fact that the first annual conference of the *Sangam* at Eriyad in 1923, was attended by leaders from the length and breadth of Kerala like Mohemad Serul Sahib (Kasargod) Mohamed Kunji and Mammu Sahib (Tellichery) T.P. Moidu (Mahe) Vallanchira Kunji Moyi (Manjeri), Vakkom Kader (Travancore) etc.¹⁰⁴ Besides, the political leaders associated with Khilafath Movement in Malabar, like E. Moidu Moulavi, Mohemad Abdurahiman Sahib, K.M. Moulavi and E.K. Moulavi were also active in it. Basically it was an association of the educated Muslim middle class and the enlightened religious leadership of the community and lacked popular support.

It was Makti Thangal who had made Kodungallur a favourable soil for the efflorescence of reformist ideas. He had fostered a young Muslim group in Kodungallur, receptive to reformist ideology.¹⁰⁵ The general mood of the audience in the meeting was to transform it in to a permanent organization with a pan Kerala stamp.

The following were the main objectives of the *Sangam*.

1. To unite Muslims of Kerala for the general good of the community, setting aside their internal feuds.
2. To enlighten Muslims through oral and print media.

¹⁰³ E.K. Moulavi "Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangavum Navothanavum" in P.A Said Mohamed (ed.), *Kerala Muslim Directory*, Cochin 1960, p.470.

¹⁰⁴ K.K.M Kareem, Note no. 62, p.144.

¹⁰⁵ N.K. Ahmed Moulavi, "Aikya Sangavum Kerala Muslimkalum" *Shabab Seminar Issue*, Calicut, 1997, p.114.

3. To set up a *panchayath* to settle disputes within the community.
4. To eradicate all un-Islamic practices and to strive for the religious, moral and economic betterment of the Muslims.¹⁰⁶

Thus, the main focus of the *Sangam* was unity of the community and upholding of the concept of *Tawhid* (unity of God). It held the view that the real cause of the dilemma of the Muslims was that they deviated from the teachings of the scriptures and hence, it advised exhorted them to go back to *vedas* or *Quran* and *Sunnath*. Quite naturally, its primary target was the destruction of 'popular Islam' in Malabar. The Sangam vehemently opposed the un-Islamic practices like *Chandanakudam*, *Kodikuthu nercha*, *Ratib*, *Mala and Moulud*.¹⁰⁷ They could stop the *Chandanakudam* at the *Saipinte Palli* in Ponnani and tried to stop the *Kodikuthu nercha* at Manathala Hydroskutti Moopan's *Maqam*. It was as per its mediation that Beeran Sahib, who used to finance the *Kodikuthu*, declined to assist it financially.¹⁰⁸

A prominent achievement of the *Sangam* was the formation of an *Ulema* association called *Kerala Jamiathul Ulema* (hereinafter *KJU*). The first conference itself had decided to form an organization of that sort and E.K. Moulavi was entrusted the task of framing its constitution. In the second conference of *Aikya Sangam* held at Alway in May 1924, the *Kerala Jamiathul Ulema* was officially formed, which later spearheaded the *Islahi* movement in Kerala. The leaders of *Aikya Sangam* had toured all over Kerala, inviting *Ulemas* to the meeting, scheduled at Alway in May 1924 with the intention of forming an association of religious scholars.

¹⁰⁶ *Muslim Aikya Sangam Niyamangal* (Constitution of Muslim Aikya Sangam) published by Aikya Sangam, 1923, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ N.K. Ahmed Moulavi, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.117.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.117.

Kerala Jamiathul Ulema was formed in 1924 with M.Abul Kadir Moulavi, as president and C.K. Moideenkutty as secretary. Prominent religious scholars of Kerala like E.K. Moulavi (Kadavathur) P.N. Mohamad Moulavi (Pulikkal) Moosakutti Haji (Kannur) P.M. Abdul Qader (Kottayam) B.V. Koyakutti Thangal (Chavakkad) Palassery Kammu Moulavi (Kuttur) P.P. Unnin Kutty Moulavi (Pulikkal) etc were the working committee members.¹⁰⁹As suggested by the chairman of the conference, Abdul Jabbar Hazrath, a five point programme was accepted by the conference as the agenda of *KJU*.

1. To bring unity among Muslim *Ulemas*, who were at daggers drawn.
2. To form a Muslim *panchayath* to settle dispute among them.
3. To set up a *Darul Ifta* to issue *fatwas* (religious decrees).
4. To strive to ascertain the real faith among Muslims, purging out the anti-Islamic accretions.
5. To organize Islamic missionary activities.¹¹⁰

Hazrat Abdul Jabbar, in his inaugural address, urged the Muslims to put an end to the ongoing polemics among various Sufi orders like *Shaduli* and *Chisthi* and between schools of jurisprudence like *Shafi*, *Hanafi* etc. and to work for the integration of Muslims in Kerala.

A remarkable achievement of *Aikya Sangam* was the publication of two journals, *Muslim Aikyam* in Malayalam and *Al-Irshad* in Arabi-Malayalam, with P.K. Muhamedunni and E.K. Moulavi as editors respectively. In *Mathrubhumi*, Manappatt P. Kunhi Mohamed wrote, 'The sole cause of the decline of Kerala muslims is ignorance about religion and

¹⁰⁹ *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam*, Second Annual Report, 1924, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.31.

blind beliefs. No permanent cure is possible without knowledge of religion. Hence, a journal to advise Muslims about religious teaching in Arabi-Malayalam, which alone could be followed by majority, is essential in the present context'.¹¹¹ Another journal called *Al-Islah* (A.M) was also published by *Sangam*. Though these journals could not last long, due to the opposition of the orthodox wing and the general indifference of Muslims to reading culture, their impact was tremendous.

The subsequent conferences of the Sangam were held at various centres of Kerala like Calicut (1925), Thalasseri (1926), Kannur (1927), Tirur (1928), Ernakulam (1929), Trivandrum (1930), Malappuram (1931), Kasargod (1932), Eriyad (1933) and Kannur (1934).¹¹² The 12th and the last conference was held at Kannur in 1934, along with the conference of *Kerala Muslim Majlis*, the first organisation of Muslim League sympathisers, formed in 1931. In this conference, the *Aikya Sangam* was dissolved and merged with *Kerala Muslim Majlis*, as both were striving for the same goal. The *Waqf* properties of the Sangam were transferred to *Rousathul Uloom* Association of Feroke, which founded Farook College, the first Muslim college in Kerala.¹¹³

Crusade against Bidath (Innovations)

If one goes through the innumerable resolutions passed at various conferences held between 1923-1934, it could be seen that the main focus of *Aikya Sangam* was regaining the pristine purity of Islam in Kerala. They stood firmly against all accretions to Islam that contradict the basic tenets of Islam like *Kodikuttu nercha*, *Chandanakudam*, *Kathukuthu*, *Marumakkathayam*, etc. which were part and parcel of popular Islam in Malabar. In a pamphlet, *Al-hidaya* distributed at the 3rd conference in 1925,

¹¹¹ *Mathrubhumi*, 8th March, 1924.

¹¹² K.K.M Kareem, Note no. 62, pp.142-154.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

the *Sangam* unequivocally opposed the tomb worship, covering of *Jaram*, *Chandanakudam*, *Kodikuthunercha*, etc.¹¹⁴. This was based on the *Ibaraths* of Ibn Haitami's '*Sawajir*'. It was this tirade against *bidath* (innovations) practiced and supported by the orthodox Ulemas that compelled them to turn against '*Aikya Sangam*'. K.M. Moulavi's Arabi-Malayalam work '*Al-Hidaya Ila Mahqil Bida Wadwalala*' criticized the mortuary practice and tomb worship, in the form of *Chandanakudam*, *Kodikuthu*, etc.¹¹⁵ In short *Sangam* leaders were against all kinds of polytheism and they strictly adhered to the Islamic concept of *Tauhid*. As put in by E.K. Moulavi, 'it is an undisputable fact that all the enlightenment and encouragement that is visible in Kerala in these days, is the product of the activities of *Aikya Sangam* within a period of 12 years.'¹¹⁶

K.M. Moulavi, the foremost leader of *Aikya Sangam*, along with his trusted lieutenant E.K. Moulavi, played a prominent role in the dissemination of reformist ideology in Malabar, through his reform-oriented journals mentioned earlier. He stormed the citadels of orthodoxy, incessantly fought against all forms of *shirk* (polytheism) and *Bidath* (innovations) that were rampant in Muslim society. Through his public speeches, articles and *fatwas* (decrees on religious issues) published through such journals, he carried on his crusade against the evils of Muslim community.

What prompted the leadership of both *Aikya Sangam* and *KJU* to stand against *bidath* was their concern about *Touhid* (unity of God), which they believed was the very foundation of Islam. They held that saint worship; tomb worship and invoking the help and intercession of the dead (*Thavassul Isthiaqaza*), were contrary to monotheistic foundation of Islam. They opposed

¹¹⁴ N.K. Ahamad Maulavi, *op. cit.*, p.122.

¹¹⁵ K.K. Kareem, Note no. 62, p.181.

