Chapter II

Islam Observed and Discussed
Theological Differences among Kerala Muslims

1. Introduction

In the first chapter, we tried to locate the intellectual legacy and scholastic background that shaped the mode and undercurrents of Islamic Higher Education both in Kerala and in Indonesia. Now, in the following two chapters, attempts will be made to read in brief the theological differences among Kerala Muslims, in order to understand the ‘Islam being observed and discussed’ among them, paving the way for an easy understanding of the system of religious higher education system, or the nature of transmission and reproduction of Islamic knowledge. It is true that the Islamic higher learning centers mostly belong to particular theological positions, and the conceptual framework of the curriculum being adopted there and nature of the subsequent product of those will be in the line of that particular concepts.

2. Clarifying Terminologies In Studying Religion

Mapping and analyzing of differences in religious communities and philosophies has been part of the study of religion for long. This genre of writing is called Herseiography or firaq literature. Early theologians and hersiographers of Islam like Al-Ashari (d 935), Abu Mansur Abdul Qahir bin Tahir al Baghdadi (d 1037), Al Ghazali (D. 1111) and Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Fath Muhammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Kaṭīb al-Shahrastānī (1086–1153 CE) had taken ‘the deviation from Islam’s doctrinal purity’ as a subject of keen examination. They made efforts to define the parameters of Sunni Islam and to defend it against those regarded as innovators (mubtadi‘), heretics, and deviants. Henderson has called Islam as ‘an ultra-hersiographical religion concerned on the establishment and defense of dogma’ (Henderson, 1998), thanks for this kind of writing being one of the dominant

---

45 Ash’ari’s book in this field is Maqalat al-Islamiyin wa-Ikhtila’ al-Musalin, and Ghazali’s books are Faidhal Tafriqah bayn al-islam wa-l-zandaqa, Fadayih al-Batiniya wa-Fadail al Mustazhiriyah
intellectual and literary enterprises for many centuries. (Saleh, 2001) The Persian historian ash-Shahrastānī’s widely celebrated book Kitāb al–Milal wa al-Nihal (Arabic: كتاب الملل والنحل, The Book of Sects and Creeds) is considered as a non-polemical study of religious communities and philosophies until his time, and a first systematic study of religion. He introduced a scientific approach to the study of religions. Al Baghdadi dealt with the different groups among Muslims through his critically acclaimed work Kitab al-Farq bayn al-firaq wa bayan al Firqat al-najiya minha, in which he makes an extensive discussion on the seventy-three groups of Muslims mentioned in a Prophetic Hadith.

Keith Lewinstein points out that studies of early Islamic doctrines and sects had long taken as their starting point the Sunni heresiographical literature, saying that the classical tradition had not allowed the earliest sectarians to speak for themselves, so the historians had to depend on later heresiographical representations of them, and this field was dominated by Mu’tazili and Ash’arite heresiographical texts written by scholars like Ash’ari (d. 324/935), Baghdadi (d. 429/1037), Shahrastani and others (Lewinsein, 1994). Lewinstein is of the opinion that despite being composite in recording a number of earlier polemical agendas, these literatures do not account for all the heresiographical data produced by Muslim scholars. He tried to study the theological differences among Muslims drawing attention to an independent yet often neglected tradition of firaq as he dealt with such literature spread among eastern Hanafism, and also a work on the Azariqa.

---


47 Kate Chambers Seelye has translated Baghdadi’s work with the name Moslem schism and Sects: being the History of the various Philosphic systems developed in Islam. AMS Press, New York, 1966.

48 He started with the Talbis Iblis, a well-known polemical tract composed by the Hanbalite scholar Ibn al-Jawzi (d597/1200), and he also deals with the schematic material preserved by Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d.561/1166), the Burhan of the Shafite tradionalist Abbas b. Mansur al-Saksaki (d. 683/1284), the Kitab al-Tanbih Of the Syrian traditionalist Abu ’l-Husain al-Malati (d. 377/988) and the principal creeds of the Hanbalite author Ibn Batta al-Ukbari (d. 387/997).

The first problem faced by those who take the stock of the theological differences in modern times is the confusion regarding terminologies used to explain the diversities or variations within particular religion. A general tendency is to employ the terms developed in the study of Christianity irrespective of the conceptual variations, specific connotations or the value additions it brings with it. Here, the works of Baghdadi and Shahrastani are called Heresiography. The word heresy and heretic, along with apostasy and blasphemy, are always considered as an accusation. ‘Scholars studying medieval European religious history have described heresy as opposition to the Christian churches’ doctrinal authority, emphasizing that heretics were not only religious but also political dissenters’. (Judd, 1999) ‘The meaning and significance of accusations of heresy are difficult to ascertain, regardless of the religious setting or historical milieu in which they appear. According to Judd, it is difficult to define the concepts of heresy and orthodoxy in early Islamic history as there was no dominant religious voice in the community after the first four Caliphs. ‘Instead a variety of opposing parties struggled for the right to define doctrine. So there could be no orthodoxy, since none had sufficient moral authority or coercive power to impose their views to the exclusion of all others. Consequently there could be no heresy either, because, heretics are simply those whom the dominant religious authority deems to be outside the bounds of orthodoxy’.

Generally, the term Heresy is used for the rejection of one or more established beliefs of a religious body, or adherence to ‘other beliefs. In Christianity, heresy is unorthodox practices and beliefs considered to be heretical by one or more of the Christian churches. Most commonly, it denotes those beliefs, which were declared anathema by the Catholic Church prior to the schism of 1054. However, since that time, various Christian churches have also used the concept in proceedings against individuals and groups deemed to be heretical by those churches.50

Heresy, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is a "theological or religious opinion or doctrine maintained in opposition, or held to be contrary, to the catholic or orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church, or, by extension, to that of any church, creed, or

religious system, considered as orthodox. By extension, [heresy is an] opinion or doctrine in philosophy, politics, science, art, etc., at variance with those generally accepted as authoritative."

Heresy is a controversial or novel change to a system of beliefs that conflicts with established dogma. It is distinct from apostasy, which is the formal denunciation of one's religion, principles, or cause, and blasphemy, which is irreverence toward religion. The founder or leader of a heretical movement is called a heresiarch, while individuals who espouse heresy are known as heretics. Heresiology is the study of heresy. Heretics usually do not define their own beliefs as heretical. For instance, some Roman Catholics hold Protestantism as a heresy while some non-Catholics considered Catholicism the "Great Apostasy." For a heresy to exist there must be an authoritative system of dogma designated as orthodox, such as those proposed by Catholicism.  

Throughout the Islamic history, one can see groups calling their opposing parties as heretical. Sunnis and Shias deem each other as heretical, whereas, various groups emerged out of these two main Islamic platforms are also mentioned with the term heresy.

Schism is yet another word used to denote the splits. 'Schism is a division or a split, usually between people belonging to an organization or movement, most frequently applied to a break of communion between two sections of Christianity that were previously a single body or to a division within some other religion.' 52 In religion, the charge of schism is distinguished from that of heresy, since the offence of schism concerns not differences of belief or doctrine but promotion of, or the state of, division. 53 According to Catholic Encyclopedia, schisms involve mutual accusations of heresy, and every heresy is a schism. The Sunni-Shia bifurcation is considered the major schisms of

51 Ibid
52 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schism
53 Encyclopedia of Britannica, article on Schism
Islam. (Rogerson, 2006) The same word has been used conveniently at times to denote Mu'atazilism, Ahmadiyya, Zaidism and many others.

