Chapter V

Systems of Religious Higher Education in Kerala

A Study on Pallidarss

Introduction

After making attempts to draw a common ground in the Islamic rites and beliefs of two non-Arab Muslim communities - South India and Southeast Asia, specifically Kerala and Java - in the first three chapters, the fourth chapter was devoted to have a detailed study of the system of Islamic higher education in Java. The special focus of the study was Pesantren, which is a typically traditional system, indigenously developed incorporating the global and historical idea of Islamic schooling, aimed at producing Muslim 'Ulama.

Now, the fifth chapter will study a similar traditional and indigenously developed Islamic higher education system in Kerala. This will be an explanatory or descriptive study of the Pallidarss\textsuperscript{10} or mosque-college system in order to evaluate that how much this Islamic higher education system in Kerala fit into the common scholastic and intellectual legacy explained above in terms of Hadrami background, Shafi'i school of law, Ash'arite theology, and Shari'a-oriented Tasawwuf and Sufi orders.

Pallidarss or Mosque-College

Kerala Muslims had developed through centuries a variety of educational systems in order to impart Islamic knowledge to each member of the society, thanks to the sincere efforts and visionary undertakings of a multi-layered spiritual leadership consisting eminent figures of Sayyid families, great religious scholars, and exemplary personalities of Sufi missionaries. A thorough understanding of Kerala Muslim history in the pre-20\textsuperscript{th} century period brings to the light that there were three main systems of religious

\textsuperscript{10} This entire chapter has been written based on a number of primary and secondary sources in Malayalam and Arabic-Malayalam, the names of which will be provided in the bibliography. The study is also result of a number of interviews, participatory observations as well as the personal experience of the researcher for years.
education during this time. There were Othupallies\textsuperscript{109} for primary education, Pallidarss or mosque-colleges in higher education and Wa’az programs\textsuperscript{110} for universal education (Zubair, 2006).

Pallidarss, literally means class or lessen in the mosque, is the educational system attached with mosques. It is the most fundamental type and the longest lasting educational system in Islam pioneered by the Prophet himself who arranged facilities for a selected few, called Ahlu al-Suffa, to stay in his mosque at Medina to learn more about Islam from him and to be expert scholars who can play a major role in disseminating

\textsuperscript{109} Othupalli was the name given by Mappila Muslims for the indigenously developed system of primary religious schooling, the similar systems of which are known as Qur'anic schools or maktabs in most of the Muslim communities and Madrasas in some places. ‘As the very name ‘Othupalli’ denotes, the method of teaching in these schools was oral. The teacher who was called ‘Musliyar’ or Mullakka’ or Mulla, would recite the lesson and the students would be asked to repeat the same again and again until they memorized it. ‘The curriculum was limited to learning, the recitation of Qur’an and memorizing some of the ‘Adhkar (hymns and invocations used in prayers and religious rites). There is an influence of a local culture in the set-up of Othupallis as an institution imparting only oral education. Other than Muslims, the culture of studying religious, texts, rites and rituals existed only among Nambuthiri Brahmins, who used to recite many hymns and invocations in prayers and religious rites. Therefore, they taught their children those Sanskrit prayers in their childhood itself, and the tradition was to recite it in a special rhythm, called ‘oath’ means oral articulation. Muslims also adopted almost same style to teach Islamic prayers and Qur’an to their children. Being all the prayers and Qur’an in Arabic, all boys and girls were trained to read Arabic and memorise these prayers. This training also called as ‘oathu padikkal’ (learn to recite). ‘The origin of the name ‘Othupalli’ also derived in this way. The word ‘Palli’ was used to denote prayer and teaching centres of Buddhists and Jains. Muslims also adopted this name for their primary learning centres, which were set up to meet the needs of the time. Until the first quarter of the 20th century, Othupallies served as the sole institution for Muslims in Kerala to learn Qur’an and to get primary religious instructions. It existed in different areas in different forms. Mostly, it was a single-teacher institution founded adjacent to the mosques, and sometimes in or near the teacher’s house. These teachers were called ‘Seethis’ in Tellicheri regions of northern Kerala, ‘Mulas’ in South Malabar and ‘Labbas’ in Travancore-Cochin regions. In the first half of the 20th century many Othupallies served as schools to learn both preliminary religious and secular subjects. (Zubair, 2006)

\textsuperscript{110} It seems as an exclusive tradition of Mappila Muslims to conduct systematic and institutionalised public religious oratory services called Wa’az programmes. This is a series of public speeches held in each Muslim Mahallu annually, mostly in month of Ramadan, conducted either by Mahallu committee or by local religious youth organisations with their support. Wa’az series, which sometimes continue to a full month or more, are conducted in nights starting after Magrib or Isha’ prayers and lasting until late nights. Almost all religious subjects from those related to belief, rituals, Tasawwuf, and jurisprudence to social life, education, personal and social responsibilities were discussed in these wa’az programmes. Some times days-long programme will be held depending on single popular religious test like Zainuddin Makhdoom’s renowned book of Shafi’i law school, Fathul Mu’in, and Imam Al-Gazali’s masterpiece Ihya ’ulum al-Din. Wa’az programmes also played many important social and financial roles. Stages of these programmes were one of the major sources to collect contributions for building mosques, Madrasas and business establishments or complexes, which is built to find out a permanent income for running the religious institutions of the Mahallu. Funds were also collected from these stages for social and community charities like building houses for poor in the Mahallu, assisting them in meeting their needs, availing good and needed hospital treatments, get their daughters married, etc. (Zubair, 2006)
religious knowledge. *Darss* system, which is Known in the Islamic history in the name of ‘mosque schools’ and ‘mosque colleges’, developed and transformed in various forms throughout the centuries. Muslim propagators promoted Prophet’s system of mosque-school in the new areas they reached, resulting in the expansion of ‘Darss’ system across the Islamic world. Hundreds of mosques in Baghdad, Alexandria, Isfahan, Mashhad, Ghom, Damascus, Cairo, Granada and several other Muslim cities ran effective and quality *Darss* systems in the golden era of Islam. In course of time, most of the mosque-schools either ceased to exist or adopted institutional forms like formal colleges and universities. However, *Darsses* existed in various kinds until later periods in different parts of Muslim world, from Morocco to Algeria, Yemen and Iraq, as the defenders of the traditional Islamic knowledge.

1. **Review of Literature**

Unlike the case of Indonesia and the *Pesantren* system there, few academically qualified studies have been held on *Pallidarss*. There are many articles appeared in a number of souvenirs, magazines and periodicals in Malayalam and Arabic-Malayalam. Even in the local language, fully devoted studies are very limited. A notable one is a handbook by Dr Mustafa Kamal Pasha, former Chair for Islamic Studies and Research at Calicut University. In a kind of sympathetic and promotional book named ‘*Darssukal Enthinu Pracharippikkanam*’ (Why We Should Promote *Pallidarss* System’), he speaks about the characteristics of the system and enumerates more than 20 reasons for why he does support this traditional system of education, which have been labeled as outdated and retrogressive by modernists. However, this small is work far away from providing a clear picture of *Pallidarss* as an educational institution. (Pasha M. K., 2005) The same author has an article in English about the *Darss* system in an edited work on Kerala Muslims (Engineer, 1995).

There is another work in Arabic written by Muhammad Faizy Bin Bukhari Al-Malaibari and published by the publication wing of Anwariyya Arabic College, Pottachira, Palakkad, of course with no academic quality, which is somewhat related to the syllabus and curriculum of *Pallidarss*. The book, named ‘*Tariq al-Abrar mimman tudarrasu*...
Almost all works on Kerala Muslims or Mappilas and their culture have briefly mentioned, in one way or other, about the Pallidarss system. Such mentions can be seen in the books of William Logan, S F Dale, Rolland E Miller others. In addition, Prof K M Muhammad’s work on the Arabic literature in Kerala and P Muhammad Kuttasheri’s work on Arabic colleges and religious institutions in Kerala give some ideas on the Pallidarss system. However, detailed and devoted studies on, or academic exploration into, one of the major traditional system of education is amazingly absent.