¹¹⁶ E.K. Moulavi, "Kerala Muslim Aikyasanghavam Navothanavum", in P.A. Sayed Mohammed (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.470.

all forms of *Bidath* like *nerchas*, *Chandanakudam*, *Moulud*, *Ratib*, dowry system, matriliney and such practices, which had no sanction in *Quran* and *Hadith*. They rejected *Taqlid* (blind acceptance of views of early *Imams*) and accepted the validity of *Ijtihad* (independent research based on scriptures). In other words, the reform movement initiated by *Aikya Sangam* and *KJU*, exhorted Muslims to return to *Quran* and *Hadith* and abandon anything that run contrary to the original teachings of Islam.¹¹⁷

The reformists alleged that the traditional *Musaliyars* were responsible for all the decay and distress of the community. In an article, in 1930, A. Mohamad Kunnu, a reformist scholar, exposed the *Musaliyars* and their unscientific methods of religious instruction thus: 'What do the *Musaliyar* do with *Quran* which ought to be the light of the Muslim? They use it to recite on the tomb (not when he is alive) and to ward off the evil spirits... In this way they amass wealth. There is no convergence between what God intended with *Quran* and what *Musaliyars* do with the same... They strive hard to topple all attempts to eradicate the evils like *Moulud*, *nercha* and tomb worship and thereby, they negate the very basic principle of Islam, *Touhid*... They have neither the eyes to see the pretty face of Islam, nor the nose to enjoy the fragrance of Islamic ideals.'¹¹⁸ K.C. Komukutty Moulavi, in his presidential speech at the meeting of *Kozhikode Muslim Sangam*, Calicut in 1926, shared the same view thus : 'Though many causes can be discerned for the decline of *Mappilas* , the prominent one ofcourse is *Musaliyars*. They used Islam as a puppet in their hands and the community is suffering on

¹¹⁷ E.K. Ahmed Kutty, "Islam and Social Reform Movements in Kerala", *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. V, December 1978, part III & IV, pp.439-451.

¹¹⁸ A. Mohamed Kannu, "Parishkara Vairikal" (Fundamentalists among the Muslim Community), article in E.M. Habeeb Mohamed (ed.), *Sahradayopaharam*, (Mal) T.V. Press, Quilon, 1930, pp.9-17.

account of that. They discourage all means of modernization like schools newspapers etc. and *Aikya Sangam* is anathema to them'.¹¹⁹

Moulavi Abdul Hameed, the Chairman of 8th Annual Conference of *Aikya Sangam* (1930), also drew the attention of the audience to the evil influence of *Musaliyars*, in perpetuating ignorance and idolotory among Muslims.¹²⁰ Moidu Moulavi, in his article, 'The *Thangals* and *Musaliyars* of Malabar' in *Al-Islam*, a journal published by Vakkom Abdul Kader Moulavi, despised the *Thangals* and *Musaliyars* for exploiting the ignorant *Mappilas*.¹²¹

E.K. Moulavi, a prominent leader of reformist school in Malabar, in an article "Kerala Muslims and anti-Islamic rituals", deals with four anti-Islamic practices followed by Muslims, (a) *Marumakhathayam* (b) Spend thriftness (c) Dowry (d) Tomb worship.¹²² About *Marumakhathayam*, he opined that it undermined a chapter in *Quran* and ruined the unity and fraternity of Islam.¹²³ He also opposed the expensive ceremonies connected with wedding, ear piercing and circumcision.¹²⁴ His attack against tomb worship was emphatic when he says, 'some argue that this tomb worship is *Siyarathul Qubra* (visit of tomb, which is meritorious indeed) and they, who oppose it are opposing the visit to tomb itself. Had it been a meritorious deed, the *Salafis* (companions and contemporaries of prophet) would have done it. This evil has crept in to Islam from other religions. Certain false *Shaik's* miracles and the meaningful silence of *alims* (knowledgable persons) led to its spread in

¹¹⁹ *Mathrubhumi*, 7th January, 1926.

¹²⁰ *Mathrubhumi*, 25th May, 1930.

¹²¹ K.K.M. Kareem, Note No:62, p.179.

¹²² E.K. Moulavi, "*Kerala Muslims and Anti-Islamic Rituals*", E.M. Habeeb Mohamed (ed.), *Sahradayopaharam* (Mal) T.V. Press, Quilon, 1930, pp.155-164.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.159.

¹²⁴ In connection with his daughter's wedding Kallai Kunhahamed Koya spend 5000 Rs.5000 for fire works and for two consecutive days, the inhabitants of Kallai turned duff (*Malayala Manorama*, 21st October, 1922).

the community¹²⁵. He further argued that as per Islamic *shariath*, no building is permitted on tombs and praying to an intercessor was *shirk*.¹²⁶

The reformist stressed that saints were great men, worthy of respect but that prayers should never be offered to them with the intention that they would pass them on to *Allah* (Tawassal Isthigaza). Only *Allah* could be the recipient of prayers.¹²⁷ The worshippers of saint become guilty of *shirk* (idolatry). Hence, the reformists relentlessly fought against *bidaath* like *Muharam*, *Kodikuthu*, *Maqbara* building, *Chawadiyanthiram* (death rituals) etc.¹²⁸

The sole aim of the reformist was to spread the message of *Quran* and *Hadith* and to familiarize Muslims of the methods of *Salafis* (companion of prophet). Organization of religious sermons, publication of articles and books distribution of pamphlets, restructuring of *Madrassa* syllabi as per *Quran* and *Hadith* etc. were envisaged as the effective means to achieve the above aim.¹²⁹ There was no other difficult task than to convince the Muslim masses that what they had been practicing for centuries in the name of Islam was not Islam at all. The reformists criticized the *Musaliyars* for following the out dated system of pedagogy in *othupallis* and for engaging in hair-splitting debates on unimportant issues. They were asked to comprehend the real spirits of *Quran* and to try to achieve a proper understanding of *Sunnath*. The reformist held the view that for the revitalized understanding of religion, speculative reconstruction (*Ijtihad*), blind imitation (*Taqleed*), was necessary.

¹²⁵ E.K. Moulavi, *op.cit.*, p.161.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹²⁷ 11th Annual Report, 1935, *Kerala Jamathul Ulema*, Pulikkal, 1935, p.4.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹²⁹ M. Mohemad Abdul Kader, "The place of Muslims in history of Kerala," *Sahridayapaharam* (ed). Mohemad Habib, *op. cit.*, p.8.

The emphasis on *Touhid* (unity of God) led them to abhor all practices, which smacked of polytheism. Socio-religious festivals of Muslims must be in accordance with Islamic tenets and hence, they denounced all un-Islamic rites like tomb worship, devotion to pirs etc. In other words, they advised to abandon all practices and traditions, which had encouraged syncretism between Hindus and Muslims. Social exclusiveness was the base for building up community exclusiveness. During the pre-reformist phase, the Muslim masses had been more influenced by common traditions shared with Hindus in the past. The reform movement enforced a break with this past in the lives of Muslim masses.

When the *Aikya Sangam* was amalgamated with Kerala Muslim Majlis, the focus was turned to socio-political interests of Muslim community. The most important aim of *Aikya Sangam* for a decade had been the theological reform of Muslims and this was sidelined by *Kerala Muslim Majlis*. Realizing this danger, K.M. Moulavi took the initiative to reactivate the *Kerala Jamiathul Ulema* (hereafter *KJU*). K.M. Moulavi, along with his close associates re-organized the *ulema* association and got it registered under Societies Act XXI on 23 February 1933.¹³⁰ From 1935 onwards, *KJU* initiated vigorous campaigns through *Wa'az* (religious sermons) to educate the masses about the dangers of superstitious beliefs and practices in the name of Islam.

***Wa'az* (Sermon) as a means of Religious Education**

The most important means to impart religious education to the masses during this period was public lecturers called *Wa'az*. These were usually held in mosque premises in the midnight hours. A host of scholars like Issudin Moulavi, P.K. Moosa Moulavi, M.C.C. Abdurahiman, K.M. Moulavi, Paravanna Muhiyudin Moulavi etc. were engaged in such *Wa'az* programmes

¹³⁰ 11th Annual Report 1935, *KJU*, Pulikkal, p.2.

all over Malabar and within a period of two decades (1930's and 40's) the reformist ideology spread in the length and breadth of Malabar.¹³¹ *Wa'az* made the rural Muslims intensely aware of issues concerning life in Islam, which was far beyond the narrow limits of his daily existence in remote villages. The *Wa'az* was peaceful assemblies designed to address the masses on the importance of leading a pious life. These were effective means of communication with the masses in the rural Malabar. With the introduction of public address system, more *Wa'az* programmes were organized to galvanize public support for their ideology. In every village, such *Wa'az* were organized. Normally *Wa'az* programme lasted for about seven days and during *Ramzan*, it lasted for about two weeks. These were occasions also for raising funds for building mosques and *Madrassas*. These *Wa'az* provided opportunity to bring rural Muslims together and made them conscious of their own identity. It strengthened the bonds of unity among Muslims of various localities at a time when transport and communication facilities were meagre. At the same time, these were occasions when *Moulavi's* exhorted the Muslims to stay away from syncretic practices of *Kufr* or *Kafir*. These pejorative terms, in a way, were objectionable to Hindus and indirectly it helped to polarize the two communities. Thus, the *Wa'az* became a regular feature of Mappila social life during the middle of 20th century and created a new awareness of Islamic identity among them, as the reformers advised them to revive the true spirit of Islam by changing their life style.

Polemical Debates

Another impact of the reformist movement in Malabar was the *Vadapradivadam* (polemical debates) between reformists (*Mujahids*) and traditionalists (*Sunnis*). This was an entirely new pattern of religious activity in rural Malabar, though the debates between Makti and Christian

¹³¹ M. Abdul Samad, *op. cit.*, p.102.

missionaries were held in North Malabar in 19th century. We come across umpteen such debates between *Mujahids* and *Sunnis* in different parts of Malabar, like Sulthan Bathery, Kodyathur, Panoor, Kottappuram etc. By 1930's, the priests of Malabar had joined either of these two factions.¹³² These polemical debates, called '*Vadaprathivadam*' in Malayalam, were really open public meetings held to debate controversial theological questions. Such debate became a common occurrence in Malabar during 1930's and 1940's. These *Samvadams* debated a variety of questions concerning the interpretation of various doctrinal issues, over which the rival groups differed. The prominent issue that excited such debates in Malabar was related to intercessionary prayers or *Tawassul Isthigaza*. It will be of interest to examine one such famous debate held at Nadapuram in Kozhikode Taluk in 1933, which was the first of its kind in Malabar. The venue of the debate was *Pulikoolwayal* in Nadapuram. Even prior to the debate both *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* had indulged in a notice war against each other.¹³³ Kannyath Ahmed Musaliyar led the side of *Sunnis* and Kattilasserri Mohamad Moulavi, well versed in logic, led the *Mujahid* group.¹³⁴ The orthodox section visited the Menakoth *Maqam* for their success in the debate. The whole meeting was controlled by District Police Superintendent Kalimulla, as such debates usually ended up in clashes. Both sides were seated in opposite sides and the first question, raised by the *Sunni Musaliyar* was whether the *Auliyas* (saints) possess miracle-making powers (*Karamath*) after their death. The *Mujahid* Moulavi replied that such powers would cease after death. Immediately, there came the second question, where is the *dalil* (evidence)? The crowd, the sympathizers of *Sunni* fold, without waiting for an answer, began to roar that the *Mujahids* were defeated in the debate. The result was pandemonium and

¹³² K. Moidu Moulavi, *op.cit*, p.71.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.71.

