The foregoing fact clearly shows that despite egalitarian teaching of Islam, social divergence is the characteristic feature of the Muslim society in Kerala in general and Malappuram district in particular. The Muslims of Kerala though forming a religious community sharing basic Islamic precept do not form a community in anthropological / sociological respect. The Muslims of Kerala are differentiated among themselves into various groups and subgroups on the basis of ethnic, social, and cultural distinctiveness among them. The groups and subgroups in Kerala are arranged in stratified order and social inequality is rampant among them. Only in recent years have various marginalized Muslim groups raised their profile for empowerment and self-development. The nature of their struggle has created a complex situation under plural-cultural setup of the Indian nation state. Report of Sachar Committee also unambiguously states that “as per the latest round of NSSO survey, Muslim OBCs constitute 40.7 per cent of the total Muslim population, they are also a sizable component (15.7) per cent of the total OBCs population of the country”.

“It is important to underline that Muslims of Kerala are not a monolith and this is our analyses across various indicators of human development also suggests. While Hindu OBCs continue to be relatively deprived in terms of the all-India data, the Muslim community as a whole is lagging behind Hindu OBCs. However, over all, the condition of Muslim OBCs is worse than those of general Muslims. The abysmally low representation of Muslim OBCs suggests that the benefits of entitlements meant for the
backward classes are yet to reach them.” Under the wake of new world order, simple reservations and affirmative actions of the government are not very helpful for development of the Muslim elites as well as subalterns, unless both work for human resources development in self reliant and participatory manner. But this cannot be done by the Muslims alone; the state too must facilitate the process.

The Mappilas of Malabar a distinct group of Muslims, who adhered to correct principles and teaching of their religion, are the descendents of the Arabs who married the local women folk. Scholars give different version for the origin of the name. As noticed, Islam was introduced peacefully to the land of ‘Cultural Symbiosis’: Kerala, as honored guests in a house. The wholeheated support of Hindu rulers especially Zomorians, Rajas of Calicut encouraged conversions to Islam for expansion of their navy and sea trade.

The arrival of the Portuguese ruptured the cordial relationship that existed among the native population. They spread the virus of communallism in the land of harmony. The reign of terror unleashed by the Portuguese aiming at depriving the spice trade of Arabs and Muslims of Malabar, thus adversely affecting the Mappilas. The social scientists viz. Zain -ud-din Ib AH (senior) Zain-un-din Makhdum (Junior), Qazi Muhammedi preached the ideology of jihadi as a desperate struggle against the Portuguese atrocities. Thus the so called Mappila militancy was the need of the hour to fight against the Portuguese intruders. Subsequent scenario was filled with the naval battles fought by the admirals of Calicut, the Kunjalies. The untiring of the Marakkars with enduring support of Zammorian and Mappilas in their century long fight against Portuguese forms a glorious
episode in the wide spectrum of anti-European struggles of the Mappilas. It still acts as a motivating factor and inspires the people of Kerala against the invasion of Colonialism and imperialism in new forms.

A century old fight against the Portuguese deprived the Mappilas of their lucrative spice trade. The Mappilas were compelled to move to the interiors of the Districts seeking opportunity in agricultural vocations, but who in the traditional land owning system were forced to accept the lowest grade of landless labourers. Brahmin jenmies and upper caste Hindu landlords possessed the land. The Muslim tenants were expected only to enjoy the right to cultivate the land and not possess the ownership of land.

The rule of Mysore Sultans over Malabar provided occasion for Mappilas for owning agricultural land, as many upper caste landlords had fled to Travancore after selling the jenmam rights. Thus the Mappila community became more powerful. When the Malabar was brought under British rule (1782), they again suffered adversaries as jenmies returned and resumed possession of their land. The Mappilas were consequently dispossessed from the ownership of land reverted to landlords who were supported by the British judicial system. Thus Mappilas had lost their faith in the existing administration because of their repressive measures.

It was in continuation of this situation that phases of national movement, like Khilafat, Non-Cooperation and tenancy questions came to the surface. The Mappilas supported the movements and enthusiastically participated in these movements. The participation of the Mappilas facilitated the rapid spread and acceptance of the Indian National Congress in Malabar. This was a period of Hindu Muslim unity and accord.
Both communities jointly formed the Khilafat Kudiyan committees. Leaders like Kattilasseri Muhammed Musliyar and M.P. Narayana Menon spent their prime time for the spread of these ideas. Khilafat leaders like, E. Moidu Moulavi, A. Abdurahiman Sahib, U. Gopalamenon, K. Madavan Nair, K.P. Keshava Menon, M.P. Narayana Menon, Variyam Kunnath Kunjuahammed Haji, Ali Musliyar, Brahmadathan Namboodiripad were in the forefront of these movements.

