CHAPTER 111

MUSLIM RELIGIOUS REFORMERS AND MADRASA EDUCATION
The Muslim attitude towards modern educational activities of European missionaries was negative during the early days. In the meantime these activities helped at least a few in the Muslim community to acquire modern education. These educated Muslims were at the forefront of a movement against superstitions in society and their relentless efforts made the community aware of the importance of modern education.

Formerly no timely changes could be adopted in the religious education of the Muslim community and it seems that the majority had no profound knowledge in religious matters. It was in this social context that the Muslim reformers came out with the Madrasa educational activities. Hence it could possibly be said that tremendous progress in Madrasa education took place in the latter half of the 19th century and in the early 20th century.

Early twentieth century was crucial as far as Kerala society was concerned. The period witnessed the upraising of downtrodden sections, the growth of communism and nationalism and the progress of religious-caste organizations, which favoured the Reformation movements in society, and the period brought significant changes in the Muslim community too as in other communities. It must also be said that the 20th century was a period in which the Islamic spiritual values and the fundamental principles were altered effectively to give a wider acceptance. The Muslim reformation movements that were gaining momentum in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore areas had many characteristic features.
Various erroneous notions regarding Islam were set right during this period. The basis of early Madrasa education was known as Othupally wherein Arabic alphabets, the Quran recitation and religious rituals were taught. Mulas in earlier times were selected from among the people who had only primary Islamic education and so Mulas were able to provide only an average education to the children who came to study Arabic. It could be seen that these Mulas were not competent enough to alter the existing rituals and customs followed in society during that time.

However, it is true that the attitude towards English education during the colonial period brought in some changes in Islamic community too, resulting in reformative leaders and it can be seen that these reformative leaders succeeded to a certain extent in promoting the need for modern education in the community. The contributions of these leaders in the field of Islamic religious education especially Madrasa education are valuable. Makthi Thangal, Hamadani Thangal, Chalilakathu Kunjahammad Haji, Vakkom Muhammad Abdulkhader Moulavi, K.M Moulavi, E.K Moulavi etc. were the eminent personalities who worked for social reformation and Madrasa education. Efforts taken by these leaders for Muslim Reformation and modern education should be taken into account while we consider Muslim religious education.

Makthi Thangal (1847-1912 A.D.) is being considered as a pioneer social and political reformer among Muslims. Tungal was born at Veliyancode, in Malappuaram district in 1847 A.D. His forefathers belonged to the Saqaf tribe of
Arabia¹. According to his own account his genealogical line extends to Abbas-ibn- Abdul Muthalib, an uncle of Prophet Muhammad and so the title ’Sayyid’ and ’Tangal’. His father was a Munshi (Translator from Persian language) under the British here and hence could get modern education and completed primary education from Chavakkad higher elementary school². By the time he had also acquired religious education in the traditional system. In addition to Malayalam and Arabic, he was proficient in Urdu, Persian, Tamil and English³. Being educated he was appointed as Excise Inspector by the British government⁴. But he resigned from the post in order to devote his whole life for education of the community.

Earlier efforts taken by Makthi Thangal were to defend massive anti Islamic, religious hype initiated by the Christian missionaries. His book ’Kathorakutharam’ criticized the Christian dogmas, especially the concept of the trinity. It created a sensation in the filed of theological polemics⁵. He also debated through the journal, ’Keralamithra’. In 1892, he published another work; ’Prakaleetha Porkalam’ .He challenged the Christian priests to come out with a

² Thangals and Sayyid, descendant of Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fathima and her sons Hassan and Hussain.
⁵ M.Abdul Samad, ‘Muslim Reformist Movements in Kerala; Work of Sayyid Sanaulla Makthi Thangal’, Proceedings of South Indian History Congress 12th Annual Section, 1991, p.205.
⁶ Ibid.,p.206.
rejoinder to the book and offered an Inam of Rs 200. But nobody took the challenge.

The major works of Makthi Thangal were devoted to answering the anti-Islamic propaganda of Christian missionaries. He had also published several booklets in which counter charges were levelled against Christian beliefs and practices of the Church. ‘Christiya Vayadappu’, ‘Suvishesha Masam’, ‘Madhyapanam Mashha Mathabhimanam’, ‘Yadasopilahoso’, ‘Masheeh Matha Mulanasham’, ‘Christiya Mooda-Proudi Darpanam’, ‘Chistiya Manapoorva Masanam’, and ‘Neethiyalochana’ were his important works, which mostly dealt with the charges against Christian ideas. He wanted to establish a press for the propagation of his ideas through booklets. His request for funds was not met by the well-to-do in the community. Some enthusiastic youth from Alleppey enabled him to establish a press at Cochin in 1890. He collected a small coin each from the petty shopkeepers of Cochin and issued a biography of Prophet Muhammad, entitled Nabi Nayanam.

Makthi Thangal exhorted the Muslims to become educated. He urged the Ulamas to restructure the religious education. He published a good number of

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7 Ibid.
9 M.Abdulsamad, op.cit., p.44.
10 A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, op.cit., p.228.
11 Ibid.
articles in English in this regard. Of these, 'Muslim education' has a prominent position, in which he describes first the system of ongoing religious education\(^\text{12}\).

Makthi Thangal prepared a scheme of education from the primary level and published it in the journal 'Salahul Ikwan'. In this scheme he included Malayalam, Arabic, English and Arithmetic. In order to get fluency in speaking Malayalam, he suggested reading stories from the Puranas and Epics. He also prescribed a textbook, 'Muallimul Ikhan'\(^\text{13}\).

Kerala Muslim directory maintains that the 'Muallimul Ikhan' to Arabic Malayalam is more significant than 'Kerala Paniniyam' to Malayalam for the use of teachers. He prepared an 'Arabic- Malayalam-Sanskrit trilingual directory'. But it was irrecoverably lost.