¹³⁴ The priests of *Sunni* fold were known as *Musaliyars* and of *Mujahids* as *Moulavis*.

the meeting was dissolved. The issue of the debate, 'whether one can invoke the blessings of dead saints was never settled.'¹³⁵ Though the Sunnis claimed that the Mujahids were defeated in the debate, the educated Muslims of Malabar realized that the debate was deliberately obstructed by the *Sunnis* and that the formulations of the *Mujahid* scholars were not baseless.

Another *samvadam* was held at Punur in Calicut district in the late 1930's. Both parties assembled in opposite buildings and the crowd in the middle on the road. As in Nadapuram, the bone of contention at Punur was related to *Tawassul Isthigasa* or intercessionary prayer with the intention of seeking the blessings and succour of dead saints. The *Mujahids* argued that such practices were *shirk* and *Quran* and prophet had denounced it in hard words. When the Mujahids asked, whether there was any proof in *Quran* permitting *Isthigaza* (mediation between God and man), the *Sunnis* took almost four hours to answer the same and in the midnight hour they came with a reply- 'Since no evidence to prove that it is prohibited, it could be inferred that it is permitted'.¹³⁶ With no concrete solution to the problem, finally the debate was dissolved. To attend this programme, Muslims from all parts of Malabar had flocked at Punur

In 1942, another *samvadam* was held at Kodyathur between Paravanna Moideenkutty Musaliyar (*Sunni*) and M.C.C Abdurahiman (*Mujahid*). The topic of debate was 'number of *rakath*' (additional worship units) in *Tarawih Namaz* (night *namaz* during *ramzan*).¹³⁷ Another debate was held at Sulthan Batheri between K. Umar Moulavi and E.K. Aboobacker *Musaliyar* about the legitimacy of collective prayer after *Namaz*. Like any other *Samvadam*, it also turned violent. *Samvadam* was also held at

¹³⁵ K. Moidu Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.71.

¹³⁶ K. Umar Moulavi, *op.cit.*, p.78.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.78. *Raka'th* means additional worship units; The *Sunnis* were following 20 *raka'th* while *Mujahids* claimed that only 8 will suffice.

Valambur in Malappuram district in 1945 between K. Muhammed Moulavi (Mujahid) and Alavikutty Musliyar (Sunni). The issue of debate was whether it is *bidath* (innovation) to use the sword at the time of ascending the *mimbar* (pulpit) during Friday congregation.¹³⁸

Such debates were also held between *Mujahids* and *Ahmadiyahs*. In 1933, a polemical debate was organized at Calicut in which H.A. Abdulla Sahib of Ahmadiyahs and K.M. Moulavi, M.C.C Abdurahiman etc of the *KJU* took part. As usual, both sides stood with their arguments firmly, the debate was concluded without reaching at any consensus.¹³⁹ These type of debates were also held between *Mujahids* and *Jamathe Islami*, which came late in the picture. In the early 50's such debates between *Jamathe Islamis* and *Mujahids* were held at different centres like Chennamangalur, Kodyathur etc.¹⁴⁰

Huge participation of Muslims in these debates reflected the growing interest of illiterate public in religious affairs and provided opportunities for communication with other Muslims. Normally, these debate proceedings continued for hours till dawn, but without any decision or conclusion. After each such debate, both parties would claim that their respective leaders could assert their views successfully and scored victories over their rival groups. Most of these polemical debates ended inconclusively without any decision or consensus. But the interest they aroused in religious discussion among the masses was enormous. Also, the preachers used such occasion to appeal to the masses to fashion their lives in accordance with the principle of Islam. Another interesting point is that, though these meetings were concerned with Islam, often the local police officials' presence was essential, as such meeting threatened to disrupt public peace. Feelings ran high on such occasions and

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.123.

¹³⁹ Parappil Koya, *op. cit.*, p.298.

¹⁴⁰ K. Moidu Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

the rival parties were so determined to win the debate that when reason failed a resort to violence was always on the cards. As Usha Sanyal observed in another context, 'the debates being social events often attended by a large public audiences were characterised by elements of competitive showmanship and theatre'.¹⁴¹

We have got a particular genre of literature in Arabi-Malayalam which deal with the details of such famous debates. These accounts constitute an important material for analysing the nature of controversy between the two factions of Islam in Malabar. *Raddul Wahabiya*,¹⁴² is a *Mappila* song composed by a Sunni priest about Punur debate.¹⁴³ Innumerable notices justifying the stand of rival groups were also published.¹⁴⁴ This literature provide a clue to the nature of issues, which were discussed in the debates. Other issues discussed in debates were *talkin* (catechism recited at the grave) *tahlil* (mortuary recitation) *Ijthihad* (independent reasoning) *Niyyath* (the statement of intent before worship), *Qunuth* (the insertion of special prayers in the morning *namaz*), *Tarawih* (the number of additional worship units in special *namaz* during *Ramzan*), the position of hand during *namaz*, how much of head must be wetted in the ablution prior to *namaz* and medium of *khutuba* (Friday Sermon). Most of these issues could never be resolved because they were questions of *Ijthihad* (independent reasoning) and of the opinions of the theological scholars. But it served a purpose. As Barbara D. Metcalf observed, 'as each competitor left the debate convinced that his side had won; that his view was morally 'right' and the rival opinion correspondingly

¹⁴¹ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Raza Khan and his movement, 1870-1920*, OUP, Delhi, 1996, p.95.

¹⁴² *Wahabi* was a derogatory term invented by British Imperialists and Turks but profusely used and popularized by the orthodox *Sunnis* in Malabar.

¹⁴³ K. Umar Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.79.

¹⁴⁴ For eg: 'Ozhinjumariyatharu?' a pamphlet by SKJ Ulema dated. 28th April,1945 , Valanchery. In reply to it KJU published 'Samasthakarude Ahwanathinte Ullukalli'. dated. 24th ,May,1945 which was written by MCC Abdurahiman.

'wrong', all participants derived psychological satisfaction from the exchange'.¹⁴⁵

Thus the emergence of reformist movement in Malabar led to the formation of a public sphere of religious discourse. Through these debates and discussion, the participants of both sects constructed discursive linkages to the texts and ideas held to be part of universal tradition of Islam. Thus, Talal Azad's conception of Islam as 'a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of *Quran* and *Hadith*' seems to be relevant in this context.¹⁴⁶ It was the theological discourse that construes diverse speech events as Islamic by linking them to broader Muslim traditions'.¹⁴⁷ In short, the primary concern of all the contenders was to bring the message of Islam to the masses and to counter what they considered misrepresentation of the tenets of Islam.

Reform in the domain of Education

A major thrust of the reform movement was the re-organization of religious education in Malabar. The reformist from the time of Chalilakath Kunhahamad Haji onwards, realized that until and unless the future generation was not given proper religious training in proper way, the movement that they had initiated would peter out. Reformist denounced *Othupalli* system as a useless way of learning ancient scriptures by rote and considered it as the basic cause of Muslim backwardness. All that the students learnt was from oral dictation of *Mulla*.

¹⁴⁵ Barbara D., Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton, University Press, 1982, pp.215-16.

¹⁴⁶ Talal Azad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam", George Town University Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies. *Occasional papers series*, Washington, 1986, p.14.

¹⁴⁷ Talal Azad, "A Theological Conception of Religion: Reflections on Geerts", *Man* (N.5) 18, 1983, p.243.

It was in this backdrop, the reformist tried to modernize the system of religious instruction. With this intention, *Aikyasangam* and *KJU* established a number of *Madrasas* throughout Malabar, following the model and syllabus propounded by Chalilakath. The *Sangam* had a plan to build a centre of higher learning to produce religious "pundits" capable of preaching their ideology at Alway but could not be materialised. The *Noorul Islam Madrasa* was established at Tirurangadi under *Issathul Islam Association* in 1937.¹⁴⁸ It was K.M. Moulavi and M.K. Haji who worked hard behind this institution and it was the fourth among the *Madrasas* established in Malabar as per the scheme of Chalilakath. Later this *Madrasa* became the head quarters of reform movement in Malabar. In 1943, under the same management, an orphanage was opened with the assistance of Jamith Dawath Tablighe-Islami (JDT). Another reputed institution started by the reformist was *Madeenathul Uloom Arabic College* at Pulikkal in 1947.¹⁴⁹ It was managed by *Kawakibunnayyira Association* of Pulikkal and M.C.C. Abdurahiman was the founder-principal of the college.¹⁵⁰ Those who complete *Afzalul Ulema* course (degree course) from *Madinathul Uloom* were given the title '*Madani*'. A major chunk of the leaders of Mujahid Movement after 1950 were the alummi of this college. After independence, several such colleges were started in different centres of Malabar under the auspices of Kerala Nadvartul Mujahideen.