The repressive policy of the British worsened the situation. The Mappilas who had adhered to the principle of non-violence took arms against the authorities and finally the movement which mobilized masses turned into a rebellion, which in no way was a product of the Khilafat agitation alone. On the other hand, it was also against the atrocities of administration and exploitation of landlords and moneylenders. In fact there were stray incidents when certain anti-social elements had exploited the volatile situation causing hardship to the Hindu community. Nevertheless, the Congress and Khilafat leaders like Abdu-Rahiman Sahib, E. Moidu Moulavi, K. M. Moulavi had vehemently opposed violence and disowned themselves from the rebellion, at later stage. Leaders like Ali Musliyar, Variamkunnath Kunhammad Haji and Chembrasseri Tangal were also against the violence and other excesses. Whatever the situation during and after the rebellion, one significant aspect of Malabar has to be noted that no serious incidence of communal riots has not yet been reported in Malabar.

The genesis of the present backwardness of the Muslim / Mappila can be traced to the anti-European struggles. Mappilas except a few land owning and business families did not take to English education because they were told that English was the language of
the enemy / hell. They even hesitated to study Malayalam, which the theologians forbade by naming it as Aryan Ezhuthu (Aryan Language). The result was that they lagged behind in education and were not represented in government services. It took years after Independence for the Muslim community to cope with the new situation. The new awareness was largely due to the formation of the state of Kerala in 1956 and the active participation of Muslims in politics. Besides, the socio-religious reformation and educational awareness created by the progressive scholars and organizations were crucial in bringing the community to the forefront. Leaders like Vakkam Abdul Qadar Moulavi, Hamadani Tangal, K.M. Moulavi, E.K. Moulavi, Seethi Muhammad Sahib and others wished to reform the community and put an end to recurring of another 'ravage' in future. The formation of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam at Kodungallur in 1922 was a stepping stone in materializing the dreams of the leaders.

Thus the over all impact of the post-Portuguese period was less brutal on the community but the net effect was the same. The Zammorians were powerful, but Mappilas were no longer a major political asset and they were relegated to the background of events. The destruction of their economic prosperity was now sealed and stamped. The frustrated Muslims were in the process of becoming a community of petty traders, landless labourers and poor fishermen.

The lot of the community changed for the worse during the 150 years of British colonial rule. The neglect of vernacular education on the hand and bitterness against "English" on the other made Muslims the "illiterate" and ignorant by modern standards. The mass fines and tax burden for the maintenance of government machineries like
Malabar special police made them poorer. Being a far off district of the Madras state after Independence, their demands were not heard. Only after the formation of the state of Kerala in 1956 did developmental activities, with the slowest peace started in the area under study.

The foundation of Farook College a Feroke in 1948 was the most important event in the history of the community after Independence. One of the largest colleges in Kerala often called the ‘Aligarh of South India”, the service of this institution to the community has been great. The formation of the Muslim Education Society (MES) in 1964 was yet another landmark in the path of progress which eventually resulted into the formation of All-India Muslim Educational Society in 1970. The progress, which the society could make under the leadership of Dr. P. A. Abdul Gafoor, resulted into the community’s awareness in terms of need for self-reliance and reform. Doctors, Engineers, Professors and lawyers, the planters of Wayanad, Businessmen of Calicut, Exporters of Cochin, Landlords of Eranad, timber merchants of Nilambur and Business tycoons of Kasargod all joined the enthusiastic Muslims: who only contributed just five rupees a month. The society boosted the creative energy of men of all vocations.

The history of the community will be incomplete without a reference to the Muslim League. Trace to the Mappila traditions the leadership of the organization had always been with Sayyids. In the post-Independence turmoil persons like Hssan Kutty Kurikkal and Perool Ahammad Sahib kept the organisation alive and after the formation of the state of Kerala the League become a decissive factor in politics. The state had the first Muslim chief minister when C.II.Muhammed Koya was sworn in as the Chief Minister.
following the fall of the ministry under P.K. Vasudevan Nair. Perhaps no other leader had been so popular with Mappilas in recent times as ‘C. H’. His pen and tongue had been equally effective in snubbing the critics, and at the same time extolling the honor of the community. The uneding struggle of the Muslim league legislators under his able leadership won many favours for this “Backward Class” of the “Backward Area”. The unity and solidarity of the community was once again manifested in and outside the country, to the Malappuram Relief Fund instituted by Sayyid Muhammed Ali Shihab Thangal.

In terms of the policy of reservation for backward classes, Kerala stand out for having extended the benefit of reservation to the entire Muslim population. This has been achieved by including Muslim (minus the creamy layer) as a distinct group within the broad category of backward classes and then provided with exclusive quota. This distinct feature of the reservation policy dates back to the colonial period. In Kerala, the demand for reservation for underrepresented communities was accepted as early in 1936 in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, and in Malabar, even earlier in 1921. Quota was fixed not only for caste groups such as the Ezhavas, but also for religious minorities: the Muslims and sections of Christians.