The most important rivals of Makthi Thangal were the orthodox Ulamas of his own community. He was totally against the entry of Hindu rituals in Islamic community. One could see that the Muslims were not ready to eliminate all the superstitions that prevailed in the community. So he fought against superstitious beliefs and practices among the Muslim community like Nerchas\(^\text{14}\), Rateeb\(^\text{15}\), use of long brass lamps for religious ceremonies, belief in mantras, charms etc\(^\text{16}\).

\(^{12}\) M.Abdul Samad, 'Muslim Reformist Movements in Kerala; Work of Sayyid Sanaulla Makthi Thangal', *Proceedings of South Indian History Congress*, 12th Annual Section, 1991, p.206.

\(^{13}\) The prime motive of this work was to teach Malayalam letters to Islamic religious institution.

\(^{14}\) Offering made to the Jarams of saints and Martyrs to obtain their blessing.

\(^{15}\) It is a kind of ecstatic dance, performed as religious offerings.

\(^{16}\) C.K.Kareem, *op.cit.*, p.572.
Malabar was an area where modern education of Muslim community was negligible. Consequently the earlier activities of Makthi Thangal were not acceptable to the Islamic community of Malabar. He was even pelted and abused from various corners of Malabar about which a detailed narration is given in his book ‘Makthi Manaklesham’.

He made Herculean efforts to publicize his ideas through the media. He had realized that media is the effective way of communicating his reformist ideas with the Islamic community. Weeklies and journals published by him point to his efforts. In 1888, ‘Sathyaprakasham’, a weekly, was published from Cochin. But it was discontinued after nine months on account of lack of popular support. During this period he started an Arabic-Malayalam fortnightly called ‘Thuhfat Ul Akhya’, was ‘Hidayatul-Ashrar’ severely criticizing of the orthodox Ulamas.

In 1902 he published a monthly, ‘Nithyajeevan’. But, due to lack of popular support the journal was not continued. Some years later another monthly, ‘Paropakari’ was started by him from Calicut which had the same experience as the earlier ones. Due to some financial crunch he had to stop this monthly journal too. In 1909 he started one evening paper named ‘Turkey Samajaram’. One could see that these journals contained reformist ideas and had immense

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18 A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala Their History and Culture, p.228.
19 C.K. Kareem, op.cit.,p.572.
impact upon those who were progressive in the Muslim community. Hence the efforts taken by him were fruitful.

*Thangal* had also thought about the promotion of women education and *'Nabhicharitham'*. His work discusses the importance of the same. Earlier, the priestly class were reluctant to provide education to women. Even religious education was not allowed to women by the priests who were also totally against modern education. They were not even reluctant to produce a *'Fatwa'* restricting women from learning and writing depicting it as *'Haram'*. *Thangal*, through his work, totally rejected this practice and attempted to make the community understand the need for modern and Islamic education.

*Marumakkathayam* which was practiced in Kerala in the earlier days, was followed to a certain extent in the Muslim community too. Sons were denied of their right to paternal property as per this system. Women were given absolute right over the property of the father. This system prevailed among the Muslims of Kannur and in certain pockets of Travancore area. He emphatically fought against these 'un-Islamic' practices. Makthi *Thangal* had written several articles in the periodicals like *'Salahul Ikwan', 'Swadeshahhimani'* of Vakkom Maulawi,

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21 *'Fatwa'* is a religious order delivered by the priest of the Muslim community. Later it became an order of this community.
‘Sanathana Darmam’, ‘Malayala Rajyam’, ‘Kerala Sanchari’ etc. The most outstanding contribution would be his Quran translation into Malayalam. Unfortunately the manuscript was lost. He recalls this in ‘Makthi Manaklesham’.25

During this period, the Muslim community was divided into several small groups in the name of Tariqa26 like Riti, Quadiri, Nakshabandi, Chisti, Saduli, and so on. Disputes, quarrels and prohibition of mosques were common among these groups. He criticized these classifications and all these groups, as Tariqahs were not allowed in Islam. He organized youths and carried out reforms. He started a cultural organization called ‘Muhammadiya Sabha’ in 1889 at Kannur and for this he got support from Kannur Sulthan and Ali Raja.

Mathi Thangal emphasized the necessity of secular education along with religious education for the progress of the community27. He fought against the view of orthodox Ulama that English was the language of hell and Malayalam, the language of Hindus and therefore ‘Un-Islamic’. He made fun of the Musliays committing blunders in teaching and writing on account of their lack of knowledge in local language28.

One could evaluate the contribution of Thangal in the field of Islamic education especially of Madrasa education as most beneficial to the Muslim community. The status of the Madrasa education was at that time awfully bad

26 The term used by the Sufis for the religious life, which means the path followed by the Muslims.
and the educational system was not equipped to bring in any deeper knowledge about one's own religion. As the religion had got an established structure, formal procedures and practices were supposed to be in a specific manner and the students were given only basic education to perform these. Mullas, who conducted the Madrasa education, were of minimal knowledge about the social systems or sophisticated mode of teaching. They simply followed the traditional Parrot Recitation\(^29\).

Thangal interfered in these issues as a challenge to the existing educational system. There were no classroom divisions in the Madrasa education those days. It must be Thangal who introduced the system of classroom division in the Madrasa education\(^30\). It is to be noted that Thangal was the first to introduce black boards in classrooms\(^31\). The orthodox religious heads could not digest the changes brought about by Thangal. Writing Arabic on black boards was intolerably opposed by the orthodox priestly class. Even the novel ideas upheld by Makthi Thangal were strongly opposed by the majority of Muslim priests.

Makthi Thangal died on 18\(^{th}\) September 1912 at Cochin\(^32\). Apart from his anti-Christian missionary stands, he was perhaps the earliest Muslim scholar to encourage secular education at a time when secular education was not promoted

\(^{29}\) Pupils study the Quranic lessons by heart. They don’t understand the real meaning, of what they were taught.


\(^{31}\) K.K.Muhammad Abdul Kareem, op.cit., p.35.

