CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study is on OBC Muslims in Malappuram District (Kerala): A Sociological Analysis. It is primarily based on secondary sources. This study mainly attempts towards examining the factors responsible for changing the socio-economic, political and educational conditions of Other Backward Classes (subsequently will be referred as OBC) in general and Muslims of Malappuram and Kerala in particular. The study is divided into five chapters. Each chapter deals with specific topic relating to Muslims in India in general and Kerala in particular. The first chapter begins with Introduction and General Background. After providing brief introduction emergence of Islam in Kerala has been examined. Here every effort has been made to explore the importance of Malabar with special reference to its role in the lucrative trade in Indian Ocean. The role of rulers and Sufis in the spread of Islam is also emphasized. Besides, Muslims' representation in government jobs has also been examined. The second chapter highlights the concepts caste and class among the Muslims. It also evaluates the colonial caste structure in Kerala: its impact and further delaminate practices and colonial salariat class and the Brahminical and Nair's domination in the social, political spheres in Kerala. The decline of Brahminical dominance and the anti-Brahminical movement by the
backward classes by the Muslims, Christians, and Ezhavas have been examined. The third chapter examines in detail the Muslim communities and their varied identities: meaning and emergence of the other backward classes in India. The social structure of Other Backward Classes, relevance of reservation for OBCs, rationale for the OBC reservation and backwardness and empowerment of this group has also been discussed. A detailed analysis on various aspects of Other Backward Commissions / Committees at all India level and in Kerala has also been described. The fourth chapter discusses the different activities performed by the Kerala Muslims and their social, economic, and educational dimensions for their livelihood. The other economic sources like gulf migration, Land holdings, Employment and unemployment and the basic amenities like Health, Bank Credit, Municipal services, and Infrastructure and communication facilities availed by the Muslim concentrated district in Kerala have also been examined. The main findings have been provided in the concluding chapter. It shows the main reasons behind Social, Economic and Political reasons behind almost all the Kerala Muslims coming under the category of OBC. Finally, few suggestions for the speedy and successful implementation of the reservation policy for socially, economically and educationally backward classes of India have been provided.

1.2 METHODS AND SOURCES OF DATA

The study adopts a combination of historical and analytical methods. The proposed study is mainly based on secondary and tertiary data. Census and government reports have been consulted for the purpose of the present study. Secondary materials such as books and articles related to the topic published in the recent past have been
consulted and interpreted for the present study. In addition, the reports of various commissions appointed by the central and state governments have also been examined and compared.

The present study is mainly based on the resources available in the Maulana Azad Library, AMU, Aligarh; History Department Seminar Library, AMU, Aligarh; Ratan Tata Library, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi; Institute of Economic Growth Library, University of Delhi, Delhi; Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, New Delhi; Indian Institute of Public Administration Library, New Delhi; and JNU library, New Delhi; C.H Muhammad Koya Library, Calicut University Campus, Calicut; Abu Sabah library, Farooq College, Calicut; Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum; Public Library, Legislative Assembly Library and Kerala Council for Historical Research, Trivandrum, Kerala.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the socio-Economic and Educational conditions of Muslims of Kerala with specific reference to Malappuram.

2. How the Muslims of Malappuram are different from other parts of the Country (Kerala).

3. What are the main reasons behind the backwardness of Muslims in Malappuram (Kerala)?

4. Why all the Muslims of Malappuram are considered as OBCs (Kerala)?

5. How they are different from other OBCs within Kerala and also at the national level.
6. To understand social stratification and status groups among the Muslims of Malappuram (Kerala).

7. As Other Backward Community their achievements in different walks of life.

1.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MUSLIMS IN KERALA

Through long centuries of history Malabar which name in ancient days referred to the present Kerala was variously known as described by historians and travelers as Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar and Munibar. For the people of the region it is, to quote Dr. M.G.S Narayanan, the source of a very special sentiment and as such alive factor in shaping their way of life. The stamp of the Malabar culture is clearly visible in the community life, especially in the traditional groups of Nayars, Nambudiries, Mappilas, Thiyyas, and Christians of the area in towns and villages.

