Chapter - 1

ADVENT AND SPREAD OF ISLAM
It has been unanimously agreed by the scholars that the Arabs had close commercial and trade relationship with the West Indian Port long before the advent of Islam. It has been also discussed in the light of scriptures that, the Arabs since the period of Mosses, the Prophet, had used the spices of Kerala(1). These trade relations were continued by the Arabs and Arabia became the centre of transactions between the Europe and the East. The Arabs had migrated and settled in Sumatra and Ceylon from the beginning of 1st century A.D(2). C.N. Ahmad Moulavi (d 1994), a noted religious scholar wrote that,

"the religion had inserted a trade relation with Greece and Rome from the early days onwards. The intermediary role played between them was made by the Arabs, Egyptians and Syrians" (3).

The spices, precious stones, animals and hill products of Kerala attracted traders from all over the world. As early as the days of Solomon, the Prophet (1000 BC), the ships of Tarshishu used to come here once in three years for the trade of ivory, apes and peacock (4). The indigenous people of India maintained friendly relations with other countries in general and the Arabs in particular.

The extensive coastal area and the availability of spices attracted foreign merchants to Kerala from the early times. The similarities of Greek name for rice (Onyza), Ginger (Zanzibar), Cinnamon (Carpion) and the Malayalam Ari, Inchiner and Karpooram
indicate that trade existed between Greece and Malabar, the only Indian area where all these products were grown in abundance \(^5\). Moreover, it is the special nature of Kerala coast which was bounded with the availability of pure fresh water. All the foreigners who had reached Kerala for various purposes, therefore, settled there for a short period for collecting goods and waiting for the suitable climate for departure. It resulted to develop matrimonial alliance with the natives and form a group of people with the mixed culture. Dr. S. M. Muhammad Koya accredited some facts that:

"The Arab traders who reached in the shore of Malabar, mingled with common people and made matrimonial alliance with natives. This caused to form a group of people called Mappila"\(^6\).

As subsequently this created a fallacious term for Mappilas as Ma– Pila; mother's son\(^7\). On the other hand it should be meant Maha (great) and Pilla (child)\(^8\).

The pre-Islamic Arab poet Imra al-Qays (d.550) compared the dry dung of the antelope to the pepper corns in his poem\(^9\). Imra al-Qays; while praising the beauty of his two beloveds, says in his Qasida which is ranked the first in the seven worldly reputed Qasidas Sabah Mu'allaquat:

"When both of them stand in front of me in the perfume blowing from them and fragrances producing out of their presence
are as in the morning air had come with the fragrance of ‘Clove’.

Nabigiah Zubyani and other poets have frequently used the word clove and its qualities in their poetry. The famous Arabic dictionary *Lisan al Arab* has quoted five poetic compositions from the different Arab poets in this regard\(^{10}\). Elamkulam Kunjanpillai observed:

“Pepper, which was grown in Kerala alone until the Dutch spread its cultivation in Java, was an essential item for the people in the cold area” \(^{11}\).

It is a sufficient proof for the availability of pepper in Arabia before Islam. It is also clear that Arabs had mercantile contact with Kerala before advent of Islam and spices of Kerala were much familiar to them. Ceylon was known to them for its treasure of pearls and precious stones. The Chinese traveller Fa-hien (fl AD 399 -414) had witnessed a number of South Arabian traders in Ceylon in 414 AD\(^{12}\). The Arabs used to sail through the Malabar coast to Ceylon for business and trade. This also strengthened Arabs’ contact with Kerala. The Arabs and the Rajas of Kerala lived in peace and harmony with each other. No communal rivalries and religious discriminations prevailed. Communalism and religious fanaticism were not familiar to the indigenous people of Kerala until the coming of Europeans in 1498. Shaikh Zainudeen observed in the end of the 16\(^{th}\) century:
“Muslims enjoyed great respect and regards from the Hindu rulers. The main reason for this is that the constructions and developments of the country took place largely through the Muslims. The remuneration for the Muadhins and Qadis are paid by the Government”\(^{(13)}\).