2. **Origin of the Term**

*Pallidarss* is a typical Arabic-Malayalam name the Mappila Muslims of Kerala coined to denote the religious schooling system developed in mosques. *Palli* is the local Malayalam word that was earlier used to signify prayer and teaching centres of Buddhists and Jains. Now it is used to denote worshipping places of Muslims and Christians in Kerala. Muslim *Palli* and Christian *Palli* are common names used to denote *Masjid* s and Churches respectively throughout Kerala. If one says simply *palli* it denotes either of these two, depending on who are the majority in the locality – Muslims or Christians. The word *Darss* is the noun form of the Arabic root-word *Darasa* meaning to learn. The noun form means class and the word meaning of *Pallidarss* happens to be classes in mosques. Now the term *Pallidarss* is widely used to a systematically run institution of higher religious schooling developed by Kerala Muslims in the mosques, which, according to them, has played the chief role in preserving the originality of Islam in Kerala.

3. **Elements of Pallidarss**

In the *Pallidarss* system, there are many characteristic elements. Mosque is the centre and the chief element of this system. Almost all villages and towns, where Muslims live, will have a cathedral mosque, and this works as the centre of the community life. The
same mosque functions as the classroom and hostel for the teacher(s) and students coming from outside the village. This fact can explain why all mosques in Kerala, save some newly constructed ones¹¹¹, are built multi-storied. The ground floor of the mosque is used for prayers, and the first floor (and in some cases even second floor and third floor) is set apart for the learning and lodging of the inmates who study in Darss. Most of the Masjid s have separate room for the teacher. Generally, the students lived in the first or second floors. Ground floor was used for prayer and teaching. The bathrooms and latrines of the mosques were constructed considering the convenience of the Pallidarss students and teacher as well. Many mosques have good ponds in its lands, in order to make the bathing and washing easier for the Pallidarss inmates. Contrary to earlier times when there was very limited facilities, and when even the basic amenities like latrines and electricity were absent, all the Pallidarss have improved the infrastructure trying to be at par with modern demands.

A well-structured and organized Mahallu, ruled by a strong and pro-active Mahallu Committee or Karanavars (muthawalli), comes next. ‘Mahallu is the particular socio-cultural space represented by the mosque, which is also a public forum that provides a site for authority and symbolic representation in the broader social context’ (Faisal, 2010). A Mahallu is formed in a locality, village or town, when at least forty Muslim families (houses) come together and select a committee of representatives in order look after everything religious in a proper way. The initial purpose of joining together as a Mahallu is to set up a Jumu’ a Masjid and a Madrasa in the locality for social religious life as well as proper primary religious education of the inhabitants. The committee appoints the Imam, Khatib and Muadhin for the mosque and teachers for the Madrasa. Every family contribute in cash and kinds as per their ability for a smooth running of the Mahallu system. The committee also deals with life-related issues like birth, marriage and death of individuals in the locality as well as it works as an arbitrator in all kinds of disputes in the locality. In olden days, instead of the committee, it was members of major

¹¹¹ Kerala mosques, its architecture resembling shrines of Hindus, the roles it plays, the highly systematic institution of Mahallu surrounding it, are a case of study yet to be explored. It displays an excellent example of how Little and Great traditions evolve into an exquisite cultural milieu.
family in the locality who were taking care of the issues of the Mahallu in the name of Karanavars or Mutavallies. The successful running of a Pallidarss hugely depends upon the interest, willingness and commitment of a Mahallu committee as well the people in the locality. Until the end of 1990s, most of the Mahllus in Kerala were intensely interested in having a Pallidarss at their locality, as it did a lot of functions from keeping the religious atmosphere of the village high to imparting religious knowledge into all houses of the locality in an informal way. The Mahallu committee discusses in their meeting about installing a Darss in their mosque and they seek a good scholar to teach in their mosque. They fix his salary and invite and appoint him in the mosque with all respects.

The presence of a skilled, efficient, qualified and reputed scholar is the major attraction of any Pallidarss. Students used to seek admission to Darsses held by a reputed scholars. In such a situation they don’t even care about the facilities and other things, but only the knowledge and skill of the scholar. Scholars who have a traditional way of religious schooling under known and reputed teachers are always sought after both by aspiring students and committees of the Mahallu. The committee representatives approach renowned scholars who run a major Darss with a number of students in one mosque, and offer him more salary, perks and facilities in order to shift the Darss into the mosques of their locality. Mostly this happens when that scholar is willing to change the place or unsatisfied with the facilities there. When a teacher transfers the location of his teaching from one Mahallu mosque to another one, his entire students also relocate to the new place. In normal cases, to establish a new Darss the committee approaches an established scholar and ask him to give him one of his most eligible graduating students to establish a new Darss.

The traditional scholar who teaches in the Pallidarss is called Mudarris, a derived form from darasa meaning one who teaches. Generally, the Mudarris happens to be in multi-roles – Imam of daily prayers, Khatib for the mass Friday prayers and the Qadi who officiates in, or deals with, all religious issues of the locality. Rich Mahallu committees use to appoint one or more separate persons for the posts of Imam, Khatib and Qadi. Generally, the traditional religious scholar in Kerala is called Musliyar; and this term will
be added as a suffix to his personal name. ‘The word derived from two words – the Arabic *Muslih* meaning reformer and ‘yar’ in Tamil – denoting the religious reformer of the community. Another opinion is that it was derived from *Musalli* the Arabic term meaning the one who offers prayers the most’ (C K Faisy, 2008). The entire people in the locality deal with the Mudarris with extreme respect, invite him to their homes for all special functions, and occasionally gift him cash and kinds showing their reverence and tribute as well as expecting divinely rewards for such gifts known in Islam as Hadya.

Local and foreign students, called *Muta’allim* or *Musliyarkutty*, staying in the mosque are other major element of Pallidarss. Students join Pallidarss at different stages. Generally 10-11 is the minimum age limit for joining a Darss. Some major Darsses take students from very small stage to higher stages. Students go from one Darss to another, looking for good teachers known for their skills in particular subjects or to teach certain texts of repute. At the minimal age, they join the Darss after having their primary studies in local Madrasas until fifth standard. Many Pallidarss teachers these days make it compulsory for the initiating students to pass the 5th class public exam being conducted by private Madrasa boards belonging to various organizations. Prior to the establishment of a centralised primary Madrasa system, it was the Othupallies that worked as the feeders for the Pallidarss.

Students used to come from all backgrounds. In earlier periods, many rich and reputed families had made it a tradition to send any of their sons, mostly the eldest, to Pallidarss to make them scholars in order to maintain through him a religious environment in the family. Many products of Pallidarss, who are now major scholars and whom this researcher interviewed during the fieldwork, said that in olden days, especially before the gulf boom of 1980s and large-scale migration to Middle East for jobs that brought in a

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112 *Muta’allim* is the traditional Arabic word for student, one who seeks knowledge, derived from the root word ‘ilm. *Mu’allim* is the teacher, and *Ta’allum* is learning. This term is particularly used for learning the religious knowledge. Generally, the word *Talib* is used for the student. It is from *talab* meaning to seek.

113 The Malayalam word *kutty* is used to denote small boy or a teenager. It is also used by elders to denote their younger ones. The word has also become a common popular name given to many people across all communities in Kerala. Names like Muhammad Kutty (Muslim), Raman Kutty (Hindu), and Joseph Kutty (Christian) are very common.
radical change in the economic conditions of Muslims in Kerala, it was both poverty as well as a respect to the religious knowledge that led many people towards Pallidarss. They say that it cannot be termed simply as an economic motive. The desire of parents to see their wards religiously educated and lead a morally superior life also worked to motivate large-scale entry to Pallidarss, and consequent emergence of more and more Pallidarsses in Kerala\textsuperscript{114}. However, the situation changed after the gulf boom, after which the Pallidarss became a place for students from poor backgrounds or for the sons of very devoted.

Students would stay in the Masjid day and night and engage in the studies full time. Hard work, continuous and persistent endeavours, and utmost humility are some of the characteristics essential in a Pallidarss student. He would repeat the lessons many times, commit to memory most of the texts, give utmost respect to his teacher, elder students and elders at the locality. He would learn from the Darss all what is needed to be learned in the career of a successful religious scholar. He would get training in Imamat or leadership in prayers, Friday Khutuba, and other religious rituals related to the community life of the village, as the teacher would depute him occasionally in order to train him in such issues. He would also get a good teaching training as well, as there is only one main Mudarris, it is a norm in the Pallidarss for the senior students to help his teacher by teaching small initiating texts to junior students. So the ambitious young man often studied one subject at the same time that he was teaching another one.