A quick look at the historical background of Kerala would reveal that the Malabar region on the one hand and Travancore and Cochin region on the other had different socio-historical backgrounds leading to their present social, educational and economic status. Soon after the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, Malabar with all its chieftains and houses passed into a colonial system. The case of Travancore and Cochin were different. As a result of treaties with the English East India Company, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin had retained their separate entities. The present Kerala state was formed in 1956, Following the recommendations of state Re-organization commission by the union of the major part of the Travancore-Cochin state and the Malabar and Kasargod areas because of these historical twists and variables the different regions of the state were destined to receive different kinds of treatment from their
administrators in the past, naturally the social and economic results are reflected in their present situation.

There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars and historians about the genesis of Islam in Kerala. While some scholars would attribute it to the very life time of the prophet (S.A.W.) and third group would relate it to the eighth century, ninth century A.D. respectively. The first view is based on the account in Keralolpathi about the well-known tradition of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal, the last king of Chera Empire. This tradition holds that after the portion of the kingdom, the king secretly traveled by ship to Arabia and landed at ‘Shahr’ from where he went to Jeddah and visited the Prophet (SA), then in his 57th year, and that he embraced Islam and accepted the name Tajuddin. It is further reported that he married the sister of the Arabian King Habibuddin and stayed there for five years. Later during his journey to Kerala along with his wife and father in law, he died on the way at ‘shuhr’. That the popular Muslim belief Cheraman perumal was a Shaba is support by Kerala scholar C.N Ahammed Moulavi and Abdul Kareem in their ‘Mahathaya Mappila Sahitya paramparyam’, although no reliable historical evidence has been cited to support this. The second tradition that the conversion of Perumal took place in he eighth century A.D. is based on indiscretion on a Muslim Tombstone at Pantalayani, (Kollam). The presence of Muslim groups in Kerala in the ninth century is supported by Tarisappalli copper plates (849 A.D).

Shaykh Zaynuddin (R.A).writing in the eighties of the sixth century on the first appearance of Islam in Kerala has stated; ‘As for the exact date there in no certain
information with us, most probably it must have been two hundred years after the Hijrah (622.A.D). Referring to this issue, Logan has made the following observation.

“The Malayalee Arabs assert, chief on Shaykh Zaynuddin authority, that Islam not introduced into Malabar until 200 years after Hijrah and this or a later date, seems to be correct for the Arab merchant, Sulaiman, who wrote in A.H.237(A.D851-52), who wrote with knowledge as he had evidently visited the countries he wrote about, said expressly ‘I know not that the is any one of either nation (Chinese or India) that has embraced Muhammedanism or speak Arabic’.”

Some historians have, however held the view that “Sulaimans testimony is hardly trustworthy on his point for he fails to notice the Arab possession in Sind, in Gujarat, or the Gulf of Cambay”. Dr. M.G.S Narayanan has pointed out. “There is no reason to reject the tradition that the last Chera king embraced Islam. (His name was Rama) and went to Makka since it finds a place not only in Muslim chronicles, but also in Hindu Brahminical chronicles, like keralolpathi, were no one would expect these chronicles to concoct such a tale, and which is no way enhances the prestige or the interest of the Hindu or Brahmin population.”

Keralolpathi written by Herman Gundert speaks of two Chera kings who went to Makka One Banaperumal after embracing Buddha shastra (the religion of Buddha) went to Makka. At the same time Gundert claims that Banaperumal had converted to Christianity or Buddhism, the doubt, exists that why he had gone to Makka. If the king had gone to Makka it can be assumed that he had embraced Islam. The second perumal who had gone to Makka as mentioned in keralolpathi is Cheraman perumal. The year of
his departure mentioned in the work as 332 A.D., cannot be correct, since the preaching of Islam by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) started only after 600 A.D. Another version says that Cheraman perumal left for Makka in 210 A.H. (825 A.D.)

After analyzing the variance in the chronology and the departure of two perumal to Makka as mentioned in the Keralolpathi some incline to think of the possibility of the conversion of two perumals-Shankara Varma during the life time of the prophet (SAW) and Rama Varma Kulashekara in later period both of them might have died in south Arabia, but the later paved the way for the missionary activities under Malik-Ibnu-Dinar.