In the year 1934, *Darul Uloom Association* had taken over the control of *Darul Uloom Madrasa* of Vazhakkad and the system introduced by Chalilakath during the first decade of 20th century was revived. In 1944, *Darul Uloom Madrasa* was converted in to *Darul Uloom Arabic College* with

¹⁴⁸ Umari, "Parethente Sthapanangal" (Mal.) *K.M. Moulavi Smaraka Grantham*, Tirurangadi, nd, p.125.

¹⁴⁹ Ali Abdul Razak, "MCC Hassan Moulavi", *MCC Smaraka Grantham*, Parappangadi, 1964, p.58.

¹⁵⁰ The College was affiliated to Madras University in 1948.

MCC Abdurahiman as principal.¹⁵¹ Later in 1946, M.C.C. resigned, due to difference of opinion with the management and the college itself was closed down. In 1949, the college was opened with K.P. Mohiyudin Moulavi, the leader of SKJU, who revived the age old *Mudaris* system¹⁵².

All these efforts were in tune with the resolution passed at the Kerala educational conference held at Tellichery on May 1926 under the auspices of *Aikya sangam*. The resolution envisaged a crash programme for reforming the *Dars* (religious instruction) and for instituting a new syllabus for religious education, on the model of Vellore *Baqiyathusalhin*.¹⁵³

The *Madrasas* turned to be centres of secondary socialisation of Muslim children and at this phase of secondary socialization, religious exclusiveness came in to play. Hence, *Madrasas* contributed their share in the development of exclusiveness among *Mappilas*.

Secular Education

The reformists also took up issues of socio-economic aspects of Muslims. Apart from religious education, they stood for the progress of Muslims in secular education. They raised many issues related to Muslim education in Malabar. As per the decision of 11th conference of *KJU* held at Pulikkal, in 1934, a deputation submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Director of education with the following submissions.

- 1) To attract Muslim to schools, arrangements may be made for religious education in schools.
- 2) To appoint Muslim religious instructors in Mappila schools.

¹⁵¹ Dr. A.B. Moideenkutty Moulavi, "Chalilakathum Vazhakkad Durul Uloomum", *Prabhodhanam* special issue, April 1998, pp.64-67.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p.67.

¹⁵³ K.P.Abdurahiman, "Keralathile Islahi Samghadana", *Prabhodhanam*, special issue, 1988, pp.120-124.

- 3) To appoint Arabic Teacher in Schools.
- 4) To provide fee concession to Muslim students.
- 5) To appoint Muslim members in Board of Education.
- 6) To start more High schools and Training schools for Muslims.¹⁵⁴

On August 23rd, 1931 *Kerala Muslim conference*, passed a resolution emphasising the need for the formation of a Muslim educational Board to negotiate with Government educational committee.¹⁵⁵ The 4th conference of *Aikya Sangam* held on 18th May 1926, passed two resolutions concerning the Muslim education. While one resolution asked the government to appoint Muslim religious instructors in schools, the other emphasised the need for the education of Muslim women.¹⁵⁶ In the 3rd conference of the *Sangam* held at Calicut on 1st June 1925, Mohamad Shamnad, chairman of the conference pleaded for sending wards to the English schools. He made it clear that without modern education the community cannot progress in trade and commerce.¹⁵⁷ The second conference, held at Aluwa in 1924, passed a resolution requesting the government to set up communal schools for *Mappilas*, as the common schools would be hindrance to Muslim girls to study.¹⁵⁸ All these speeches and resolutions prove that the reformists were particular about the educational uplift of the community.

Though the *Sangam* ceased functioning in 1934, its assets were transferred to Farook College in 1950 as *Waqf*, on the condition that it should be utilized for teaching Arabic, Urdu and Islamic History and meeting the expenses of Muslim students. Thus, *Aikya Sangam* could become the

¹⁵⁴ *Al-Murshid*, (A.M), Vol. I, No:2 March 1935.

¹⁵⁵ *Mathrubhumi* 23rd August, 1931.

¹⁵⁶ *Mathrububhumi*, 18th May 1926.

¹⁵⁷ *Mathrububhumi*, 2nd June 1925.

¹⁵⁸ *Mathrubhumi*, 29th May 1924.

backbone of the first Muslim college, which was infact, one of the objectives envisaged by its founding fathers.¹⁵⁹

Reformist and the Issue of Usury

Economic issues related to the community were also taken up by the reformists. It was the pathetic economic condition, followed by the Malabar Rebellion, which compelled the reformists to think about the economic betterment of the community. Other communities of Kerala had established their own banks during the early decades of the 20th century itself. For instance, C. Krishnan founded the Calicut Bank in 1909, with the intention of financing a wide range of activities from loans to professionals and merchants and loans for setting up teashops for *Thiyyas*.¹⁶⁰ Similar communitarian banks had been established by Christians in Travancore. *Mappilas* were depending on these banks for loans and they had to pay huge amount as interests. It was in this background that the reformist leaders like K.M. Seethi Sahib and K.M. Moulavi thought of setting up a Muslim bank at Mathilakam. K.M. Moulavi published a pamphlet titled '*Risalathul fil Banki*' in 1929.¹⁶¹ In this tract, K.M. Moulavi says, 'Usury has been threatening the community. The amount paid by Muslims as usury ultimately reaches the hands of Christians and non-Muslims, who use it for demoralizing Muslims'.¹⁶² He says further, 'on the basis of *Quran*, *Hadith*, and the scriptures of theological *Imams*, we feel that a Muslim bank can be set up. Those who take loans from it can voluntarily contribute an extra amount, besides the principal amount. The amount thus contributed by the loanee could not be considered usury It will be *Hilathu*

¹⁵⁹ M. Abdul Samad, *op.cit.*, p.98.

¹⁶⁰ Dilip M. Menon, "Becoming Hindu & Muslim: Identity and Conflict in Malabar, 1900-1936", working paper No:225. C.D.S., TVM, p.7.

¹⁶¹ K.M. Moulavi, *Risalathul Fil Banki*, (A.M) Eryad, 1929. pp.33-34.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

riba'.¹⁶³ Actually, Moulavi wrote this tract on the basis of an article by an Arabic scholar, Rashid Rila, in an Egyptian journal, *Majallathul Manar*.¹⁶⁴

What we see here is pragmatism triumphing over obscurantism. It was an attempt to adopt the idioms of modernity without disavowing the basic grammar of Islamic learning. The book explained away the Islamic prohibition of interest as a product of certain Islamic circumstances that were no longer applicable. Addressing the issue like usury in this fashion, was indicative of the broadening perimeters of liberal attitude of these reformist scholars.

But, unfortunately, there were howls of protest against the book, not only from the side of traditionalists, but even from amongst the reformists themselves. Mohammed Abdulrahiman Sahib, E. Moidu Moulavi and even M.C.C. Abdulrahiman wrote umpteen articles against the establishment of Muslim bank and accused the *Sangam* that they had made usury *halal* (permissible). Till this day, the major weapon in the armoury of orthodox *Sunnis* against the *Mujahids*, is this tract *Risalath ul fil Banki*.

A heated debate started between *Aikyam*, the journal of *Sangam* and *Al-Ameen*, the earlier supporting and the latter opposing the theory of *Hilathu Riba*.¹⁶⁵ Even, M.C.C. Abdulrahiman, the son of Chalilakath and active leader of *Aikya Sangam*, wrote against it in *Al-Ameen*.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

According to K.M. Moulavi, 'Maintaining such institutions (banks) without interest is impossible and at the same time, any kind of interest is prohibited by Islam. Hence at this crisis, the learned *Ulema* and devoted nobles must sit together and find out a solution to save the community from the clutches of money lenders as also from poverty caused due to payment of heavy interest. The logic of *Hilathuriba* is this preference of lesser evil in an 'either' or 'situation'.

¹⁶⁴ K.K. Kareem, Note No: 62, p.186.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.185.

In an article 'Quran and Usury' in *Mitavadi* (issue: 6, 1931) K.M. Seethi replied to the critics that 'what *Quran* prohibited was the excessive usury prevalent in Arabia. I only subscribed to the opinion of established Islamic scholars that since *Quran* has not prohibited bank interest, it is acceptable in the modern environment. I do believe that none of the principle of *Quran*, will stand against the development of the community¹⁶⁶.

As put in by E. Moidu Moulavi, 'that short treatise (*Risalathul fil Banki*) and the article written by K.M. Seethi Sahib in '*Aikyam*', supporting the bank and his speeches justifying the bank created much confusion and hallaballoo among the Muslims'.¹⁶⁷ Mohammad Abdurahiman, through his *Al-ameen*, wrote profusely against the bank and this discouraged many Muslims from taking share in the bank. When Manapatt Kunhi Mohammad and K.M. Seethi came to Calicut to subscribe shareholders for the bank, their request was turned down by the higher-ups on the pretext that Islam has unequivocally proscribed interest.¹⁶⁸ Finally, the reformists were forced to drop the idea of the bank and the event led to the beginning of the disintegration of the *Aikya Sangam* itself.

Marumakkathayam Reform

The efforts to redefine the Mappila's sense of identity in a more religious format, was also reflected in the anti-*Marumakkathayam*

¹⁶⁶ Vakkom Moulavi Foundation, *Deepika Otravakyathil* (Mal), TVM, 1992, p.269. It is to be noted that as early as 1919, a reformist scholar in Bengal had written a tract *Sud o Riba*, legitimizing bank interest. See Durjathi Prasad, *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity*, University Press, Delhi, 1998, p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ E. Moidu Moulavi, *Ente Kottukaran Muhammad Abdurahiman Sahib* (Mal), Calicut, 1964, p. 199.

