CONCLUSION
The various *Quranic* verses and Prophetic traditions emphasize the importance of knowledge, which encourage Muslims to acquire all types of knowledge from any corner of the world. In Islam, there is no difference between knowledge and education; both are called *ilm* (knowledge). During the latter half of the medieval ages there was a stagnation and decline in production and propagation of knowledge and it was confined mainly to theology. Meanwhile Islamic community had enjoyed the benefit of all branches of knowledge. During this time the Renaissance and Reformatory movements brought changes in the medieval European society and in this, the influence of the Muslim community too played a major role.

Within a short period of time, the Prophetic ideas of Muhammad were widely accepted in the Arabian society. Consequently, Islam became the official religion of Arabia. It became an institutionalised religion that followed a set of basic rules and regulations, which is mentioned in the *Quranic* teachings. Islamic educational efforts were started in this context. The main objective of these institutions was to give basic instruction in all types of knowledge along with Islamic teachings to the followers.

During the initial phase itself, Islam reached the Indian sub continent, though historians differ about the same. The Arabs had established commercial relations with Kerala even before the rise of Islam in Arabia. The Islamic ideology reached Kerala through the early Arabian merchants as and when it
originated in Arabia. The traditional Arabian merchants had played a leading role in the religious proselytization in Kerala.

The coastal areas played a significant role in the development of Islamic community in Kerala. Many Arabs who were either traders or religious missionaries settled here from the early days of Islam. The Arab travellers who visited Kerala during the 14th and 15th centuries mentioned about various names of Kerala coasts being thronged by the Arab colonies and settlements. The famous Arab traveller Ibn Battuta who visited Kerala during the 14th century mentioned in detail about the Arabs and their families who had settled in the coastal areas of Kerala.

The existing social condition had very much accelerated the spread of Islam in Kerala. At that time Kerala society had not given importance to any type of social values. So the Islamic missionary activities of the early Arab merchants were not hindered by the Kerala society. The suppressed lower class people were mainly attracted to the Islamic teaching. In these circumstances there were a large number of religious conversions to the Islam without any force or compulsion.

Forcible conversion was not possible in a society where the Muslims were only a nominal group compared to the indigenous community. The prevalent cultural and religious situation of the state was one among the main causes of religious conversion in Kerala. The newly converted people were not aware of the Islamic principles and the first step of the Islamic educational processes was
started on them. The early Islamic educational activities succeeded to give basic awareness of Islamic teachings to the new followers.

The early Muslim settlers of Kerala had constructed several mosques throughout Kerala and appointed one Quazi in each mosque. These Quazis were the first religious leaders and teachers. They were not only leaders for prayer but also teachers to give religious instruction to the converted people. This was the first step of the Madrasa educational development in Kerala.

The early primary Islamic religious educational system faced ample limitations. The newly converted people were illiterates and they did not understand the basic Islamic principles. So the earliest Islamic religious teachers taught only the fundamental ideas about the Islamic religion. During that period the teaching method followed was the traditional Gurukula system and the method of teaching was oral. The Muslims established religious educational institutions known as Othupallikudangal throughout the Muslim settlements in Kerala while Dars acted as centres of higher education.

The traditional Othupallikudangal system continued for a long time. However, the colonial period witnessed a great turning point in the history of the educational system prevailed in Kerala. The British government was the principal agent in disseminating modern (secular) education in India. They established a network of schools and colleges in India, which gave birth to innumerable elite Indians well-versed in modern culture.
Western education began to spread in Malabar during the first half of the 19th Century. But unfortunately the efforts were sheer failure in the case of Muslims due to their enmity towards the British.