Dr. M.G.S Narayanan suggests that, the conversion of the Chera king might have taken place not during the prophets time but in 1122 A.D. However according him this doesn’t mean that Malabar there were no Muslims before this date but it was the conversion of Cheraman perumal that accelerated the growth of Islam in Malabar.

It was as directed by Cheraman perumal the first group of missionaries landed at Kodungallur and started their preaching. Though all the sources speak on the mission of Malik b. Dinar (RA) and his party, there also exists the chronological differences as in the conversion of the perumal. Since there are more persons bearing the name Malik-Ibnu-Dinar in the early centuries of Islam confusion arises who among them came to Malabar. As indicated by the name Malik-Ibnu-Dinar indicates that he is of Iranian origin rather than a genuine Arab. Most of the sources say that Malik b. Dinar, after his mission at Malabar had gone to Khurasan where he had died (NM). So there is very possibility to believe that Malik-Ibnu-Dinar who led the missionary to Malabar might be the disciple of the famous Sufi Hassan Basra who died at Khurasan around 744 A.D.
The statement in Rihalat Al-Mulk, that Cheraman perumal with whose instruction Malik b. Dinar and his party came to Malabar set off sail to Arabia in 82 A.H. (701 A.D.) also comes near to the fact. This period of Kerala history was that of political turmoil and uncertainty and, as observed by Sreedhara Menon, the period also characterized by great religious and intellectual activity. Hence the possibility of the conversion of one Perumal becomes more evident during this period. In this connection it may be noted that there is the widely held tradition that Kaladi were Shankara was born belonged to a small princely whose king had accepted Islam.

It is also said that Malik- Ibnu- Dinar and his party was responsible for constructing the first Mosque in Malabar. If we believe the words Keralolpathi tradition that before leaving for Makka, Cheraman perumal entrusted the duty to protect and look after the Jonakas (Mappilas) including the quazi to punturkon (the zamorin). It means that there were Muslims and Quazi in Malabar before the departure of Cheraman perumal and then a mosque becomes inevitable for the quazi to maintain the Islamic laws. If it is so, the credit of constructing the first mosque would not come to Malik- Ibnu- Dinar and his party who come years after the departure of the perumal. If Malik- Ibnu Dinar visits in the eighth century the construction of many mosques including that of Cheraman mosque at Kodungallur (cranganore) cannot be attributed to him. And also we didn’t find the mosques at Calicut and Kodungallur in the list of mosques constructed by Malik b. Dinar recorded in Rihalat- al- Mulk.

Logon is right when he says that Malik b. Dinar and his party, even with the exceptional advantages they possessed, would hardly have been able in so short time, to
establish mosques at various places unless the ground had been prepared earlier for them to some extent, at least.

The traditions say that Malik b. Dinar and his party had with them letters from the perumal to different native rulers seeking their assistance to the missionary activities and construction of the mosques. Thus the ruler of Kodungallur, where the Muslim missionary is said to have landed first, vacated a Buddhist vihar to Muslims and this came to be known as Cheraman Palli. At the time when Muslim missionaries started their work Buddhism had lost its importance and this may be the reason for changing the vihar into a mosque. Thus according to the traditions Cheraman Palli became the first mosque in Malabar. Likewise the mosque at Madayi was constructed at about the same with the assistance of the Kolathiri Raja to whom also there was a letter from the last perumal.

It was Kolathiri raja who constructed the mosque at Valapattanam (Balipattam) and accorded all facilities for proselytizing activities to Sayyid Aboobakr who was the first quazi of the place. C.A. Innes had quoted a story from the travelogue of Ibnu-Battuta, about the conversion of a king of dadkana (Blapattam) when Ibnu Battuta visited here the ruler was an infidel “Whose grand father, who had become Mohammeden, built the mosque and made the pond. The cause of grandfathers receiving Islamism was a tree over which he had built the mosque.”