The students have nothing to pay for their entire education. Food and education are absolutely free for any knowledge seeker. The community sees it as a compulsory responsibility upon them to mould, train and produce needed scholars to man the mosque and transmit religious knowledge and culture through generations. For his books, dress, and other daily expenses, the student finds the needed amounts from other sources. In

\textsuperscript{114} Great expert of Fiqh in contemporary Kerala, Ustad Zainul 'Ulama Cherusseri Zainuddin Muşliyar, Secretary General of Samastha Kerala Jam'iyat ul-'Ulama, hail from a very rich and elite family in Kondotty. However, he was sent for Pallidarss education, and the Mahallus he studied in were as rich as to provide even the basic facilities. Avoiding luxuries at home, he suffered all kind of poverty at the Pallidarss, ate meager food provided by his host family, who themselves were in poverty. One can meet enough number of scholars who hailed from rich families but underwent the Pallidarss education suffering all kind of difficulties.
most of the Mahallu, resident members occasionally provide cash and kinds as gifts, especially during religiously important occasions related to them. They would invite the students along with their teachers to their homes for holding religiously-valued rituals like nikah\textsuperscript{115}, khatmul Qur\textsuperscript{116}n, Maulid\textsuperscript{117}, Ratib\textsuperscript{118} or qutubiyyat\textsuperscript{119}, or to do special prayers on certain days in remembrance of those who died from their home, and they would give them good Hadyas in cash or kind, expecting rewards hereafter. In earlier days, most of those who start their journey to the Gulf for job would invite the Mudarris

\textsuperscript{115} Nikah is the ceremony compulsory for making a marriage legal and valid religiously, and it is performed by the Mahallu Qadi.

\textsuperscript{116} khatmul quran is to recite the Quran completely. Many families or individuals commit to recite the entire Holy text in the belief that if they do so and offer it as a Hadya for their dead people, its rewards would reach them. When they commit to read, either they recite themselves or entrust anybody in the mosque or religiously-valued persons to recite it for him. There is yet another custom regarding khatmul quran. In Many parts of Malabar, there is the tradition, called Kuzhikkaloath, or Khatappura Oath, in which the relatives of the dead person, or those entrusted by them, would sit near the grave of a newly buried person to recite the entire Qurān once or several times until the seventh day, and in some cases until the 40th day, of the death. The word Kuzhikkaloath, means to recite at the grave, while the phrase Khatappura Oath means recitation at a hut built for khatmul quran.

\textsuperscript{117} Maulid is a widespread ritual of reading prose and poetries extolling Prophet or saintly figures.

\textsuperscript{118} Ratib is another ritual that belongs to certain Sufi orders like Qadiri, Rifa'i, etc, in which litanies collected and arranged in special manner would be recited in group.

\textsuperscript{119} Qutubiyyat is a ritual related to Qadiriyya Sufi order, observed in high respect at places like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Lacadives, Andaman Islands, Sri Lanka, and among Malayali and Tamil Muslim Diaspora in Singapore and Malaysia. This ritual is based on a book of poem and litanies written by great Tamil Nadu Scholar Sadaqatullah Al-Qahiri. While performing this ritual, the sheikh (or whoever lead the performing group) first calls for reciting the first chapter of Qurān (Fatihah) many times invoking names of various prophets, Sufi Sheikhs, and even some strange names of Jinn and all. The the entire group sing a highly rhythmic Arabic Qasida extolling and invoking the 12th century founder of Qadiriyya Sufi order, Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. When the Qasida recitation reaches at a special point, everybody stand up, switch off all the lights and call the Big Sheikh (Ghauth al-A'zam Jilani) in different tunes and varied voices with utmost respect, and expecting the presence of his soul in the majlis. They call 'Ya Sheikh Muhydдин – Abdul Qadir Jilani' for a thousand times. During short intervals, the leader makes special prayers to Allah the Almighty to shower his help and grace upon all, and the attendees follow him with the same prayers. Many people get spiritually charged and reach in a kind of intoxicated mood while calling Jilani’s name. After completing the call for a thousand times, individually or in group, everybody sit down, come back to normalcy, complete rest of the Qasida, and offer a prayer in group after reciting the special Qurān chapter called Yasin. There has been a big debate among the traditionalists and modernists regarding the religiosity, authenticity, and validity of this ritual called Qutubiyyat. Controversies aside, traditional people used to commit to hold this ritual whenever they face some difficulties in life, for the early cure of a deadly disease, for getting peace and Barakat at homes, and for many other reasons. However, it is a fact that the tradition of conducting this kind of rituals are on a decrease, due to many reasons. In order to keep this alive, many traditionalists have now arranged monthly observance of Qutubiyyat-like rituals at their mosques involving large people. To serve special food for the participants after any of such rituals is a common habit. Also, the host would give good Hadya for the religious officials of the Mahallu for their participation.
and the Mutā'allims to their home for a special food, and they in return would pray in group for the departing member for his safe journey and brakat in his job and earnings. Once he comes home on vacations he would give special gifts for the Mudarris and cash or kinds for the students. The Mutā'allim preserves all these to fund his needs. Some Mahallu committee holds special collections from resident members to help the student find the expenses of their kitabs and other related things.

There has been an interesting tradition of Urudi Parachil that was doing double purposes for the Mutā'allim simultaneously. Urudi Parachil means to do a sermon or wa'az in the mosques after canonical prayers, especially after the Friday prayer. Teachers would send their students on Fridays to adjacent village mosques to deliver short speeches there after the Friday prayer. Through this the students get a good training in delivering religious sermons. At the same time, the people of that Mahallu host him with food and also give him a good amount collecting Hadyas voluntarily given by the members present for the sermon. This amount also helps the students to find his basic needs. In many cases, the students of Pallidarss even get enough money and kinds as Hadya that they take to their homes during vacations.

An interesting system of food arrangement is a major characteristic of the traditional Pallidarss system. Chelavu kodukkal or chilavu kodukkal is the word used to denote this system. The word Chilavu linguistically means expense, and chilavu kodukkal is specially used in the language to give the food. Under this system, each house in the Mahallu adopts a Mutā'allim for food and prepares food for him three times a day - breakfast, lunch and dinner- and some houses, generally those in the proximity of the mosque, even offer a tea in the evening. If the number of students is lesser than the number of houses ready to offer food for and adopt a Mutā'allim, then the houses would host each student at any of the times - breakfast, lunch and dinner- regularly. This is seen as an easy way of finding the refreshment facility for all the students and the teacher. In earlier days, the resident members were considering it a very great thing to host a seeker of Islamic knowledge and to give him his food. It was also very easy for them to feed one student as they need only to consider one extra person when they prepare for themselves.
For the Mudarris and Imam the committee arranges the food from different houses and they appoint one person in the job of bringing the food from each home on daily basis.

The scholars encouraged the residents to host the students and taught them that it was a great opportunity for them to get rewards from Allah. According to religious scholars who went through this schooling, the tradition of going to houses for food as a permanent guest does a lot of functions in the life of the students. It nurtures good qualities like extreme humility, politeness and humbleness in Muta'allim, teaches them good public relation skill to be humble and polite, and help them understand actual conditions of the society that will enhance their commitment to work for the community in his future life. Moreover, being visible in the society interacting constantly with its members would empower him spiritually as he comes under a compulsion to stay away from bad habits and activities. The resident members used to see it a prestige to feed the students of Pallidarss and they used to consider them as a real member of their homes. They used to suffer any kind of difficulties for the sustenance of the Pallidarss, and they used to feed the far-off Muta'allim staying at their village mosque for religious education though they are in difficult conditions. Many traditional scholars, who were the real products of traditional Pallidarss, said that their contacts with the chilavu veedu were great and intact, and that bond is kept through generations from fathers to sons. Many of them still, even at their retiring age, get invitations to the chilavu veedu of their Pallidarss time whenever any important functions occur there.