Sect is yet another term used. ‘The historical usage of the term sect in Christendom has had pejorative connotations, referring to a group or movement with heretical beliefs or practices that deviate from those of groups considered orthodox. Although in past it was mostly used to refer to religious groups, it has since expanded and in modern culture can refer to any organization that breaks away from a larger one to follow a different set of rules and principles. The term is occasionally used in a malicious way to suggest the broken-off group follows a more negative path than the original’. The word was used first to denote Madhhab. Later it was replaced by words 'rite' or 'school'. According to George Makdisi, a Sunni Madhhab cannot be a sect, since the term ‘sect’ is applied to a dissenting religious body, one that is heretical in the eyes of other members within the same communion. However, all Sunni Madhhab are regarded equally orthodox. ‘The term ‘rite’ applies to a division of the Christian church as determined by liturgy, and unlike a transfer from one rite to another in Christianity, a transfer requiring certain formalities, the transfer in Islam is made from one Madhhab to another without any formalities whatsoever. The word school gives the least difficulty’. (Makdisi, 1979)

There is a general tendency to define Islam as an ideology, and the differences among various Muslim groups as ideological. Islam is a way of life rather than an ideology and mostly the differences are theological. The term ‘Ideology’ has a political connotation. It is defined as a cluster of ideas (Dusdet De Tracy, French Philosopher). It is a combination of mutually enforcing ideas, motives, and mechanism. Considering the fundamental limitation of an ideology, one can say political Islam or the so-called Islamism is an ideology. In view of the responding nature of ideology, even Salafism can be termed as one.

There are many other terms like Orthodox, heterodox, fundamentalist, reformist, revivalist, liberal, modern, moderate, extremist, obscurantist, secular etc, used in the study of religion. Moreover, these are words conveniently used in contemporary academic and media discourses to define various religious groups. Each of these words

54 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sect
has its own etymological origins, established notions, and inter-changing connotations. Generally, these are understood in relation to the Christian terms and notions. The unfortunate thing is that while using these terms, even in the academic discourses, the contextual differences and varying background of historical and intellectual evolution between Islam and Christianity are never considered.

### 3. Defining Orthodoxy

The word orthodox (from Greek orthodoxos-having the right opinion (orthos-right, doxa-opinion) typically denotes adherence to the accepted or traditional and established faith in a religion. Opposed to heterodoxy (‘other teaching’), heresy and schism, the concept of orthodoxy is ‘an idea found within all the major religious traditions’ (McDonough) in all forms of organized monotheism, where there is a concept of dogma, varied interpretation of doctrine and theology. Those who deviate from orthodoxy are often called heretics or radicals. Many see the term out of place in an Islamic context, as there are no ‘councils’ or ‘synods’, nor ecclesiastical institutions to determine the criterion of orthodoxy, and also there is no equivalent Arabic word for it.

However, Fauzan Salih, through a wonderful study has tried to define the Islamic orthodoxy, reasoning that (a) ‘the concept of orthodoxy can certainly be found among the classical works of Muslim thinkers’, (b) as the term ‘orthodoxy’ is used to indicate the possibility of distinguishing between what is true and what is false, it is obviously present in the Islamic tradition, and (c) Islam is a religion very deeply concerned with maintaining its doctrinal purity. (Saleh, 2001) The following lines are a gist of his study in this regard.

For an academic researcher, it is difficult to answer ‘who is the orthodox Muslim’. According to Hendorson, it is because (a) of the absence of a central authority like Roman Catholic Christianity with an ultimate power of declaring what constitutes the right doctrine, (b) of the claim of all Muslim groups, even those branded as heretical, that
the doctrine and tradition they follow are right, and (b) of the official political support to some of the branded deviant groups at certain point of time.

Since individual understandings of revelation may vary greatly from time to time and from place to place, Muslim scholars developed an institution called *Ijma*, which is authoritatively capable of bringing them to a common mind. *Ijma* is the agreement of all the believers in general, and in particular that of the qualified who was entrusted the task of taking the decision in juridical matters. Though ijma is theoretically aimed at reducing the causes of dissent in matters of religion, the development of Islam witnessed emergence of various thoughts, practices, sects, and schools. Considering this reality, judgments as to what is true should be based on whether the matter is agreed upon by all the members of the Umma (community), whose unanimity brings infallibility. The tool of Ijma was used to formulate or decide Islamic dogma, but there were two problems. 1) What one group regards as Ijma will be rejected by another group. 2) There were groups that rejected Ijma altogether and upheld others sources of authority, like Kharijites who accepted the Qur'an alone as the authority, Mu'tazila who adhered to rational theology, and the Shiites who depended on the charismatic Imams for validating the religious doctrine. Therefore, the authority of Ijma was recognized only by the party that later on became known as the Sunnites, ‘those who claimed to be adherents of the correct or standard prophetic practices and those who followed the Sunnah of the prophet’.

Hendorson says that there are five particular qualities useful in classifying a religious belief or practice as either orthodox or heterodox, namely primacy or originality, a true transmission from the founder to the present day, unity, catholicity, and conception of orthodoxy as a middle way between heretical extremes. (Henderson, 1998). After testing these qualities in the Islamic historical contexts, and treating the dominant theological positions of Asharism and Maturidism in contrast to rationalist Mu'tazilism and fundamentalist traditionalism, along with acknowledging the incorporation of these theological positions into the established Sunni legal schools, Fauzan identifies the

---

55 Indication to the official support of Mu‘tazilite by Abbasid Caliphs like Al Mamun, Al Mu’tasim and Al Watiq (827-847)
pattern of development of orthodoxy in Islam with that of other religious traditions, i.e. beginning with faith in divine revelation, traditionalism first appears, followed by an opposing current of skeptical rationalism, with orthodoxy finally emerging as the sensible middle way between the two extremes.

He further presses that Sunnism, which evolved under the four orthodox Caliphs in the nascent Islamic period of Medinah, is the Islamic orthodoxy. All the Sunnis are one sect, though they belong to four equally legitimate schools of legal thoughts. The Sunni majority has coined the word *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah* (people who follow prophetic traditions and the path of the Companions),\(^{56}\) in order to distinguish themselves from other Islamic sects whose view they see as bid’a or departures from this orthodoxy. The basis of the terms sunnism and ASWAJA, though popularized after the emergence of Ash’arism, is some reported traditions of the Prophet stating that Muslims, after his own age had passed, would split into 73 groups, all of which would go to hell except one, those who had constantly observed the Sunna of the prophet and his Companions. Al Jama’a, meaning the community, is used in another tradition, signifying the majority of believers, as indicated by another traditions that ‘the Community will not agree on an error’ and the ‘hand of God is above the Community’. Luminaries like Al Baghdadi and Al-Shahrestani tried to explain these points and to identify the sole winning group who follow ‘what has been decreed by the prophet and his Companions (*ma kana ‘ala mithli ma ana ‘alaahi al-yawm wa-ashabi*).’

Saleh writes, “Unlike (W Montgomery) Watt\(^{57}\), who seem to have been perplexed by the notion contained in this Hadith and asserts that ‘it is difficult to see why the founder of a religion should boast about the number of sect into which it is divided’, Muslim heresiographers tended to be more comfortable with the message of the text. They were not even bothered by the possibility proposed by some Western scholars that the *Hadith* might refer to the number of virtues or branches of faith. They maintained that the *Hadith* was literally true and tried to understand it as a matter of warning- rather than boasting –

\(^{56}\) *Ahl al-Ssunna wa-l-Jama’a* will be mentioned by short from ASWAJA from here onwards

\(^{57}\)
against disputation in religious matters. The *Hadith* was believed to imply that despite the division inherent in the body of the ummah, there is always a majority which retains the correct belief and practice of Islam, a group singled out from others as more likely to attain salvation.\(^1\) Al Baghdadi has described the doctrinal characteristics and theological stances of this winning group as part his general attempts to assert that ‘ASWAJA exemplified a definite idea of Islamic orthodoxy.