The controversy over the date of conversion of the Chera king the coming of Malik Ibnu-Dinar and his party and the construction of mosques are still a matter of controversy among the historians on Kerala history. The traditions prevalent among the people are yet to be proved with scientific facts how ever the fact remains that the spread
of Islam in Kerala was true to the letter and spirit of Sufi style of peace with all (sulh kul) and there was no Muslim ruler to impose the religion in the region. The conversion of the king to Islam was a result of the peaceful co-existence and a matter of expediency for the prospect of the state and it never amounted to an authority of one religion over the other. It was the presence of the Sufi mystics and the conversion of the native rulers, alongside with the social systems prevailing in the region that had accelerated the growth of Islam on the cost of Malabar.

In spite of the different opinion regarding the actual date of advent of Islam in Kerala, it is fairly certain now that Muslims had become a distinct community in Kerala by 9th century A.D. As Logan states “for first of all it is beyond doubt that Arabs had by the ninth century A.D., penetrated beyond India and as far as China for purposes of trade and it is notable that all the nine places were mosques were erected were either the headquarters of the petty potentates of the country or places affording facilities for trade and in some cases (as Kodungallur, Kottayam, Pazhayangadi and perhaps Pantalayani Kollam). The places had the double advantage of being both well situated for trade and close proximity the chieftains of strong holds Arabs engaged in trade had no doubt settled in these places long previously.......Malik-Ibnu-Dinar and his party, even with exceptional advantages they possessed, would hardly have been able in so short a time to found and establish mosque at these places, unless the ground had been prepared before hand for them to some extent at least. And the fact that Arabs had settled for trading purposes carries with it the further possible assumption that some of them at least had contracted alliances with women of the country, and the beginning of a mixed race, the Mappilas had been laid".
The name “Mappila” is a translation of the Malayalam. The translation has taken several different forms, the most common being Mappila, Mappilla, Moplah. The origin of the term is not settled, but it appears to have been basically a little of respect. In the partial form, Pilla (child), it is frequently found among Nayars. It was a common honorific for Christians in middle Kerala, and this usage continues to some extent to the present. At an earlier period Muslim and Christian Mappilas were differentiated as “jonaka” and “Nasrani” Mappilas respectively, but in the recent times the term has tended more and more to be used as an exclusive name for the Kerala Muslim.

In support of the view that the name “Mappila” is an honorific it is argued that such a term would very naturally have been applied by the natives of Kerala to respect and welcome visitors and immigrants from abroad. According to this interpretation the word may be derived from two Malayalam terms, Maha (great) and Pilla (child). The foreigners are great ones, noble ones, gladly received and held in highest respect by the indigenous in habitants.

A second form of this interpretation places more stress on the literal implication of child. In this sense it is taken to mean either bride groom or son-in-law. This meaning corresponds to the contemporary Tamil use of the term to signify husband, bride groom, or husband-to be to this day the newly-married Muslims in Kerala is called “New Mappila” in Malayalam. It is significant that in north Malabar the husbands of all the younger women of a Tarawad house in which they live are considered “bride grooms”, and they continue to be treated as such for a considerable time. “That usage reflects the
common role of younger husbands as honored guests and partial outsiders”. The implication of this derivation is that the term “Mappila” was applied as a descriptive honorific to foreigners who married into indigenous families.

Another interpretation that receives support derives “Mappila” from the first syllable of the term Mutawu”, which means “mother”, combined with “Pilla,” (child). The meaning of the term, there, is “mothers-child”. As such it designates the offspring of foreign husband and indigenous wives. Both to emphasize that indigenous relationship and to correspond with usage appropriate to the matriarchal system current among the Nayars it would not be unnatural to apply this designation.

Various Arabic derivations have been proposed, one suggesting that the origin is from Mahfil (gathering place or meeting place). It is surmised that Mappilas used this term for their community gatherings, and Kerala natives there for assigned the name to them personally. Another interpretation proposes a corruption of either Mufllih or Mahfilh from falah to till”. The noun form,”agriculturalist” by derivation implies “the prosperous one, a term which might have been applied to Muslims. At their interpretation calls for another corruption, this time from the noun form Muabber of the verb Abara (one form over the water). Mabar or Mubar was the early name applied by foreigners to the Tamilnad area. These derivations do not meet the objection that the term has been applied to non-Muslim communities. Other interpretations do not merit serious consideration.

