Chapter : IV
MAPPILA MUSLIMS OF MALABAR

The state of Kerala lies at the southern most tip of the sub-continent, only in 360 miles north-south and the average width is 70 miles. Bounded by the Arabian Sea on the west and the Western Ghats on the east, the state has an area of 15,002 square miles. East to west the state is divided into three segments geographically, namely, the sea coast, the middle land and the high land hilly area.

Geographical features have played a crucial role in determining the socio-cultural character of the population. The opening to the Arabian sea had been an influencing factor for the arrival of religions including Islam on the Malabar coast. ‘The sea has been the permanent and decisive factor in the history of Kerala. Such religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam came to Kerala by sea’ (Sreedharamenon, 1967 : 5f).

4.1. MAPPILA MUSLIMS

History of the community reveals that it was coextensive with history of Islam in India. Before coming to the history proper, it may be interesting to note the etymology of the term Mappila.
Several opinions have been advanced about the origin of the word Mappila. According to Lewis Moore, the meaning of ‘Mappila’ is bride-groom or son-in-law (Moore, 1870 : 13). In the opinion of Day, ‘they no doubt are descended from Arab fathers, who traded to this coast and formed fugitive alliances with Teear (Thiyar) or Chogan (Fisherman). The children never appear to have been claimed by the fathers, the fact the very word, ‘Mappila’ is said to have been derived from mother, ma and child pilla, showing to whose care the offspring, fell’ (Day, 1863 : 366). Percy Badger , editor of The Travels of Ludovico d’ Varthoma, a Portchugese traveller, observes that, ‘the name is either a corruption of the Arabic Muflih (from the root falah , to till the soil) meaning prosperous or victorious, in which sense it would apply to the successful establishment of these foreign Mussalmans on the Western Coast of India, or that it is a similar corruption of Maflih (the active participle from the same verb) an agriculturalist, a still more appropriate designation of the Mappilas, who according to Buchanan, are both traders and farmers’ (Badger, 1890 : 123). According to Logan, ‘the word Mappila is a contraction of maha (great) and pilla (child), honorary title, (as among the Nayars and Christians in Travancore) and it was probably a title of honour conferred on the early Mohammadan immigrants’ (Logan, 1951 : 191). The Jews and Syrian Christians in Kerala are also called Mappilas. The Jews are Juda Mappila, the Syrian Christians are Nazrani Mappila (from Nazrane) and Muslims are ‘Jonaka Mappila’. Jonaka may have come from the word Yavanaka (Greek) used for all
foreigners as the word European was indiscriminately used for all Westerners’ (Miller, 1976: 30). However, the precise development of the term Mappila as applied to the Muslim community in Kerala, especially to muslims in North Kerala, is likely to remain obscure.

The Mappilas as a muslim community originated after few centuries of the beginning of the Islam in Arabia. The query on origin of the Mappila muslims is incomplete without reference to Cheraman Perumal, who was reigning at Kodungallur in Malabar as head quarters of Perumal rule. Tradition tells that the ruler has gone to Mecca and embraced Islam religion. After planning to return to Kerala, he fell into ill health, died at Zafar on the Arabian coast. Before his death, he wrote letters to his chieftains in Kerala calling upon to provide all facilities for to spread the new religion. Later Malik Ibn Dinar and associates landed at Kodungallur and travelled to the different parts of Kerala, and established 10 mosques.

The Hindu tradition contained in the Keralolpathi agrees in general with the Muslim tradition. ‘The main difference is that before his emigration, the Perumal partitioned his kingdom among his relatives and dependants’ (Kunju, 1995 : 17-18) M. G. S Narayanan affirms, ‘There is no reason to reject the tradition that the last Chera King embraced Islam (His name was Rama) and went to Mecca, since it finds a place not only in Muslim Chronicles, also in Hindu Brahminical Chronicles like Keralolpathi, which need not be expected to concoct such a tale, which in no way
enhances the prestige, or further the interest of the Brahmin or Hindu population (Narayanan, 1990 : 65). The earliest recorded version of the tradition is contained in the ‘Book of Durate Burbosa’, the Portuguese writer, of the early 16th century. Berros, the official historian of the Portuguese gives similar account of the conversion of the last Perumal.

Muslim and Hindu traditions as well as travel records agree with the conversion of Cheraman Perumal. But there are serious differences of opinion regarding the time of the event. Historical evidences deny the possibility of the meeting of the last Perumal with Prophet, as there is definite epigraphical evidence of the existence of a kingdom of Perumal between 800 and 1122 AD. If the origin of Islam was connected with emigration of the last Perumal, it would have happened only in 12th century. An inscription of Madai Mosque dated 1124 AD was built by Malik Ibn Dinar, the first muslim missionary to Kerala. ‘This mosque is one of the ten mosques reputed to have been built by Malik Ibn Dinar, the companion of Cheraman Perumal during his sojourn in Arabia, and who was deputed by the Perumal to propagate the new religion in Kerala. Theinscription in the mosque, dated only two years after the emigration of the Perumal, suggests that the tradition of his conversion and emigration is quite possible’. (Kunju, 1990 : 21).