4. Tracing Differences

The emergence of ASWAJA as the Islamic orthodoxy distinguished the majority Muslims from Imamite Shiism, rationalist Mu'tazilism and extremist Khawarijites, as well as from tens of other sub-groups which emerged in the Muslim world until then like the proponents of determinism, or necessitarianism, or predestinarianism, or fatalism known as the Jabriyya, the ‘Postponers’ (*Murji'a*, who indefinitely postponed the affirmation that major sins were punishable), Qadariyya (the proponents of absolute free will, or libertarianism), the Jahmiyya (the sect of Jahm ibn Safwan, who like Mu’tazila, believed in the doctrine of pure free will), ‘Rejectionists’ or ‘Rawafid’ (who vilify the Companions\(^56\)), the Hashwiyya, the ‘Stuffers’ or ‘Crammers’ (who attributed corporal attributes to the Lord of the worlds and declared Prophets able to openly and intentionally commit great sins), the Mujassima (who attribute a body to Allah) and Mushabbiha (Those who liken Allah to creation). Once this orthodoxy was established, then most of those emerged with differing opinions claimed to be the real ASWAJA. Still, in the groups emerged from this orthodoxy, we see glimpses of various groups appeared in the past, those we mentioned above.

A contemporary researcher on diverse groups in the Muslim community will definitely find it difficult to fix the doctrinal and formational backgrounds as well as the theological

\(^{56}\) Rawafid: Those who refuse. Derogatory term historically applied by the Sunnis to describe the Shiis, who refused to accept the early caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman as legitimate. The term had a connotation of militancy and struggle engaged in by the Shiis against the ruling power that oppressed them. In modern times, the term is still used in Sunni polemics against the Shiis, but also by some Shiis themselves in places such as Lebanon and Iraq as a source of pride, signifying revolt against all tyranny (The Oxford Dictionary of Islam).
stances of each of them, precisely since the introduction of western thoughts and ideals in the Muslim world along with the colonization. 'For a while Europe exported colonialism and imperialism to Muslim realms, it could not avoid also exporting the ideas and legacies of the Enlightenment, nationalism, and European institutions and political movements - Conservative liberal and radical' (Gregorian, 2003).

The impact of liberalism, rationalism, capitalism, individualism, socialism and communism upon the thoughts of Muslims, and on the subsequent sectarian transformations of Muslim communities is evident. The responses of Muslims to modernity have been subject of all recent studies about Muslims, which showed that what kind of divisions it brought among Muslims. In one way, this west-oriented scientific rationalism brought back the doctrinal base of rationalist Mutazilism into observance and discourses of Islam, and the Protestant call for reforming religion got many takers in the Muslim world, as they pressed the need of a complete reformation of Islam at par with the changes of modernity. On the other hand, questions regarding acculturation, adaptation, and accommodation occurred in various Muslim communities due to Islam’s interaction with, or embracing of, geographically and culturally diverse communities, which rekindled the discourses of traditionalism, fundamentalism as well as the middle way between rationalism and literalism. However, the classical terms of Islah and Tajdid, i.e., reform and revival, were widely used in favor of all traditional or modernist movements as these terms have historical and religious connotations.

The contemporary peril of the Muslim Society that was started since the resurrection of the western power in the world, and the consequent disappearance of all Muslim powers, has been a starting point for many to look into the differences, and the ensuing discourses and observances of Islam. According to Vartan Gregorian, the decline of Muslim realms created another crisis of confidence and raised many questions. How should Muslims challenge European colonialism so as to regain, or retain, their independence and political and economic viability? The debate divided along two basic lines: On one side, some argued that the decline was caused by moral laxity and the departure from the true path of Islam; these traditionalists called for an Islamic revival. On the other side, there were those who claimed that Islamic societies had not suddenly declined but had long faltered,
owing to a chronic failure to modernize their societies and institutions; these reformers said Muslim societies could be rescued only by modernizing and challenging the West on its own terms. Each option had its own risks. Looking to the past for answers risked greater stagnation. Looking to the future risked the loss of indigenous culture: was it possible to modernize without Westernizing? The contest between these two responses still shakes the Muslim realms. (Gregorian, 2003)

5. Islam Observed and Discussed: Case of Indian Muslims

Indian Muslims are not homogeneous in their theological beliefs, perceptions and rituals. However, the observances and discourses as well as the divisions generally happen on four lines. One can say it is three diverse groups of traditionalists, namely Deobandis, Barelwis and Ahle-Hadith, and one group of modernists, which can be again grouped into religious modernists and secularists. All those who profess that 'Allah is the only one God and Muhammad is his last prophet' are considered Muslims by all these groups unless they deny any of the compulsory provision of Islam like the daily prayers. It is by using these criteria that Shiites are considered as Muslims and Ahmadiyya and Bahaism are considered non-Muslims in the general Muslim discourses. However, interestingly the accusation of infidelity or the process of takfir (to label as infidel) was and is very much rampant among these main groups.

A: Metcalf's Analysis

In her marvelous book about Darul Uloom Deoband, Barbara Metcalf has tried to make a critical analysis of the doctrinal stances and support base of the major Muslim groups mentioned above. According to her, the differences each of the three traditional groups saw in others were defined primarily in a legal idiom. Each accused the others of faulty jurisprudential principles and of mistakes in the domain deemed subject to legal scrutiny. ‘All three were movements of popularly based ‘Ulama committed to defining what they held to be a correct basis of the law and/or the relation of the believer to it. The ties within each group of ‘Ulama were initially reinforced by common origin and social status, yet incredibly each group was primarily defined by certain perspectives or exclusive
theological positions. The lines between the groups of 'Ulama and their followers resembled those of sects. This was particularly true of the Ahle Hadith, who were readily recognizable by style of prayer and cut of beard, they prayed separately and often had their own mosques. Both the Barelwis and the Deobandis insisted that they were not leaders of sects, but of the mainstream of Sunni Muslims. Indeed, the Barelwis called themselves the 'Ulama of the Ahl-I Sunnat wa jamaat, the classical name for the Sunni community. Yet they too were exclusive, condemning the reformers as Kafirs and maintaining a distinct style of custom and ritual. Many clues, literally from ceremonies in the cradle to the kind of tombstone at the grave, pointed to whether a person was Deobandi, Barelwi or Ahle Hadith. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)

Pointing to the impact of western thoughts in Islamic revivals, she says that all the movements of the period focused on the importance of the prophet, stimulated by western criticism of the prophet focusing on his character. However, there were subtle differences in the extent to which emphasis rested on him as object of devotion, or intermediary with God, or model of Human personality. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)

About the Ahle-Hadith, she says that they were committed to revitalization of the law by reform of custom. 'To do so they denied the validity of the medieval law schools in favor of the direct use of the textual sources of the faith that was to be interpreted literally and narrowly. They eschewed Sufi institutions and techniques of meditation and discipline. Deobands accused the Ahle-Hadith of teaching a radical approach to the law that made individual responsibility far too great. For Deobandis, this approach was possible only for the elite and not for ordinary people. Initially, Ahle Hadith directed their reform to the educated and the well born. United by aristocratic social background and a high and austere standard of religious interpretations, the Ahle Hadith were clearly a cohesive sect. Cosmopolitan in orientation, they identified themselves with similar groups abroad. Ahle Hadith was a movement of people sensitive to the widespread political and social changes of the day, but its intensity and extremism were far greater and the range of its influence less. Leadership was from the well born. The biographical dictionary of Ahle Hadith for Delhi and the United Provinces (Tarajim 'Ulama ye Hadith hind by Abu Yahya Imaam Khan Naushaharwi) proves it right. For them in particular, the
psychological satisfaction of religious debate seems clear. Denunciations of the morality of others enhanced the precarious sense of their own worth. Among them, an urgent quest for a single standard of religious interpretation and an exclusiveness and sense of embattlement against all others clearly formed the core of an orientation both religious and psychological. It was their horror of disorder that drove them to desire a true and common standard on which all Muslims could unite. Ironically, in so doing they created the dissensions on which, in fact, they thrived. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)