However, the system has become outdated now, and most of the Pallidarss has now set up separate canteens adjacent to the mosque to prepare food for the staying students, as nowadays many students consider the system of going to houses for food as something unsuitable for their status. Also, many parents don’t like their children going to other houses for food, so they even stop sending their wards for religious education to mosques. Moreover, the wealthier and rich the community has become, the less interested

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120 There is a commonly recited tradition in this regard. 'Kun 'Aliman aw Muta'alliman, aw Mustami'an aw muhibban, wala takun khamisan. Be a religious scholar, or a religious student or one who listen to those deal with Islamic knowledge or at least be a lover of the Islamic knowledge and its people, but don’t become a fifth person who stay out of all these four categories.
they are to permanently host Pallidarss students. As the housing infrastructure and conveniences of the life increased, many families see preparation of food and all as a difficulty. They themselves make it a habit to eat outside in hotels and all. It is not the hesitation to spend money for such things, but to do efforts at home preparing food and devoting time for it. In some of the Pallidarsses, resident members who commit to feed the Muta'allim ask any of the hotels in the locality to give him whatever food he wants and he pays for it.

Shortly, Pallidarss, though on decline in its glory and vibrancy, is a great system of education. Its amazing organisational setup helps impart quality education at minimum expense. Pasha writes, ‘Since the mosque is already there, there was no expense on accommodation of students or on classrooms. Since the teacher was the priest of Mosque there was no additional expense on teacher. Since the senior students helped the teacher, the number of teachers was confined to one or two. Since food was supplied by villagers from their homes allotting one student to each house, there was no expense on students. Each family adopted a student. Poor families offered either breakfast, lunch or dinner. Since the teacher and students resided in mosque, there was full utilisation of investment on mosques. Since students were given food from houses, they were considered to be members of the hosting house. He would encourage the children of the house in their education. The women would ask the students their religious doubts. So there was diffusion and encouragement of knowledge, thus the Darss helped adult education and diffusion of religious knowledge. Since the students remained in mosques, mosques were alive. Since the mats are used to sit down, there was no expense on furniture. Moreover, sitting down on earth gave more exercise to Darss students than those use bench and desk. There was no expense on staffs like clerk, peon, and administrator like in colleges. In colleges, class system is compulsory and there is no reduction on expenses if students are less in one class, and in Darsses as there is no class system such problems never come up.’ (Pasha M. K., 2005)
4. Mosque-colleges Around Islamic World

Pallidarss is a system of religious schooling systematically held at mosques. It is the oldest educational system in Islam and it is part of Islam’s Great tradition. Its history starts with that of the mosque in Islam. The Prophet is said to be its founder as he facilitated in his Masjid for the stay of many Muhajirs who migrated from Makkah to Medina during Hijra, and asked the Ansari people residing nearby to share their food and clothes with them. Many others, mainly poor people and even many Ansari people, joined the group. They spent their whole time learning Qurân and other Islamic knowledge and in community services. They were later called Ahlu al-Suffa, because of their stay in a side-room specially prepared for them, and this system nurtured among the Companions a number of great scholars who travelled far places after the demise of Prophet, spread Islam’s message, converted masses, and helped found mosques and Muslim social life everywhere.

Imitating the system of Prophet’s Masjid in Medina, all the newly founded mosques became centres of Islamic knowledge and religious activities. The new generation got all their primary education of Islam from the mosques as the Imams took the role of teachers as well. Devoted scholars started stationing at major mosques and attracting students from far and near who would stay in the mosque with the help of surrounding community in order to specialise in diverse branches of Islamic knowledge. The rich and influential people contributed huge lands and other assets as waqf properties to fund for Islamic education. World famous mosque-colleges were functioned with full zeal and energy at all major Islamic cities like Makkah, Medina, Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Kufa, Basra, Cordoba, Khurasan, Bukhara, etc. Highly reputed and renowned scholars directed major Darsses. Muslim rulers stretched all kinds of helping hands and spent generously for the existence and enrichment of Mosque colleges. (Dodge, 1962)

This system developed and transformed in various forms. It adopted institutional forms in course of time as the number of mosques and its activities increased under caliphs, particularly the Abbasids. In the first decades of the 10th century, there were reportedly 3,000 mosques in Baghdad alone while as many as 12,000 were reported in Alexandria.
These and other thousands of mosques at Isfahan, Mashhad, Ghom, Damascus, Cairo, Granada and hundreds of other Muslim cities worked as institutionalised learning centres, where students from all over the Muslim world stayed and studied multiple subjects. Such mosques also contained important libraries. Even after Madrasas and colleges had become a popular form of education, the old mosques continued to serve as seats of higher learning. However, with the advent of time some mosque colleges adjusted themselves or due to pressure to modern trends and underwent remarkable transformation. The Al-Azhar mosque of Cairo (opened in 972 by Shi’ite rulers and later dominated by Sunnis), the Qarawiyin mosque in Fes, Morocco (founded in 859) and the Zaituna mosque in Tunis (set up in 732) are most important in this regard. All of them are currently serving as well-known modern universities of the Muslim world while keeping their religious moorings intact. Mosque schools of various kinds existed until later periods in different parts of Muslim world from Morocco to Algeria, Yemen and Iraq as the defenders of the traditional knowledge (E. Gilbert, 1980) (Zubair, 2006).

5. Origin and Development of Pallidarss In Kerala

The exact time frame of the development of the Darss system of education in Kerala is not available, but one can assume that it was started along with the spread of Islam in the region, because the first thing that the early missionaries did there was establishing a number of mosques at various places. ‘It is probable that ‘Darss’ classes were started in these early mosques, immediately after their construction, as there is no evidence to prove the existence of any other arrangements for religious instruction of Muslims in Kerala those days. In the centuries following the advent of Islam, the number of Darsses went on increasing in mosques in every nook and corner of Kerala’ (Pasha M. K., 2005).

‘The first Darss of Kerala started when the first mosque was inaugurated in the early years of Hijra itself’ (C K Faisy, 2008).

Historian Umar Zuhrawardi says in his book Rihlatul Muluk, ‘A group of 12 people including Malik Dinar, Shraf bin Malik, Malik bin Habeeb and his wife Qamariyya. The total strength of the group was 44 including around 20 huffaz of Qurān and some others from Basra. They constructed 18 mosques and appointed Qadis there. They have
constructed mosques in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu as well. The *Huffaz* were also good scholars of Islam, well versed in various branches of Knowledge. One can reasonably assume that the founders of *Pallidars* in Kerala were those appointed *Qadis* and the *Huffaz* who were with them. Because, history tells us that the Companions and the Follower (*Tabi’un*) had founded mosques wherever they went and set up mosque-centred facilities to provide religious education. (C K Faisy, 2008)

Sources clearly point out the existence of many higher education centres in early Kerala mosques, especially in the coastal cities. Highly qualified teachers had attracted hundreds of students in to *Darsses* they held in *Masjid* s of Kodungallur, Quilon, Calicut, Ponnani, Chaliyam and Tanur. Traces of their history in its early periods seems difficult, for there are no Mappila sources presently known that predate the 14th century as the earliest known Muslim who attempted to deal with the subject of Mappila origin is Shaik Zein-ud-Din (1498-1581). Nevertheless, there are earlier references to the Muslims in Malabar in the notes of Arab travellers and geographers. Nainar correctly maintains that Muslim geographers are the main source for information regarding the eight to twelfth centuries of Malabar history, and they continue to be an important source for history up to the fourteenth century. It is said that a *Darss* more than eight hundred years old was held in the *Valiya Kulangara Palli* at Tanur, where eminent scholars from Yemen, Egypt, Hadhramouth, Hijaz had conducted classes. According to available documents, Sheik al-*Imam* Muhammed Abdullah al-hadhramiyy al-Qahiriyy, who taught in the mosque in 675 AH, was the first *Mudarris* and *Mufti* of this mosque. (Zubair, 2006)

5.1. Vilakkathirikkal – The Collegiate Education At Ponnani Jami Mosque

During the period between 7th to 15th century i.e., until the colonial encroachment started with the arrival of Portuguese at Calicut in 1498, a time in which Muslims enjoyed the obvious advantages of a favourable alliance with the ruling power, Ponnani rose to fame as the *Jumu’ a Masjid* there adopted a collegiate education system. The completion of the course provided there can be compared to the modern education system of graduating from a college. Almost all of the eminent scholars Kerala produced since 15th century until the dawn of 20th century had graduated after securing their seats around the famous
lamp that still lights inside the mosque. ‘Vilakkathirikkal’ (to sit around the lamp in Ponnani mosque, vilakku – lamp, irikkuka – to sit) was the major qualification of then religious scholars. Ponnani Darss supplied scholars for whole Kerala and students from all parts of Kerala came to Ponnani for higher education. (Zubair, 2006)

It is believed that this mosque was constructed eight centuries ago at the behest of Sheikh Fariduddin Bin Abdul Qadir Al-Khurasani, a well-known disciple of Sheikh Mohiyudden Abdul Qadir Jilani. But it was after the coming of Makhdum Zainuddin Bin Ali (1467-1521) to Ponnani that it became an educational centre, and came to be called “little Mecca of Malabar”. The Darss which were conducted by celebrated scholars in the Big Jumu’a Masjid at Ponnani attracted students not only from different places of Kerala and other parts of India but also from foreign countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Ceylon Yemen and Java. Since 14th century, eminent scholars from Makhdum family headed the Ponnani Darss, attracting more and more students each year. In 1887, there were about 400 such persons belonging to various and distant places pursuing their studies in the Ponnani mosque. The number in 1906 was about 300. ‘Great savants like Shykh Ahmed Zainuddin, the author of ‘Tuhfathul Mujahidein’, were associated with this educational centre thereby adding to its glory. The stagnation and deterioration gripped Mappila Muslims in the first decades of the 20th century had its negative impact on Ponnani also as it lost its traditional glory, despite still keeping a Darss and the lamp there.