\(^{32}\) A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala Their History and Culture, p.230.
by the orthodox Ulamas. However, he was a great scholar who played an active role in the development of secular education as well as religious education among the Muslim community in Kerala.

Another foremost reformer among the Muslim community was Muhammad Hamadani Tangal. He was born at Vaduthala in Vaikkam Taluk of the former Travancore State. He started his primary education at Vaduthala and then he went to Kodungallur. Then he went to the Latifiyath Arabic College for higher studies. There got command over Malayalam, English, Arabic, Parcy, Urdu and Tamil and in the mean time he joined Hamadani Tarigah.

After leaving Vellore, he tried to spread the teaching of Hamadani Tarigah in Kerala. He propagated The Quran and Sunnath. His teaching was widely accepted in Harippad, Alappuzha, Aluva, Chirayankizhu, Kodungallur, Cochin etc. And later he focused mainly in Cochin and Mattangeri area.

During this time Muslims were engaged in petty quarrels and disputes among themselves. The reasons for these disputes were very silly like family feuds or personal ego, but the wound it inflicted on the body of the community was deep and this hindered its progress. Hamadani was unhappy and considering it as his prime duty he tried for the restoration of unity among the

33 Ibid., p.233.
34 C.K.Kareem, op.cit., p.575.
35 A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala Their History and Culture, p.233.
36 Sunnath is a path of way; a manner of life. The term used in the religion of the Muslim to express the custom or manner of life.
37 C.K.Kareem, op.cit., p.575.
members of the community. And he visited different areas, delivering eloquent lectures stressing the need for unity.

Hamadani wanted to wake the Muslim community from its slumber and make it conscious of its backwardness in education. He organized like-minded young men and formed the Muslim conference to promote education among them. He took inspiration for this from the *All India-Muslim Educational Conference* organized by Sir Sayyid Ahamad Khan and Altaf Husayn Hali. He published several articles in *Arabi Malayalam* journal, *'Muslim'* calling upon public-spirited young men to work for the spread of education among Muslims. He was nominated to the Sri Mulam Praja Sabha (Travancore Legislature Assembly) by the government of Travancore.

His efforts proved successful in the construction of Mahdara palli (mosque) at Mattanchery. And later this mosque became the centre of his activities. He wrote a book titled *'Irfat-ul-Islam'* , appealing to Muslims to discard all superstitious beliefs and practices and thus developed unity in the community.

Enlightened heads of various communities also played their own roles in the attempt to eradicate superstitions and un-Islamic inclinations. Haji Seethi Sahib from Kodungalloor, Manappadu P Kunju Muhammed Haji, Vakkom

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p.234.
Moulavi, the prominent among the Reformation leaders and their contemporaries too participated in the activities for the progress of the community.

To promote Muslim education Hamadani Sheikh initiated several attempts. In an article published in the 'Muslim', he put forward a five-point programme for restructuring religious education in a befitting manner, such as

a. Madrasas should be established in almost all Muslim areas for beginners on the model of lower grade elementary schools run by the government. For religious higher education, secondary Madrasas should be established in all the cities and for advanced studies in The Quran and Hadith, higher institutions at least one in each state of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar would suffice\(^\text{42}\).

b. As long as the womenfolk are kept in darkness there would be no progress. Prophet Muhammad says, "it is obligatory on every Muslim man and women to acquire knowledge". Hence Muslim women should be provided with religious education in addition to the subjects, which are essential for maintaining a healthy society.

c. For instructing the unfortunate adults who had missed the chance of schooling, a committee of preachers should be formed.

d. For the economic growth of the country, companies and co-operative societies should be established.

e. Welfare committees should be formed to extend assistance and advice to the weaker sections\textsuperscript{43}.

Still the Muslims did not pay any attention to provide education to women. Hence Muslim women were denied modern education as well as religious education. Muslim parents were not ready to send their daughters to the schools established by the British. \textit{Thangal} was fully aware that he had to go for some other alternatives to attract them to schools. He urged in the Legislative Assembly for teaching Arabi in schools together with English and Malayalam to attract Muslim girls to schools\textsuperscript{44}. Some initiatives like acquiring land by Diwan, P Rajagopalachari, for establishing 'Vidhyapeedam' on the model of Aligar University were taken to ensure this. Unfortunately he failed establish it\textsuperscript{45}.

\textit{Thangal} was quite aware of the international scenario of Muslim issues and was successful in bringing those international issues under discussion in the community\textsuperscript{46}. A typical instance for the same was Balkan War\textsuperscript{47}. During the war, \textit{Thangal} tried to raise fund to help the Turkish Muslims.

In the mean time Hamadani \textit{Thangal} was invited by Seethi Sahib, father of K.M Seethi Sahib of Kodungallore when he established the 'Lajnatul-Hamadani

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{44} C.K. Kareem, \textit{op.cit.},p.575.
\textsuperscript{45} A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, 'Social Reform Movements Among Muslims of Kerala', 12\textsuperscript{th} South Indian History Congress Proceedings,1986,p.197.
\textsuperscript{47} C.K.Kareem, \textit{op.cit.},p.576.
Sabha’ at Azhikkode and the ‘Lajnat-Ul-Islam Sangam’ at Eriyad. The main purpose of this organization was to equip the Muslims to modern and religious education. It was the great services rendered by these organisations that brought Kodungallur to the forefront of Muslim education in the Cochin state. Thus the Muslims of Kodungallur area occupied an important position in the cultural and religious progress when compared to Muslim communities in other parts of Kerala. Another Muslim organization of Kodungallur like ‘Nishpaksha Sangham’ which was formed in 1922 and ‘Kerala Muslim Aykya Sangham’ too upheld these progressive ideas.

During the later phase of his life Thangal shifted his area of activity from Kodungalloor to his own house at Vaduthala. At the age of 65 he died at Vaduthala. However he could bring about a novel identity to the Muslim community both in the case of modern and religious education.