In a pattern common to many movements of reform, the Ahle Hadith explicated texts to yield only single meanings, and particularly shunned the esoteric and symbolic meanings offered by mystics. Their opponents called them 'worshipers of externals, Zahirparast', but they offered in return, they felt, an end to uncertainty and ambiguity. Focus on Hadith was established by denying the legitimacy of the classic works of the four major law schools, along with the commentaries and compilations of Fatawa based on them. They maintained that like the Imams of four schools they too based their legal thought on the four sources of law sanctioned in Hadith. The scope they gave the last two - ijmaa and qiyas - was very narrow. Qiyas was to be used only if there was no explicit rule and the analogy was very precise. The ijma was limited to those beliefs, such as the obligation of the five pillars of the faith, on which all Muslims concurred. For the learned at least, the Ahle Hadith thus insisted on substantial individual responsibility in interpreting the meaning of the law. Just what they expected the uneducated to do was not clear, and initially not of central concern. Their focus was on the spiritual behavior of the spiritual elite, who were called on to leave behind all intermediaries and guides other than that of the text itself. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)

The new issues introduced to the biography of the Prophet by stalwarts like Amir Ali, Chirag Ali and Allama Shibli Nu'Mani, who responded to the western criticism of Prophet's character, helped form the ideal of individual religious responsibility that was characteristics of Ahle Hadith. They chose name Muhammadi first, but soon dropped under criticism that it elevated the relation with the Prophet at the cost of the relation with God. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)
Both Ahle Hadees and Deobandis opposed the Sufism of Dargas and the customs of the Shia, and called for the religion to be free from all customs that could be criticized by non-Muslims. They prohibited all ceremonies at Dargas – urs, qawwali, and unlike Deobandis, they discouraged the institutional forms of Sufism, saying Sufism itself is a danger to true religion. With Ahle Hadith, the method of performing prayer is a highly visible point of contention. They say ameen aloud, lift their hands at the time of bowing, fold the hands above the navel, and repeat Fatiha aloud along with the Imam\textsuperscript{59}. Ahle Hadith argued that they alone continued the tradition of Shah Waliyullah. Many of them were in fact of families that had been brought into the reformist milieu by Shah Waliyullah and his successors. But Waliyullah’s was a balanced approach, both by acceptance of many rulings of the law schools that were consulted eclectically, and by a willingness to exercise analogy and reasoning in interpreting Hadith. None of the leading ‘Ulama in the late 19th century, despite their claim of Waliyullah being their progenitor, continued this broadly based orientation. Ahle Hadith also found legitimation for their approach as they shared a general orientation with contemporaries in Hijaz, Abdul Wahab. So they greatly valued the works of Ibn Taimiyya/ Muhammad bin Ali al-Shoukani

However, many Ahle Hadith denied the influence of Arabian Wahabis, for them being followers of Hanabali law, and their ill-reputation for disruptive political action.

Ahle Hadith were a cohesive group, convinced of their own morality, legitimized in their own eyes both historically and intellectually, and distinct from other Muslims in their style of prayer and even their cut of beard. Their sense of themselves derived above all from their active opposition to those who differed from their beliefs, and they clearly enhanced their own self-esteem by the conviction that they stood forth as embodiments of the authentic faith ready to challenge all who differed from them. The moral superiority

\textsuperscript{59} Metcalf writes about that hearing the sort of discourses made by Muslims at that time, a British official commented that a vital question of religion no doubt a most important question is 'should amen be said loudly with the hands crossed over the chest, or should it be said softly with the hands crossed over the stomach.
and self-righteousness of the Ahle Hadith was often accompanied by certain harshness. The ‘Ulama of Ahle Hadith preached and led prayers, issued fatawa, and wrote extensively. They never had the popular appeal of the Deobandi or Barelwi ‘Ulama, because of the extremism of their jurisprudential position and because of their opposition to acting as Sufi shaikhs to their followers. Numbers aside, the intellectual influence of the Ahle Hadith was of great importance. Not only did they stimulate the movement of the Barelwi ‘Ulama, but they also positively influenced the Ahli Quràn, the Ahmadiyya and the modernists, all of whose jurisprudential rules derived from theirs. Ahle Hadith were Muslims by conviction, not by birth. As in other reform movements, those so united acquired both an enhanced sense of their individual worth and a deepened feeling of solidarity within their group. Much of this sense depended on the oppositional character of the sect. Among Muslims, the Ahle Hadith added an important element to the rivalries of the day and to the movement of religious revitalization in general. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)

Ahle Quràn was a splinter group created following a bitter internal dispute in Ahle Hadith at the end of 19th century. It was led by Abdullah Chakralawi, Lahore, and its influence was limited to Punjab. It denied excessive emphasis put on Hadith, accusing creation of two kinds of revelation. They opted to use the revealed statements of Quràn, and claimed that Hadith is relevant only in human situations of Prophet. (Metcalf B. D., 2005)

Metcalf's observation of the Barelwi group goes like this. ‘Barelwi ‘Ulama did not emerge out of a desire to transform standards of practice and belief but rather out of opposition to the other two groups. They held fast to Hanafi law, and to a custom laden style of Sufism, closely tied to the Pir’s of the medieval tombs. Unlike the ‘Ulamaof the other two groups, the Barelwis placed relatively little emphasis on individual responsibility and much more on intercession of the ‘Ulama and the Sheikhs. Nothing characterized their teaching more than hierarchy, which elevated the Prophet, the saints, and the ‘Ulamathemselves as benefactors, patrons, and intercessors. The community they defined was more tied to particular shrines and fixed occasions, and tended to be rural rather than urban. They accepted the existence of the colonial authority apparently without
A reaction to other two groups, Barelwis operated as a popularly supported leadership, detached from political activity, offering social and religious guidance to their followers. In a period widely held to be threatening to their culture, they blamed the reformist Muslims more than they blamed the colonial ruler. Refutation and confrontation were the motive of much of their work. Their target was other Muslims rather than Arya Smajists or Christians, with whom other groups had frequent debates. The core group of Barelwi \textit{Ulama} was Pathans from the major cities of Bareilly and Budaun Rohilkhand. Their support came from small towns and rural areas. The movement offered its followers a hierarchy of mediators ranging from the Prophet to the saint and pirs of the Shrines to the towering central figure of the movement, Ahmed Riza Khan Barelwi (1856-1921)\textsuperscript{60}.

Throughout her book, Metcalf elaborates the development and evolution of the Deoband movement. Started as an attempt of reviving Islam in the post-1857 mutiny, this movement was developed through the base of a higher learning centre set up by luminaries like Muhammad Qasim Nanutawi (1833-1877) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. Through cooperation among graduates of Deoband, a number of such schools were found around the country, and increasingly the name of Deoband came to represent a distinct style, a maslak, of Indian Islam. They claimed to be the people of a correct and purified Islam. Like Barelwis, the Deobandi \textit{Ulama} were devoted to Hanafi law and to Sufi doctrines and disciplines. However, they were wary of more ritualistic Sufism followed by the Barelwis like pilgrimage, Urs, mediation, etc. They offered an alternate spiritual leadership geared to individual instruction. The Tablighi faith movement was a byproduct of Deoband, and it is strongly linked to the school and to its intellectual leaders. Barelwis accuse influence of Wahabism in Deobandi School, but the \textit{Ahle Hadith} have a big problem with the Deobandis because of the latter’s strong belonging to the Hanafi legal school. Supporters saw the Deobandi \textit{Ulamaas} exemplars of orthodoxy, devoted to

training 'Ulama, spreading the tenets of Islam, and defending the faith against all attacks.