Tomb of Panthalayani Kollam (Near Koyilandy), North Malabar depicted 782 AD, shows the possibility of Islam in Kerala in 8th century. The presence of a large
number of old tomb-stones presupposes the existence of an early muslim settlement there. Another significant evidence to prove the existence of influential trading communities in the port-town of Kerala is provided by the Tarisappalli Copper plate grant (849 AD). This grant proves the influence of the trading groups including Arab Muslims in the affair of the local kingdoms.

Sheik Zaynuddin, author of ‘Thuhfat ul- Mujahidin’ has expressed that Islam must have originated in the 9th century, most probably it must have been two hundred years after Hijrah (632 AD).

Even today we have not ample conclusive evidence to prove the exact date of the origin of Islam in Kerala, we have only ‘strong circumstantial evidence to prove that Islam originated in Kerala as soon as it spread in Arabia’ (Kunju, 1990 : 21-22). Out of all these available evidences it is concluded that the Mappila Muslim community originated shortly after the beginning of Islam itself. They were the first muslims in India. That is, the community has had a long glorious tradition.

4.2. GROWTH AND EVOLUTION

The major factor for the rapid popularity and spread of Islam was the socio-cultural environment of Kerala. The patronage given by Hindu rulers to muslim community was exemplary. It was the result of a mutual dependency. The native rulers received support from the muslim traders settled down in different places of
Malabar, in turn promoting the reputation as an excellent and safe place for trade; Eventually resulted in the economic prosperity and political stability of the kingdoms. ‘Among the rulers of Kerala, it was the Zamorin of Calicut who showed special regard to Muslims’ (Kunju, 1990: 29). K. V. Krishna Aiyar point out, Mappila Muslims ‘not only made Calicut the greatest port of the West Coast of India, they even helped to spread the name and fame of Zamorin’ (Aiyar, 1938: 52). This mutual dependency was the force behind growth of the Zamorin kingdom and Mappila Muslims in Kerala. Even the conversion was supported by Zamorin. ‘Zamorin is said to have ordered that one member from every fishermen family should be converted to Islam’ (Kunju, 1990: 32). Conversions were not limited to fishermen, but included other lower castes. One major reason for the conversion was status mobility assured to converts, Gasper Correa, 16th century Portuguese traveller, reports, ‘By becoming Moors (Muslims) they could go wherever they liked and eat as they pleased. When they became Moors, the Moors gave them clothes and robes with which to cloth themselves’ (Correa, 1849: 155f). The converted were accepted by all in the community. This social acceptance was a major cause for the emergence of Mappila Muslims as a community.

The spread of Islam in Kerala was associated with missionary activities too. ‘The tradition of Malik Ibn Dinar and his associates who spread the religion of Islam in Kerala itself indicates the first missionary activity’ (Kunju, 1990: 24). They
travelled all along Kerala and erected ten mosques, in Quilon (Kollam), Kodungallur, Chaliyam, Panthalayani Kollam, Srikantapuram, Dharmadam, Madai, Kasargod, Mangalore and Barkur. Later Sufi missionaries entered into Muslim social life. Many became most influential Sufis and other religious leaders, settled in Kondotty, Mampuram, and Kozhikode have made a strong impression of the community. And Mappila Muslims as a community became a reality soon. Thus Islam grew as it began and it grew steadily, so the Mappila Muslims too. Then the political climate have paved the way for the growth of Islam in Kerala. ‘The first eight centuries of Mappila growth following the establishment of Islam in Kerala were marked by a calm forward movement. The peaceful contact and development stands in sharp contrast to the progress of Islam in North India’ (Miller, 1975 : 51).

Travellers have noted the growth and strength of Mappila Muslims. Marco Polo (1293), Abu-Fida (1273-1331), Ibn Battuta (1304-1369), and Abdul- al- Razzaq were those who have visited Malabar and marked the relevance and strength of the muslim community. ‘Ibn Battuta found muslim merchants and muslim houses in most districts of Northern and Central Kerala’ (Miller, 1976 : 56).

A political reason was also noted. The growth of Mappila population was strengthened by the rise of the Ali Raja, head of the Arakkal ruling family of Kannur, the only Muslim ruler family in Kerala. It maintains descent from the early days of Mappilas. The royal family was with independent status, even became a custodians of
Lakshadweep Islands. They became powerful to give patronage to Mappila Muslims as a community. When Durte Barbosa visited Kerala he remained in Calicut for several years. He estimated that Mappilas are ‘so many and so rooted in the soil throughout Malabar that it seems to be they are a fifth part of its people spread over all its kingdoms and provinces’ (Barbosa, 1831 : 74). He has mentioned mainly about the coastal areas, probably the Mappila Muslim settlements, and the progress of Islam in the interior regions of Kerala is not known. Later Zein-Ud-Din estimated that of the total population of Malabar ten percentage were muslims. (Zein-Ud- Din, 1833 : 59).