Chalilakath Kunhammed Haji, born at Tirurangadi, was one of the pioneers of Muslim reformists in Kerala. Kunhammed Haji was against the existing system and tried to modernize the Muslim community in Kerala. His father was Moideenkutty, a native of Timr. He spent his childhood with his uncles. Though his primary education was limited to primary classes in a school

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49 A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala their History and Culture, p.234.
50 C.K.Kareem, op.cit., p.573.
at Kozhikkode, by his strenuous effort, he became proficient in Malayalam and elements of grammar.

His religious education continued from Dars of Kozhikkode and Ponnani. After his study at Dars he went to Latheefiya Arabic College at Vellore for higher studies. He became the first student from Kerala to take the degree from there. Later he became the principal of the Bagiyath-ul-Salihat Madrassa at Vellore. Then he returned to Tirurangadi and started a Madrassa at Taramal Palli. Later he joined the Mahe and Palikkal Madrasas. His book 'Risalatul Hisab', describes the timing of daily prayers. That was the time of the Khibla dispute. There were many faults in determining the position of many mosques. He prepared a calendar for uniforming prayer timings based on numerology and published a scientific work, Ilmul Mikhath, to know the prayer timings with seasonal variations. Ulamas were compelled to follow this book of Kunjahammad Haji while arguments and counter arguments were going on around Khibla issue. The speech at Pulikkal by Cherusseri Ahammed Kutti Moulavi, one of the students of Kunjahammad Haji, established the conclusion of his teacher and had great

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31 Ibid.
32 Khibla was also known as Kaiba, which is situated in Makkha in Saudi Arabia. Muslims all over world to turn in the direction of Kaiba for their prayer. There are certain rules to be fulfilled before entering for the prayer to be in a proper manner. They are five in number and are called 'SARTHKAL' (Conditions). The fourth among them is facing towards KA-U-ABA. KA-U-ABA is located at 22 degree from Kozhikkode in north-west direction. Khibla Issue is the argument that one should always take utmost care for facing towards KIBILA.
33 C.K.Kareem, op.cit.,p.574.
impact upon the masses. A small book, Abava was also published by Cherusseri Ahammed Kutti Moulavi asserting his opinion on Khibla issue\textsuperscript{54}.

A meeting was convened at Kuttichira in Kozhikkode by the then Educational Deputy Inspector of Malabar, to discuss Muslim educational issues. Moulana Chalilakathu Kunjahammad Haji took part in that and proposed a project for Muslim educational progress. It was unanimously accepted in the meeting\textsuperscript{55}. Koyappathodi Ahammad Haji, an eminent personality and one of the participants of that meeting, invited Kunjahammad Haji to Vazhakkatu to reform the Dars\textsuperscript{56}. In 1909 he became the teacher of Vazhakkad Darul Ulum Madrassa and introduced several changes in the academic curriculum of the Madrassa\textsuperscript{57}. In addition to the usual courses like Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Tasawwuf and Maani, instruction in Logic, Astronomy, Geography and Mathematics was also given\textsuperscript{58}. He started higher classes in the Madrasa on modern lines and renamed it as Darul Uloom Arabic College\textsuperscript{59}.

A detailed and novel curriculum was prepared by Chalilkathu to scientifically reform and restructure Madrasa education in the primary level. Based on this system a Madrasa was established in which, the previous way of teaching was not followed. The students were divided into classes. Introduction

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\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} K.K.Ali, op.cit.,p.25.
\textsuperscript{58} A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala Their History and Culture, p.232.
of periods, study timings and examination schemes were also noted changes in
the field\(^\text{60}\). Novel study materials and instruments like black board, chalk, bench,
table and desk were also introduced which were not common in those days in
the Madrasas\(^\text{61}\).

As a result a number of Madrasas came up with restructured scheme of
Moulana. Madrassas at Kannur, Thalassery, Valapattanam, Kozhikkode,
Vadakara, Kodiyathoor, Pulikkal, Paravanna, Chaliyam, Thirurangadi,
Nallalam, Eriyad in Kodungallur and Azhikkode deserve special mention. Later
many Madrasas were established throughout Kerala on this model\(^\text{62}\).

Definitely the orthodox religious heads were not contented with these
changes in Madrasa education. They thought that writing Arabic on black board
was a sin because Arabic letters fall down when the writing on the board was
erased. Though Kujahammad Haji resisted these views, many orthodox
community leaders were against any kind of change in religious education\(^\text{63}\).
Kujahammad Haji believed that modernised education could bring progress to
the Islamic community. He also believed in the necessity of new teaching aids
for imparting new knowledge to the students. The managements of the Madrasas
gladly provided all equipments required for teaching like globe, atlas, maps,

\(^{\text{60}}\) K.M. Muhammad, 'An Evaluation of Alternative Madrasa System', *Tha Malabar* Vol.II,

\(^{\text{61}}\) E.K. Ahammed Kutty, 'Vidhyabhyasa Navodhanathende Munipil Nadanna Islahi

\(^{\text{62}}\) E.K. Ahammed Kutty, 'Kerala Muslimingal Madrasa Vidhyabhasavum', *Farook College
Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, p.147.

\(^{\text{63}}\) C.K. Kareem, *op.cit.*, p.574.
references and library books\(^{64}\). The Madrasa students were organized into four classes and different subjects were taught according to a set curriculum. To provide textbooks for the different classes, new books were also compiled. He also used the modern examination system on western lines in these Madrasas. People from far and near used to come to see this new educational system. The Vazhakkad Darul Uloom Arabic Colleges served as a model of Arabic Colleges and it became the best of its kind in South India\(^{65}\).

Thus the renovation of Madrasa education attracted much attention as well as criticism. The orthodox Ulamas were critical of the new experiments in Madrasa education and objected to Wakf\(^{66}\) properties being utilized for such purposes. When this was brought to his notice, the Vazhakkad Darul Uloom Madrasa principal arranged a meeting of well-known Ulamas of south Malabar to inspect the textbook and the teaching methods. The inspection commission unanimously approved the syllabus and textbooks\(^{67}\).