The precise development of the term “Mappila” as applied to the Muslim community in Kerala is likely to remain obscure. We may, however, propose taking as
our starting point the still current meaning of ‘new husband’, which usage itself was in all probability based on the horrific, Mahapilla. This term, used indigenously, was naturally attached without prejudice to bridegrooms from the honored visitors or immigrants from abroad. Though not in Tamil, at some point in Malayalam usage the term began to be reserved especially for such unions and those born of them. The reason for the attraction of the term to non-Hindu communities must have been the practical and growing necessity in Kerala to develop a world to describe such marriages and communities in a way that was both exclusive and respectful.

1.6 SPREAD OF ISLAM IN KERALA

The spread of Islam was unbelievably fast and wide in Kerala. Several factors are attributed to this, when Arab traders and missionaries settled here, the local rulers were extremely helpful and hospitable to them. The missionary work was quite peaceful and cordial and members of the Hindu community maintained a very cordial and friendly relationship with Muslims. There was no ban for willing members to embrace the new religion. The Zammorian of Calicut even encouraged such conversion with a view to strengthening the trade with Arabs. It is reported that he gave orders that in every family of fishermen (Mukkuvan) in his domain, one or more of the male members should be brought up as Mohammadans.

The works of missionaries and Sufis greatly helped the spread of the new religion. However recorded information on their work during the early period is scantly in contrast to detailed accounts of such activity in other parts of the country. It is pointed out that the available Arabic works being mainly theology have completely ignored the ideologies
and activities of the Sufis and missionaries and that our main source of information on the work of Sufi saints is the Malas (Tadkiras) sung extensively extolling their activities, especially their Karamaths (super natural activities).

The tradition of Malik Ibnu-Dinar and his associate is very well known in the history of missionary activities in Kerala. According to this tradition, Cheraman Perumal, on his return trip from Arabia, was accompanied by the family and friends of Malik Ibnu Dinar. Before the king died at zufar on the Arabian coast he had instructed his friends to proceed to Kerala and spread the new faith. According Malik Ibnu- Dinar and his friends landed at Kodungallur, visited the different parts of Kerala and established ten cathedral mosques at Kulam (Quilon) Kodungallur. Shaliyat (Chaliyam) fandarina (Pantalayani), Darmafattaan (Darmadam) Jurfattan (Srikantapuram) Hajili Marwi (Madayi), Karyarkut (Kasarkode), Manjalur (Mangalore) and Fakanur (Barkur). The works of these missionaries like Makdums of Ponnani, the Mamburam Tangals, and The Kondotti Tangals was also instrumental in a big way in the spreading of Islam in Kerala.

The universal brother hood of man preached and practiced by Islam was an universal experience to the vast mass of the low and down-trodden communities in Kerala such as Cherumas, Pulayas, Parihas, Mukkuvan etc. Who found great solace and relief in accepting Islam. Logan states “The conversion of a pariah or low caste Hindu to Muha-mmedanism rises him distinctly in the social status, and he is treated with more respect by Hindus”. He is no longer the degraded pariah whose approach disgusted, and whose touch polluted the Hindu of Caste. But belonging now to a different scale of being.
contact with him does not require the same ablutions to purify it. (special commissioner Grames report, paragraph 21).

Thus conversion gave to low castes a new status and a prospect of new life based on equality. This factor too attracted the low caste who had been suffering for long under the yoke of tyranny of the upper classes, to Islam in great numbers. The moment they got convert, they were able to forget their stigmata and acquire 'A vitalizing social status almost tantamount to equality with others. It can thus be seen that the main factors behind the fast and unparalleled spread of Islam in Kerala in the early days were different-such as the patronage and hospitality the Arab traders and missionaries received at the hand of the native princes, the backwardness and social disabilities of the downtrodden tribes and the spiritual enlightenment of the early Muslim saints and missionaries among the Arabs settlers.