**ADVENT OF ISLAM IN KERALA**

It is a fact that Islam was introduced in Kerala in earlier times. On the advent of Islam in Kerala, the historians rightly indicated the geographical proximity of Malabar to the Indian Ocean and the trade relationship with Arabs that felicitated Islam to reach Kerala in the life time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) itself. Francis Day’s assumption that the 1\(^{st}\) settlement of the Muslims in the western coast took place sometimes in the seventh century strengthened this view\(^{(14)}\). The traditional belief regarding the spread of Islam in Malabar is based on the account of Keralolpathi, relating the conversion of a native ruler called Cheraman Perumal who is said to have gone to Makkah and embraced Islam under the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)\(^{(15)}\). According to the traditional narratives, Shaikh Zaheerudin and his friends landed Kodungallur and met the Chera King. They explained the mission of the Prophet and his miracles which were witnessed by the king himself. He was attracted to the faith and expresses his desire to embrace Islam and accompanied them to Arabia. Later he visited the Prophet (SAW) six years before Hijra(617 A.D). He embraced Islam and received the name Tajuddin.
After residing there for a few years, he returned to Malabar, but on the way he died at Shaker Muqalla in Yemen in the first year of Hijra\textsuperscript{16}. To strengthen this view C.N. Ahmad Moulavi, a noted religious scholar, cited a tradition, reported by Abu Saeed al Khudri, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) which was recorded by the Hadith scholar Imam Hakim in his \textit{Mustadrak} that:

“A King from India gave a gift of ginger packed in a jar to the Prophet and he distributed it among his companions and he fed me to one piece.”\textsuperscript{17}

According to the second view the conversion of Perumal took place in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D\textsuperscript{18}. It is based on the account of Umar bin Muhammad Suhrawardi, who claims that the conversion of Cheraman Perumal took place due to the influence of Raja of Mahal Deep (Maldeep) who had business relations with Middle East and was treated friendly by Cheraman Perumal. During the period of Waleed 1\textsuperscript{st} (695 to 705), the Umayyad ruler, he reached at Basra, where he was welcomed by Malik bin Dinar. In 713 AD while returning to Malabar he died at Shaker Muqalla. The inscriptions on a Muslim tomb stone at Pandalayani, Kollam supported this version. It says

“Ali Ibn Uthorman was obliged to leave this world forever to the One which is Everlasting—may God bestow on him His mercy— in the year 166 A H(788 A.D) the others declared
after Muhammad the Prophet (SAW) left to Madina”\(^{19}\).

The third perspective goes like this. The conversion of the Chera King occurred in the 9\(^{th}\) century A.D. Shaikh Zainudeen, the author of *Tuhfat al Mujahidin*, held the view that Islam rooted in Kerala in the 9\(^{th}\) century A.D. In his words,

“There is no clear evidence to say for sure which year this happened. It might have been happened in 200 years after Hijra”\(^{20}\).

The editors of *Imperial Gazetteers*\(^{21}\) and the *Tarisapalli Copper Plate* accounts strengthen this view. Dr. M.G.S. Narayan says that the *Tarisapalli Copper Plate* also proved the Muslim presence in Kerala in 8\(^{th}\) Century A.D.\(^{22}\). The supporters of the last view quote the inscriptions on the Madai Mosque in their favour. This much acclaimed that the Mosque was built by Malik bin Dinar who came to Kerala in 518 A.H. (1124 A.D) for missionary purpose. Moreover, the traditions relating to the disappearance of the last Perumal, Rama Kulasekhara, under the strange circumstances in 1122 A.D also supported this version. Dr. M.G.S. Narayan suggests that,

“The conversion of Chera King might have taken place not during the Prophet time, but in 1122 A.D”\(^{23}\).

However it does not mean that in Malabar there were no Muslims before. The tomb inscriptions at Pandalayani Kollam and the *Tarisapalli Copper Plate* are the evidences to prove the presence of Muslims in Kerala prior to the conversion of the Perumal. In spite
of the difference of opinions regarding the actual date of advent of Islam in Kerala, it is certain that the Muslims had become a distinct community in Kerala by the 9th century A.D. Whatsoever may be the history of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal, it certainly accelerated the growth of Islam in Kerala\(^{(24)}\).

All the historians agreed that one of the Kings of Kerala accepted Islam and disappeared in unknown circumstances. Dr. M.G.S. Narayan pointed out that there was no reason to reject the tradition that the last Chera King embraced Islam and went to Makkah since it is a place not only in Muslim chronicle but also in Hindu Brahminical historia, like *Keralolpathi*\(^{(25)}\)

All the traditional accounts were unanimous in the opinion that the first group of missionary Muslims landed at Kodungalloor and started their preaching with the generous advice provided by Cheraman Perumal. They started to construct mosques and to reform the society throughout Kerala. According to the *Rihlat al Muluk* they constructed ‘18’ mosques\(^{(26)}\). But Shaikh Zainudeen says that they constructed ‘10’ mosques only \(^{(27)}\). William Logan, the British collector in Malabar says that,