During that time British Malabar played a leading part in the national movement. The policies of the British government ruined the peasantry of Malabar. The heavy land revenue and suppressive activities of the landlords made the Malabar Mappilas rioters. In order to create a communal gulf among the land lords and tenants the British official historians were trying to depict all riots in a communal outlook. Gradually the resistance of the Malabar peasants towards the British land policy took the form of an opposition towards all the policies of the British. Consequently the Muslims began to view every British policy with an eye of suspicion. This also caused the poor response of Muslims towards English education in Kerala. The educational system introduced by the British was strongly opposed by the Muslims on the belief that it threatened to subvert the very basis of Islamic faith.

The Muslims of Kerala gave much importance to Madrassa for imparting religious education to their children. The religious institutions were established adjacent to the mosques. For Madrasa education Muslim community primarily depended on Arabic and Arabi Malayalam languages and hence they taught that they were in need of only these two languages alone, for their education. So they considered learning a foreign language, English, was of no use in communication or education of their community.
At that time the religious leaders were able to exert great influence among the Muslim community. But these leaders did not encourage English or western education in the early years. It was the Christian community that favored the promotion of English education and the Muslim leaders had an eye of suspicion about the activities of the missionaries. They considered that the missionaries working for modern education would use it as a means for the conversion to the Christian religion. So the Muslim religious leaders were opposed to English education and they termed English as *Naraga basha*. Some of the opportunist and obscurantist Muslim theological leaders are partially responsible for the backwardness and the lack of modern education among the Muslims.

It was during this period that the Muslim reformation leaders came forward to rejuvenate the Islamic community. The prominent leaders among them were Chalilakathu Kunjahammad *Haji*, Makthi *Thangal*, Hamajani *Thangal*, Vakkom *Moulavi* etc. And their aim was to give an orientation for the social and cultural revival of the Muslim community. These leaders through their writing tried hard to make them aware of the need for modern education as well as religious education. And they were successful in understanding the necessity of modern education among the Muslims of Kerala and also revealed the drawbacks of existing religious education followed by the Muslims.

The reformative ideas had broken up the traditional and unsystematic *Madrasa* educational practices. The reformative leaders stated that the orthodox Muslims educational practices were not sufficient to fully understand the Islamic
principles. The traditional Mullas were able to teach only the basic principles of Islamic practices. So the students had no clear idea of what they had been taught. The reformative leaders initially could not gain the full support of the orthodox section of the Muslim community. When changes affected the orthodox sections of the community and the Mullas opposed it due to the fear that the process of change would erode their authority. But gradually they began to play a leading role in the proliferation of the Madrasa system. They re-organised the existing Madrasa systems similar to that of modern educational institutions.

The restless efforts of the reformatory leaders were not limited to the field of Madrasa education. They were also engaged in the re-organisation of the Muslim community. They severely criticised the traditional un-Islamic practices followed by the Muslim community and questioned the authenticity of the ongoing practices like, Khabar ziyarath (prayer at the tomb of Muslim saints), Dua, priesthood, etc. During the initial stage the reformative leaders faced severe opposition from the orthodox Muslim groups. Slowly the reformative ideology gained acceptance of one section of the Muslims. It resulted in the organization of a new section in the Muslim community. The Kerala Jameat Ulama and Jamaat-e-Islami were the important organisations formed in such a way to propagate the modern reformatory ideology among the Muslim community.

During this period a number of other organisations also emerged in the Muslim community in Kerala, such as the Samatha-Kerala-Jame-at Ulama,
Dakshina-Kerala-Jame-at-Ulama, Kerala Naduvathul Mujahiddin and Jamaat-e-Islami. But one cannot see any type of ideological differences among these organisations. Each and every group creatively worked to the uplift of the Muslim community in Kerala. But today they have deviated from their real objectives. These organisations do not have any mutual understanding with one another. There are no unified efforts anywhere to be seen and its effects the progress of the Muslim community. The ideological clash among these organisations often causes ideological confusion among the members of the community.

At present, the Islamic community in Kerala is mainly divided in to two sections based on their ideological differences. One is the orthodox group called the Sunnis while the other is the reformative called the Mujahid. The division is clearly visible in the religious educational field. Though they do not accept each other in the programmes and policies of religious affairs they are active in the area of religious education. Having understood the limitations of the existing Madrasa educational practices, they are trying to overcome them.