When the Portuguese landed, Mappila Muslims were powerful enough to influence the rulers, mainly through their trade and love towards the country.

4.3. THE PORTUGUESE AND MAPPILAS

After the arrival of Portuguese at the end of the 15th century, the situation changed drastically. The hatred towards colonialism and the conflict of Mappila Muslims with Portuguese adversely affected their political status. It also affected the harmony between the Hindu rulers and Mappila community. On this matter Miller has stated that religiously the Mappilas were in a psychological retreat. While their rapid increase along the coast was never restored after the Portuguese period as they turned to inland in search of new livelihoods the Mappilas met outcastes who were in need of change (Miller, 1976 : 83).
The political power attained by the Europeans, and the anxiety developed towards the Hindu rulers had caused alienation and uncertainty to Mappila Muslims. In 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries they moved to different occupations other than trade and business. Slowly the community crossed the boundaries of port town and moved towards the interior localities. The invasion of Mysore kings, Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan, and later incidents increased the population.

Mappilas welcomed the changes brought-about by the Mysore rulers. One among them was social distance that developed with Hindu communities, especially with Nayars. Conversions occurred willingly and forcefully. Miller confirmed: Family names, the existence of wealthy muslim land owners and the prevalence of the \textit{marumakkathayam} system of inheritance among north Malabar Mappilas a sign that such conversion as there was in Hyder Ali’s time largely took place in that region. Tippu Sultan, the successor of Hyder-Ali also was in the same track. Majumdar point out, ‘he forced conversion only on those recalicitrant, Hindus on whose allegiance he could not rely’ (Majumdar, 1948 : 715). Even though the period of Mysore rule was for a short period, it gave the Mappilas a much needed psychological boost. It might have supported the increase in the population. ‘Although statistics are not available, the size of the Mappila community must have increased sharply during this period despite the relatively short reigns of muslim rulers’ (Miller, 1976 : 94). 63.9% of the
increase of Mappila Muslim population in the period of 1871-1911 is considered to be a reflection of this patronage.

The muslim peasants in South Malabar were not having any claim on land, and they were exploited severely by the feudal lords. The small as well as strong agitations of muslim peasants in that period was natural consequence of these suppressions and exploitations. During the period, 1821-1921 a total of fifty one Mappila rebellions occurred. ‘To sensitive observers it was clear that this was not finally a problem of law and order, but the problem of an alienated community’ (Miller, 1976 : 109). The 1921 outbreak was a serious setback in the growth of Mappila Muslims, is both physically and psychologically affected. Thousands were killed, imprisoned and sent to Andaman islands. Mappila Muslims had to face a tough time.

4.4. POLITICAL STAND

Immediately after the Rebellion of 1921, because of the intense sufferings and miseries, Mappila Muslims lost the political direction. But, Mappilas were involved in freedom movement, through the Khilafat Movement first under the flag of Indian National Congress. They were active in the Salt Satyagraha, Indian Political Conferences and later Quit India Movement. It has been pointed out that a divisive policy had been developed in the Hindu Congress leaders after Mappila Rebellion. ‘Mappilas were sharing the growing feeling of Indian Muslims that the Congress
leadership was not sufficiently sympathetic to muslim needs and desires’ (Miller, 1976 : 160). The attitude of many Congress leaders led to the alienation of Mappilas from the Congress movement. Reform movements initiated by Vakkom Moulavi and involvement of organizations like Aikyasangam and Kerala Muslim Majlis ‘had forged a new kind of unity among the Mappilas with the awareness of a new destiny for the community’ (Menon, 1976 : 13). The anti modern consciousness was replaced by modern aspirations. This consciousness was an amalgam of Islamic, Indian and Malayalee identities. This new identity was exposed with formation of Muslim League. And for the last eight decades it played a crucial role in the political activities of Mappila Muslims. They have power many times both in the central and state governments and played a key role especially in the state politics. They have opted a policy of working with different parties like CPM and Congress on the basis of programmes with goals appropriate to muslim interests. Two important facts remain to be mentioned, Muslim League enjoyed the mass support from Mappila Muslims especially in Northern districts. Also Muslim League had an undeniable role in the integration of the community amidst the forces that significant portions of the community belong to CPM and Congress parties.