5.2. Pallidarss In 20th century

Though the name and glory of Ponnani Darss came to a decline by the onset of 20th century, the big Vilakkathirikkal system remained intact and still a Pallidarss is being held there. However, there were many other noted Pallidarsses emerged at various Mahallus across Kerala. The system greatly survived all kind of big disasters, troubles, challenges like the Mappila Rebellion of 1921, modernists and secularist onslaught, and the post-independence enthusiasm for the promotion and spread of pure secular education. The history of major Pallidarsses, their role in producing the entire religious scholars of the last century, their contribution in the social and religious life of Mappila Muslims should be studies separately.

194
Only an extensive survey of existing and disintegrated Pallidarsses can reveal the extent of spread and reach of the system. In the pre-20th century period, there were certain major centres where big Darsses were held. The more graduates of these Darsses came out and started seeking jobs, the more mosques were constructed, more Mahallus were formed and more Darsses were founded. The process of this gradual spread and reach of the Pallidarss system and its development can amply explain the gradual process of Muslim community formation in Kerala. With the onset of 20th century, the number of Pallidarsses shows a tremendous increase. However, numbers declined in the post-1921 tragedy.\(^{121}\)

Since 1921 tragedy, which was a culmination of almost four-century-long repression and anti-Muslim cruelties by the colonial powers and which had made Muslim conditions worse and pathetic in all fields, until the situations becomes more suitable following the independence in 1947, Mappila Muslims underwent radical transformation in almost all fields. A number of religious organizations were formed. The entire community were divided into modernist and traditionalist platforms, and emerged among them a dual-faced discursive tradition in each and every issue, one in the line of traditional revivalism and the other in fundamentalist reformism. Among the so-called modernists itself, there were diverse theological perspectives from pure literalism or extreme fundamentalism to religious rationalism and secular rationalism.

From this pathetic social condition, Muslim leaders of all platforms and of all colours started searching for reasons of the present situations, and seeking solutions. In fact, the divisions among the society were the result of this soul-searching and analysis of the problem on the basis of their views and perspectives. A group of some elites and ‘intellectuals’ embraced the modernity and western culture in its full form and discarded religion, because they analysed the ‘sticking to religion’ as the major cause of Muslim backwardness. Another group consisting some modern-educated intellectuals and some

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\(^{121}\) Sources depended for this and many other preceding and following conclusions are varied from oral histories drawn through formal interviews and casual detailed talks to a number of articles, speeches and memoirs, in addition to personal observation of the researcher who has been closely watching and experiencing the system for around 20 years.
religious-educated personalities accused the traditionalists of hindering all kind of progress in the community, and of pulling them deep into backwardness, through insisting survival and existence of all kinds of traditional institutions from Pallidarss to ‘religiously-inspired but locally developed’ rites and rituals. They called for a reformed Islam by rejecting the entire traditional heritage, accusing the traditional scholars of deviation from Islamic tenets and by reinterpreting the religion overshadowing all the intellectual traditions. They also rejected any form of esoteric interpretation and criticised most of the transmitted knowledge, practices, customs and rituals. In the meanwhile, traditionalists claimed that they are not against the trends and developments of the period unless it becomes against or challenge the values of the religion. Analysing the reasons of backwardness, they called for religious revivalism and perceived a dual faced threat – the infiltrations and influences of the western un-Islamic culture on one hand, and the emergence of the modernist, fundamentalist and puritanical as well as reformist versions of religion on the other. They accused the religious modernists of slowing the holistic progress of the community by confusing the common people in the name of reinterpreting religion through problamatizing jurisprudential issues that were already discussed in detail, and reached conclusions, by medieval scholars.

One of the most visible changes taken place as a result of diverse analysis and interpretation of the post-1921 Muslim backwardness was radical transformation in the educational systems of Malabar Muslims as in the case of all other communities that called for drastic modernisation process in the wake of modernity and new educational and scientific developments. The English system of secular education started spreading in the Muslim areas since the onset of 20th century. In the aftermath of 1921, due to some policy interventions from the part of British, more people started going for secular schooling. In the same period, Malabar witnessed emergence of a large number of Madrasas belonging to all theologically diverse sects.

Though almost all of their initial religious leaders were the products of Pallidarss, the modernists and religious reformists held this traditional system of religious schooling responsible for community’s backwardness and they started vilifying and degrading the system as outdated, unsuitable and pre-modern. As mentioned earlier, they also rejected,
in their search for this standardized tradition, all the classical authority and the entire corpus of classical texts and references, criticise almost all of the transmitted knowledge, practices, customs and rituals, and insisted on returning to the Qurān and the Sunna anew. They also snubbed any form of esoteric interpretation (tawił), which was followed by the traditionalist 'Ulama. They said that any person who knew Arabic need not rely on authorities, and that texts can be approached without intermediary.

This stance of modernists resulted in traditionalists being the sole spokespersons and promoters of Pallidarss system in Kerala. Calling for reinterpretation and direct access to both the prime sources of Islam Qurān and Hadith altered the way of religious schooling for the modernists. Meanwhile, the traditionalists effectively utilised the two typically traditional institutions of Mappila Muslims – Mahallu system and Pallidarss – in order to consolidate their authority and power and to overcome the challenges posed by the modernists. The Pallidarss, which were widely popular in towns and villages, and its teachers and students, who were inter-connected 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 the traditionalist Sunni platforms in their theological fight against modernists. They could attract a massive following among the large rural population through scholars doing religious duties at the villages and religious institutions.

In the post-independence period, Samastha utilised its organization platforms to institute more Darsses in Mahallus. Several of its sincere leaders travelled from villages to villages encouraging the committees or notables at Mahallus to set up Madrasas and Pallidarss at their village in order to improve and found new facilities for religious schooling in the traditional way. They promoted two kinds of Darss system. The first one is aimed at local students and the idea is that the Imam of the Mahallu gathers, with the help of the committee, all those school-and-Madrasa-going boys and encourages them to come to the mosque for the Magrib or Subhi prayers and to learn Islamic teachings until Isha or sunrise respectively. In many cases, grown-ups and even elders joined these Darsses and studied some key texts concerning jurisprudence, Tasawwuf or morality from the Imams. The second one is encouragement of proper Pallidarss appointing new Mudarris and admitting non-local students.
There were a number of such Darsses in almost all villages of Malabar till the end of 1990s. According to a survey during this period, there were around 32,721 students studying in Pallidarrses across Malabar under 1109 Mudarris/teachers. In Malappuram district alone, there were 545 Pallidarrses catering to 22,300 students (Al-Qasimi, 1998). An overall survey shows a sharp decline in the number of functioning Pallidarrses. No exact numbers of existing Darsses are available.

6. Academic Calendar

Darsses played the role of higher secondary and collegiate education. Students willing to learn more about religion or to be religious scholars joined Darsses held at various places after getting their primary education in Othupallies or such preliminary facilities available in their locality. The educational calendar of the Pallidarrs is from Shawwal to Sha‘aban, as it follows the Arabic Hijri calendar. Other than all Fridays, other holidays in a systematically held Pallidarrs are 10 days for Idul Azha, Muharram 9&10, five days for Rabi‘ul Awwal and a day for Mi‘araj. There would be more and less holidays depending on local and other circumstances of the Darss.