"Malik bin Dinar and his associates, even with the exceptional advantages they possessed, would hardly have been able to establish mosques at various places in such short time unless the ground had been prepared by the earlier Mappilas" \(^{(28)}\)
We can thus conclude that when Islam emerged in the Arabian Peninsula in 7th century, its influence rushed to Kerala through the merchants. Dr. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju states:

"Thus it is clear that the Arabs had close commercial relations with West Indian port for the spices of Kerala. The colonies of Arabs must have existed in the port towns for purpose of trade. Therefore it supports the supposition that soon after the rise of Islam in Arabia, it reached the Kerala coast by the Arab merchants. It seems also reasonable to believe that in the first fresh of enthusiasm they tried to spread the new faith in all the lands they traded with" (29).

These Arab colonies culminated into a new generation known as Mappilas or Jonaka Mappila through the muta’ marriage prevalent among the Arabs in pre-Islamic era but banned later on in the Sunni world. They were the first converts who helped Malik bin Dinar and his associates to construct mosques and spread Islam.

**Main Factors**

a. Social Factors:

Kerala was indeed one of the most caste ridden states of South India and the untouchability was very rigid and extreme. The low caste people were forbidden to enter temples, bazaars and even walk through the streets or drink from the public wells used by the upper castes. Education was totally denied to these low caste people. Shaikh Zainudeen says:
"The Hindus of Malabar loyally maintained their caste system, because of this they encountered many difficulties. Yet, they did not attempt to violate the norms of caste system or to do away with the system. The Hindus here belonged to many different castes. Among them there were high castes, low castes and castes of other degrees in between. A bath was obligatory on high caste Hindu in the event of any physical contact with the members of the lower caste or they happened to be together within the boundaries and limits prescribed for intercourse"[30].

These outcaste groups of Hindus were popularly known as untouchables. To escape this caste discrimination of upper class the lower class welcomed Islam as a chance to win some degree of social freedom which was denied to them by high caste people especially, Brahmins. It was the result of their aspirations to escape from uncompromising and rigid caste systems and its taboos. Contrary to this, the moto of Islam is universal brotherhood. According to Islamic principles all human beings are equal on the earth and no one is given undue preference over the other; self purification and righteous deeds are the criteria to attribute any distinction among the human beings. Discrimination between the human beings on the basis of caste, creed, colour, gender, religion and region is forbidden in Islam. In Kerala, the Muslims made close contact with low caste people who were employed in various professions and had worked
more freely under them at that time. The social equality maintained by Muslims and the respect given to them by upper class Hindus attracted them to new faith. This dissatisfied low caste wished to rise their status in the society by the conversion. The same raised their social status in the society. Shaikh Zainudeen says:

"No body would affect a Hindu if converted into Islam. Moreover he was considered to be one among the Muslims and was given all respect."[31].

Logan point out that:

"If a Cheruman[32] or the other lower classes people convert to Islam, their social status would immediately rise to upper strata of the society. All his demerits, due to his birth in low castes would be vanished and considered him a noble man like other Muslims"[33].

The Islamic social views and practices attracted the common people of Kerala at large.

b. Political Factors

The royal patronage and encouragement extended by rulers was significant in promoting Islamic awakening among the inhabitants. The Zamorins of Calicut encouraged the lower caste to embrace the new faith because of two factors. In order to have sufficient sailors to sustain their commercial stability on account of the increase of trade with the foreign countries, it became essential for Zamorins to guard the sea port from the pirates. For this purpose the Zamorins must
have traced out more naval forces. The army of the Zamorins, did not recruit the Nairs as they were restricted traditionally from fighting in the sea. Zamorins must have appointed Mappilas as a substitute to guard the frontier of coastal area. He ordered that in every family of fishermen in his dominion, one or more male members should be brought up as Muslim\(^{(34)}\). This is justified by the fact that many of the fishermen along the Malabar coast are Muslims today.

Secondly, as a ruler of vast region the Zamorins wanted the support of the Muslim community to maintain the balance of power. P.C. Manavikraman Raja says:

"The Rulers of Kerala gave the Muslims, the monopoly of export and import, freedom to perform religious rituals, allowed them to propagate Islam and marry the local women"

\(^{(35)}\).

