

## MODERNISATION OF MADRASAS: REVIVAL OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MALABAR

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### ABSTRACT

*The Mappila community of Malabar originated primarily as a result of the west Asian trade contact with the Malabar Coast. The Zamorin of Calicut gave special concession to the Arab Traders. They give freedom to covert people to Islam and were also given the monopoly of import and export trade. The Arabs converted their trading centers to religious centers. Madrasa were developed with the purpose of religious learning. Madrasa is an Arabic word meaning religious institution. Madrasa education seems to be working an old traditional pattern there is no emphasis on any research. They are the nucleus of the cultural and educational life of Muslims. Now a day the marginalized Muslim communities increasingly demanding more quality education in Madrasas. Religious knowledge and its transmission is the identity of Muslims. In this paper I would like to analysis the Modernization of Madrasa education system and its revival in the Islamic education. The main objective of this study is to understand the origin and development of Islam, to analyze the different types of traditional education system and the role of social reformers in its modernization.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Calipha, jati, Usthad, Quazi*

### INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM IN KERALA

Arabs had close commercial relation with West Indian ports and the spices of Kerala must have attracted to Kerala. The Arabs had established trade relation with Kerala even before the rise of Islam in Arabia. There were a number of ports flourishing in ancient Kerala. Muziris, Panthalangadi, Baliapattanam, Cannor, Brahmapattanam, panthakiyin, Calicut, Bepore, Chaliyam and Azhikodu were the principal ports in those days. Kerala held an important position in the trading map of Ancient World. Hippalus discovered how to utilize Monsoon winds for direct traverse of the Arabian Sea.<sup>1</sup>

The Arabs during their stay here might have got enough time to propagate the new religion as they usually came before Monsoon and stayed for four to six month to collect enough goods to sail back to Arabia.

Islam as a religion and civilization made its entry into the world stage with the life and carrier of prophet Mohammed (570-632CE) in Western Arabia. After his death a series of successors called Caliphas claimed political supremacy during their period Islam grew worldwide and spread in the rest of the world. After embracing Islam the Muslim traders continued their trade and they must have arrived Kerala coast as usual.

The Coast of Malabar was the first place to host Islam in India. Mappilas were considered as the first descendent of Indian Muslims. The story of Cheraman Perumal tradition is an important Turing point in the development of Islam in Kerala. The conversion story of Cheraman Perumal aroused a considerable debate in the Kerala history. Malik-bin- dinar

<sup>1</sup> Rolland e miller, Mappila muslims of Kerala, A study in Islamic trends,p.40

built first mosque in Kerala and became the first Quazi in that place. The architecture adopted in these other mosque in Kerala stands as a testimony to the Hindu indigenous influence.

Organized Islamic worship was first established in the merchant communities in Kerala. These settlement of Arab merchants cemented and strengthened by their marital union with native Hindu women brought forth the first Mappila a community generated by immigrant Arab traders and mariners.

The native rulers were another cause for the spread of Islam in Kerala. The Zamorin of Calicut had the supreme Political power among the native rulers. He patronage many Arab traders and families from Yemen. Trade was the key economic resource in South India. So each and every ruler developed a close alliance with Muslim merchants. It enabled the Muslims also get more support from the local rulers. During this period Arabs enabled the Muslims also get more support from the local rulers. During this period Arabs had succeeded in totally concentrated in the Arabian Sea.

The rapid growth of Islam in Kerala and the social conditions of the then Kerala gains prominence. It is historical that inequality that prevailed in society accelerated the spread of Islam. In its initial phase people did not as fully internalize the doctrine of Islam rather it was a means to get out of the *Jati* system in society.

One of the strange customs that favored the people to embrace Islam and Christianity was Mannapedi/pulappedi/parappedi. In the month of karikkitam the Nair women were not allowed to go out in the evening without the company of men. If some mannan from a lower caste happened to see a Nair women and declare as seen. She would be ousted from her caste and was supposed to live rest of her life with that mannan.<sup>2</sup>

The Arabs had been a friendly towards the natives of Kerala because the real ground behind their arrival was trade. The novel social system which embrace all irrespective of their caste and creed must have literate them. The converted people mostly illiterate did not truly understand the Islamic teaching so first step of the missionaries was to impart the basic Islamic principles to the newly converted people.