The modernist reactions to the western impacts came prominently from the towering figure of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898)\textsuperscript{61}, the founder of Aligarh movement, who measured a correct understanding of Islam by the degree of acceptance of a British cultural style and by participation in British institutions. His reformist orientation is evident since his early writings. In 1841, he published a \textit{maulud} on prophet\textsuperscript{62} in which he eliminated ‘spurious’ miracles and depicted the Prophet as a moral exemplar. Like \textit{Ahle Hadith}, he rejected the law schools, denied the abrogation of verses of the Qur\textit{\textae}n, and insisted on the literal meaning of texts. Like Ahl-i-Qur\textit{\textae}n, he denied the validity of the \textit{Hadith} collections, deeming many to be fabrications. He believed in the law of nature. He denied the efficacy of prayer, for, logically, in such a system nothing could change the predetermined course of events. He interpreted miracles naturally, saw the night ascension of the Prophet as a dream, and the Jinn as mountain dwellers. Dividing injunctions of the Qur\textit{\textae}n to those related to social affairs and to those related to religion, he said the later will remain the same for all age and all prophets, but the former will have to undergo changes from time to time. He was largely seen and opposed at that time as a ‘Wahhabi’ or ‘ghair-muqallid’.\textsuperscript{63} He argued that western learning and science was not inimical to Islam, but intrinsic to it; to study them was to study Islam itself. However, one can see that the strong opposition against him from all quarters was not due to his commitment to western education, but due to his new ideas as well as his support of the colonial rulers.

\textbf{B: Ahmed's Impressions}

Metcalf’s research was about the movements and currents in the Muslim community at the end of 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century India. Interestingly, we have a latest analysis of

\textsuperscript{61} To read more about Sir Sayyid and his Aligarh movement (Lelyveld, 1978) (Troll, 1978)

\textsuperscript{62} Jila'ul-Qulub b Zikri-i Mahbub (Polishing of the Hearts by Memory of the Beloved)

\textsuperscript{63} One who does not follow any particular school of law
Muslim minds across the world, done by Akbar S Ahmed, who made an anthropological exploration of Muslim lands post-9/11 taking a quality stock of Muslims’ thought, perceptions, belongings, need, vision, dreams, etc. (Ahmed, 2007)

Theorizing splits in world religions, he says, ‘All world religions seek to discover the best path to understanding the divine in order to lead a fulfilling life on earth. In this search, some people try to look for parallels and analogies outside their own tradition; others try to incorporate principles from life around them to strengthen their own beliefs; and still others focus on preserving their own legacy as much as possible. These different approaches give rise to internal contradictions and dilemmas within the major world faiths, and they also affect relations with other religions’.

Categorizing Muslims and their responses to modernity, he says, ‘Islam attempts to differentiate its various approaches or worldviews, some of which overlap while some are in opposition. These approaches can best be summarized as ‘accepting’, ‘preserving’, and ‘synthesizing’. Those who believe in ‘acceptance’, approach the divine through universal mysticism; those who believe in ‘preserving’, opt for straightforward orthodoxy or a literal interpretation of the faith; and the ‘synthesizers’ seek to interact with modernism and the ideas it values, such as democracy, women’s rights, and human rights. Again, each perspective is considered the truest form of the faith and a means of counteracting the three positions. Each is affected by globalization, and each causes internal tensions within Islamic society. Hence, Islam’s response to the forces of globalization also takes at least three distinct forms: mystics reach out to other faiths, traditionalists want to preserve the purity of Islam, and modernists attempt to synthesize society with other non-Muslim systems.

Elaborating this point and making an easy generalization Akbar coins three India-oriented metaphors representing three different interpretations of Islam in the minds of local people associated with a particular Muslim perspective; Ajmer, Deoband and

---

64 Here ‘globalization’ means all kinds of ideas, perspectives, mode of actions and thinking that affect the Muslim world in one way or another, according to which they need to readjust their living and thinking styles
Aligarh. He tries to recognize the models named after them universally in Muslim societies, although sometimes disguised under different labels and forms. While Ajmer followers may spend more time thinking of the hereafter and ignoring this world, those favoring the Aligarh model may be doing the opposite. Confident that it is the guardian of the faith, Deoband believes that it has struck the right balance between Deen and Dunya. The models of Ajmer, Deoband and Aligarh provide some perspective on the broad Muslim responses to one another. That is one of the advantages of reducing large and complex populations to models and categories. Ajmer followers, for example, think Deobandis are too critical of other faiths and too preoccupied with opposing mysticism, while they find Aligarh followers too concerned with the material world. For their part, the followers of Deoband would consider those of Ajmer guilty of innovation and close to heresy and those of Aligarh far too secular and too influenced by the West. The Aligarh group would perceive Ajmer as backward and would dismiss Deoband as little more than a rabble of ignorant clerics, country bumpkins, and benighted rustics.

He depicts the highly celebrated 11th century Islamic scholar Ghazali one of the greats who sought to reconcile the three models. As a university instructor in Baghdad, Ghazzali studied Sufi mystic thought, orthodox Islam, and Greek philosophy, from which the Ajmer, Deoband, and Aligarh models are descended. Ghazzali withdrew from society to grapple with the main intellectual trends of his time and reemerged with a series of influential works offering a balance between mysticism, faith, and rationality. Over the centuries, Muslim intellectuals have turned to Ghazzali’s work to find inspiration and help them meet the challenges of life. Not surprisingly, throughout Akbar’s trip to the Islamic world, leading Muslims regularly named Ghazzali as a role model. He brings in Iqbal as another thinker in this regard, whose work synthesizes the different and often contradictory views that the three models represent. In his unrestrained admiration for the thirteenth-century poet and mystic Rumi, he appears to advocate the Ajmer model, yet his most popular poems, the “Shikwa,” or “Complaint” (of Muslims to God for their plight), and the “Jawab-i-Shikwa,” or “Reply to Complaint” (God’s answer), embody the Deoband worldview. Letters written during the last months of his life to Jinnah, who best symbolizes the Aligarh model, developed the idea of a modern Muslim nation to be
called Pakistan, meaning the “land of the pure.” To Muslims, Iqbal’s verses are not contradictory but a manifestation of the struggle of ideas in human society.

All these three draw their inspiration from the one name that provides unity to the diverse global Muslim community: Prophet Muhammad. Muslims everywhere, regardless of race, age, social class, gender, or sect, relate to him in a special way. They see in the Prophet an inspiration for their own lives. The Prophet’s popularity reflects both the paradox and strength of Islam: the Ajmer mystics will sing songs of love for the Prophet and trace their spiritual lineage directly to him; the orthodox Deoband will hold him up as their ultimate exemplar, imitating him down to style of beard and length of trousers; and the Aligarh modernist will cite him proudly as the original revolutionary of history, who gave rights to women, minorities, and the disenfranchised. All agree that the Prophet is the best interpreter of the Qur’an and accordingly Islam. His powerful words provide the unity that binds the diverse cultural and political branches of Islam, especially when faced with a common threat.

6. Islam Observed and Discussed: Case of Kerala Muslims

Metcalf’s analysis of existing Muslim groups in India and Ahmed’s attempt to define and generalize the divisions among Muslims through three models found from the Indian context gives an approximately clear picture of Islam being observed and discussed in India or in South Asia. Though this analysis and the tool would not fit fully in the case of Kerala Muslims, the general observations made by the two will be useful in defining them.

We have seen the intellectual base of Kerala Muslims and the stages of their evolution since Islam’s appearance on the South western coastal areas of India in the 7th century to the present age in the chapter one. Researches attest that Kerala Muslims could maintain its ASWAJA orthodoxy until the early 20th century. None of the ideological conflicts that emerged in various regions of the Islamic world time and again could make any major impact on Kerala Muslims until this time. The only aberration was landing of a sayyid from Persia who was accused of Shiism as well as propagation of a fake Sufi order. This
could not make any major influence as the ASWAJA ‘Ulama came against him in full force.