At that time the orthodox Ulamas discouraged not only modern education but also reading of newspapers and journals on the ground that it diverted the attention of people from their religious duties. He was the only scholar who

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\(^{66}\) The Wakf is mainly intended to make facilities to perform the religious and charitable rituals and rites of the Muslims. Establishing Mosques it facilitated daily prayers. It established and ran 'Dars 'Madrasas.

recommended reading of newspapers and journals to widen students' vision and this encouraged them to acquire modern knowledge.

In the case of Muslim women education too, Moulana set a new model. Not only did he advocate their education but also dared to send his daughters to school defying the orthodox dictum that it was a sacrilege. For all these reforms he used the services Saidalikkutty Master, who was an inspector of school in Malabar and editor of *Salahul Ikhwan* news papers.

Modernization of *Arabi-Malayalam* dialect was another important reform of Moulana. His book, *Taswirul Hurut* consists of certain pragmatic suggestions in this regard. Moulana was also an ardent critic of *Ahamadiya* movements. His work, *Quadiyanism* is one of the earliest responses to *Ahamadiya* doctrines from within the Muslim scholars of Kerala.

It was his students like Cherusseri Ahammed Kutti Musaliyar, Paravanna M.Moideenkutty Musaliyar, K.M Moulavi, P.K Moosa Moulavi, Phalakki

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70 The founder of the *Ahamadiya* Movement Mirza Ghulam Ahammad was born on 13th 1835 in Punjab. The *Ahammadiya* movements or *Qadiyanism*, has been the most controversial movement among the Muslims of India ever since its inception in the Punjab. Although it originated as a reformist and missionary work among the Muslims, their followers have become an exclusively independent community characterised by its own doctrinal peculiarities. The movement has met with severe opposition from Muslims all over the world, both *Shias* and *Sunnis* alike.
71 M.Abdulsamad *op.cit.*, p.52.
Muhammed Moulavi, E Moidu Moulavi and P.K Younus Moulavi who were really responsible for the further spread of the reformist ideas.

Among these K.M. Maulavi was a liberal scholar who wanted to modernise the Madrasa education and by his efforts many reforms were carried out in the Madrasa system. K.M Moulavi was born in 1886 at Kakkad near Tirurangandi. His early education started in Darul Uloom Madrasa at Vazhakkad. Later Moulavi joined the institution as a teacher and became the right-hand man of Kunjahammed Haji. Necessary teaching materials needed as per the new system were provided mainly with the efforts taken by K.M. Moulavi.

K.M Moulavi was one of the earliest in Malabar to join the Khilafat movements when it was launched in August 1920. He was the heart and soul of the Khilafat movement in South Malabar, and he travelled to different parts of South Malabar to spread the message of independence and Hindu-Muslim unity.

K.M Moulavi Sahib actively took part in the activities of the Khilafat conference held at Ottappalam from 23rd to 26th April 1921. The police had beaten up several activists of the conference, which created a tense situation.

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75 A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala their History and Culture, p.235.
The rebellion was finally crushed and about 12000 Muslims were killed, thousands jailed and a few hundreds transported to the jungles of the Andaman Islands. K.M Moulavi Sahib was charged for carrying out armed conflict against the British Government and an arrest warrant was issued against him. It was during this time that K.M Moulavi shifted his activities to the Cochin State. At Azhikkode the families of Seethi Mohammad, father of K.M Seethi Sahib and Manappat Kunjahammed Haji served as the shelter for Moulavi Sahib and his companions. During this time he participated in all social and religious activities of the community in Azhikkode. This was a moment for Moulavi Sahib to come into close contact with Vakkom Abdul Khadar Moulavi.

The majority of community Reformation leaders were guilty in the eyes of the British in the post-Malabar rebellion period and many cases were charged against them. This compelled many Muslim leaders to migrate from Malabar to Kodungalloor and K.M Moulavi and E.K Moulavi were prominent among them. This was the time for joint efforts with the eminent leaders from the middle of Kerala like Vakkom Moulavi.

His ideas were widely accepted among the Muslims of Kodungalloor who were educationally far better. After the Malabar rebellion his area of activities was Kodungalloor till all the procedures related to the rebellion were

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over. Kodungalloor was intimately related with Moulavi and even the very name, K.M Moulavi, was given by the people of Kodungallur whereas his original name was Thayyil Muhammedkutty Musaliyar.

Since they selected Kodungallur as a favorable region for the spread of reformist ideas, it became a place of cultural, social and educational progress and this must be the reason for the establishment of an organization called 'Muslim Aikya Sangham' in Kodungalloor.

The organization was founded to create unity among the people and also to promote social and economic condition of the people. One of the objectives of the Sangham was to remove superstitious and evil practices like Shirks, Nerchas, Rateeb etc. K.M Moulavi played an active role in the foundation of Muslim Aikya Sangham. Ilahi, an organization which governed the reformation activities in Kerala must have its roots in the Muslim Aikya Sangham.

The reform activities of K.M Moulavi were not confined to Kodungalloor alone and he had made tedious efforts to spread the functioning of Muslim Aikya Sangham to Malabar. It was evident that he was acceptable even to the British officers. Though he was considered to be the prime culprit of the Malabar rebellion, the Circle Inspector himself had given guidelines and enough ways

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., p.105.
out for him not to be caught. After the withdrawal of cases charged against him by the British Indian officers he shifted his centre of activities to Thirurangadi.

The first enterprise, in which Moulavi sahib interested himself after his return to Tirurangadi in 1933, was the organization of a reformed Madrasa there. Thus the Nurul-Islam Madrasa was inaugurated on 2nd February 1933. In spite of serious financial difficulties, the Madrasa grew slowly but steadily into a first grade Madrasa in Malabar.