They appointed one *Quazi* for each mosque. The main motive of the *Quazi* was to lead the prayer and the Islamic principles to convert the followers. This was the background of Islamic Education in Kerala. Since the arrival of Islam in Kerala the mosque have functioned as centers of religious education both in sense of instruction and in the sense of building of moral personality in the students.

## TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Education is the responsibility of each and every individual in Islam. The purpose of Education in Islam is to associate and balance physical and spiritual development of human kind.

Religious education among Muslims of Malabar can be dived into three distinct styles.

- Othupalli
- Dars
- Madrasa

<sup>2</sup> Elamkulam kunj pilla, Annathe keralam, p.93

### Othupalli

Othupalli is a malabaric terminology. It provides religious education for Muslim boys and girls. It also known as *Pallidars* in Southern part of Kerala and *Maktab* in North India. It is a single teacher school set up in neighborhood Mosque. The *Imam* of the mosque act as the teacher of the othupalli. The Mullakka/Mulla/maudin was the assistant who helped the Imam to run the Othupalli effectively. They learn how to pray and other basic Islamic teaching. The curriculum was limited to recitation of small *surahs* of Quran and the *duas* or prayers and certain *Dhikrs*. The methods of teaching in these schools is oral. Classes under Othupalli are held either before or after regular school hours to accommodate school going children.

### Dars

Dars is an Arabic word means class. All Dars were attached to Masjids/mosque. Dars education system is free to the students. Most of the Masjids of Malabar are two floors. The second floor is not only to hold the overflow of worshippers on special prayers such as juma Ramadan and Eid occasion but also serve as place where a group of students can be lodged and be comfortable. The ground floor of the masjid served as a class room during non prayer times. They got free education from the musliyar/imam of the mosque. He teaches the students an Arabic and Islamic science. These Dars system imparts religious and Arabic education for Muslim boys only. Earliest and well known Dars was in Ponnani. One of the outstanding features of the Dars system is that the duration of the course took ten to fifteen years. The village gave food for the students and the teachers. Each family adopts a student. So the students and village had a co-relation with each other. In return for food the student's teach the young children of the house.<sup>3</sup>

### Madrasa/Madrasah

The Madrasa taught the basic education in the Islamic faith. The purpose of the education should be the establishment of the Islamic religion in all aspects of life. The main feature of this system is a one man centered educational practice. There was no age limit for the students. Girls were not allowed to continue their education after they had attained puberty. The expenses of the institution were met by the Mahallu. Those who study one book are considered as one class. The teacher is known as '*Usthad*'. The student sits in semi circle. The *Usthad* would read the text word by word and would give meaning and expiations as much as possible. In 1911 A.M Koyamunhi started Madral uloom Madrasa in Cannanore. Maulana Chaliyakath Kunhahamed Haji started higher education in Madrasa.

## SOCIAL REFORMERS AND THE MODERNISATION

An important turning point in the history of Mappila education in Kerala was the formation of Kerala provincial Muslim Educational Association. It was established to safe guard and protects the interest of education of the Muslims of Kerala.

The contribution of the leaders in the field of Islamic religion education especially Madrasa education are valuable. Makthi Thangal, Hamadani Thangal, Chalilakathu kunjahamad Haji, Vakkom Muhammed Abdulkhader Moulavi, K.M Moulavi, E.K Moulavi M.M Basheer Musliyar Al Baqawi etc were the eminent personalities who worked for social reformation and Madrasa education.

Makthi Thangal emphasized the necessity of secular education along with religion education for the progress of the community. There were no classroom divisions in the Madrasa education those days. Thangal introduced the system of

<sup>3</sup> Kashif-ul-huda, system of Islamic education in Kerala,p. 2

classroom division in the Madrasa education. Thangal who introduced black board in the classroom. The orthodox religious heads could not digest the changes brought about by Thangal. Makthi Thangal was a great scholar who played an active role in the development of secular education as well as religious education among the Muslim community in Kerala<sup>4</sup>.