¹⁶⁸ In the second conference of the *Sangam* held in 1924, Abdurahiman Sahib had presented a resolution before the conference requesting the *Sangam* leaders to support the Indian National Congress, but was rejected. Hence, he was disinterested in *Sangam* and utilised every opportunity to criticise the sangam leaders and the decision to start a bank provided Sahib, an ample opportunity to do the same.

propaganda. By the second decade of twentieth century itself, efforts in this direction had begun in North Malabar, where the system prevailed predominantly. In the last decade of nineteenth century, Makti Tangal had conducted many *wa'az* programmes in Kannur and Edakkad, drawing attention of *Mappilas* towards the unIslamic content of the system. Following this, in 1915, public meetings were held in Chirakkal Taluk and else where in North Malabar drawing crowds up to 3000 people, in which the local *Qazis* called upon the *Mappilas* to give up the matrilineal system of inheritance.¹⁶⁹ At some of the meetings the roused priests declared, 'If anyone were to say that he does not want that his self acquired property should on his death devolve according to Mohammedan law, he would turn a *Kafir*.'¹⁷⁰ When the Tahsildar, as per request of District authorities, made an enquiry, it was found that majority of the *Mappilas* favoured the dissolution of the system.¹⁷¹ This growing concern of Northern *Mappilas* shows that the sermons of Makti had its impact upon the *Mappilas*. Later, the *Mappila* residents of Cannanore submitted a petition to the Governor of Madras stating that 'Marumakkathayam law of inheritance was opposed to the spirit and teachings of Islam and that they were forced to follow it owing to long usage.'¹⁷²

In 1930, E.K. Moulavi, a prominent leader of *Aikya Sangam*, unequivocally stated that the system contradicted the basic tone of Quran. He wrote, 'The system is forbidden in Islam and it is an accretion from Hinduism. It is prevalent in North Malabar and certain parts of Travancore. It undermines a chapter in *Quran* and ruins the unity and fraternity of

¹⁶⁹Dilip M. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.11.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁷¹ Report of P.A. Ammoo, the Tahsildar of Chirakkal 29th Jan. 1915 and Deputy, Tahsildar of Quilandy, 1st Feb. 1915. DR. Public 497/published 9th March 1915, Arakkal Records, K.R.A.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

IslamThe community leaders and religious scholars, should attempt to eradicate it'.¹⁷³ No wonder, when Mappila Marumakkathayam Bill was introduced in Madras Legislative Assembly in 1937, by Khan Bahadur Shammad, the Select Committee collected the opinions of various Muslim organizations in Malabar about the Bill.¹⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that almost all the opinions received, barring one or two, objected to the system from the point of view of Islamic *Shariath*. The *Maunathul Islam Sabha*, when the Bill was sent to them for opinion, held a meeting on 18th April 1938, expressed its opinion in the following words.

'It is an undeniable fact that the *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance is opposed to principles of Islam. Unfortunately the *Mappilas* of North Malabar and South Canara are following this system. Khan Bahadur Shammad has to be congratulated on his efforts to modify this un-Islamic system even on a small scale and to make it conform to the laws of Islamic *Shariat* (Mohammedan law)'.¹⁷⁵

E. Moidu Moulavi, Sub editor, *Al-Ameen* made the following remarks:

'Islam does not allow *Marumakkathayam* which is the cause of many domestic troubles in Mappila *Tarawads*. The Mappila youths of South Canara and North Malabar have been raising a hue and cry against the system and have for the past many years been demanding the introduction of *Makkathayam* system.....If Shammad Sahib has really moved the Bill with a view to root out the un-Islamic system I would ask him why he has given the Bill an un-Islamic name'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ E.K. Moulavi, "Kerala Muslims and Anti-Islamic rituals" (Mal.) in *Sahrudayopaharam* (ed). E.M. Habeeb Muhammad, Edava, 1930, pp.155-164.

¹⁷⁴L.A. Bill No:8 of 1937, Madras Govt. Press. 1938 Arakkal Records, Sl.No. 8119. K.R.A.

¹⁷⁵Opinions received by Select Committee on Mappila Marumakkathayam Bill of Shammad Sahib, MLA. L.A. Bill No.8 of 1937, Madras Govt. Press. 1938, Arakkal Records No:8119, K.R.A, p.67.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.67.

Similar is the tone of the opinion expressed by Muslim Association of Paravanna in South Malabar. Regarding the Bill the Association members opined that 'the system which is found in some places of Malabar is quite anti-Islamic. A Bill bringing the *Mappilas* following Marumakkathayam within the boundary of Islam is urgent and necessary. Therefore Mr. Shammard's Bill is to be changed totally and a Bill in the aforeside manner should be introduced.¹⁷⁷ *Salahul Islam Sangam* of Calicut opined that 'the Bill in no way accelerate the introduction of Islamic *Makhathayam* system in the near future.¹⁷⁸

What is of interest in this context is that while Marumakkathayam communities like Nairs stood for its dissolution in the background of the pressure of modernity and the structural changes brought about by colonial government, the *Mappila* opposition to the system was anchored on scriptural Islam. Thus, every institution and custom practiced by Muslims were juxtaposed with scriptural Islam and if some contradictions were detected, such practices were anathemised.

Reformists and the Translation of *Quran*

Another area where reformist made their mark was the rendering of *Quran* in vernacular language. In sharp contrast to the traditionalists, they emphasised the importance of rendering scriptures in to the vernacular or *tafsir* (commentary). Although *tafsir* literally means interpretation of *Quran*, it includes translation also. 'Because the inimitability of *Quran* belies the idea of translation, all rendering of its words in to other tongue was generally considered to be interpretation'.¹⁷⁹ The traditional *Ulemas* had a strong reluctance to translate God's words in to an ungodly language like Malayalam.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.75.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.77.

¹⁷⁹ John R. Brown, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1993, p.64.

But this hesitation to translate or interpret was not unique to Malabar Muslims, but through out the Arabic speaking world. The *Sunni Musaliyars* believed that it was a capital offence on the part of a Muslim either to translate or to read such translations.¹⁸⁰ In 1931, a reformist leader lamented, that, 'It is a pity that even educated Muslim are under the impression that *Quran* is a *mantra* with which sins of the dead could be salvaged, if recited at his *Qabar* or that it could be used to annihilate the enemies or to win over friends... Translation of *Quran* is the only way to purge out such embedded darkness.'¹⁸¹

In 1930, *KJU* had decided to bring out the Malayalam translation of *Quran*. With this intention, Muslim Literary Society was established at Calicut. The first portion of *Quran* (5 chapters) was translated with commentaries by P.K. Moosa Moulavi, K.M. Moulavi, M.C.C. Abdurahiman and P. Muhiyudin and published it from Calicut.¹⁸² The second part was published by Tellichery Muslim Literary Society, but the remaining portions could not be brought out.

Mohammed Abdurahiman Sahib had realized that translation of *Quran* was essential to bring about a renaissance within the community. He chalked out a wide programme for the translation, with the assistance of religious scholars of the time. He contacted the Nizam of Hyderabad, the wealthiest man in India then, and the Nizam promised to support this venture. But the orthodox sections in Malabar through letters and telegram prevailed upon Nizam and the miserly Nizam took this as an excuse and withdrew from his offer.¹⁸³ Sahib entrusted P.K. Moosa Moulavi and P. Mohamad Moideen with

¹⁸⁰ K. Moidu Moulavi, *op.cit.*, 75.

¹⁸¹ V. Kasim Pilla, *Deepika*, Issue:1 Vol:1 1931.

¹⁸² K.K.M Kareem, Note no. 62, *op.cit.*, p.189.

¹⁸³ M. Rashid, *Muhammed Abdurahiman* (Mal), IPH, Calicut, 1994, p.74.

the task of translation. But due to the paucity of fund, only the first few chapters were published.

In 1946, the Muslim Communists of South Malabar area also tried to interpret *Quran* in tune with the ideology of Communism. One Moyin Moulavi from Kondotty, on the basis of *Quranic* verse '*Araithalladi*' argued that these anti-communists were misinterpreting the religion. A communist Muslim from Angadi Mugar interpreted certain *Hadiths* from *Sahih Muslim* compilation, to justify communism and published it from Ponnani.¹⁸⁴ It was in this context, C.N. Ahmad Moulavi published '*Islamite Dhanavitharana Padhathi*' (the wealth distribution system in Islam), countering the views of Muslim communists.¹⁸⁵

Though such isolated attempts were made in rendering *Quran* in to Malayalam right from Mayinkutty Ilaya in 1861, the first full fledged Malayalam translation came out only in 1961, by C.N. Ahmad Moulavi, exactly after a lapse of a century of the first attempt.¹⁸⁶ Through '*Ansari*', a journal started by him in 1949 from Karuvarakundu, he published the chapters of *Quran* in Malayalam. From 1951 to 1963, he was exclusively involved in translation work. His translation had tremendous impact on both Muslim and non-muslims alike.¹⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that the traditionalists, who had strongly objected to the translation of *Quran*, came out with their own version of *Quran* translation in 1970's, which shows that reformist initiative in this

¹⁸⁴ K. Moidu Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.123.

¹⁸⁵ Shihabudhin Arambram, "C.N. Ahmad Moulavi", *Prabodhanam*, special issue, 1998, p. 97.

¹⁸⁶ M.N. Kasassay, "Kerala Charithravum C.N. Ahmad Moulaviyum", (Mal), *Mathrubhumi*, Ramzan Supplement, 2005, pp.61-64.

¹⁸⁷ It was on the basis of this translation that K.C. Raghavan Nair composed his '*Amrutha Vani*' (*Quran* in Malayalam verse), IPH, Calicut, 1997.

direction made tremendous impact in the Muslim society of Malabar.¹⁸⁸ These were the people who manhandled K. Ummar Moulavi at Nadapuram in the 1940's, when he tried to sell the *Quran* translation published by Calicut Islamic Literary Society.¹⁸⁹ At Palakkad, similar untoward incident occurred, when Umar Moulavi tried to sell the copies of Quran translation.¹⁹⁰ Thus, *Aikya Sangam* eventually became a source of inspiration to its detractors in this matter. *Tafsir* (commentaries) became a symbol of Reformist struggle. They rightly perceived the significance of vernacular rendering of scriptures in the overall struggle for religious enlightenment.