He favourably supported Muslim traders to settle down in the port town of Kerala to promote the economic prosperity and political stability of the small kingdom. The rulers of South Kerala also maintaining the same policy and gave considerable help to the promotion of Islam in Kerala. The King Marthanda Varma (1729 -58) was granted a large estate at Thiruvananthapuram and Quilone to built mosques at their convenience\(^{(36)}\).

Whatever may be their intention behind this support, it is established historically that their policies helped the missionaries to
carry out their selfless preaching conveniently. Shaikh Zainudeen says that:

"The non-Muslim rulers of Kerala were too accommodative to the Muslims. They were cordial and did never prevent the spread of Islam". (37)

c. Economic Factors

The Muslim traders were wealthy and they maintained a higher standard of living and sound culture. This might have induced the upper caste and lower caste alike to accept Islamic faith. The Muslim style of living, their loyalty to the fellow ones aroused the curiosity even among the Hindu elite who resided in the urban centres and got into contact with them. Sir Thomas Arnold observed:

"Occasionally, also converts are drawn from among the Nairs and native Christians" (38).

The economic reason behind this friendly relationship was that the King and the Hindu subjects largely depended upon Muslims for their transactions. Since there were no sea ports and trading centres among the Hindus of Kerala, the Mappilas filled the vacuum and the interrelationship became an unavoidable one. Moreover the Mappilas did not verbally contempt the social structure of Hindus; rather they remained indifferent. Millar says,

"The rise of the Zamorins was aided by two factors. The first was notable absence of incursions from without by the dominating powers of the sub continent. The second was
the Zamorin’s friendly coalition with the Mappilas and Arab traders. Economically that coalition had beneficial results for both parties. On the one hand, the Arabs in the end succeeded in total controlling trade in the Arabian Sea and in exercising strong influence to the east. On the other hand, with the help of his friends, the Zamorin whose chief source of income was custom duty, could monopolise the trade outlet”[39].

Till the advent of the Portuguese, the maritime trade of the Malabar coast was entirely controlled by the Arabs. Mutual economic interests induced both the Muslims and Hindus for interacting in a balanced and positive way. The foreign trade of the country had reached the highest peak of development. This correlation and integrity desirably helped to attract the indigenous people of the Kerala to accept Islam as their faith.

In short, the economy of the state was stabilised by the Muslim presence and naturally the government appointed them on the higher administrative posts. They acquired the prestigious position of Raksha Purusha to be awarded in the Mamagam festival celebrated officially in every 12th year. The Muslims were honoured and respected every where. These Muslim traders spent a lot of money for the propagation of the religion which attracted the lower caste people and other communities to Islam. Shaikh Zainudeen says that:
"The earlier Muslim traders collected a fund to meet the financial requirement of the newly converted people." [40].

SPREAD OF ISLAM

The Muslims in Kerala were advanced in population certainly not by force or political or financial inducement but the influence of Islamic civilization convinced these people to accept the unitary concept of the Islamic teachings. The scholars unanimously agreed that the important factor to facilitate the spread of Islam in Kerala was the *dawah* work of Muslim Scholars and Sufis. Their peaceful means of propagation, and simple ways of life attracted a number of people to Islam. The Sufis lived amongst the people and shared their joys and sorrows. Simultaneously the people were always associated with them seeking their blessing and visiting their shrines. The indigenous sources reveal the names and activities of several Muslim Sufis and saints who propagated Islam in the region.

The tradition of Malik bin Dinar and his associates, spreading the religion of Islam in Kerala definitely indicates a missionary activity. They were responsible for a systematized missionary work after constructing mosques at different parts of Kerala[41]. These missionaries spread the Islamic ideology and invited the local people to the new faith. After that a number of scholars and saints came to Kerala. Ibn Battuta says in his notes that he had seen many
scholars and saints such as Badrudhin Al Ma’bari at Mangalore, Khatib Hussain and a saint Sayeed at Ezhimalai, Shaikh Abi Ishaque Kasarooni and Shiahabuddin Kasarooni at Calicut, the great Scholar Muhammad Shah Bander who was qadi at Kollam, a Shafi scholar Alaudin Aujee, Shaikh Fakarudin Kasarooni and so on. All of them were popular personalities and had a good position among the rulers and the subject. He had also seen a number of mosques in different parts of Kerala[42].