**4.5. SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS**

It is interesting to go through the socio-cultural aspects of the Mappila Muslims for a better understanding of their unique cultural traits.
Traditional Mappila Muslims are distinguishable by their dress and dialect. The common dress among men comprises of *mundu*, a piece of cloth tied round the loins and reaching down to the ankles, a shirt preferably with full sleeves. Their mode of wearing the *mundu* is tying it round the waist by tucking the two ends at either side, and the upper flap fixed at the left hand side. For non-Muslims the upper flap will be fixed at the right hand side. The dress of the traditional Mappila women is also distinctive, they wear *Kaachi*, white or coloured cloth, if it is white sometimes coloured bluish or reddish at the fringe. *Kaachi* in white without colour at the fringe was seen in Thalassery, Mahe and Kannur, and the other was popular in Kozhikode, Koyilandy and Vatakara; coloured *Kaachis* were used in Malappuram. They wore a blouse which reached below the waist and a white cloth called *thattam* to cover the head and breast. Local variations in dressing pattern have seen among the Mappila Muslim women.

New generations of women can be grouped into four categories on the basis of dressing pattern. (a) Wearing sari with full sleeved or half sleeved blouse, and some cover the head with one end of the *sari*; (b) *Salvar* and *Kammis*, with a *scraf* to cover the head and breast; (c) Youngsters who wear jeans and *kurta* or skirt with shirt. (d) Those who wear *Purdha* in black or other dark colours, which entered into Mappila women life very recently. Another common change in the women’s dress irrespective of whether they wear *sari* or *salvar* is the use of *mufta* as head cover. In Thalassery
and Kannur, tight blouse is used, in Kozhikode, Koyilandy, and Vatakara loose blouse is the fashion for the middle aged. In Malappuram the blouse does not come to the waist. Thus the locality has an influence on this matter. Whether, male or female, an educated Mappila can not be distinguished from a member of any other community on the basis of his/ her dressing patterns.

4.5.1. RELIGION

The Mappila Muslims belong to the Shafi school of Sunni sect. Shafi school has always been dominant in the region of the Arab mariners, all along the coast of Arabia. ‘Wherever Islam has been introduced through the peaceful influence of Arab traders and sailors, it is this school that has been adopted by the followers’. (D’ Souza, 1976 : 169). They follow Quran the holy script and Hadith the collection of sayings of Prophet and on Prophet’s life. The faith is founded on three roots : ‘(i) there is but one God ( Allah ) self existing, ever was and ever will be, in whom in all power, Majesty and Domination, by whom all things are and were created, with whom is neither partner or substance and He alone is to be worshipped, (ii) the Prophets were all true and their writings are to be relied on with a true faith, and Mohammed is the last Prophet and Quran is the creation of God ( Allah ), and (iii) resurrection of the dead on the day of judgment is certain’ (Levy, 1961 : 242). The five commandments of Islam are : (i) the profession of faith that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is His last messenger, (ii) ritual prayer, namaz, five times a
day, (iii) fasting in *Ramazan*, (iv) *Zakath* or giving alms, and (v) *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

When compared to other Muslims in Kerala, it is observed that Mappila Muslims are more religious and ritualistic. Most of the Muslim organizations are very much active in North Kerala. Mappila Muslims are more involved in the muslim organizational activities, than Muslims of the South Kerala. The Mappila Muslims mainly belong to Sunni and Mujahid groups. Two Sunni organizations (commonly called as Samastha and Markhaz groups), two Mujahid organizations (recently had the split among Kerala Nadvatul Mujahidin) and Jama-at –Islami. Sunni groups come under the orthodox sects who are observing the traditional customs, rituals and practices. They worship the *cenotaph* of martyrs, Sufis, Saints etc.

Mujahid movements started nearly 60 years ago in North Kerala. The theological reform tended to be publicly represented by the Mujahids. At the beginning it was opposed by the orthodox group later it gathered an increasing number of sympathizers, and was formally organized Nadvat-ul-Mujahideen in 1952. It was a progressive organization with a view to enlighten the muslim mass on scientific lines, and they propagated their ideologies extensively through writing and teaching. ‘They engaged in extensive publication programmes, the effect of which continues to be widely felt, and they came down hard on the side of modern education’ (Miller, 1976 : 275).
Sunni leaders have taken an open stand against Mujahids, and conflict continued for more than three decades. To hasten the process of reform the Mujahids began to establish their own madrasas, religious schools and their own mosques. Now there are two fractions among the Mujahid since (2002).

Jama-at-Islami (usually others call as Jama-attukar) is another organization, founded on the ideological propositions of Abul-Ala-Moudoodi. They have their own religious leaders and teachers, training institutions, separate syllabus based madrasa education, organizations for welfare programmes and publication units.