7. A Functioning Day At Pallidarrs

A functioning day in Pallidarrs starts with the teacher and students waking up before dawn, and offering the Tahajjud prayer. After the call for Subhi prayer, the students wait sitting in line for the Jama‘at (group) prayer to start, and at the same time engaging in chanting Tasbih and Istighfar in a low-pitched voice. After the Subhi prayer they recite the Qur‘an at least for half an hour. After the Qur‘an recitation, students get engaged in the learning process. They approach the teacher with concerned texts according to their turns. The teacher would hold classes for a single student or for a number of students. The teaching in turns continues until the evening. Other than the main teacher, the senior

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122 Tasbih is to declare the glory or celebrate the praise of Allah the Almighty, while Istighfar is to seek repentance and apology. Chanting Tasbih and Istighfar are highly recommended before sunset and sunrise. It is mentioned in Qur‘an and Hadith, and Islamic institutions have made it a part of their daily routine to get the students engage in group chanting of Tasbih in the morning before the Jama‘at starts and in the evening while waiting for the call for prayer to be given. A general litany of Tasbih followed in most of the places is – ‘Subhanallahi wabihamdhihi, Subhanallahi ‘Az(d)eem, Wabihamdhihi Astaghfirullah’
students also engage in teaching junior students. The *Darss* system functions smoothly in a spiritual control without any bells system or time-to-time direction of warden-like officials.

7.1. *Onnam Darss* and *Randam Darss*

The resumption of *Darss* after the evening break starts with the *Muta'allims* and the local school-going students, most of whom join the *Darss* for the duration between *Magrib* and *Isha* prayers, sitting together in *Swaff*\(^{123}\) circle and chanting the *Tasbih* and *Istifhar*. After the *Magrib* prayer, the local and foreign students would sit in circle in the main hall of the *Darss*\(^{124}\) and recite a prayer *Beith* (song) in Arabic in highly melodious as well as spiritually-inspiring voice. This denotes the starting of evening session of the *Darss* which is called in the *Pallidarss* terminology as 'Onnam Darss' (first *Darss*). There are various versions of this prayer *beith* varying from *Darss* to *Darss*. It starts with *Hamd* and *Swalat* and includes prayers for the teacher, great forefathers, all those who help in the smooth running of the *Darss*, and for the dead ones. There are two prayers *beiths* popularly recited in the *Pallidarsses* of Malabar. These are written by two great scholars and Arabic poets of Kerala – Abdurahman Fazfari a/s Kutty *Musliyar* and Ustad Areekkal Abdurahman *Musliyar*. Even the common people at the *Mahallu* know these *beiths* by heart.

It is during the first *Darss* that the local students join the *Darss* and get religious education. In earlier days, there was enough care from parents to send their male children, whose regular *Madrasa* period is over, to the *Darss* during this *Magrib-Isha* time, and this had worked as a good system of follow-up education for the basic religious knowledge they learn from the primary *Madrasas*. Generally, the *Mudarris* would not

\(^{123}\) *Swaff* is the Arabic word for line. In the Islamic terminology *Swaff* is specially used for the clear cut lines after lines kept by the members present for communal prayer. It is highly recommended by the Prophet that the *Swaff* created for the communal prayer should be correct and curve-less. People use to sit in *Swaff* itself in the mosque as they come early and wait for the *jama'at* to start.

\(^{124}\) Generally, the first floor of the *Masjid* is used as the main hall of the *Darss* and the inner hall of the ground floor, which is the main part of any *Masjid* consisting the *Mihrab* and *Mimber*, would be left for the convenience of praying people.
teach the non-local students during the Onnam Darss, as they would be engaged in revising the lessons they learned in the day time. He utilises this time to teach the local students. This works for them as a teenage school. Other than the follow-up religious education, they get a moral and spiritual training through their interactions with the Muta’allims. They also get accustomed with highly recommended religious habits like prayer in Jama’at, offering of non-compulsory rawatib sunna prayers, Tashih, Istighfar, Haddad, Maulid, etc.

Once the call for Isha prayer is over, the Onnam Darss ends by reciting Swalat on Prophet and the students and those who come for Jama’at sit in circle in the main prayer hall of the Masjid to recite the short and popular Ratib al-Haddad in group, which last less than 15 minutes.

After the Isha prayer, Muta’allims go to their Chelavu homes for the dinner and come back to start the second Darss or Randam Darss. The second Darss continues until the Muta’allims feel sleepy. They use this time to repeatedly revise the day-time lessons as well as to refer extra books and read other interested works. Many graduates of Pallidarss expressed their nostalgic feelings when asked about the Darss experiences. They remembered the days they sat awake until early morning, repeating the lessons, reading more, and decoding the difficult portions of tough texts that dealt with serious jurisprudential, philosophical, theological or intellectual discourses.

8. General Characteristic Features of Pallidarss

In the Pallidarss system, there is no division of classes as such. Students were taught on the basis of big text books. Those who study one textbook or Kitab could be considered as one class. There was no bench, table or blackboard. The teaching was oral. The teacher would read the text, word by word and would give meaning and explanation. Students are encouraged to ask questions and trigger quality discussions and debates based on the leaning texts. The teacher would explain for clarifications.

The idea of mosque-college or Darss in a Masjid is global and part of Great tradition of Islam. However, the systematic Pallidarss system functioning among Kerala Muslims
can be seen as a fine mix of Little and Great traditions. The idea of religious schooling in the *Masjid* is effectively blended with local culture and systems. The single-teacher monitory system of education has a Hindu legacy. Traditional Hindu and Buddha educational system is famous in the name of *Gurukula Sampradayam*, in which the Guru (teacher) and Shishya (student) would stay together for the latter to learn divine knowledge from the former with utmost devotion, extreme humility and tremendous respect.

The *Darss* system helps every student to learn according to his capacity and at par with his skill and dexterity. There will not be any class or peer pressure, as the system effectively honours the multiple intelligence and varied capacity of the students. Traditionally, it holds no regular exams or other types of comparative testing of the student’s ability, and does not decide the capability of a student on the basis of marks he gets. Rather, he comes under the constant watch, guidance and counselling of the teacher who devises upgrading plans for each students realising the level of his skill as well as comprehensions, in addition to his hard work and perseverance. In fact, the *Pallidarss* system has been an effective application of newly found educational methods based on theories of Multiple Intelligence (Gardner H., 1993). Recently, the education experts are implementing a plan called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). Under this plan the teacher has to constantly watch a student and give him grades accordingly. The aim of the project is to instil confidence in each student realising and empowering one’s own skills and talents. This is based on the idea that ‘there is no one as good for nothing or good for everything’. A Mudarris watch the Muta’allim since he joins the Pallidarss, and occasionally guide him to rectify his mistakes and nurture his talents. Students at any level of grasping and intellectual capacity can follow the system of Pallidarss as it encourages a system of repeated revisions and unlimited repeats of lessons (C K Faisy, 2008). There is no fixed period of education in Darss. Students learned Kitab after Kitab.

125 According to theories of Multiple Intelligence, there are more than eight kinds of intelligences that can be found invariably in every kid. This theory questions the judgment based on certain kind of IQ tests, and it says everybody is intelligent in one way or other. Howar Gardner has explained these theories in his path breaking book, *Frames of Mind, The Theory of Multiple Intelligence* (1993). His other works are, *Multiple Intelligence: New Horizons* (2006), and *The theory of Multiple Intelligence: How it should Influence gifted and Talented Education* (1997).
If one could learn a Kitab quickly he could start the next one. Therefore, 'in Darss system intelligent students could complete their course within a short time. So there was no waste, as found in western educational system'. (Pasha M. K., 1995)

Studying the Pallidarss system, Dr Kamal Pasha has counted about 20 apparent benefits of Darsses:

(1) Good teacher-student relation, because of both being together in the mosque for 24 hours. Other than the textual lessons, the student learns from his teacher the life of a pious Muslim.

(2) Maintenance of good discipline: The atmosphere of Masjid itself nurtures in the student discipline and respect.

(3) Cultivation of good character because of the grouping along with teacher and other students in the mosque.