In the case of North India, a big stage of divisive theological discourses was over by the onset of 20th century and the Muslims were already grouped into several sections. The loss of Muslim rule culminated in the gruesome mutiny of 1857 set the stage of these divisions as it made Muslims look for a reawakening from disaster. That they visualized the reawakening in diverse ways explain the emergence of diverse groups. We can see Kerala Muslims in a similar situation in the post-1921 anti-British revolt, called Mappila Mutiny of Malabar. More than 10,000 Mappila Muslims were killed in the mutiny while it resulted in exiling of around 20,000, imprisonment of 50,000, and disappearance of another 10,000.

Kerala Muslims had witnessed many pre-1921 movements initiated by different personalities with the aim of modernizing their education system or popularizing the western forms of life styles and mode of thoughts, or to bettering the living conditions of the Mappila Muslims. One can read this in the line of same initiatives found in almost all non-western communities of the time who underwent colonization, experienced modern science and technology, and adopted selective modernization. However, the precarious and helpless post-1921 situation paved the way for a radical change in the life and thoughts of the Mappila community. The trend that was set out of this background still work as the stimulator of all transformations the Mappila Muslims have been undergoing since then. The intellectual and theoretical base of this trend lies in ideas developed at local level, Indian level and global level. It can be understood from the following explanation.

One can see the entire Muslims of Kerala being divided in to two main platforms; traditionalist and modernist. The former accused the later of spreading a spurious and bida‘i form of Islam that is a mix of all the new trends of thought which appeared in the Muslim world from traditionalist fundamentalism of Ibnu Taimiya, Literalism of Zahiriya Movement, rationalism of medieval Mu’atazila, Anti-Sufistic Puritanism or Wahhabism of Muhammed bin Abdul Wahab (1702-1793), Salafism of Rashid...
Rida (1865-1935), Pan-Islamism of Jamaludden Afghani (1839-1897), anti-*Madhhab* Islamic modernism of Muhammad Abdu (1819-1905), to liberalism, modernism and protestant reformism of the West. Meanwhile, the later accused the traditionalists of conservatism, superstitions, of indulging in the great sin of *Shirk* (joining others in the unity of Allah), of misunderstanding *Tauhid*, of stagnating the religion through following the medievalist legal schools. The theological discourses and debates ensued since then were drawn in the line of these traditionalist and modernist platforms.

6.1. Mujahid

The exponents of the modernist platform asserted their presence first through the *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham* (group for unity among Kerala Muslims), which was founded at Kodungallur of Cochin state in 1922 by leaders like KM Seethi Sahib, KM moulavi and EK Moulavi. The initial aim of this group was merely to settle the fiscal and familial rivalries that have been marring the unity of traditional elite Muslim families in the historic region of Kodungallor. However, this group could bring the scattered and unorganised reformist activists together. Later, clearly inspired by the North India-based *Ulama* organisation, an *Ulama* organisation was formed, namely Kerala *Jam'iyyat ul-'Ulama*, at a two-day conference of Aikya Sangham held at Alwaye in 1924 where a large number of scholars were invited. However, it is evident from the reformist history that the Kerala *Jam'iyyat ul-'Ulama* started actively working only in 1933 and until then it was working as an advisory board of Aikya Sangham. There was no separate agenda or working committee for the *Jam'iyyat ul-'Ulama* and it carved out a scientific and active working field only after Aikya Sangam was disbanded in 1933.

The reformist or modernist platform witnessed a split in its ranks with the advent of the ideas of Abu! Aa’la Moududi, who interpreted Islam with political orientation. Almost all those who were attracted to the political interpretation of Islam by Moududi in Kerala were from the already established modernist or reformist ranks. This divided the reformist platform into two; those having Islamist political orientation and those having reformist theological orientation. The latter consolidated their rank and formed Kerala Nadwat ul-Mujahideen in 1949. This group is called Mujahids, Salafis, Islahis or
Wahhabis. Mujahid is the general objective name used to denote them exclusively from Sunnis and Jamaat. Salafi and Islahi are name they use to introduce them. Wahhabi is a name they are called by opponents, who say salafis are basically selective followers of a number of Muslim ideologues who emerged time and again in the Muslim world questioning the existing traditionalism and accusing their contemporaries of deviation.

It is easy for a researcher to find out that Salafis or Mujahids of Kerala keep a separate identity, despite their intellectual indebtedness to the different ideologues mentioned above. They call for a return to and direct reference of the Qurân and Sunna of the Prophet, and for the rejection of all other interpretations. Historically, they denied any linkage to the continuous past, which saw emergence of highly-qualified scholarly reformers who at certain epochal times stood as revivalist and Mujaddids. In their call for direct dealing with the two prime sources of Islam - Qurân and Hadith - they refused to accept all kinds of classical interpretations made by luminaries and also cut the exemplary tradition of the transmission and dissemination of Islamic knowledge from respected teachers to students. They interpreted the pre-1921 history of Kerala Muslims as ‘Dark Age’, labeled the entire scholarship as spurious and accused even the great scholars and their followers of Shirk and deviation. The reformists simultaneously accepted the fundamentalism of Wahabism and salafism, and practiced sheer rationalism, literalism and modernism. The Wahabist perspectives inspired them to deny all esoteric interpretation of the texts, the encyclopedic knowledge-branch of Tasawwuf derived from the Islamic concept of Ihsan, the institutional form of Tasawwuf exemplified through Sufi orders, and the sublime spirituality that was nurtured by Tasawwuf and the Sufi orders. The Salafism induced them to reject the legal schools and the entire abundant treasury of classical Islamic knowledge produced by eminent scholars of the past explaining the Qurân and Sunnath. Reformism and modernism with its liberal and rational modes of thought helped them put the human reason and intellect above all and interpret each and everything accordingly. They tried to explain everything in a way suited to one’s own reason and intellect. In one way, the modernist platform was accused of a very narrow and rigid interpretation of religion opposing all kind of local and spiritual articulation of religion and preventing any move forward from the seventh century Arabia, whereas on
the other hand it promulgated free interpretation of the religion on the basis of human reason.

The Islahi or Mujahid movement called upon its followers to approach the Qurān and Hadith directly, and to understand the religious doctrines and edicts with individual efforts. Practically this resulted in two major problems. The unity of the community in rituals and doctrines disappeared as most of them tried to be mujtahid muthlaq (independent interpreters), despite having limited knowledge, and started interpreting each and everything as they found it in the sources. Different and contradicting views emerged on single issue due to this unbridled and pre-matured ijtihad. Secondly, despite theoretical correctness of not doing a blind imitation of any established legal school, practically almost all of the followers were blindly imitating the scholars of the movement. And, interestingly, it is not a single great scholar in the genre of Imam Shafi’i or Imam Abu Haneefa they were following, but different leaders of the sect. Their opponents always accuse them of blindly imitating the ‘out of the ordinary’ scholars appeared in the history like Ibnu Taimiya, Ibnu Abdul Wahad, Abduh, Afghani, Rida, etc.

The reformist approaches towards interpreting religion, like the skepticism against the Hadith literature and liberal and rational attitude in approaching Qurān and Sunnah in the matters of faith, paved the way for the emergence of a couple of other modernist outfits among Mappilas, though they were less appealing to them. The modernist movement of Muslim Educational Society (MES) in sixties and the liberal and anti-Hadith movement of ‘Islam and Modern Age Society’ in seventies emerged in these lines. While some highly educated professionals represented the first, the second was the initiation of Maulavi Muhammad Abul Hasan, popularly known as Chekanur Maulavi, a graduate from Vellore’s Baqiyyat Arabic College who had served as religious teacher in Islamia College at Shanthapuram and later in Jami’ a Nadviya at Edavanna.