Women and Islam

The position and role of women was another major area of discussion initiated by the Reformists. The reformist preachers always stressed the idea of gender equality in Islam. They emphasised that in Islamic *Shariat*, women enjoyed rights to property and inheritance. The attempt of Makti Thangal in this domain has already been dealt with.

By about 1920 itself, books on women issues in Islam began to be published. The first one ofcourse was the translation of Shaik Munir Husain Qidwai's urdu work 'women under Islam' by Mssr's.K. Pareethu Pillai and M. Ahmad Kannu,¹⁹¹ which was published with the title '*Islam Mathavum Sthreekalum*' (Islam and Women) in 1920. In the preface of the work Vakkom Moulavi wrote, 'it is pertinent here to admit that it was the pathetic condition of Muslim women that provided a chance for western and other

¹⁸⁸ The first attempt in this regard among *Sunnis* was the translation of *Quran* by K.V. Muhammad Musliyar. With its publication, the opposition of *Sunnis* to translation of the scriptures ceased to exist.

¹⁸⁹ K. Moidu Maoulavi, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁹⁰ K. Umar Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.112.

¹⁹¹Vakkom Moulavi Foundation, *Vakkom Moulavi Prabandagal Smaranakal* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1982, p.93.

scholars to criticize the religion of Islam.¹⁹² The reformists realised that the reform and management of women was central to the religious reform of Muslims. Women's ignorance of religion was a problem for society as a whole, for they infect their children with a contagion of indiscipline and ignorance. Hence they need to be managed through proper instruction in Islam. Further, the Christian missionaries and other non-Muslim communities criticized Islam for the low status accorded to women and for lack of education among Muslim women. As K.M Moulavi observed, 'the main impediment before the Islamic missionary workers, when they try to win over the lower caste Hindus to the fold of Islam, is the misconception, current among the general public about Islamic conception of women.'¹⁹³ He pointed further that the position of women in Islam was theoretically higher than their current status. The cause of this discrepancy was adherence to false customs. It was to wipe out that misconception, K.M. Moulavi wrote the treatise *Islamum Sthreekalum* (Islam and Women) in 1936.¹⁹⁴ In the first part of it, K.M. Moulavi proved, on the basis of scriptures, that both men and women were having soul and having equal rights and obligation in belief and rituals.¹⁹⁵ In the second part, quoting *Hadiths*, he made it clear that women could participate in all collective prayers in the mosque along with men. He added that, during the time of prophet, women used to take part even in battles. Citing the example of Ayisha, he held that women used to take part in battles during the time of prophet.¹⁹⁶ The third part of it dealt with the right of women to education, both religious and secular. In the 4th section he dealt with 'Islam and Purdha' in which he made it clear that women were asked only to cover their body except fore arms and face. Even without covering

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.93.

¹⁹³ K.M. Moulavi, *Islam and Women*, (Mal) Ishaath Committee, Aleppey, 1936, p.I.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7.

their face, they could go out and engage in all activities. He concludes, 'irrespective of gender distinction, Islam permits Muslims to do any profession but it prevents and abhors begging...but Islam does not provide unlimited and indecent freedom to women, as the women of the western countries...'.¹⁹⁷ Thus, Moulavi exposed the hollowness of the long held patriarchal belief that keeping women in ignorance and seclusion was part of their religion.

Due to the initiative of the reformists, a renewed interest could be seen in the Muslim public sphere, regarding the rights and obligations of women as laid down in Islam. In the days of the prophet, women had the right to divorce their husbands, by forgoing *Mahr*, but it was never allowed in Malabar. Similarly, the female attendance of congregational prayers in mosque was another practice that had fallen in disuse in Malabar. All these rights conceded in Islam to women, but not socially in vogue in Malabar, were thoroughly discussed in the 1940's and 1950's.

Orthodox Reaction and Formation of *Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema*

While the reformists under *Aikya Sangam* and *KJU* had been making steady progress, there had been a simultaneous growth of orthodoxy in Malabar. The traditionalist opposition grew in intensity when their religious leaders, *Thangals* and *Musaliyars*, came under sharp criticism from the reformists scholars. Organized efforts were made to counter all the criticisms of the reformists' which brought into focus the basic opposition between scriptural Islam and Malabar Islam. Perhaps it was the uncompromising stand of reformists against the popular beliefs and practices of Muslims, which invited vehement opposition from the traditionalist *Ulema*. Since this cut the very basis of their economic existence, they were in the forefront of counter attacks against the reformists.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23.

At the inaugural meeting of *Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema*, which was held during the second annual conference of *Aikya Sangam*, all the *Ulemas* of all shades of Malabar took part as it was chaired by Abdul Jabar Hazrath, the *guru* of all the then leading *Ulemas* of Kerala. But during the 3rd Annual conference held at Calicut in 1925, certain traditional *Ulemas* raised some doubts and K.M. Moulavi, the leader of *KJU* answered such questions. Satisfied with this answer, Pangil Musaliyar, who later became the president of orthodox *SKJU*, said that *Aikya Sangam* was based on *Ahlussunnathwal Jamath* and prayed for its existence till the doomsday.¹⁹⁸ But the same Musaliyar, along with Varakkal Mulla Koya Thangal and others, met at Kuttichira Juma Masjid and formed a parallel organisation called *Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema* in 1925. On 26th June, 1926, a convention of the orthodox *Ulema* was held at Calicut Town Hall and the organization was renamed as *Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema*, with Varakkal Mulla Koya as president and P.V. Mohammed Musaliyar as secretary.¹⁹⁹ The organisation was registered on 14th November 1934 with 40 member committee (*Mushavara*). It is pertinent to note that 80% of the *Mushavara* members belonged to South Malabar and none from outside Malabar.²⁰⁰ Unlike *KJU*, which had in its working committee, members from all part of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, *SKJU* was basically a Malabar based organization. The following were the aims as stated in the constitution of the *SKJU* drafted in 1934.

- 1) To propagate Islamic principles in accordance with the strictures of *Ahlusunnath wal Jamath*.²⁰¹
- 2) To oppose those who stand against these strictures.

¹⁹⁸ P.A. Sayed Mohamed (ed.), *Kerala Muslim Directory*, Cochin, 1960, p. 473.

¹⁹⁹ *Samastha 60th Anniversary Sourvenir*, Calicut, 1985, p.27.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁰¹ Those who adheres to the traditions of Prophet and his righteous followers. In this sense all groups except *Shias* are *Sunnis*.

- 3) To protect the communitarian and religious rights of Mappila Muslims.
- 4) To promote both religious and secular education (which are not against religion).
- 5) To save the community from disunity, blind belief, immorality and anarchy.²⁰²

Among these, the second and fifth clauses were aimed at *Aikya Sangam* and the disciples of the *Tarikas* of Korur, Chottur and other faked *sheiks* and in the 1940's the *Jamathe Islami*.²⁰³ But their enemy number one remained to be the reformists whom they termed as '*Wahabis*'. As per the constitution of *Samastha*, anybody who has studied '*Alfiyah*', '*Fathul Muin*' and '*Jalalaini*', under a leading Ulema, could become member of *Samastha*. But the interesting aspect of its terms of membership was that only the *Ulemas* who could cooperate with the British government were eligible for membership.²⁰⁴ This shows that connivance of the British also was a factor behind its formation. The 15th resolution passed at the 6th Annual conference of *Samatha* at Feroke on 5th March 1933, makes this political stand of *Samastha* clear. The resolution says, "This meeting reaffirms our earlier decision that the main aim of the *Samastha* was the revitalisation of the principles and practices of *Ahlussunnath wal Jamath* and that those *Musaliyars* who become members of *SKJU*, ought to be non-congress and pro-govt'.²⁰⁵ The British might have played their role as the *Aikya Sangam*

²⁰² *Samastha 60th Anniversary Souvenir, op. cit., p. 28.*

²⁰³ *Ibid., p.28.*

²⁰⁴ *Samatha Kerala Jamiyanthul Ulema Memorandum, as quoted in Sunni Yuvajana Sangam Souvenir, 1989, p.120.*

²⁰⁵ *Samstha Resolution of 6th conference (Feroke) as quoted in P.K. Kutty, "Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema" (Mal), in Prabhodanam special issue, op. cit., pp.131-135.*

leaders like K.M. Moulavi, E. Moidu Moulavi and Mohammed Abdurahiman were staunch opponents of the British Rule.

But the real cause behind the polarization of the traditional *Ulema* under the new organization was that the reformist propaganda against the popular Islam threatened their status and even livelihood itself. Majority of the traditional *Mullas* were strongly in favour of the various institutions which were embedded in Malabar Muslim life, like tomb worship, mortuary rituals, *Maulud*, intercessionary prayers etc. These were profitable source of income for rural *mullas* and their abolition would have affected them adversely. They derived their income for subsistence from such religious rites and social functions they officiated. Besides, their role as rural doctor-cum-exorcist also earned them much of their income. Unlike the reformist scholars, the rural priests were not merely preachers but functionaries, closely involved with the life and aspiration of rural *Mappilas*. The social base of the reformist scholars, most of them from middle class background was also a factor behind their failure in the rural Malabar. Hence it was difficult for them to break the hold of these *Mullas* over the masses. The rural *Mappilas* had to depend upon the *mullas* even for a small thing like the ritual slaughter of chicken.²⁰⁶ Bulk of these rural *mulla* classes remained opposed to the reformists and supported the traditional system with its peculiar blend of Islam and local cults. Unlike the chaste Malayalam spoken by the reformists, the traditional *mullas* spoke a pidgin Malayalam, which the *Mappila* masses could easily grasp. In short, due to these factors, the *SKJU*, within a decade itself, could keep the Muslim masses under their control.