When Sufism developed into orders in the 12th century their activities reached at Kerala also. The Sufi orders like Qadri Rifai, Chisti, Suhrwardi and Naqshbandi were the important Sufi orders in Kerala. The existence of a number of Sufi devotional songs called Malas like Muhiyadin Mala, Rifai Mala, Nafeesat Mala and so on indicates the influence of sufism on Muslim life [43]. The great Sufi Ahmad Jalaluddin of Bukhara came to Baliapatanam in the year 1494. His descendants were renowned for their scholarship and he was widely recognized as a leader of the community. Said Muhammad Moula (d 1792) in Kavarathy, a descendant of Jalaluddin Bukhara (d 1480) expanded their activities all over Kerala[44]. With the arrival of the Makhdum in the second half of the 15th century Ponnani became the religious and cultural centre of Mappilas. The oldest mosque at Ponnani is said to have been built in the 12th century[45]. The first Makhdum Shaikh Zainudeen Ali (1467-1521) was initiated in to the Chishti Tariqah[46]. Qadi Muhammad (d-
1660) and his successors, the hereditary qadis of Calicut, were also actively engaged in the spread of Qadiri order. The greatest of the Shuharwardi Shaikh Umar bin Muhammad Suhrawardi, the author of Rihalat al Muluk, spread Islam in the surrounding areas of Mahi. Shaik Muhammad of Puratheel near Kannur, is better known as Abdul Khader Thani (d 1574) also belonged to the same order. Syed Muhammad Hamid, popularly known as Valiya Seethi Thangal of Qoilandy, the great Ba-Alavi saint, an offshoot of Qadiriya, Shaikh Jifri of Hadramaut at Calicut and Said Abdu Rahman Aidrose (d 1751) of Hadarmout at Ponnani were great scholars and spiritual leaders of Kerala. The great Ulama and sufi of Malabar Syed Alavi Thangal better known as Mampuram Thangal (d 1844), his son Syed Fazal Thangal (d 1901) and Umar Qadi of Veliyancode (1852) were the running spirit behind the Mappila resurgence against the British and paradoxically during the same period the conversion increased rapidly. In 1856 the number of Cherumar was 1,87,758 and within a period of 25 years they were reduced into 25% \(^{(47)}\). Millar says that in the period 1871 to 1891, the growth rate of Hindus was 22.6% while the growth rate of Muslims was 63.9% \(^{(48)}\). Again Prof. K.A.Bahaudheen noted that the growth rate of Muslims during the period 1831 to 1851 was 42.8%\(^{(49)}\). Another great Sufi Muhammad Shah, of a Persian origin, reached at Kondotty in 1718 A.D. He was responsible for the conversion of a large number of people at Kondotty, Areakode and Palakkad. His arrival caused a dispute
between Kondotty and Ponnani Section of Muslims regarding the *Murids'* prostrating in front of the Shaikh. More than forty Syed families had made their way into Malabar for preaching Islam. Most of these families were attracted to some order of Sufism and engaged in spiritual pursuits. The Sufis like Sayyida Majida Bibi and Maheen Abubacker of Thiruvananthapuram, Shaikh Faridudin Awliya of Kanjiramattom in Ernakulam were other influential saints, in the central and southern parts of Kerala.

The important feature of Sufism emerged in Kerala are to be noted that the Sufis were not confined to Khanqahs premises. Instead, their activities were centered around the mosques in the form of *Pallidars* (50) or *Maktabas* (51). The second outstanding feature was that, the Sufis gave a great stress on acquisition of knowledge. The students from different parts lodged in such mosques and completed the education under them. Those who completed their learning in the said institutions were finally awarded the title *Musliyar*. During this period they became well versed in certain religious sciences. These scholars had been appointed either as *qadi* or *khatib* or *imam*.

All these Sufis, *ulama* and missionaries constructed mosques and propagated the teachings of Islam. On account of this the Muslim population was tremendously increased to one fifth of the total population in the 16th century (52) and which strengthened the spread through nook and corner of Kerala. To sum up, the factors
like Indo - Arab commercial relations, role played by the missionaries, ulama and Sufis, was tremendous. In addition to these, co-operation of the local rulers and peaceful preaching of the Muslims provided a fertile soil to the spread of Islam in Kerala. The Muslims with the encouragement and inspiration from the Islamic teaching enriched later on the Kerala society and played a constructive role in the national movement of modern India and resisted violently against the colonizing powers.
Notes and References


8. *Pilla* is a term of endearment and intimacy and the Nairs of Travencore even now use this honourary title with their names. The Christians of Travancore are called *Nasrani Mappilas* while the Muslims called *Jonaka* or *Chonaka* Mappilas. For the details of various theories of origin of the


10. See *Lisan al Arab*, vol - II, p 330, vol- IV 532 - 556. For detailed study of Indian commodities used in pre Islamic Arabic literature, see Mubarak Puri, Qadi Muhammad Athar, *Arab - O -Hind Ahad-e- Risalat Mein* (Urdu), Delhi, Nadwa Al Musannifeen, 1964, pp 13-55.