In Kerala, the reservation scheme introduced in 1952, fixed the quantum of reservation at 45% (including 10% for SCs and STs). The beneficiaries included the Ezhavas, Kammalas, the Nadars (Hindu and Christian), other Hindu Backward castes and SC and OBC converts to Christianity. On the reorganization of the state in 1956, the quota for backward classes was enhanced to 40%. Later, the scheme was modified to
introduce subquotas for major backward groups. A separate Muslim share was fixed at
10% that later rose to 12%. At present, the reservation system in Kerala is as follows:
Backward Classes 40%, (Ezhavas 14%, Muslims 12%, Latin Catholics 1%, Nadars 2%,
Christian Converts from SCs 1%, Other Backward Classes 3%, Viswakarmas 3%) and
SCs and STs 10% (Sachar 189-196).

The Kerala list which is noted on pages 22, 23, and 24 contains backward classes
of the state from serial No.1 to 82. In it serial No. 46 is written Other Muslims
excluding and those excluding are “Bohra, Kachchi, Memon, Navayets, Turkan, and
Dakhini Muslim”.

A class analysis of these communities has been attempted. Only Kurikkals are
regarded as landed class, followed by Keyis who later shifted from business to land
ownership. Mappilas formed agricultural labour class before nineteenth century. The
Bhatkalis and Bohras were purely business class. The Nahas and Marakkars formed a
maritime class, while Pusalans formed a labour class of fisherman. Sayyids alone formed
the religious class, but not priesthood. Many of the sayyid families were wealthy
merchants who could with the help of their kinsfolk settled in different parts of the world,
operate international trade with much ease and comfort.

The Bafaqi and Jifri sayyids had their warehouses and business in Malabar,
Ceylon, Burma and Singapore. The Pathans and Ruther’s who were a service class in
times of dynastic rule have now been shifted to various vocations like shop keeping,
small trade and governmental jobs. The Ossans alone are at the same time a service caste
and class, among whom, class mobility is little noticed. One of the reasons may be that
the Ossans profession is well paid and the youngsters take to profession at a very early stage. Their ladies in any way have to perform the traditional services in village community and this fact hampers any psychological impetus necessary to such a change. The Pusalans also remained a class with an aversion to change, the reason again being the early initiation to traditional professions which never required any formal education.

In spite of the existence of all these communities, none claimed superiority sanctified by religion over the other or tried to formulate an order of caste hierarchy. They were all but vocational groups forming one important section of the ‘multy cultural ‘amalgam’ of Malayali society. On the basis of the above discussion one may draw a conclusion regarding the factors responsible for shaping the nature and the cause of getting all or 99 percent of Muslims as OBC status as follows: (1) There are no differences between Malappuram and Kerala Muslims. (2) Politically, Muslims have played successful role asserting their identity and realizing their demands in Kerala. (3) Lack of large scale or visible level of stratification among the Muslims in Kerala. (4) Almost homogenous Socio, Economic and educational condition of Muslims. (5) There is no origin of noble orientation among Muslims of Kerala. (6) Proper identification of problems of the weaker sections by the inclusion of them by the respective commissions. (7) Absence of large scale movement by the backward section of the society, especially their social origins. Regarding 1% of Muslims, the following explanations may be provided: (1) The perspective of understanding Muslim society from below shows that there is a wide gap between text and context, so far Islamic ideology and Muslim society are concerned. (2) The tendency to represent Muslim society as single, monolithic and homogeneous groups in political arenas and academic discourses has no empirical
validity. (3) The empowerment and reservation facilities given to certain marginalized section of Indian population has been influencing the socio-political behavior of many other disadvantaged groups of the country. This has created a contradiction between state simplification and social complication. Awakening of Muslim OBCs and their demands added a new dimension to this process. (4) The standard categories used for reservations in India faces varied challenges and counter challenges from Muslims, which reshuffle religious, caste and class identities. (5) The contemporary lively debate on reservations within the Muslim communities on minority (Religious) verses class issues is not only a legal and political question, but also anthropological and sociological one. (6) The rise of marginalized Muslim groups in India is a clear indication that the subalterns of the community now want upward social mobility for their profile against the elites of the community and of the country too. This may be designated as postmodernist movement, deconstructing the myth of monolithic identity of Muslims and there by challenging the politicians who attempt to polarize majority Hindus from minority Muslims simply on religious ground.

Muslims of Kerala with their ardent religious zeal maintained many of the Arab or Persion traits adapted themselves to meet the challenges and yet remained a distinctly proud community with its unique features and identities.
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