Hamadani Thangal put forward five point programme for restructuring religious education in benefitting manner such as (a) Madrasa should be established in almost all Muslim area for beginners on the model of lower grade elementary school run by the government. For religious higher education, secondary Madrasa should be established in all the within and for advanced studied in Quran and Hadiths.(b)as long as the women folk are kept in darkness there would be no progress. Prophet Muhammad says it is obligatory on every Muslim man and women to acquire knowledge. Hence Muslim women should be provided with religious education in addition to the subject which is essential for maintaining a healthy society. (c) For instructing the unfortunate adults who had missed the chance of schooling a committee of preachers should be formed. (d) For the economic growth of the country companies and co-operative society should be established. (e)Welfare committees should be formed to extend assistance and advice to the weaker section.

Moulana Chalilakathu Kunjahammad Haji proposed a project for Muslim educational progress. In addition to the usual course like Tafsir (Explanation of Quran), Hadith (Sayings and teachings of Prophet Muhammed), Fiqh (Jurisprudence), Tasawwuf (realizing ethical and spiritual ideas), and Maani(semantic) institution in logic Astronomy, geography and Mathematics was also given. He started higher classes in the Madrasa on modern lines and renamed it as Darul Aloom Arabic College.

A detailed and novel curriculum was prepared by Chalikathu to scientifically reform and restructure Madrasa educations in the primary level. Students were divided into classes. Introduction of periods, study timing and examination schemes were also noted changes in this field. Novel study materials and instruments like black board, chalk, bench, table and desk were also introduced which were not common in those days in the Madrasa. Madrasa students were organized into four classes and different subject were taught according to a set curriculum. He also used the modern examination system on western lines in these Madrasa.

M.M Basheer Musliyar Al Baqawi an outstanding figure who gave an ideological base and intellectual perspective. He called for reforming the curriculum and syllabus of the higher centers of Islamic learning by taking lessons from outstanding Islamic personalities came in the past. He argued that the prevailing system of Islamic education was very narrow and emphasized the need of preparing a more inclusive syllabus that would enable the progress of humanity in all field. He called on Islamic college to innovate the Dars in the Mosques. He tried hard to implement his vision of model Dars which was aimed at a fresh and live approach towards every subject taught in the Darses along with teaching language of English and Urdu. Basheer Musliyar joined the Rahmaniya Arabic college at Kadameri of Calicut where he implemented many outstanding and alternative innovative<sup>5</sup>.

The educational board of the Kerala Nadvatul Mujahiddin, under the leadership of Alhaj Muhammed Hamani Moulavi and P Saithu Moulavi aimed at the unification of Madrasa education in Kerala and conducting integrated annual examination.

<sup>4</sup> M.Anhul Samad,islam in Kerala groups and movement in 20<sup>th</sup> century.p.54.

<sup>5</sup> Zabari Hudawi,New model of Islamic education in Kerala ,P.3

## CONCLUSION

Education in Islam is twofold, acquiring intellectual knowledge through application of reason and logic and developing spiritual knowledge and its divine revelation and spiritual experience. Madrasa education has been in existence for many centuries. Madrasa constituted an important segment of education for many centuries. It was in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that modern Muslims started learning in English. Kerala has a long tradition of higher religious schools held in mosques and the system still prevails with a string of modifications needed in the modern world. Just like other communities Mappila Muslims had also faced the waves of modernization trends with the onset of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of reformist ideologies the transformation of community leadership from the hand of individuals to that of organization based on various ideologies and increased efforts for adoption of secular western education changed the facets of Mappila education. The 'Samasthas' educational board today runs systematic primary education programme. There are other Muslim organizations Kerala that also run many such primary madrasa under a centralized system. The issues of Madrasa educations are missing of basic education, main streaming not viable, and lack of job opportunity and missing of secular learning. Madrasas are an integral component of the education system in India. These institutions are facing massive challenge in finance and desperate need of reforms. The governments recognize the need to modernize India's Madrasas. Islamic education is uniquely different from other types of educational theory and practice largely because of the all encompassing influencing of Quran.

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