He had published an Arabi-Malayalam monthly journal named Al-Murshid at that time. Under K.M Moulavi’s leadership another organization, Kerala Nadwatul Mujahiddin, was given birth on 20th April 1950 from the office of Al-Manar at Chalappuram in Kozhikkode. P.K Moosa Moulavi, N.V Abdul Salam Moulavi, M Kunjai Vaidyar were other prominent figures in the organization. It was registered in 1957 as per the Society Act. The educational board of the organization, under the leadership of Alhaj Muhammed Hamani Moulavi and P Saithu Moulavi, aimed at the unification of Madrasa education in Kerala and conducting integrated annual examinations.

K.M Moulavi Sahib had not only been one of the pioneer social reformers the community had produced but he was also a top-ranking freedom fighter of Malabar. Moulavi sahib had the courage of conviction to lead a crusade against

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84 E.Moidu Moulavi, op.cit.p102.
85 M.Muhammed Kannu, Vakkom Maulaviyum Navodhananayanakanum (Mal), 1982,p.81.
86 A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala Their History and Culture, p.238.
87 M.Muhammed Kannu, op.cit.,p.82.
un-Islamic practices. His simple talk and exemplary character touched the innermost feeling of the people and converted them to his way of thinking. His scholarship and non-partism attitude in the matter of religion earned the esteem of both his friends and antagonists. He championed women's education at a time when the major section of the community led by the orthodox Ulamas was deadly opposed not only to women's education but also to modern education.

He was also trying to translate and publish The Quran into Malayalam, which was considered as a great sin by the orthodox Ulamas. For this purpose he formed the Islamic literature Society, but unfortunately the effort was not completely successful. In 1964 he died. But his efforts very much influenced the Islamic community in Kerala in the field of Madrasa education and modernizing of Kerala society.

The Islamic Renaissance in Kerala, in the real sense began with AbdulKadir Maulavi (1873-1932). He was born in 1873 at Vakkom, in Thiruvananthapuram District. His enlightened and wealthy father Muhammad Kunji sahib, a prominent merchant and influential leader, engaged a number of scholars from distant places, including an itinerant Arab savant, to teach him everything he wished to learn. During that period Islamic educational institutions were limited. Hence it was customary to engage scholars even at the concerned houses as home tutors. Those who were not able to afford these

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89 http://www.wikpedia.org/wakkom
facilities would send their children to some of the Gurukulas or Madrasas or such educational centers.

Muhammed Kunju Sahib invited scholars in order to teach his son. Those brought for teaching religious texts and Arabic included Andathode Kunjipokker Musaliyar, the famous Labba Alim Sahib from Tamilnadu and Muhammed Nooh Musaliyar. Maulavi managed to learn Logic, Arabic, Grammar and Linguistics and also the different branches in religious philosophy. He also managed to learn Sanskrit and Malayalam from Mr. Kesava Pillai, a native of Ambalappuzha. He could learn Persian and Urdu languages from Alappuzha Sulaiman Moulavi. Thus the extreme care his father had taken for his education might be the sole reason that Abdul Khader Moulavi became an authoritative personality in the sphere of Islamic reformation in Kerala.

In a short time he mastered Arabic language and acquired profound knowledge of The Quran, Sunnath, Logic and Islamic Jurisprudence as well as Islamic history. The authoritative writings of Abdul Khader Moulavi later known as Vakkom Moulavi on Islam and his strenuous efforts in liberating Muslim culture from ignorance and superstition also helped him attain a supreme position in the Reformation movement itself.

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91 http://www.wikipedia.org/wakkom
Early in his career he had started subscribing Arabic language daily newspapers and periodicals from Cairo, Demascus and Mecca. He was greatly influenced by the radical reformist journal of Cairo, 'Al Manar' which was edited by the eminent writer and savant, Rashid Rida, and which reflected the views and ideals of the 19th century liberal thinker and religious reformer Shaikh Muhammed Abdah. And thus Vakkam Maulavi was greatly influenced by Muhammed Abduh's ideas and he devotedly studied Ghazzali's work, one of which he translated to Malayalam. Although Al Gazzali's philosophical thinking had fascinated for him he steered clear of the Sufistic path.

During the 19th and the early 20th century, the social condition of Kerala was very pathetic. The low caste people like Thiyyas, Pulayas, Parayas etc, the untouchables were denied freedom of worship and wearing ornaments. All the reformist leaders tried to fight against the existing social condition in Kerala. The banner of reformist activities rose throughout Kerala under the leadership of eminent leaders like Chattambi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, etc.

Chattambi Swamikal who was a Nair reformist revolted against the social order in which the Brahmins enjoyed a monopolistic position. The work of Chattambi Swamikal was mainly confined to the ranks of the Nair community. His work was in close cooperation with Sree Narayana Guru. Sree Narayana Guru was an Ezhava who made substantial contribution to the social change in

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93 http://www.wikepedia.org/wakkom
Kerala. He was highly electrical in his outlook on religious matters as is evidenced by his famous saying, "one caste, one religion and one God for man". The activities of Guru very much influenced Vakkom Moulavi who spent his time, energy and money for the upliftment of the superstitious and orthodox Muslim community.

In the mean time Vakkom Moulavi started a religious and social movement for the Reformation of Muslim society. He really targeted the evacuation of different types of superstitious and anti-Islamic activities dominant in the Muslim community and thus brought the whole community into the light of reformation. In his burning zeal to rid the decadent Muslim society of his day of all un-Islamic accretions and to rescue it from the evil influence of the reactionary Mallas, he had drawn great inspiration from the life and teachings of the early 19th century Arabian reformer, Muhammed Ibn Wahab and his 13th century ideological receptor, Ibn Taymiya. The Muslim community like the other communities in those days was also engrossed in many local practices.