(4) Better learning style in which approaching the teacher to clear doubts and clarify tough portions is always possible, and there are facilities to arrange discussions. Explaining this point, Pasha wrote that 'the Darss atmosphere facilitates more discussions and clearance of doubts from the teacher and senior students. Senior students also correct in a very friendly manner when they hear any mistake in junior students while they reading or in other things. One English man named Doctor Bell has written a book (The Madras System of Education) about this system after he saw such an atmosphere in a Madrasa at Madras. Christian missionaries have implemented this system in their Sunday Schools. One of the reasons for spread of education in England was implementation of this cheap but highly fruitful in education there'.

(5) Education at minimum cost: There are many aspects that make the Pallidarss system highly economical and at minimum cost. 1. The Masjid already exists, so no expense for building. 2. No much expense in salaries as appointment of only one teacher for any number of students is needed in the Darss. The seniors teach junior students. 3. No huge and collective expense on food. The resident-members commit to share the students and
host them at their homes. 4. No expense on furniture as the system of sitting on mats prevails in Pallidarss. 5. As in colleges, Pallidarss does not need a separate office, appointment of employees like peon, clerk, administrator, etc. 6. Because the class system is compulsory in colleges, expense will not be reduced though the students are less in one class. In Pallidarss, there are no such problems as there is no system of separate classes or divisions. 7. The Masjid needs an Imam anyway. If the Mudarris himself is the Imam, no separate salary is needed, and he can also handle other things like Khutuba, Nikah, etc.

(6) Spiritual activity involved by many: In Islam, education is considered as a spiritual activity and a good deed for which hereafter-rewards are expected. Therefore everybody from the teacher and students to the resident members of the Mahallu see it a great thing to be part of the Pallidarss proceedings in one way or other. The rich residents commit to feed one or more students daily. The poor also come forward to provide the food for at least one time. So everybody can be part of this process as per their abilities and expect rewards hereafter, and in this way they become among those who love and work for religious knowledge which is considered a great worship.

(7) Possibilities for mass education and for (8) diffusion of knowledge to the public: The food from houses system creates a good relation between the Muta'allim and his host family. This gives the households, especially women there, an easy chance to get more Islamic knowledge through them and to get their doubts on religious issues cleared in an easy way. The presence of a Muta'allim in the house helps nurture a religious discipline and culture in the house. The hosting families, especially those living far away from the mosques, used to seek the help of the Muta'allim for taking their children to the mosque along with them. In this way they can ensure that their wards get religious education and training in a safe way. Relating the children with the mosque plays a great role in nurturing religious spirituality in future generations, and the Pallidarss functions well in creating this religiosity in the new generation.

(9) Training for a religious life: The Pallidarss life makes the Muta'allim highly capable of dealing with issues related to mosque maintenance, as he gets training in Calling for
Prayers (Adhan), Imamat, and even in cleaning and other related things. It has been found that the graduate of Arabic/Sharī'a colleges, which has been fast replacing the Pallidarss system, feel it uncomfortable even to sleep in the mosque, and therefore they show a kind of reluctance to take up a Masjid job after they graduate from the colleges.

(10) A healthy system: The building of the mosque, with ample air and light in open and serene surroundings, gives the students a healthy atmosphere to learn. Most of the Darss are held at upstairs and it demands from the student climbing the staircases many times a day. Moreover, the system of sitting on the floor adds to the daily exercise of the students.

(11) Monitorial system: Under this, higher level students can, while they teach lower ones, thoroughly understand and clarify the doubts in the portions they studied earlier. It is a fact that any student gets a clear understanding of the portions not when he learns but when he teaches.

(12) Training for teaching while one teaches those at small level. When the Pallidarss student graduates he would have received a good amount of training in teaching unlike the students of colleges.

(13) Facility to expand as per necessity as there is already at least one mosque in each village where there is significant Muslim presence.

(14) Darsses make the Masjid alive always. All the Jama'at prayers will be held regularly due to the presence of Mudarris and his Muta'allims there always. It is a fact that many of the village mosques that were once vibrant and alive with the Pallidarss are now facing the problems of having nobody even to hold a proper communal prayer at times.

(15) Pallidarss materialises the actual Islamic vision of transforming mosques into knowledge centres. Islam considers the Masjid not only as a mere worshipping centre, but also a centre of learning and other religious activities. In the absence of a Darss, the huge buildings of mosque worth crores of rupees lay unutilised and dysfunctional.
The existence of a Darss also helps the Imams utilise his time and energy well, as in its absence he lacks any work after the five time communal prayer.

(16) The Pallidarss plays a great role in nurturing a humane culture devoid of immorality and indiscipline seen in secular colleges.

(17) The Pallidarss system is the most practical and fruitful ways of religious education as far as religious careers of the graduates are concerned. When the graduates of colleges seek jobs in gulf or in fields other than that of religious, and when they even change their dressing and attitude in order not to recognise them as graduates of a religious college, the graduates of Pallidarss, according to the experience so far, preserves their legacy, keeps their traditional attire, and show willingness to pursue a religious career though earnings from such jobs are minimal.

(18) The Pallidarss system helps any student learn and grow according to his mental capacity. In colleges, both the most intelligent ones and less intelligent ones get it difficult to go along. An intelligent student can learn a text within a week, but the less intelligent may take even a year to learn the same. Both of them will be disturbed in a time-bound class system. In the Darss system, the intelligent one saves a lot of time as he can go up very fast, while the slow learner gets enough time to comprehend things. In the college system, the fast learners lose a lot of time, while the slow learners feel the time pressure. Therefore the Pallidarss system happens to be more scientific.

(19) The Pallidarss system helps everybody do jobs according to their ability in the religious field without pressure of class system or degrees.

9. Arabic/Shari’ā Colleges And Graduation With Sanad/Title

The introduction of British education system was the chief motivator behind the transformation of religious education in India into an institutional set-up with planned buildings, separate classrooms, appointment of more than one teachers in one institution, arrangement of bench and desk, regulation of classes in periods, initiation of examinations and issuance of certificates after graduation. During the post-1857 efforts
for religious revivalism, North Indian Muslims pioneered in this, establishing some prominent institutions like Darul Uloom Deoband (1867), which “emulated the British bureaucratic style for educational institutions, accepted a fixed curriculum, separate classes for students of different level, well-defined academic year, annual examinations and networks of affiliated schools”. Deoband is still considered one of the premier centres of traditional Islamic learning in the world. The most important characteristic of these initiatives was its selective modernisation as they adopted the modern trends in physical arrangements of the institution to teach the traditional subjects without any modifications in the syllabus and curriculum. (Zubair, 2006)

South India witnessed the effects of this partial modernisation in traditional education with the establishment of Baqiyat ul-Salihat Arabic College in Vellore of Tamilnadu, founded by Sheikh Abdul Vahab al-Veluri (1831-1918) in 1883. Baqiyat soon became the prime centre of higher Islamic learning for South Indian Muslims, whose religious education has been mosque-centred so far. Baqiyat brought in a radical change in the way of Islamic schooling in South India, and obviously Malabar Muslims also joined this change. Both Velur of present day Tamilnadu and Malabar were under the control of Madras presidency at that time. As Ponnani’s renowned collegiate education had been on decline by then, many students joined Baqiyat for higher studies after their initial studies in Pallidarss.

One of the main changes brought by Baqiyat was honouring the graduates with a title and Sanad. The system of providing Sanad was already there in the Darss system in the name of Ijaza, but honouring with a title was not. All the Pallidarss graduates were called Musliyar. Now those who complete the course on offer at Baqiyat were given the title of MFB (Moulavi Fadhil Baqavi) and were called Baqawi.

Malabar region also witnessed the influence of British education as Baqiyat and Deoband model experiments in religious education spread in the region by the end of 19th century, though at an extremely nominal level. In 1871, the famous Koyappathodi family of Vazhakkad set up the first Arabic college in the region, Tanmiyathul Ulomm Madrasa. However, the change was simply the transfer of the existing Darss into a special building
and appointment of an eminent scholar to attract more students and by bettering the boarding and dining facilities of both students and the teacher. This trend of adopting a Madrasa name for the existing Darsses, improving its building facilities and sometimes separating it from the Masjid can be seen elsewhere in Malabar. The impact of Baqiyat Arabic College felt more in Kerala with the arrival of eminent scholar Marhoom Chalilakatt Kunchammed Haji (1866-1919), who is rightly called the father of the modern Madrasa and Arabic Colleges of Kerala.