Like its counterpart, *SKJU* held their annual conference at different centres of Malabar (never picking up a venue outside Malabar until 1945) like Tanur (1927 February 1st) Mollur in Walluvanad (December 2nd 1927)

²⁰⁶It was a common practice in Malabar even during 1970's, that only *Mullas* (mosque functionaries) could slaughter the chicken.

Chenguzhi (1929 January 3) Mannarghat (1930 March 17) Vallianchery (1931 March 5) Feroke (1933) Karyavattom (1945) Meenchantha (1947) Valanchery (1950) Badagara (1951) Tanur (1954-2015 anniversary).²⁰⁷ Some of these conferences were memorable in terms of certain important resolutions which triggered off religious controversies in Malabar. At the 4th conference held at Mannarghat on 17th March 1930 *Samastha* passed the resolution to boycott non-sunni sects like *Wahabis*, *Qadiyanis* and the *Tarikas* of Chottur and Kondotty Tangals.²⁰⁸ Another resolution of the same convention banned the education of Muslim women.²⁰⁹

The 6th conference held at Feroke on 5th March 1933 was historic in terms of certain controversial resolutions it passed. One such resolution advised the Malabar Muslims to disassociate from the national movement, at a time when it had achieved considerable momentum in Malabar, after the traumatic experiences of rebellion. The resolution says 'since it is against the religion to oppose the government and to disobey its civil laws, it is not fair on the part of genuine Muslims to cooperate with the Congress party'.²¹⁰ It was the British connivance that had been at work behind this resolution. Even prior to the formation of *Samastha*, the British were able to win over a section of *Ulemas* of Malabar to their side, as was evident from the *fatwa* known as '*Mahikual Kalafath Ala Ismil Khilafath*' (The truth about the Rebellion in the name of Khilafath) by Mammed Kutty Musliyar of Ponnani, issued in 1921.²¹¹ Another resolution, which had its repercussion in Mappila's religious life, was passed in the 17th conference held at Meenchantha on 17th March 1947. This resolution, which is popularly known as '*Meenchantha premeyam*'

²⁰⁷ *Samastha 60th Anniversary Souvenir*, 1985- p.28. Also see *Prabodhanam* special issue, 1998, p. 132.

²⁰⁸ *Prabodhanam*, 1998, p. 132.

²⁰⁹ *Al-bhayan*, (Arabi- Malayalam) Book I Issue 5.

²¹⁰ *Prabodhanam*, *op cit.*, p. 132.

²¹¹ See chapter '*Khilafath and Pan-Islamism as Symbols of Solidarity*'.

(Meenchantha Resolution) in subsequent discourses, emphatically legitimised all the components of popular Islam in Malabar; which the reformists were trying to exorcise. The resolution was introduced by Shihabudin Ahmad Shaliyathi and supported by P. Kammu Musliar. It reads, 'This conference resolves that they, who consider the customs and practices, which the Muslims of Kerala have been observing for centuries and which have been ratified by the *Ulemas* of *Ahlu-sunnath wal Jamath*, are *Shirk* or prohibited in Islam, are not *Sunnis* and not fit for either *imamath* or *Khatib*.²¹² These customs include, prayer to dead *Auliyas* as *Tawassul*, recitation of *Mouluds*, *Talqin*, visit and prayer at tombs, belief in charms and aumulets, membership in *Qadiri* or *Rifai Tarikas*, and recitation of *fatiha* or *Malas* like '*Manqus*', '*Muhyudhin*', '*Rifai*' etc.²¹³ The same conference reiterated its earlier resolution passed in 6th conference, to boycott the *Wahabis* (reformists). Now, *Jamathe Islami* was also included in the list of groups to be disassociated with.²¹⁴

Thus, despite the reformist denunciation of the practices of popular Islam, the traditional *Ulema* under *Samastha* stood firmly in favour of the continuation of these institutions and were entirely averse to the idea of their abolition. They exploited the sentiments of ordinary *Mappilas* and succeeded in retaining their support for most of these institutions. It is pertinent to note that these *Sunni Ulemas* were not opposed to all that the reformists stood for. They shared with the reformists the concern over the celebration of *Muharam* in North Malabar, as well as certain practices associated with *nerchas*. For eg the *Samastha* resolution, passed in the 19th annual conference held at Badagara in 1951, advised the Muslims to purge out all the un-Islamic rituals

²¹² *Imamath* means leading the *namaz* and *Khatib* means one who delivers *Khutuba*.

²¹³ 17th *Conference Report of Samastha Kerala Jamiyyalul Ulema*, 1947, Calicut, pp.10-11.

²¹⁴ *Fatwa* No:2, Shihabuddin Memorial Publishing Bureau, Chaliyam, 1947, pp.13-14.

and to observe only those rituals which converged with *Sunnath*, during the *nerchas*.²¹⁵ The reformists and the *Sunnis* were unanimous in their opposition to the ideals of Mirza and to brand the *Ahmadiyahs*, who had organized their *Jamaths* in certain parts of Malabar in the early decades of 20th century, as heretics. Both groups issued *Fatwas* and pamphlets challenging the argument of *Quadiyanis*. *Samastha* also stood firmly against the *Tarikas* called Chottur and Kurur *Sheiks* but supported the *Tarikas* of *Qadiri*, *Chishti*, *Rifai* and *Shaduli*. It could be seen that the primary opposition to reformist propaganda was directed against the reformist's attempt to undermine some institutions, from which they derived their livelihood. We have already examined in the first chapter how the *Mullas* derived money from mortuary rites like *Telkin*, *Tahlil* and *Othikkal* and also from *Moulud*, *Ratib* etc. Another source of income was from charms and amulets, popular remedies in which rural *Mappilas* had implicit faith.²¹⁶ In the 3rd Annual conference of *Aikya Sangam* held at Calicut, a pamphlet '*Al-Hidaya*' was released, which unequivocally declared that tomb worship and cults like *nerchas*, *Kodikuthu* etc were un-Islamic. But the *Musaliyars*, who survived on these tomb cults, realized the danger of such ideas percolated in the society and they came out with a parallel organisation.²¹⁷ Through *Samavadams* (polemical debates) with reformists and religious tracts, the *Sunnis* could win over to their side the illiterate masses of Malabar. The reformists succeeded only in converting only a fraction of the Mappila population, mainly in the coastal towns, to their point of view. Thus, the practices condemned as anti-Islamic by the reformists a century before could be seen persisting in Malabar Muslim society as late as the last quarter of 20th century.

²¹⁵ *Samastha 60th Conference Souvenir*, 1985, *op cit.*, p. 54.

²¹⁶ For details see Husain Randathani, *Social and Cultural life of Mappila Muslims of Malabar, 1800-1921*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Calicut University, 1997.

²¹⁷ N.K. Ahmad Moulavi, *Aikya Sangavum Kerala Muslingalum* (Mal), Yuvatha Books, Calicut, 1997, p.38.

At the same time, the *Sunnis* had to swallow many of their earlier *fatwas* related to certain issues like secular education, *Quran* translation and *Madrassa* system. Regarding the *Quran* translation, Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musaliyar, the *Sunni* leader wrote in *Al-Bayan*, the mouth piece of *Samastha*, that the attempt to translate the holy *Quran* with the business intention or to fill the belly or to sell it to any '*Chathan, Pothan, or Kiran*' (Tom, dick and Harry) who take it to latrin or toddy shop and thereby undermines its sanctity and sacredness, is a capital offence'.²¹⁸ He wrote this at time when Calicut Muslim Literature Society brought out the first part of *Quran* into Malayalam in the 1930's. But in 1970's, the *Sunnis* brought out their own version of *Quran* Translation in Malayalam written by K.V. Muhammed Musliyar. Similarly the same group which equated *Madrassa* with hell, started an Educational Board in 1951 and got thousands of *Madrassas* registered under the Board.²¹⁹ They who despised Malayalam and English as the languages of hell and prevented Muslim masses from studying them, started journals in Malayalam, established schools and colleges (even for women) in many parts of Malabar after 1950's.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Pangil Ahmedkutty Musaliyar in *Al-Bayan*, as quoted in *Shabab* special issue, *op cit.*, p.134.

²¹⁹ In 1985, there were around 5200 Madrasas affiliated to Samastha Educational Board and 40,000 teachers working at these Madrasas, *Samastha 60th Conference Souvenir* 1985,, p.29.

²²⁰ Within a period of 65 years after its birth, it had to witness three major splits. The first occurred in 1966 when a section of the *Samastha* leaders split away from it and formed *Akhila Kerala Jaiyyathul Ulema* due to difference of opinion regarding *Samastha's* approach to *Thablige Jamath*. Another group emerged within *Samastha* towards the same period under K.K. Sadakathulla and they formed a new organisation called *Samastha Jaiyyathul Ulema*. The cause of the split this time was regarding the issue of use of loudspeakers for *Jumua Kutuba*. The final and major split occurred in 1989 when A.P. Aboobacker Musaliyar was parted from it and formed a splinter group with the same name. The new organization was the result of feud between E.K.Aboobacker Musaliyar and A.P. Aboobacker Musaliyar regarding the sharing of dias with *Wahabis and Moududis* at the time of Shariat dispute connected with Sha Bano Case; Besides, the undue subservience shown by the *Sunni* leaders to the Muslim League also added additional flavour to the schism. The new group argued that any cooperation with these groups are against the spirit

Jamaethe Islami

Jama'the Islami was a sect founded by Abul A'la Moududi in 1941. By about 1930's itself, the ideals of Moududi were familiar to Malabar Muslims through their journal published from Hyderabad called *Turjumanul Qurani*. V.P. Mohammadali Moulavi of Edayur (Malappuram) was the founder of *Jamathe Islami* in Kerala. The earliest proponents of this sect in Malabar were the reformist scholars themselves including K.M. Moulavi and V.P. Mohamed Ali. K.M. Moulavi even had translated Moududi's book and published it in *Al-Murshid*, the organ of the Reformists *Ulemas* ²²¹ In 1946, Mohammed Ali along with Janab Issudhin Sahib, formed an organization called '*Jamaiyathul Mustarshidin*,' at Valancheri with a forty member committee.²²² It was later converted in to the first unit of *Jamaethe Islami* in Malabar. Within a short period, a number of units of the organisation were set up in different parts of Malabar like Kuttiadi, Chennamangallur, Santhapuram, Kannur, Kozhikode etc. To form a state level committee, the adherents of this sect met at Calicut in August 1948 which took certain significant decisions, like establishment of central Head quarters, publication of an official mouth piece called *Prabodhanam* and formation of a central committee called '*Shura*'.²²³ As the *Jamaath* also stood firmly against innovative practices, it was the workers of the reformist *KJU*, who were attracted to the ideology of Moududi and there had been cooperation between

of 'Meenchanda premeyam.' Despite these splits the Sunnis could garner the support of the majority of *Mappilas* in Malabar.