The community in those days had lost its monotheistic spirit and the unquestionable personality one should have in not sacrificing oneself to any other force except God. The scholar community in Islam also seemed to have committed itself to the hegemony of the religious scholars. Vakkom Moulavi

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96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., p.41.
was a staunch critic of the time old and sterile practices like lighting up the
wickers on the *Khabar worship* (grave of Muslim saints), celebrating festivals,
considering *Khabar* as a sacred spot, praying for recovery from illnesses, etc. He
questioned these types of practices like those existing among the *Shirks*. According to Vakkom Moulavi these practices had crept into Islam from the
alien religions and he called them *Bidatuka*. The Islamic society in those days
depended more on magical threats and tantric rituals like drinking the inscribed
cup wearing Mohiyudheen chains, and the practice of chanting *Badariyath* etc
were some of the ritualistic practices gaining momentum for certain immediate
worldly objectives like easy delivery and also to oust out the haunting spirits.
More people at the time believed in superstitious practices even at the expense of
dispensing with medicines in the treatment of illnesses.

Realizing the impending danger besetting the Islamic community,
Vakkom Moulavi took initiatives in introducing modern education clubbed with
spiritual and religious value orientations. It was to disseminate the modern
values and to reform the community saving it from the outdated social practices
that he had insisted on instituting enlightening organisations and schools with
modern education and also asserted the importance of reading of newspapers
and other serious magazines.

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99 Ibid., p.22.
100 Innovative practices. Islam has not sanctioned any type of innovative practices.
However, the Islamic religious centers like the Madrasas were insufficient to meet the larger objectives and reduced themselves to the level of teaching Arabic language somehow or the other\textsuperscript{104}. It is really strange that no special care had been given even for a meaningful reading of the Quran, and so Vakkom Moulavi paid attention to the issue of incorporating certain scientific practices into the teaching of Arabic.

It was with the larger objectives of bringing about radical changes in the realm of Arabic language studies that he resorted to two ways, one was to modernize the Madrasa adjacent to the mosques and the other was to introduce certain psychological principles and linking the same with the curricular subjects attending to the attitude of the learner\textsuperscript{105}.

It was because of the continuous pressure from Vakkom Moulavi himself that the government took steps to introduce Arabic language in the public educational centres like government schools. The introduction of Arabic language in the schools indirectly helped the Muslims in sending their children to these schools. The scarcity of Arabic teachers really brought a hurdle on the way for introducing the Arabic education in schools. So the government entrusted Moulavi himself to train the teachers and also to certify their course of

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\textsuperscript{104} S.Mohamed Abdu, \textit{op.cit.}, p.23.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ibid.}, p.34.
study, and it was on the basis of these certificates that the teachers in Travancore were appointed at different centres\textsuperscript{106}.

The central idea of Moulavi was restoring Islam to its pristine purity and utter simplicity and interpreting the Quranic principle. In 1906, he set up a Muslim printing house at Vakkom, which brought out a cultural journal "Muslim", first as a monthly and later as a weekly. This was followed by Al Islam, a monthly journal in Arabi Malayalam, that is, Malayalam written in Arabic script, mainly devoted to the cultural and religious education of Muslim women who were familiar with the Arabic script\textsuperscript{107}. Through the pages of the 'Muslim', he carried on his reformist campaign. Religious tracks and booklets followed as a result of the continuous campaign throughout the state. The Maharaja's government introduced the teaching of Arabic in all state schools where there were Muslim pupils and offered them fee concessions and scholarships, girls being totally exempted from payment of fees\textsuperscript{108}.

Moulavi wrote a textbook for children to learn Arabic and a manual for training Arabic instructors in primary schools. In the midst of these works, the reformist movements went on with undiminished vigor, 'The Muslim' and 'Al Islam' serving as his mouth piece. Moulavi used the columns of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{106} A.Sreedhara Menon, op.cit.,p.279.  \\
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.  
\end{flushright}
Swadeshabhimani for the betterment of the Muslims as well. But it is erroneous to say that his main purpose was to uplift the Muslims alone, as he was often depicted. The Swadeshabhimani harped on the overall progress of the Mohammedans and their educational advancement in particular. Deepika another important monthly published only twelve volumes which discussed the unislamic practices of the Muslim community. This journal gives a clear-cut idea to the non-Muslims to understand Islamic teachings.

The journal 'Muslim' was started in 1906, and for this purpose Moulavi travelled all over Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and met a number of important individuals. Through this journal he tried to eradicate the superstitious practices of the Muslim community. One of the remarkable features in 'The Muslim' was the question-answer column. Moulavi answered the questions, based on Islam.

He established a weekly journal Swadeshabhimani to fight against corruption and to fight for the democratic rights of the people. It became a powerful organ of public opinion. However, the dual task of running Swadeshabhimant and leading the Muslim reformist movements at the same time soon proved unmanageable and Moulavi looked for an editor for

109 Vakkom Maulavi brought out a journal under the title Swadeshabhimani. The first issue was brought out on January 19, 1905 under the editorship of C.P.Govindha Pillai.
112 K.O.Shamsudhin, op.cit.,p.42.
113 Ibid.,p.101.
Swadeshabhimani who would measure up to the high standard of integrity and courage.

Vakkom Moulavi also became familiar with the ideas of other Islamic reformers ranging from Al Wahhad to Jamal Al din Al Afghani. He might not have had an intimate knowledge of each one, but he was impressed by their overall commitment to the principle of Tawhid; the unqualified oneness of God. Influenced by them and by his own study of the Quran, Vakkom Moulavi became convinced of the necessity of boldly and unremittingly proclaiming the centrality of Tawhid, and vigorously opposing anything that smacked of Shirk. He literally threw himself into the task of communicating clearly and widely the fundamental message of Islam in a way that would reach the common people, utilising free languages, Malayalam, Arabic and Arabic Malayalam.