4.5.2. ‘CASTE’ GROUPS

Two to three endogamous caste-like groups are seen among Mappila Muslims, usually identified in different group names like Tharawadikal, Tharawattukar, or Onnam number, Pooslans (Randam) and Thangals are aristocrats considered to be converts from Nayars and Brahmins. ‘Most of this lineage appear to be those aristocrats who get large land, gifts and wholesale trading rights from native rulers’. (Puthenkalam, 1977 : 201). They are settled down in coastal belt of Malabar. Pooslans or Randamnumber are supposed to be descendants of converts from polluting Hindu castes, especially from fishermen. Both groups live together in the same locality, even in adjacent houses, inter-dining freely, and worship together in same mosques. Thangals who belong to Sayyid or Jifri clan, who consider themselves belong to Prophet’s kin. Earlier these groups practiced endogamy strictly. With the
new trends and changes brought about as an impact of modern education, new job opportunities, reform movements and migration, the rule of endogamy has been broken, but still majority prefer to stick on to the traditional rule. In recent years the rigidity of the rules and regulations governing the behaviours of higher and lower groups has got reduced.

4.5.3. HOUSING

Aristocratic houses are in the old pattern, made on the basis of Kerala architecture, seem to be muslim version of nalukettu, the Nayar ancestral house. They have padippura, gate house and long kolaya (varanda), all are legacies of Hindu architecture. In the traditional Muslim tharawad there will be two huge window like rectangular openings on the wall facing the varanda with a thick wooden closnrell which when unfolded can be used as a sturdy bench. This is called irunira (thappa, in Mahe). In the adjacent room, in between kolaya and naduvakam (Central Hall) there will be two built-in platforms on both the sides to the entrance called kottil. Traditionally it was used as sleeping place of unmarried adult males or for performing rituals like ratib or moulood. In naduvakam, usually in the left side, there will be wooden staircase leading to the first floor hall from where the passages are constructed to the aras (private rooms of visiting husbands). There will be a square or rectangular opening on the roof with transparent tiles atop the naduvakam through which sky comes into view, and get good ventilation, called nalakkayya similar to
nadumittam in nalukettu. From naduvakam there will be doors on three sides to the rooms for the women and the aged. Usually husbands are put-up in the rooms on the first floor, where they spend the whole night and seldom come down or mingle with other women folk in the wifehouse, since they are not to see or speak to other grown up women in wife’s house. Husbands take their breakfast in their room. For husbands if possible, they provide attached toilet room.

The middle class house is rectangular in shape, a miniature of tharawad with ground floor only. It also consist of aras for couples. The lower class houses are thatched or tiled and seen in cluster, usually on the river side or sea shore. They are small in size, with one or two rooms without toilet facilities. The modern houses of Mappila Muslims are like the other communities dwelling units.

4.5.4. KINSHIP ORGANISATION

The Mappila Muslims have two types of kinship organization, namely patrilineal and matrilineal. Majority practice the first and minority the second type.

The patrilineal muslims predominate in the interior of South Malabar, particularly in Malappuram and Palakkad districts and interior suburban areas of coastal region of Kozhikode and Kannur. Patrineals have a clan, several families related in the male line called as tharawad. It is basically exogamous. Great grandfather or grandfather or father is the head of the household called karanaavar. He acts as the head in all household activities and on all ceremonial occasions.
Clan exogamy insists not to marry from the male line, such as children of brothers. There is no objection to the children of two sisters or a brother and sister marrying each other as they belong to the different patrilineal tharawads. Thus tharawads form an endogamous group as marriages between members of the same patrilineal tharawad is prohibited.

Among the patrilineal Mappila Muslims a married woman lives in the house of her husband after marriage. Usually a husband will not be involved in any household matters of wife’s tharawad. The children will be brought up in father’s family. The property is divided according to the Islamic law of inheritance. But in certain localities the house will be given to the eldest son, but in some other to the youngest son.

4.6. MOTHER-RIGHT FAMILY

The mother-right Mappila Muslims constitute a minority, mainly among the muslims living in the coastal region. The kinship units found among the Mappilas closely resemble the matrilineal units of the Nayars of Central Kerala, with some modifications. The matrilineal units are called tharawads or Puras. It comprises of the members who can trace their ancestry in the female line to a common female ancestor. Every individual acquires rights in the tharawad by birth. These rights include the co-ownership of the tharawad property and the right to have a share if and when the property is divided by the common consent. In the traditional days individuals were
not allowed to procure personal property, if he does it will be added to tharawad property. If personal property is allowed, the self acquired property, presently does not go to tharawad but divided according to Shariat rules of Muslim Law, and this was legalized by the Mappila Succession Act of 1918.

The basic kinship group was typically matrilineal characterized by the absence of the husband or father in it. Members found in the traditional units were related consanguinely. The living members of a matrilineal Mappila Muslim household might belong to different generations which might vary from three to five, sometimes even more than five. The persons of the living generation might not even remember the original ancestress from whom tharavad had sprung-up.