²²¹ *Al-Murshid*, November - January, 1936-37.

²²² K. Moidu Moulavi, *Ormakkurippukal*, *op. cit.*, p.124 and O. Abdurahiman "Jamaethe Islami in Kerala", *Prabodhanam* special issue, 1992 p.241 and Prof. K.A. Sidiq Hasan "Jamathe Islami Keralathil" *Prabodhanam* special 1998, pp.137-144.

²²³ O. Abdurahman, "Jamaethe Islami in Kerala" (Mal), *Prabodhanam* special issue, 1992, p.241.

the leadership of both groups. For instance, in the first annual conference of *Jamaiyuthul Mustharshideen* at Valanchery held in 1947, the *KJU* leaders like K. Ummer Moulavi, A. Alavi Moulavi Shaik Mohammed Moulavi, Parappur Abdurahman Moulavi etc took part.²²⁴ In certain cases, the units of *KJU*, were converted in to units of *Jamath*. In 1950's, to stem the rising tide of communist ideology among Malabar Muslims, leaders of both *Jamath* and *KJU* collectively set up an offensive missionary organization and organized a campaign called 'Familiarize Islam'.²²⁵ They also issued a number of tracts explaining the Islamic ideology, especially about *Zakath* and Socialist aspects of Islamic ideology. It was a time when Muslim communists brought out some tracts interpreting *Quran* and *Hadith* within a communist perspective.²²⁶ It was in this context that K.C. Abdulla Moulavi published *Islamum socialisavum (Islam and socialism)* which countered many of the arguments of these Muslim communists.²²⁷ But this honeymoon between the *KJU* and *Jamath* did not last long. In early 1950's itself, K.M. Moulavi and six others of *KJU*, issued a combined *fatwa* against *Jamathe Islami*.²²⁸

The early leaders of the movement were Haji V.P. Mohammedali (popularly known as Haji Sahib among *Jamath* circles) K.C. Abdulla Moulavi and V.K.M. Issudin Moulavi. While the *Jamath* agrees with almost all the arguments of *Mujahids* related to *Touhid*, *bidath* and authority of *Quran*, and *Hadith* etc, they differ with them in one respect, *Taghoot*, any form of government, including democracy, Islamic or non-Islamic, which govern people without heeding the commandment of God, is *Taghoot* and hence a Muslim cannot cooperate with government or participate in any kind of

²²⁴ K.A. Sidiq Hasan, "Jamathe Islami in Kerala", *Prabhodanam* special issue 1998, pp.137-144.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.138.

²²⁶ K. Moidu Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.123.

²²⁷ M. Abdul Samad, *op cit.*, p.122.

²²⁸ K. Moidue Moulavi, *op. cit.*, p.125.

Governmental activity and institutions. No wonder, the *Jamath* took a firm decision to boycott elections and to reject Government appointments. When the first election was held to the Parliament in 1951, the *Jamath* exhorted its members to abstain from electoral activities.²²⁹ This stand of *Jamath* was not acceptable either to *Sunnis* or the *Mujahids* in Kerala and both became the staunch critics of *Jamath Islami* from 1950's onwards.

Through their tracts and public lectures, the *Jamath* could mobilize supporters in certain pockets of Malabar. Like other Muslim organisations, *Jamath* also organized annual conventions at its major strongholds like Valanchery (1948), Kuttiadi (1950) Mulliar Kurussy (1952) Santhpuram near Perinthalmanna (1952) Edayur near Valanchery (1953) Malappuram (1955) Alwaye (1957) and Calicut (1960)²³⁰ This shows that *Jamath* like the *SKJU* was basically a Malabar phenomenon at least in the early decades of its foundation. In 1945 itself, a publishing company called Islamic Publishing Company, was set up at Edayur in Valanchery and the first book it published was the translation of Moududi's famous work, *The religion of Islam* in to Malayalam; which was the manifesto of *Indian Jamathe Islami*. An interesting aspect of the *Jamath* literature was the standard Malayalam in which these were written at a time when both *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* were clinging to the age old polyglot called Arabi-Malayalam. A journal called *Probhodanam* was started from August 1949 onwards, under the editorship of Haji Sahib and this journal took the ideology of *Jamath* to the length and breadth of Kerala. *Jamaath* also brought out its own translation of *Tarjumanul Quran*, the commentary of *Quran* by Abul A'ala Moududi. Following the footsteps of *Mujahids*, *Jamath* also started their Arabic college

²²⁹ Moulana Abul Laith, "Indian Muslims and Election" (Mal), *Probhodanam*, July 1951.

It was only in 1977, due to bitter experience of *Jamath* workers during Emergency that they decided to cast those votes in the election.

²³⁰ K.A.S. Sidhique Hasan, *Probhodanam*, special issue, 1998, *op.cit.*, p.146.

at Kasargode called 'Aliya College', to provide training to the scholars of *Jamath* orientation. Later they started colleges synthesizing religious and secular studies at Chennumangallur, Santhapuram, Tirurkad etc.

While the *Jamath* was thus gaining ground in Malabar, both *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* turned against them and many polemical debates were held between *Mujahids* and *Jamath* and between *Sunnis* and *Jamaths*. These debates also stirred the religious life of Malabar Muslims in 1950's and 1960's. The main bone of contention between *Jamath* and others was the issue of *Taguth*. Both *Sunnis* and *Mujahids* held a diametrically opposite view to that of *Jamath* regarding politics. Both *Mujahid* and *Sunni* leaders were active in political parties right from their very inception. In the initial years, the *Mujahids* were anti-British and the *Sunnis* Pro-British. In the 30's and 40's and after independence, the *Sunni* leaders were active in Congress politics and the *Mujahids* in Muslim League. The ideological war started between them and *Jamath*, when the latter declared that a Muslim could not involve in politics, other than trying to establish an Islamic state.²³¹

Conclusion

What was the impact of the activities of these three different organisations on the religious landscape of *Mappilas* of Malabar?

The reformists as well as the counter-reformists brought about a new awareness among the ordinary Muslims and as an inevitable result, helped to transform a people in to a community. All these organizations in their own way contributed to the growth of a community consciousness among the *Mappilas* of Malabar. Despite the existance of internal difference, solidarity of some kind or the other could be achieved by the mobilization of the masses

²³¹ It is interesting to note that *Jamath* was the only Muslim group in Kerala which kept away from liberation struggle against the communist government in 1959. It was in this background, *KJU* issued a *fatwa* against *Jamathe Islami, Probhodanam* special, Calicut, 1998, *op.cit.*, p.142.

under different banners. Through their intense propaganda work, these sects created a new interest in Islam and Islamic way of life among their lay followers. Due to their hectic organizational work, these organizations could put an end to the isolation of rural *Mappilas* and widened the socio political contacts of the community. With a competitive spirit, they started new educational and welfare institutions, published umpteen religious tracts, organised polemical debates and *wa'az* gatherings and thus brought significant change in the world view or 'common sense' of common *Mappilas* in Malabar. Islam in Malabar by about the mid of 20th Century, entered a new phase marked by intense debate and discussions among rival groups which helped to create a new awareness of doctrinal matters among all sections of the community. Confrontation and debates were the hallmark of the years between 1922 and 1950, the formative period for developing a scripture-based conception of religion in Malabar. By engaging in theological discourse, commentaries and exegesis, these rival groups linked social events to authoritative Islamic texts.

These organizations also helped the rural *Mappilas* to achieve horizontal solidarity within the community. For the first time, the rural *Mappilas* began to attach much more significance to their 'Muslim identity' as opposed to their local or national identity, which subsequently helped to achieve a measure of social cohesion, in a diversified and even culturally polarized community. The emphasis on Islamic identity led to a contemptuous rejection of every thing associated with popular Islam like *Marumakkathayam*, mortuary services, *Kathukuthu* and even *nerchas*. Again the idea of an Islamic Unity, based on equality of believers, began to gain ground and stigmatization of *Puslams* (muslim fishermen) began to disappear.

The reformers like Makti convinced the *Mappilas* about the futility of *Jihad* and preached instead a 'return to pure faith' as the right path to Islamic

glory. People now began to take increasing interest in mosques and *Jumua* prayers. In short, the combined effect of extensive publications, preaching tours in towns and villages, sermons delivered at mosques and oral debates together created a self consciousness about religion which was new in 20th century Malabar.

Thus, the religious reform efforts in Malabar Muslim society contributed in their own way to strengthening of their identity, for generally these reforms were directed against un-Islamic practices of the Muslims which were mostly cultural baggages from the past. The sole purpose of the reformist was to render the lives of the Muslims in Malabar more in conformity with scriptural or normative Islam, rather than introduce extra-Islamic principles to regulate their lives.