It was crystal clear that no Muslim scholar had ever taken any initiative in educating the women in the community to a higher level. Hence the Muslim population, particularly women, remained ignorant even of the basic tenets of the religion itself. However it is a fact that as per the Quran all the people irrespective of gender differences are to grow by all the Islamic principles. It is really strange that some of the religious leaders stood even against women learning alphabets. Vakkom Moulavi advocated against the baseless arguments

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114 Roland E. Miller, Mappila Muslims of Kerala; A Study in Islamic Trends, 1992, p.271.
115 Ibid.
of the leaders, especially through his scholarly articles and even proved his statements subscribing to the Hadith.  

It was to initiate so many educational activities that the Moulavi established schools, both in Travancore and Cochin. His main intention behind the mission was to modernise Islam and also to avail the positive results of modern education to the new generation of Islamic believers. The Director of Public Instruction stated in one of his speeches "the services rendered by the Moulavi and the Muslim, in the course of Muslim Education were greater than those of the Government."  

'Alappuzha Lajnathul Muhammadiya' was an organization established on the frequent call by Vakkom Moulavi. A higher-grade elementary school was established under this organisation, which was the first among the Muslim educational institutions. There was an immense impact in several other places of Travancore due to the activities of Alappuzha Lajnathul Muhammadiya and many Muslim Sabas and schools were established in centres like Itava, Nilakkamukku, Perumathura, Chilakkoor, Navayikkulam Kottarakkara and Alangadu with the strenuous efforts of Vakkom Moulavi.  

There was an attempt to form 'Travancore Mahajana Sabha' based on the promising activities of organizations like 'Nilakkamukku Muslim Sangham' and

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118 Ibid.  
119 Ibid.
'Kottarakkara Manasil Islam Sangham'. On 21st August, 1921 a convention, in which more than 300 Muslim delegates from 23 taluks of Travancore participated, was held at Aryasala Hall, Thiruvananthapuram under the presidency of Alappuzha N.A Muhammed Sahib.

The objectives of Taluk Samajams could be listed as below: Collect the statistics of Muslims in each Mahallu, give contemporary education to boys and girls of Muslim community, keep books in mosques to register marriage, divorce, birth and death, establish Madrasa, library and reading room related with mosques, appoint progressive scholars in mosques, stop rituals based on superstitions, publish Islamic books both in Malayalam and Arabic and start a publishing house and a newspaper.\footnote{M.Muhaminad Kannu, Vakkom Maulaviyum Navodhana Nayakanmarum op.cit.,p.92.}

With the birth of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham the ideas of Vakkom Moulavi became more fruitful. Social Reformation was the main agenda of the Sangham and the activists of the Sangham tried hard to eradicate the superstitious beliefs and rituals. The first annual conference was held under the presidency of Vakkom Moulavi at Eriyattu in 1923.\footnote{Ibid.,p.580.} The activities of the Sangham irritated the orthodox people who characterized the Sangham as a heretical association and cautioned people from becoming its members. But the enthusiasm of the young men had been quickened and several branches of the Sangham were established in different parts of Cochin and Travancore.
The early leaders of the *sangham* had to work under great stress to meet the social boycott and other acts of reprisal organized by the literate people, instigated by the orthodox *Ulama*. The community’s attention was also focused on the evil effects of such un-Islamic practices as *Chandanakudam, Kodikuttu* etc\(^\text{122}\).

His main works are ‘*Arabi Matha Sidhanda Sangraham*, ‘*Safeerul Islam*, ‘*Nabimar*’ and ‘*Islaminte Sandesham*’ and he had also attempted to translate *Quran* into Malayalam\(^\text{123}\). One could hardly find an eminent personality like him who stamped himself in the realm of religious education. He died on 31\(^\text{st}\) October 1932.

It is also worth mentioning that there are many other leaders also who had left an indelible mark in the sphere of Islamic religious Reformation and in education reform movements. E.K Moulavi was one among them. Being influenced by Islamic reformist ideas, he accepted the discipleship of Chalilakath Kunjahammed *Haji*. Despite his limitations in getting education through the modern educational institutions, Moulavi managed to be a scholar through his incessant reading. He published many books in Malayalam. More over, he published books titled ‘*Al Islam*, ‘*Sheik Jeelani*, ‘*Kottappurathu Zeeli Muhammed*, ‘*Islamum Communisavum*, ‘*Islamun and H.G.Wells*’\(^\text{124}\).

\(^{122}\) A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, ‘Social Reform Movements Among the Muslims of Kerala’, 12\(^\text{th}\) South Indian History Congress Proceedings, p.201.


\(^{124}\) M.Muhamad Kannu, *op.cit.*, p.113.
Another noted personality in the reformist movements was P.K Moosa Moulavi Sahib, who was also the editor of the organ ‘Alminah’, and he was also one of the architects of Islahi movement. He began his education from Madeenathul Arabic College and continued his education both at Vazhakkadu Madrasa and also Paravanna,Kottummal Dars. He became a teacher at Madrassathul Muhammadeeya in Kozhikkode in 1926 and in the same year he started associating with the Islahi movement and later turned out to be one of the best activists of the movement. Consequently all the changes followed thereafter were due to the restless activities of the Moulavi himself. He supported all the positive changes brought about in the stream of Madrasa education.

Another unique personality in the Islamic reformist movement was Muhammed Abdurahman Sahib, who had been lucky to get modern education. He contributed much to the freedom movements and even put his strenuous efforts in strengthening the Khilafath movement joining hands with Hassan Koya Mulla, U. Gopala menon and E. Moidu Moulavi. His modern ideas on Islamic education brought about sweeping changes and led to many social changes at the larger level. Many such social reformers, influenced by Chalilakathu Kunjahammed haji, Makthi Thangal and Vakkom Moulavi’s ideas, worked for the Islamic Reformation.

However it is imaginable that the modernization of a community is not simply possible by the efforts of its leaders. It was the restless efforts of the

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125 Ibid., pp.120-122.
reformist leaders and unconditional support and cooperation of the new generation that helped the way to path breaking changes in Madrasa education and modern education. A major share of the Muslim community was dissatisfied with the existing practices in the community and that may be the very reason why the modern society has accepted all the reformatory innovations in the Madrasa education.