Increasing contacts with gulf countries and more understanding in the nature of Gulf salafism, especially the Wahhabi realm of thought in Saudi Arabia, created theological confusions in the modernist platform, which was initially a common front against the
traditionalists in which all from fundamentalists to modern rationalists were involved. The perspectives of Saudi salafism effectively split the Mujahid movement into two at the end of the last century. Many organizational and financial issues are being said to have led to the split in the Kerala Salafi ranks. However, the post-split literature clearly speaks of a host of theological differences from defining the exact Thouhid (unity of Allah) to interpretation of many religious concepts. Due to the influence of rationalism and the skeptical approach towards Hadith literature, the Mujahid scholars had earlier denied the existence and effect of Sihr, Bad Eye and Manthram and that of Allah’s creatures like Jinn, Satan, etc. Now the official Mujahid group (called KNM AP group) changed their perspective on all this. The other fraction is called Madavoor group.

As Metcalf rightly observed, the Mujahid movement could never get the popular appeal and acceptance enjoyed by traditional ‘Ulama, because of the extremism of their jurisprudential position, their opposition to the spiritual or esoteric interpretation of Islam based on Tasawwuf and Sufi orders, and due to their focus on individual responsibility of finding one’s own religious guidance from the original sources. More importantly, the public always doubted the most significant theological position they expounded, the accusation of shirk in the traditional scholars and their followers. To do shirk is the biggest crime in Islam and by doing it one no longer can remain a Muslim. A Muslim cannot inherit a Mushrik, cannot have marital relations with him, cannot hail him with salam, let alone make him a Imam or leader in prayer or other things. However, despite accusation of shirk, of ‘veneration of saints’ and of qabar pooja65, against the traditionalist Sunni majority, the followers of Mujahid and Islahi movement kept all kind of Islamic contacts with them. This led to nurture doubt among the public about the sincerity of the movement, and, even after a century of relentless and exhaustive propagation and dawa works, Mujahid movement could not attract the majority Muslims In Kerala.

65 In almost all Islahi or Mujahid literatures, the darga and graves of saints are depicted equivalent to Hindu deities.
Numbers aside, the intellectual influence of the Mujahid movement is of great importance. It could stay on as an effective opposition that helped the traditional community notice many of the deviations spread amongst illiterate people at rural areas and make active works to rectify it. Due to the presence of Islahi activities, the traditional ‘Ulama always took extra caution for not letting their common ordinary followers do rituals and other locally developed rites in anti-Islamic way. Most importantly, those in the modernist platform were active in promoting modern education and setting up of public schools and colleges at a time the traditional ‘Ulama put most of their focus on promoting religious education. This was mainly for two reasons. The secularly educated people, who always looked for and attracted in changes, saw the call for religious reform by the Islahi movement appealing. Secondly, in the initial stage, all kind of Muslims those opposed the traditionalist majority, be they secularists, communists, pure rationalists, or the fundamentalist wahabis, were counted together in the modernist platform.

6.2. Jama’at

Abul Aa’la Moududi announced the formation of Jamaat-e-Islami (Islamic Party) as an Islamist religious and political party on 26 August 1941 in Lahore. The Indian Jamate Islami was formed in April 1948 when Moududi moved to Pakistan with his party after the partition and became active there as an Islamist political party. In India, Jamaat had to readjust its founding objective of ‘Hukumate Ilahi’ (Attempt to establish Allah’s rule) as ‘Iqamat-e-Deen’ or ‘Nizam-e-Mustafa’ - the establishment of a pure Islamic state, governed by Shari’ā law. The Kerala Jamate Islami was also officially formed soon after, though its activities were started soon after Moududi announced his party in early 40s. One of its founding fathers, V P Abdul Hameed Haji, had attended the meeting called by Moududi at his house to form Jama’at. Both Mujahids and followers of Moududi represent the reformist platform, but the latter differs on the political participation in the democratic political system of India. While Jamaat initially argued that, any kind of participation in the democratic setup of the country, even doing job under secular government, is haram and un-Islamic, Mujahids actively participated and advocated for it.
In Kerala, Jamaat is considered as a separate Muslim sect in the modernist platform, not as a progressive organization as it is considered in North India. The *Jama'at* introduces itself as an Islamist organization. In the sphere of religious education and conceptualizing Islamic *Shari'a*, they resemble Wahabism, Salafism and Modernism. They stand for the rationalist interpretation of Islamic sources of knowledge, as they oppose the following of classical legal schools in *Fiqh*. What makes them different from Wahabis or Salafis is their political orientation. Initially they were against voting in democratic system, opposing any support to any rule other than that of *Hukumate Ilahi*. It still keeps in its constitution a clause that prevents its members from accepting any job or power under a non-Islamic ruling system, even if they do in practice. Theoretically, Jamaat opposes Westernization, ideologies such as capitalism, socialism and secularism, and practices such as bank interest and liberalist social mores.

### 6.3. Tablig

The Deobandi-Barelwi division of North India cannot be found in Kerala. However, the faith or puritanical movement of Tablig *Jama'at*, which is a byproduct of Deobandi movement and which has a large following worldwide, has drawn considerable support in Kerala. The movement has been appealing to Muslims from both modernist and traditionalist platforms. While the traditionalists were attracted to its committed Da’wa activities, those from modernists were attracted to the spiritual atmosphere it has been giving and which they were lacking in their platforms. The modernists accuse them of extreme orthodoxy, of utmost conservatism, of focusing only on the hereafter world at the cost of earthly life, whereas the traditionalist Sunnis see them as the popular face of Wahabism or Salafism, of having innovative (bid'a) views in many issues, of focusing only on peripheral or marginal area of religious knowledge, and of making ignorant as leaders. The Tablig followers rarely go for debates and discussions with others on controversial issues, as they keep their focus on proselytizing in their own style.

### 6.4. Sunni
The majority Muslims of Kerala are traditionalists. Known as Sunnis, they claim to be the true followers of the Sunna of Prophet and his Companion (Ahlu Ssunna Wal Jama’a, ASWAJA). They call the followers of Mujahid movement, Jama’a Islami, Tablig Jama’at, Ahs u-Qur’ân and all other splinter groups in the modernist platform as Mubtadi’ or Ahl ul-Bid’a (innovators). They strongly support the view that it is compulsory for the present day Muslims to follow any one of the four established legal school in jurisprudential issues, and the Shafi’i maslak is followed widely in Kerala. In theology (‘Aqida), they follow Abul Hasan Al ‘Ashari. Strong advocates of scholastic Tasawwuf and the institution of Sufi orders, the Sunnis widely teach classical texts of Tasawwuf and promote various standard Sufi orders like Qadiriya, Rif’iya, Shaduliya, Naqshabandiya, Chishtiya, etc. They visit the graves of Prophets and Awliya, do Tawassul and istighasa, and believe that Allah may give special powers to those who become close to him through sincere devotion and committed worship.

Contrary to the reductionist historical view of the Mujahid, Jama’at and all others in the modernist platform, who visualize a completely superstitious ‘Dark Age’ in Kerala prior to the Islahi or modernist reform movement of the last century, the traditionalist Sunnis tend to view the radical post-1921 changes not as a reformism. But they call it a revivalism or a reawakening similar to other religious movements and activities led by eminent scholars at several other times in the history. They believe that the Islamic life of Muslims in Kerala, which received Islam in the first Hijra century itself, had not always been well and in the same rhythm throughout the last 13 centuries. There have been deteriorations and deviations at times, and whenever such un-Islamic culture or less-Islamic atmosphere started dominating the Muslim life, there appeared epochal scholars who spearheaded the Islah and tajdid activities, and this tradition of timely revivalist activities is at the roots of reawakening happened in the last century. In line of this contrasting historical perception, the modernists count certain personalities who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries as the makers of the Muslim Kerala. Meanwhile, the traditionalists respect and like to link with all the past luminaries in history from Malik bin Deenar and his companions of the first hijra century, the Qadi family of Calicut, Makhdum scholar family of Ponnani, leading Sayyids from around 30 Sayyid families.
who arrived in Kerala, spiritual sheikhs of many Sufi orders to influential community leaders.