The orthodox section of the Muslim community established Madrasas through out the Muslim centers of Kerala. The Samastha-Kerala-Jame-at-Ulama, Dakshina-Kerala-Jame-at-Ulama and Markaz are their prominent religious educational organisations leading the Madrasa activities. The activities of the Samastha include the area of Waynad, Kasargode, Kannur, Palakkad,
Kozhikkode, Malappuram, Thrissur and some other parts of southern Kerala. While the area of the Dakshina is limited to southern Kerala.

The Samastha-Kerala- Jame-at-Ulama enjoys the foremost position in the Madrasa educational field. They have established several Madrasas throughout Kerala and other states. The Ulamas understood the problems of traditional Madrasa education and formed the Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board which is trying to solve the existing problems faced by the Madrasa system in Kerala. It has introduced several policies for the educational progress among the Muslim community. The educational board has prepared a new syllabus for the Madrasas and new academic calendar for the religious educational activities. The Samastha organizes training classes also for the Madrasa teachers to improve their standard. These kinds of activities have brought new trends in the Islamic educational system.

Though Islam demands its followers to acquire all kinds of knowledge from any corner of the world, the Madrasa system of education is limited to spiritual education. Actually Islam does not impose any restrictions to these institutions for acquiring or teaching rational education.

The 1950s, was a turning point in the history of higher religious education in Kerala. The traditional Dars system of education was transformed into the modern Arabic colleges. The important feature of this Arabic college system is that it gives priority to religious education as well as modern education. The new types of the Arabic colleges are given an opportunity to fulfill their
educational needs. Now, there are more than two thousand Arabic colleges working in Kerala under different managements. These colleges offer free food, lodging and other facilities.

Some Arabic colleges started degree and post graduation courses along with Islamic theology. It was the realization of the need of modern education as well as religious education, which benefited the present generation. These kinds of radical changes in the Islamic education is also the aftereffect of recent reformative movements. The Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid are the important organizations which led the reformative activities in Kerala. They believed that the reformation was only possible through reforms of religious education.

They established their own Madrasa Educational Board named Kerala Naduwathul Mujahidhin Education Board (K N M E B) and Kerala Majilisathul Thaallimil (K M T) to orient their Madrasa educational system. Today there are more than six hundred Madrasas under the K N M E Board and one hundred and ninety five Madrasas under the direction of the K M T. The introduction of Malayalam language in their Madrasas is another important change brought about by them. The Educational Board has prepared Malayalam textbooks for the Madrasas. It helps the students to harmonize religious education with the modern education and they have totally discarded the Arabi Malayalam language. They think that the use of Arabi Malayalam language was one of the causes of the backwardness of the Muslim community.
This reformative ideology slowly gained the support of the Muslim community. Their uncompromising efforts in the field of religious education caused the growth of a new generation in the community in its real spirit. They started several modern educational institutions, which also uphold their reformative vision. They have also started several measures to the uplift of Muslim women and started several Arabic colleges for them. Now many of the institutions have gained the affiliation of recognised universities. In addition to these activities they started several programmes for the cultural and social enhancement of Muslims. They introduced many newspapers and magazines of a secular in vernacular languages. Though the reformative groups brought many changes in the fragmentary religious educational system, these efforts were limited to the Madrasa curriculum alone. At the same time the activities of these groups have given a separate identity to the community from other communities.

During the early 18th and 19th centuries the Pardha system was not common among the Muslim community in Kerala. But today due to the compulsion of the reformative organisations the system is very common on moral grounds among the Muslims of the state. They are compelling even the female kids to wear the Pardhas in their childhood itself. This kind of efforts of the reformative leaders created a separate identity to the Muslim children, which may provide communal isolation. Likewise, Islamic fundamentalism is growing in the soil ever than before with the blessing of these organizations, which is
dangerous to Indian secularism and national unity. Communal isolationism is suicidal to the community and their success depends on their readiness to stand sholders with the educational fraternal communities in a spirit of equality and justice.