The eldest female member in the tharawad will be the karanavathi. The eldest male member is having sole authority over the management of tharawad. Usually the husbands visited their wives every night, reaching after supper and left after the breakfast. The practice of the husband staying permanently in the tharawad of his life is rare in Koyilandy, Vadakara and Kozhikode Districts. He has to depend mainly up on the resources of his wife’s tharawad. Although he is entitled to a share of income from his own tharawad, in practice such payments are not made to persons residing in their wife’s tharawads.

Once the husband takes up the full responsibility of looking after his wife and children, he attaches himself more and more to his wife’s house, where as previously,
he would only take his breakfast in his wife’s house, now he may take all his meals there. At the same time he will keep connections with his own *tharawad* by visiting it often. The attachment of husband to his wife’s house is related with age too, as the age increases the attachment also increases.

House is a common property of *tharawad*, and it is indivisible. It will be handed down to daughter, and daughter’s children and so on. In most cases the house is the only common *tharawad* property. In certain *tharawads* there are some immovable common property like shop, go-down, and coconut groves. This is also not divisible, but enjoyed in common by the members of the *tharawad*.

The kinship system of the matrilineal Mappila Muslims are also reflected in their names: They prefix the name of the matrilineal *tharawad* with personal name and suffix surname, like Puthiya Nalakath Fazal Mohammed. The patrilineal Mappila Muslims always prefix name of the fathers house, like Kalladi Kammappa. Usually people identify the prestige of the person from the prefixed name of the *tharawad*. Thus the system of names provides a device for tracing the lineage of a person and the status given to his or her clan. Among the *Thangals*, they use the name of the patrilineal *tharawad* with their name, but in practice they are also observers of matrilocality.
4.7. MARRIAGE AND MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

The matrliney is closely associated with the system of marriage and residential pattern. For Mappila Muslims, marriage is a civil contract. Nikah is the important religious ceremony of a Muslim marriage. But consummation of marriage can take place only after holding a function called kalyanam. Nikah can be ceremonised months or years ahead of the kalyanam. If nikah is not performed in advance of the kalyanam function both functions are conducted on the same day. Among the matrilineal Mappila Muslims nikah is held in bride’s house or in local mosque. Nikah is ceremonised by a religious leader or a respected person of the community.

Women of tharawad have an active role in the conduct of the marriage. It is generally the boy’s mother, sisters of mother, sisters and other senior women member of tharawad that involve in the matter. The formal betrothal ceremony takes place at the boy’s family. The elder male members meet to declare the proposal and fix a date for marriage. This function is called nischayam.

Preparations for kalyanam start earlier. Among the preparatory ceremonial rites, the decoration of bridal chamber will be started. The decoration of maniyara (bridal chamber) is taken as a matter of prestige for aristocrats. It depicts the financial conditions of both the parties. If the bridegroom comes from an affluent and aristocratic family, bride’s family will be very cautious in arranging the maniyara
suitable to satisfy the status of both families. The day before kalyanam guests prefer to visit maniyara and express their opinion.

The day before kalyanam, is auspicious for the whole family members. Relatives and friends will be invited for the dinner of that day, and the function is called mailanchi kalyanam. Mailanchi literally means henna and the ceremony consists of applying henna paste juice to the palm, nails, toes and feet of the bride. Dressed up bride will be seated in the centre, and the senior most female member from her father’s family, usually her father’s sister (her ammaayi) initiates the ceremony. Then senior women will apply henna on her palm, by putting a dot symbolically one by one. The experts apply the remainder. That activities will be accompanied by oppana (Mappila folk dance, a Muslim version of kaikottikkali). On the same day night a function for friends and relatives will be organized, usually with a mehfil, a music concert of old songs, in bridegroom’s house.

*Kalyanam* may be regarded as the most important function of Mappila Muslims. *Kalyanam* lasts for the whole day with many ritualistic acts. It begins with thedippokal, a group of youngsters move to bridegroom’s house to take him to the bride’s house. At midday bridegroom reaches at the bride’s house with friends and relatives. Delicious food is served to all the guests who have been invited by the bride’s family and to all those who accompany the bridegroom. The ceremony of arayilakkal is an important event in bride’s house, The bridegroom is taken to
The bride is also taken to the chamber accompanied by oppana singers and women. Garlands or rings are exchanged, and bridegroom hands over the mahar, if it is not given at the time of nikah. The bridegroom will return with friends and relatives to his family. Immediately women from bridegroom’s house move to bride’s house to take her to bridegroom’s house, and this ceremony is called pudukkam. When she has gone to his house, the ladies from bride’s house will be visiting bridegroom’s house and take back the bride to her house, it is called marupudukkam. At night bridegroom with close relatives and friends will reach at bride’s house, it is called moodayumpanam. A five course dinner will be served, and bridegroom remain there. Ceremoniously bride is brought to maniyara by women folk and the reluctant bride is pushed into the chamber and close the door. This is called arayilakkal, literally means ‘pushing to the room’.