1.7 FROM EARLY DAYS TO THE MODERN PERIOD

Miller records that specific factors involved in the growth of Muslim community up to the time of European encroachment included immigration, intermarriage, missionary activities, the support of the Zammorian and personal advantage. Kerala, it will be recalled had been from early times a caste ridden society. The traditional Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisa, and Sudra had their counterparts here. Nambudiries and Kshatriyas were few in number but occupied top positions in the hierarchy. They controlled majority of the social, political, and economic activities of the lower caste of the society. There were no Visyas here. The reason might be that their functions were carried out by
Muslims and Christians. The Nair’s of the state corresponded to Shudras. In Cochin, the Christians and in Malabar the Mappilas held high positions.

Islam spread in Kerala maintaining its own culture and style at same time retting some of the old characteristics of its members before conversion. The converts were naturally influenced by the age old habits of the people around. Depending on the places of settlement, the habitats and culture of local people influenced the new converts as is visible from the lives of the people in rural areas and the coastal belt. The settlers of the coastal and urban areas such as Kannur, Kozhikode and Ponnani, were mainly trade people.” They evolved a policy of give and take to promote their business despite the religious differences, cherishing a somewhat secular outlook in life. They were the loyalists of the Zammorian, the local prince. They fought violently against their common foreigners’ foes, the Portuguese, Dutch, French and British who were looked in fierce struggle to gain supremacy over the Arabs on space trade from 15th to 18th centuries.”

Following the practice among certain higher caste Hindus, urban Muslims adopted “the matrilineal system which was totally unknown to Muslim societies in the Middle East. His Muslims of Travancore and Cochin under the rule of native princes enjoy greater freedom and this enabled them to be in better position in the field of education compared to their counterparts in Malabar.

Unlike the Muslims of north India Muslims of Kerala were never rulers except in a petty kingdom ruled by Arakkal family for a period of 7 centuries. However this did not make a notable impression on the Kerala Muslims as a whole from a socio-cultural angle.
1.8 PORTUGESE ARRIVAL AND AFTER

The arrival of the Portuguese on the scene in 1498 A.D. changed the whole situation and this threw up a challenge not only to the commercial and trade interests of the Muslims but also to their religious and cultural interests. Zammorian in a bid to reserve the trade interests in his domain on the one hand and on the other to retain his cordial and friendly relationship with Muslims who stood with him and fought for him in all situations even went to the extent of decreeing that all those born on Friday on the coastal areas would be of Islamic faith. Muslims maintaining their bondage and friendship with the Zammorian fought battles on the land and the sea providing their allegiance to the king to very least. In spite of the pressure exerted by the Portuguese to give up special consideration for the Arabs and local Muslims, the Zammorian refused to change his attitude and continued to be friendly and helpful to the Muslims.

The Muslim settlers in Kerala, it is well known, came from different strata of society. Naturally the influence of the customs used for centuries together could not be shaken off all of a sudden. Tuhfat-ul mujahideen tells us how as a result of the missionary work of the Malik Ibnu Dinar and his comrades, people in coastal areas began to embrace Islam in small groups swelling the ranks of Islam. Kozhikode, Veliankode, Tirurangadi, Thanur, Ponnani, Parappanagadi, Paravanna, Chaliyam, Kakkad Thikodi, Edakkad, Kannur, Tirurangadi, Mahe were places which become busy centers as a result of the new religious activity. Even though the rulers and administrators were Hindus, they just were fair in their dealings with the Muslims. Zaynuddin (RA) gives a detailed account of the type of special treatment Muslims received at the hands of the Zammorian. If any Hindu
wanted to embrace Islam no one would stand in the way nor would any one create any difficulty in his daily life. Once a Hindu embraced Islam, such a person used to be given all respect even if he belongs to any of the backward class prior to his conversion.

The routine situation on the scene changed on the arrival of the Portuguese who considered Muslims as their enemies on the commercial as well as religious front. When the efforts cause estrangement between the Zammorian and Muslims failed, the Portuguese resorted to extremely cruel, inhuman and dastardly attacks on Muslims on the sea as well as on land, which lasted for one hundred years or more. The valiant fights put up by Zammorian men ably assisted by the famous Admirals, Kunhali Marakkars are shining examples of naval warfare. But for this heroin and long-drawn naval battles, the western seashore of India could not have been protected from the Portuguese colonial domination.