15. Many evidences are available about the advent of Islam in Kerala during the life time of Prophet (SAW). Some edifices in Madai Mosque in Kannur mentioned 5-AH, Kodungallur Mosque 11-A.H, Thottungal Mosque near Ponnani 8-AH, the graveyard of Rukkab, who lived in the lifetime of Prophet, was situated in Ernakulam which mentioned 9-AH. For more details see Prof. K.M. Bahauddhin *Kerala Muslims Poratta Charithram*, (Malayalam), *(History of Kerala Muslim Struggle)*, IPH, Calicut, 1995, p 11. The marble edifices which found infront of Madai Mosque was write 21-AH, and the inscription on Kasargode Jama Masjid mentioned that the mosque was completed in 12 Rajab 22-AH. For more details see Dr. C.K. Kareem, *Prajeena Keralam, Muslim Avirbhava Charithram*, (Malayalam) *(Ancient Kerala, History of the Muslim Origin in Kerala)*, Islamic Sahithya Academy, Calicut 1999 p 59.


Hakim historically authentic and reliable. Though Imam Dahabi while abridging the Mustadrak has criticized Amr bin Hakkam a student of Imam Shubah, one of the narrators of the Hadith.


32. Cheruman., one of the largest group of the depressed caste among the Hindu community they had undergone many discriminations and segregations from the side of upper class Hindus.


43. Randathani, Hussain, Dr., *Mappila Muslims; A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggle*, Other Books, Calicut, 2007, p.34.


45. Randathani, Hussain, Dr., *op.cit.*, p.37.
Pallidars or Dars:- The Arabic words dars means class: here mosque itself is served as classroom and hostel. In the technical sense the education system attached to mosque was known as dars. This system of religious education is quite unique and has played a decisive role in the diffusion of Islamic knowledge throughout Kerala. Even today this system of education existing in some places. This system of education sprang up in Kerala soon after the arrival of Makhdum family at Ponnnani (Dr. C.K. Kareem, Kerala Muslim History, p259).

The curricula of dars covering both religious science and modern subject, Quran, tafsir (exegesis), hadith (tradition) fiqh (jurisprudence), tasawwuf (mystical science), nahw (grammer), sarf (morphology), aqeeda (faith), bayan (rhetorics) adab (literature), mantiq (logic), hisab (mathematics), uqlaidis (Euclid), tibb (medicine) and falsafah (philosophy). The duration of this course took 10 to 15 years and the books were taught in a sequential manner. The first textbook was known
as Pathkitab or Asharatu Kitab (10 books) which containing faith (aqaid) moral science (akhlaq) Islamic mysticism (tasawwuf) then grammar book Alfiya, Zanjan, Ajnas, Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and Miskat Masabih, jurisprudent (fathul muin) later imparted the modern subjects. As far as style of instruction is concerned there was no bench, table or blackboard. The classes were conducted on the ground of the mosque and method of teaching is oral. The teacher would recite the text, word by word and would give meaning and explanation. There was only one teacher for different classes and senior students helped the junior student on the learning. In the dars system the syllabi and curriculum was varied from place to place. Some time it limited to Arabic grammar, Quran, hadith and fiqh.

51. Maktabs or Othupallikal is a primary religious school running along with every mosque which imparting religious education in vernacular language. This institution was known as Othupalli. It imparts religious and Arabic education to Muslim boys and girls. There was a teacher in this primary institution called Mulla, Mullaka or seethe. The method of teaching was oral. To Logan

“The Mulla would recite the lessons loudly and the students would recite the sentences until they memorized”.

38
The curriculum was too rigid and confined to the writing and reading of Arabic alphabet, recitation of small *surahs* in Quran, some basic information about obligatory rituals and provide training in prayer, ablution, fasting and learning of certain *dhikr*. There was any fixed syllabus nor any central board or authority for monitoring the activities. Rather, all these were handled by a single man *Mulla*. See more details Dr. Ahmad Kutty, Arabic Language and Kerala, (Malayalam), Souvenir, RUA college golden jubilee, Farook, 1998 p129. The medium of instruction was Arabic – Malayalam. Later the British government greatly utilized this system of education to spread secular education.