The visit of elderly women to the bridegroom’s house, called ammayi thakkaram is conducted on the second or third day of kalyanam. Bridegroom’s relatives are also invited to bridegroom’s house. Bridegroom will be treated with respect for the coming days, sometimes it may prolong to the first forty days.

Regional variations are seen in the functions, but basically, most of the rituals are common. The most important thing is, marriage is considered to be very important for Mappila Muslims and it is designed to glitter their social life. From Islamic point of view muslim marriage is simple and universal in nature. The essential requirements
of a Mappila Muslims marriage are: (a) the marriage partner should not be chosen from among the person of certain degree of relationship, (b) the parties to a marriage should give their full consent, (c) the bridegroom should pay a contracted amount or ornament called *mahar* to his wife; (d) the marriage contract or *nikah* should be solemnized in the presence of witnesses by a respected person, usually by *khazi* the local leader in the *mahallu* or area. The Mappila Muslims marriage should satisfy all these Islamic requirements. But their local customs may mix with the Islamic practices.

### 4.8. DIVORCE

Islamic law and injunctions regulate the procedures of divorce and remarriage. A divorce is affected by the mere pronouncement or with prime consultations between two parties of the formula of *talak*, or repudiation, three times in immediate succession by a man, which implies he is giving up the rights over and the obligations towards the wife. Then through *khazi* or leader of religious organization they belong to, the divorce will be religiously sanctioned. According to Muslim Law, *talak* is revocable if the formula is pronounced only once or twice, and in such cases the husband can take back the wife or reunion may take place. The Islamic Law prescribes that a woman who has attained puberty and whose marriage has been consummated can not remarry to her earlier husband until she has been married to and divorced by another man. This is strictly practiced by Mappila Muslims too.
Under certain circumstances a woman also enjoys the legal right to get divorced, and this is called *fask*. The important grounds for divorce by *fask* include: chronic disease of husband, serious physical defects of man, incompatibility between partners, inability of husband to provide support and desertion or ill treatment by the husband.

A Muslim woman cannot remarry immediately after divorce. A divorced woman who has attained puberty has to wait for three menstrual periods before she can remarry, and this is known as *iddah* period. The regulation of the Islamic Law aims at confirming that the woman is not pregnant by her previous husband. In case she is found to be pregnant, she can marry only forty days after confinement.

It is noted by scholars that divorce is comparatively low among Matrilineal Mappila Muslims than the patrilineals. *Fask* is rarely practised.

### 4.9. BIRTH AND DEATH CEREMONIES

The rituals and practices among the matrilineal Mappila Muslims connected with birth and death are elaborate. Immediately after the delivery the child would be washed in luke-warm water and dried with a piece of soft cloth. The eldest male in the *tharawad* or available at that moment will recite the *bank* or *aazaan*, call for prayer usually made in mosques, into the ears of the newborn.
After delivery the woman is taken care of by her family, a trained mid-wife is appointed, called euttukarathi, to attend to the woman and newborn for a few weeks. Husband’s family will provide an amount for delivery expenses (pettuchelavu). Usually husband can’t sleep or take food from wife’s house till the celebration of 40th day of delivery, called nalpuli. Womenfolk from husbands family give gifts to infant and mother on the occasion of nalpuli (giving kandosarams). Shaving or Tonsuring the head of the new born is an important ritual called mudikalachil, and this is also conducted with lot of celebrations. Husband’s family will sacrifice a young bull and distribute it’s meat among all kinsmen.

When a male child, attains the age of five or six, arrangements are made for his religious instructions. Before the child attains puberty he has to undergo the ritual of circumcision, (markakalyanam or sunnath kalyanam). A parallel ceremony for a girl is the ear-boring ceremony (kadukuthu kalyanam). Usually both the ceremonies are conducted in mother’s house when the child becomes 5 to 14 years old. Circumcision was done by an expert barber. At present it is done by a medical practisicioner in a hospital. After the boy recovers, a Friday is fixed for taking him for Juma prayer by his elders. Today ear boring is also done by physicians. Traditionally these two rituals were accompanied by grand food.

The celebrations and ceremonies related with different stages of life cycle involve high expense as they are celebrated with great pomp and show. Traditionally
the **tharawad** has to take care of the conduct of the functions. The husband usually contributes his share. Usually among matrilineal Mappila Muslims, relatives financially support for the conduct of the functions.