1.9 THE IMPACT OF THE INTRUSIONS

The Portuguese intrusions on the Malabar Coast starting from 1498 and stretching over a period of nearly one hundred years had a decisive and long-lasting effect on the affairs of the Mappila Muslims of Kerala. Historians are generally agreed that till the advent of the Portuguese, Mappilas led a peaceful life on the coast in harmony with the sister communities and occupying a leading role in the trade and commerce of the land both within and outside Kerala. The situation changed almost abruptly on the arrival of the Portuguese with definite trading interests with the intention of breaking the commercial monopoly of Muslims, in internal trade. When their initial efforts to enlist the assistance of the Zammorian to effect an estrangement between the Muslims and the
ruling kingdom failed; the Portuguese to all sorts of intrigues, conspiracies, and open attacks on Muslims and the powers that supported them. They also resorted to signing political treaties of convenience with the kings who were anemically to the Zammorian. The innumerable attacks on Muslims and their establishments, stretching over a period of nearly one hundred years, descriptions of which abound in Tuhfath- al- Mujahidin and later historical accounts, completely wrecked the Muslim trade and dislocated the normal cultural life of the community destroying their prospects for years to come.

“The result of the Portuguese period for Mappilas may be summarized as economic retrogression, estrangement from Hindus, bitterness against Christians and new militancy. Each of these was passed forward in some measure into modern times, shaping both Mappilas history and present attitudes of the community. The economic regression had a severe effect up on the Mappilas and produced a radical change in their situation.”

Regarding the historical and economic implications of Portuguese intrusion on Mappilas, noted all historians and social scientists hold the same view. While most of the social activists who participated in the survey conducted by Prof. U. Muhammad in his study on “Educational empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical perspective, thought that the impact of the colonial intrusion was one of the chief causes of backwardness among Kerala Muslims who stood on a different footing from their counterparts in other religions.

Dr. M Gangadharan held of different view in this regard. “Though the Portuguese were ruthless against Muslim traders in the Kerala coast in the early 16th century, they did
not succeed in crippling the oceanic trade of the Muslims. There is some evidence even to show that the native Muslims (Mappilas) benefited when rich foreign (Arabs) merchants left the Kerala coast by the end of the 2nd decade of the 16th century due to the violent attacks by the Portuguese. Till then Mappilas had to suffer the hegemony of the foreign Muslims."

Modern researchers have pointed out that Mappila merchants remind in the trade of the coast fighting against the Portuguese in the 16th and early 17th centuries. It not appears that the Mappila trade flourished on the coast even in the 17th century competing with the Dutch traders. The Mappilas of the coast suffered heavily only in the second half of the century when Tippu Sulthan nationalized oceanic trade in northern Kerala and established monopoly of the Mysore government in the trade of the coast. When the English East India Company succeeded Tippu Sulthan to political power in north Kerala in the least decade of the 18th century, the impoverished Mappila traders of the coast were reinstated in trade as agents (middlemen) in spice trade. This, it may be presumed, made the coastal Mappilas of British Malabar loyal to the British rulers till the end of the foreign regime. It may be remembered that the Muslim league started functioning in Kerala in the 30s of the 20th century with the support of the pro-British, relatively rich, coastal Mappilas."

While interpretation of events and consequences spread over several centuries may differ among the historians, there is no denying the fact that the vicious cycle of events following the Portuguese intrusion had a telling and damaging impact on the social, psychological and economic life of the Kerala Muslims even several centuries
after the Portuguese intruders had left the Kerala coast. As Hamid Ali observed, “The discovery of the cape of good hope........was an evil day for the Mappilas..........in the keen struggle for the supremacy on the Eastern seas the Moplas came out vanquished......and never since have they regained their wealth and their glory. Even though the post-Portuguese Europeans were less brutal than their predecessors, “the net effect on the Mappilas was the same. The modest improvements in trade, agriculture, and small industry and the widening of horizons produced by the new contacts did not materially help the Muslims, whose position continued to deteriorate. Islam in Kerala, it is said, had never been in greater distress since its advent.