One remarkable feature of Mappila Muslims in the post-1921 period was the transformation of their leadership from the hands of individual scholarly and outstanding personalities to the fold of organisations formed on the basis of theological orientations. The reformists or modernists associated first under organisations like Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-'Ulama and the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham (group for unity among Kerala Muslims). The 'Ulama, who always enjoyed the supreme authority among Muslims, were suspicious towards the ongoing modernisation trends. When they saw the reformists utilising the platform of the newly-formed Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-'Ulama 'to attack the traditional Islam which was nurtured under the guidance of eminent scholars headed by Makhdums of Ponnani', they felt the need to organise 'to defend and protect Kerala's Islamic tradition and to wage a revivalist movement against the new interpretations that declared a host of Islamic cultural traditions as Shirk and Bidaa and alleged the centuries-old scholarly and intellectual tradition of Kerala Muslims with deviations and alterations.

In 1925, the traditional 'Ulama formed Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-'Ulama (All Kerala 'Ulama Organisation) and gave an organisational setup to the majority traditional Sunnis in a meeting convened at Calicut big Jumu'a Masjid. The meeting was called by Marhum Varakkal Sayyed Abdurahman Ba Alawi Mullakkoya Tangal, who was a Sufi Sheikh, renowned religious scholar and a prominent figure of Sayyed family, after he was consulted by some 'Ulama under Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musliyar, who had already started counter campaigns against the 'Wahhabi ideology'. The newly-formed 'Ulama organisation, which was in fact a temporary response to reformism, convened within a year many popular conferences, mainly at places where the reformists had received big attraction, and directed the masses to be aware of the leaders and followers of the 'Bida'i sects'. The traditional mosque-colleges, called Pallidarss, which were widely popular in towns and villages, and its teachers and students, who were interconnected either by student-teacher relation or by Sheikh-murid relationship of Sufi orders (often in both the ways together), became the biggest support base of this Sunni organisational platform. They could attract a massive following among the large rural
population through scholars doing religious duties at the villages and religious institutions.

On November 14, 1934, Samastha got registered with a clearly drafted bylaw, which was agreed upon after deep and wide scholarly discussions held in various Mushawara meets and in consultation with law experts. It promulgated the ‘propagation of true Islam, impart of religious education and activities against superstitions and un-Islamic traditions as its primary and supreme objectives’. Its bylaw also included encouragement for secular education compatible with religious beliefs, and calls for religious tolerance, interfaith friendship, peaceful existence and national progress. According to the bylaw, the main aims and objectives of the organisation are (a) to propagate and spread the rites and beliefs of Islam according to the real view of Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama'a, (b) to legally prevent the organisations and campaigns which are against the rites and beliefs of Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama'a, (c) to look after all rights and powers of Muslim community, (d) to promote and encourage religious education and do the needful for the secular education that will be compatible with religious beliefs and culture, and (e) to work for the welfare and progress of the Muslim society in general by eliminating superstitions, anarchy, immorality and disunity.

6.4.1. Sunni Splits

The organisational splits did not spare Samastha or traditionalist Sunni platform as well. In sixties, some scholars opposed the opinion of Samastha Mushawara, the consultative body, against the puritanical movement of Tableeg Jamaath, and formed a new organization named Akhila (all) Kerala Jam'eeyat ul-'Ulama. Just like Samastha, they also formed a 40-member Mushawara or consultative committee of eminent scholars. However, this organization had a very short life.

Another split occurred in the Sunni platform when one of Samastha’s outstanding leaders, Sheikhuna Sadaqatullah Moulawi, who had gifted with a number of religious disciples across the state, viewed the use of loudspeaker in Islamic prayers like Jumu'a Khutuba, salat, and Adhan (call for prayer) un-Islamic. He resigned from Samastha when
it officially opposed his views and passed a resolution in 1967 making it *jaiz* (recommendable) to use loudspeaker in *ibadat* like Friday *Khtuba* and *Adhan*. Sadaqatullah Moulawi, who was then president of the Smastha, voluntarily resigned from the post and along with his followers formed another Sunni organization called Smasthana Kerala Jam’eyyat ul-’Ulama, which still survives, even after his death, with a handful of followers, some noted scholars, some supporting mosque-colleges and two higher learning institutions.

At the end of eighties, Samastha underwent a major split that prompted a significant amount of Sunnis to organise under a new group named Smastha Kerala Sunni Jam’eyyat ul-’Ulama, which draws a considerable support base among traditional Mappilas. Though a host of organisational as well as ideological reasons are said to have led to the latest break-up, conflicts of opinions regarding Samastha’s favourable attitude towards the political ideologies of Muslim League, and regarding co-operation with the reformist organisations in matters concerned to all Muslims were the main causes of the split.

There is a separate platform for the Majority Sunnis in South Kerala called *Dakshina*[^66] *Kerala Jam’eyyat ul-’Ulama*. This was formed when the Samastha and its activities augmenting the traditionalist platform were more or less limited to the Malabar region and the Sunnis of South Kerala wanted to join forces against the spread of reformist ideas among them. Dakshina was formed with full support of Samastha leaders.

Broadly speaking, Kerala Muslims belong to any of three ideological divisions; Sunni, Mujahid and Jamaath. All of them have their own exclusive theological perspectives, support bases, mosques, primary and higher learning institutions, separate auxiliary organizations meant for kids, students and youths (the Mujahid and *Jama’at* have women wing as well, not for Sunni groups who strongly oppose any public activity by women) and publications. This is not to ignore the purely secular/modernist Muslims who never want to be labeled under any of the above mentioned Muslim sects. Some of them want

[^66]: *Dakshina* means South
to be called as general Muslim, some as progressive Muslim and some even doesn’t even want to be called a Muslim.

6.5. Discourses and Debates

Kerala Muslims have witnessed intense debates and healthy discourses on hundreds of theological issues throughout the last century, and much of the controversial subjects are still debated though at a depleted level. Most of the hotly-debated issues were between the traditionalist and modernist platforms, precisely between Sunnis and Mujahids, and sometimes both of them with Jama'ats. There were also internal debates on issues among each of the mentioned groups. Public oral debates and stage or page discourses among the groups served many psychological functions. It had a significant influence in defining the boundaries of each group. There was a deep satisfaction in identifying themselves from others, who were judged wrong. Since the consolidation of traditionalist and modernist support base through concerned organizational platforms in late 20s up to the 80s, various localities in Malabar hosted intense and often tense debates on controversial religious topics. The important achievement of each debate was internal to each group. Each side invariably claimed that they had won and the correct argument is with them. Other than fully understanding what was delivered in the stage, the followers were impressed by the learning and debating skills of their leaders. The spokesmen tended to argue within their respective ideological systems, and to develop a series of stereotyped points that satisfied their supporters more than their opponents. However, there was also shifting of loyalties after each public debate. In a society largely illiterate and equipped only minimally with modern forms of communication, the debates came to serve as a new forum for communicating religious and social issues.

An in-depth study on the theological discourse will lead to volumes. There is an urgent need to document the various facets of this discursive tradition held between modernist and traditionalist platforms. While this study focuses on the system of religious higher education, the researcher only wanted to look how the extensive theological discourses are intertwined with the higher learning systems of Islam. The religious higher education centers always defined the spread and flow of theological ideas in the concerned society.
It was the texts taught or referred at these learning centers that controlled the merit and quality of the religious discourses. Moreover, these centers purposefully or accidentally prepared the scholars who can lead the intellectual and theological discourses between the groups. The positive aspects of these discourses are that it helped social production of knowledge in large scale, it facilitated transmission of religious thoughts out of the learning centers, and most importantly, it helped people, with varied levels of grasping power, intellectual capacity and thought patterns, get platforms of their choice in accepting and understanding Islamic views on issues.