The groups believe in life after death. Hence, much importance is attached to the religious rites associated with death. When a believer is in his/ her deathbed, a person is expected to recite **kalima**, (the words to be pronounced to be a Muslim) and drink **Zam-Zam**, holy water brought from Mecca by a person who attended **Hajj** pilgrimage. The kinsmen of the dead are expected to be informed of the death and ceremonies. If husband stays with wife, after his death, his funeral will be conducted from her house. Immediately after death the pillow is removed, head of the dead is kept straight and laid down in a plain wooden bench covered by a cloth. The hands and legs are kept in position, the toes are tied together with a piece of cloth, and whole body will be covered in white cloth. Relatives and friends will visit the house of the dead and see the face, which is considered to be a **sunnath**, an act rewarded by Allah. The body will be taken for ritualistic bath (**mayyathukuli**), done by close family members. After the ritualistic bath the **kaufan** (mortuary clothing) is done by experts. The **kaufan** consists of three pieces of new white cloth of equal length and breadth, one over the other or one after the other from head to toe. Pieces of cotton are kept over eyelids, lips, nostrils, neck, in between fingers, toes and knees, and joints. Rose water (**panineer** or any **athar**) sprinkled over the cloth. Three knots are made with the
last piece of the cloth, one above the head, second on the stomach and third below the feet. The prayer for the dead (*mayyith namaskaram*) of female members will be done from house, and for male from nearest mosque. The Imam or close relative of the mosque may lead the prayer. The body is taken in specially prepared enclosure, (*mayyith kattil*) to the graveyard, and interred by reciting verses from Quaran. Only after the rituals are over, food is prepared and taken by the family members. Orthodox Mappila Muslims have few more rituals like *moulood*, *ratib*, *kathampayangal* etc. Now many of the rituals have been given up by many of them.

After death of husband, wife is expected to observe ‘seclusion’ for a period of 40 days. During this period she is expected not to see or to hear any males other than her matrilineal members. Few decades back the widows were put in dark room, closed ears with cotton, and were not allowed to meet any others. The promptness of all these ceremonies depends on religious identity with organizations and the financial positions of the kinsmen.

4.10. MAPPILA MUSLIM IDENTITY

The Mappilas are typical Malayalees. They are distinct in many ways but not an alien. They have grown out of the trends, ethos and traits with in the larger community of Malayalees. They have not shown much difference in their life style, like their counter parts in other states. In occupational and economic behaviour they were alike to others. The Mappila Muslims of Kerala hardly show any sharp
deviations with their non Muslim neighbours; diffused themselves with main stream Malayalees of the same time keeping their identity.

The most conspicuous evidence is *Arabi Malayalam*. It is Malayalam written in Arabic script. It ‘is a mode of transliterating Malayalam into sophisticated Arabic script’ (Karassery, 1995 : 169). This text was the chief material of education for the Mappila Muslims till recent times. For day to day activities as well as religious education *Arabi Malayalam* had been used. *Mappilapattu* (Mappila folk song) was originated as a medium for literary and cultural expression of Mappila Muslims. ‘These songs punctuate the rhythm of the every day social life of the Malabar Muslims’ (Karassery, 1995 : 172). In folk art forms of the Mappila Muslims like *kolkali, oppana, aravana, daffumuttu,* and *mappilapattu* play an important role in lending them with lyrical and rhythmic dimensions. *Arabi Malayalam* is still widely used in Madrasa education. Books in Islamic history, and *karmasastra* are written in *Arabi malayalam*, which are used more than 10000 madrasas in Kerala run by Sunni organizations.

This process of diffusion has been seen in all walks of social life of Mappila Muslims, in dress style or food habits etc. They dressed like other malayalees but with some changes to differentiate themselves as Muslims. This is evident in dresses like *mundu, kaachi* and *blouse*. In food habits also they are more malayalees, than
Muslims. But at the same time they have maintained a subcultural identity of their own.

The Mappila Muslims were not confined to caste occupations like in North India. They were involved in all economic pursuits and occupational activities, wherever possible. Due to historical reasons they were traders, they involved in navigation, fishing, and agriculture. Mappila Muslims are entered now in all types of economic activities. The educated young generations enter into very avenue of gainful employment and rub shoulders with members of other communities.

There is a general belief that the muslim ethos are strikingly different from that of other communities as it is a product of a different legal system. But studies challenge baseless assumptions. Best examples are the studies of sociologists like Dube (1969), Kutty (1972), Ittaman (1976), Ahamed (1976, 1981) and Canklin (1976). They do not support the earlier anticipatory belief or assumption. On the contrary they have shown that muslim norms correspond closely to other religious groups especially among the Hindus. In relation to familial institutions and kinship, those studies reject the common assumption of Islamic cultural identity. Mappila Muslims have their own cultural identity, but not alien or not necessarily distinguishable in public. They are part of the wider cultural complex with their own distinction and diversified character, but shared equally by those who reside in the region as a whole. It can be observed from matrilineal muslim life. Islam in Kerala
has accepted and retained the local cultural religious traditions with a distinguishable character. The matrilineal Mappila Muslims, their history and social life reveal this fact.