By 17th century A.D. however, the Portuguese power waned and in their place Dutch, the French and the British began to establish their power-pockets in different parts of Kerala. Even though, the new colonial powers came in place of the old one, this did not bring about significant changes in the lot of Muslims. With the surrender of the last Kunhali Marakkar by the Zammorian to the Portuguese, their relationship with the local Muslims was never the same. The bad days of Muslims had begun socially and economically, they no longer enjoyed the position they once held before the arrival of the Portuguese on the scene.

The Mysorean interlude (1776-1792) for a while revived the hopes of local Muslims to improve their conditions. With this hope they supported the Mysore sultans and received favors of enrolment in their forces and in the administration. At a different level, the new situation gave an opportunity to the people of low caste who were suffering for long under the oppression of their masters to convert to Islam which brought
in its wake many favors. In the interior places this was most pronounced. The new converts, it is said, must have used their newly won freedom by turning against their old oppressors.

During this period large numbers of Brahmins and Nair’s ran away from their abodes, for whatever they could fetch. The Hindu Janmis thus fleeing from the scene, the immediate beneficiaries were Mappila cultivators. This naturally attracted them range themselves behind the Mysore administration.

With the British occupation of Malabar in 1792, the situation changed again. The Muslim cultivators were taxed more heavily than before with the result that they were not able to pay the areas. There was general discontentment and resistance. The administration had even to seek the assistance of the army to quell riots and ensure collection of revenue. The system had broken down and by 1800 it is recorded that the East India Company had taken over the control of the entire administration of Malabar.

As Tippus forces retreated, the lot of the Mappilas peasants becomes more difficult and unsafe. There was frequent confrontation with the Britishers on the one hand and repressive measures at the hands of Hindu Janmis on the other. The land laws were against the interests of the tenants enabling the Janmis to evict the tenant or transfer land from one to another. It is said that a situation arose in the field of agriculture (which was almost similar to that a situation arose in the field of agriculture) which was almost similar to that which existed in the field of trade when the Portuguese came to the Malabar Coast. The discontent element of Mappilas resulted in a series of violent out brakes spread throughout the 19th century. Government turning a deaf ear to the constant
complaints of the Mappila tenants, the outbreaks persisted. The agrarian tension steadily increased which finally triggered of the rebellion of 1921.

The rebellion of 1921 was a great tragedy and a turning point in the history of Malabar Muslims. The Britshers who had looked up on Mappilas as ‘uncivilized brutes’, used this event to unleash very severe a harsh measures on them. Many were executed, many sentenced life imprisonment and thousands jailed. According to the account summarized by Dr. Miller from different sources: “The physical effects of the rebellion were extensive. The total Mappila causalities are unknown, although Mappilas themselves speak up to 10,000 lives lost. An official British source estimates a death toll of 1000 out of an active 10000 participants. But another report indicates that by January, 1922, 2266 Mappilas had already been killed...........A total of 252 Mappilas were executed by court martial, while 502 others were sentenced to life imprisonment: other thousands were given jail sentence, usually 7-14 years duration, by special magistrates appointed to judge lesser charges. Prisons in the area were so congested that a special camp was reactivated in Bellary, were 4500 Mappilas were jammed into facilities intended for 1500. Many Mappilas were eventually expatriated to the Andaman Islands for imprisonment there. The rebellion proved to be a turning point in the history of Kerala Muslims for many decades to come as it sealed their fate and completed their decline. “The community at this juncture presented the picture of socially, economically, educationally, culturally and psychologically wrecked society with no hope of any revival in the rear future.
The deep hurt towards the British rulers who wanted to annihilate the Muslim culture, created a deep-rooted aversion in the Muslim minds against any thing western including the English language, western culture and western since. The roots of Muslim antagonism to western education can be traced to this point in history. Looking back it can be seen that this attitude had placed the community in a precarious situation. As observed by Miller “It had blocked their progress, retarded the development of the community economically and created a public image and private mentality of backwardness.”