Some religious opponents allege that Madrasas are factories of Jihadis or terrorists. As far as Kerala is concerned no such Madrasa institutions have been identified so far. Islam dose not support any kind of terrorist activities or communal violence. It gives great importance to national patriotism and one who dies for their nation is considered as shahid. Many Madrasa teachers and students actively participated with the national struggle for independence from Kerala, particularly from the Malabar area. At the same time some of the Madrasa teachers and Mulas have been creating communal disharmony through their rhetoric and misinterpretation of the Quranic verses.

Islam has not sanctioned any kind of gender differences. But in most of the cases of Muslim girls who attained puberty, they are not allowed to continue the Madrasa education. There was a positive attitude towards women's education in the early days of Islam. Hazrath Aysha, the youngest wife of the Prophet Muhammad took an active part in promoting religious education among the people. But no Muslim woman priest or Madrasa teacher has been produced by these institutions so far. Though Islam is against gender discrimination, today these institutions are not caring the message of gender equality on the ground that Shariat has no tradition of Khutba being read by a
woman. Thus the Madrasa education in the state is male dominated. The object of Islamic education for women is to make Muslim girls strong and hard working, well-behaved religious, pious, wives. But in reality women had been confined to the households as a mere instrument. However now a days separate centres for women for Friday prayer and Madrasa education have been established in some places mainly due to the efforts of the reformatives.

The Madrasas are not enough to propagate or encourage the socio-cultural activities of Muslim students. The Mulas of the Madrasas think that the study and practice of various art forms particularly performing arts are unislamic. They propagate the idea that if anybody practices such kind of cultural activities, their place is 'Hell' in the 'Other World', which is permanent and unchanging. Such kind of preaching always back seated the Muslim students from the cultural fronts.

The Madrasa education is getting rooted mainly in a low socio-economic base, which consists of poor, illiterate and downtrodden Muslims. Today it leaves the students fit for religious purpose only. After completing religious education students join as Maulavi or Madrasa teachers in rural areas. While the students belonging to other sections of the Muslim community will leave the Madrasas immediately after acquiring some basic knowledge about Islam which is essential for their daily prayers and rituals.

However there is a realization in the Muslim community that it is necessary to make substantial changes in the traditional pattern of Madrasa
education. These institutions are functioning as centres of mere religious seminaries and seldom discuss the new frontiers of modern Science and technology. The Theology taught in the Madrasas today suffers from irrelevancy and sorely tries the patients of loyal Muslims attempting to deal with contemporary issues. This growing sense of the unrelatedness of religion to life weakens the power of Islam to hold and influence in Muslims and hastens and abets the process of secularism.

The Madrasas of the state are to be turned into formal educational institutions where all kinds of knowledge will be welcomed. As a result these institutions can be affiliated to the National Open School system which will benefit the Madrasa student to continue their learning process. The Islamic Educational Board may strive for the qualitative improvement of the Madrasa education to make the students good citizens, good Muslims and good preachers. Moreover, the introduction of technical oriented education in Madrasas would make the fit to face the challenges of modern life. Similarly, a fresh educational environment may be provided to develop the potentialities of the Madrasa students particularly in the field of art and culture. It is also desirable for the centres of Islamic learning to provide opportunity for non-Muslim pupils who are interested to learn more about Islamic education.

In short, we can see that the Madrasa education in the state serves only the religious needs of the Muslim community. But the Muslims of the new generation have had to bear the brunt of the so-called competitive forces
unleashed by liberalism and globalization. So the time has come to train the
students to acquaint themselves with the modern education coupled with
religious education to the extent that they may fulfill the obligation of the
Quranic Dawat (exhortion) in accordance with the needs of modern times.