When he returned after spending many years of learning and teaching at Baqiyat College and its adjacent Latheefiya Arabic College in 1909, he was appointed as the Sadr ul-Mudarriseen (headmaster) of the Tanmiyathul Ulomm Madrasa at Vazhakkad. As he found a favourable environment under the auspices of Koyappathodi family to implement his ideas of a modern Islamic learning centre there, he started higher classes on modern lines and renamed it as Darul Uloom Arabic College. He adopted many radical innovations in teaching methods by introducing use of tables, chairs, benches, desks and blackboards in the classrooms as well as enlivened the all-inclusive syllabus of early Darsses in which the subjects like logic, astronomy and mathematics were suggested to be taught according to modern trend. Along with textbooks of Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Grammar and Tasawwuf, he brought a provision to teach Malayalam as a language. In this way he tried to bring in a grand modernization process in the Darss system.

It is said that people from various regions of Malabar used to visit Vazhakkad to see the new system of education and were inclined to imitate the system in their areas. However, some of traditional 'Ulama had come out against the modernisation efforts due to various reasons, like the inherent cautious approach towards change and jurisprudential doubt of some that whether a waqf property set to run Darsses could be used for such modernisations. It is not true, as the reformist sources say, that all the traditional 'Ulama were against the Madrasa movement of Chalilakath. Many of traditional

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126 Other than modernizing the higher education system of Darss, he tried to modernize the primary education system as well, introducing a well-designed scheme of study to teach local students the preliminary knowledge of Islam. He utilised his college students to assist him in teaching in the primary Madrasa. In fact, he paved the foundation for the amazing contemporary system of a centralised Madrasa education across Kerala, run by boards that belong to various fractions.
'Ulama and even later leaders and supporters of the traditionalist Samastha, like Qutubi Muhammed Musliyar and Cherusseri Ahmed Kutty Musliyar, were the students of Chalilakath. Besides, it was a group of the most eminent contemporary traditional 'Ulama, including Ponnani Makhdum Cheriya Bava Musliyar, Kattilasseri Ali Musliyar and Pallippuram Yusuf Musliyar with other scholars and community leaders, who declared that the reforms adopted at Vazhakkad college and Madrasa are satisfactory and not contrary to Islamic view, after they examined the students studying there. The inspection was held on a special request by its then manager who was disturbed with oppositions to the reforms from some traditional circles.

There occurred some other attempts as well to establish Arabic/Shari'a colleges imitating the Baqiyat model. In 1916 Quwwatul Islam Arabic College was founded in Taliparamba, Kannur. In 1924, Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musliyar, a great scholar and author who was one of the founding fathers of Samastha, founded Islahul 'Ulum Arabic College at Tanur. However, even with the presence of these new colleges, students continued to flock to Baqiyat to get the title after their schooling in Darss. Many of them went to Baqiyat after completing study of all noted texts used in the field of religious education from the Darss, thinking to get a Sanad and title.

The modernists also adopted the system of Shari' a/Arabic college in religious education, but they adopted new curriculum and syllabus for this. The Mujahids started plenty of Arabic colleges including Medinatul Ulum Pulikkal, Raudhatul Ulum Farook and Jami’a Nadwia Edava, giving much importance for the study of modern Arabic language and literature along with literal study of Quràn and Hadith. The Jama’ at-e-Islami leaders started colleges like ‘Aaliya College in Kasargod and Islamia College in Shantapuram, giving importance for Arabic language studies as well as studying Islam in the line of Moulana Maududi’s intellectual and Islamist perspective. Traditionalist leaders sensed the need of an Arabic college, where the course would culminate in providing Sanad and title. They had problems with Darul ‘Ulum at Vashakkad as its new management supported the modernist perspectives and shifted the education system into what was followed by Mujahid people. They had also problems with Baqiyat. First it was quite difficult for many of the Pallidarss graduates to continue their higher education there due
to distance and other expenses. Secondly, the Baqiyat College was more and more coming under the influence of people belong to or support the puritanical movement of Tablig Jama’at, and the Sunni traditionalists had been in ideological conflict with them. Thirdly, the focus in Baqiyat was on Hanafi Fiqh and its Usul.

After prolonged discussions and demands from everywhere, the traditionalists founded their first title-giving Shari’a/Arabic college in 1963 in the name of Jami’a Nooriya Arabia, Pattikkad. Eminent scholars of the time joined in the college as teachers. The college first started in the Rahmania Masjid, and later shifted into buildings constructed at a 200-acre coconut plantation estate donated as Waqf by a childless pious rich man called Bappu Haji. The Jami’a was in fact a late application of the first modernisation trend touched the religious education like what happened in Deoband and Vellore; transferring the traditional mode of learning from mosques to separate building with divided classes and provisions for examinations and certificates. However, Jami’a provided its students more exposure to the modern world, taught them necessary secular subjects, gave tuitions in English and maths thus making many of its products very much influential among the traditional Mappilas. The annual convocation programme of Jami’a has been one of the largest Muslim gatherings in the district where people will come from far and wide to hear speeches of Samastha leaders. The Jami’a started according the title of Moulavi Fadhil Faizy to those who does the 2-year ‘post graduation’ or ‘Mutawwal’ course from there.

It should be noted that the Shari’a/Arabic colleges started by the traditionalists were mostly an extended form of Pallidarss that adopted the British education system. Though the syllabus, teaching methods and approaches to the subjects were same in both the college and Darss system, there were changes in the teacher-student relations, progression of students, and in other areas that were counted above as the sole characteristic features of Pallidarss system. In 60s, 70s and 80s Kerala Muslims witnessed emergence of a number of such colleges in the traditionalist platform, thanks to a lot of reasons from the increase of demand and improved financial situations to rifts and divide in the traditionalist circle. Now there are a number of such title-giving colleges
around Kerala. Below are names of some of such colleges, the name of the title they give and the platform they belong to.

Jami’a Nooriya Arabia, Pattikkad, Malappuram (Faizy) Samastha
Anwariyya Arabic College, Pottachira, Palakkad (Anwary) Samastha
Rahmania Arabic College, Kadameri, Calicut (Rahmani) Samastha
Darussalam Arabic College, Nandi, Calicut (Darimi) Samastha
Yamaniyya Arabic College, Kuttikkattur, Calicut (Yamani) Samastha
Irfaniyya Arabic College, Chapprappadavu, Kannur (Irfani) Samastha
Markaz al-Saqafat al-Sunniya, Karanthur, Calicut (Thaqafi) Samastha (AP Group)
Darul Ihsan College, Othukkungal, Malappuram (Ahsani) Samastha (AP Group)
Sa’adiyya Arabic College, Deli, Kasargod (Sa’adi) Samastha (AP Group)
Wahabiiyya Arabic College, Wandur, Malappuram (Wahabi) Samasthana
Mannaniya Arabic College, Warkala, TVM (Mannani) Dakshina ‘Ulama

All these and many other colleges provide a PG degree and title in traditional religious higher education, and the existing Pallidarsses function as the feeders for these Shari’al/colleges. The level of this course is called Mutawwal and many of the colleges also have its lower or degree section called Mutawwal spanning between 4-6 years. Those who get admission to this course come after their initial schooling in the Darsses or completing their 10th class under Madrasa system.

10. Criticism against Pallidarss System of Education

The traditional system of Pallidarss has received severe criticism from both modernists and traditionalists themselves. Many modernists, in their partisan attempt to vilify traditionalism and its institutions, have tried to blindly criticise this system projecting only its defects, while completely ignoring its merits and the role it played in preserving the Islamic culture and tradition among Kerala Muslims at a high quality. Though there
were some negative features and deficiencies in Darss system, one cannot say it is totally ‘an unscientific and defective system of religious education’.

The main demerits pointed out against the Darss system are that the teaching method in Darss was defective, Arabic was not taught as a living language and since the meaning of the texts were taught word by word there was much waste of time. Even after the education for years, the students were not in a position to speak in Arabic language. They were not in a position to read new books or periodicals. The students were completely cut away from day to day life. Since the students took food from houses, some of them developed an inferiority complex.

Dealing with misconceptions and critical views surrounding the Pallidarss system, especially regarding the food system of the Darss, Pasha writes, “It is not true that the system of taking food from others’ home would develop an inferiority complex and slave mentality in the minds of students. All the hosts actually see it as a great thing. In the West there is a culture of Paying Guest System in which students would stay in other homes and would take food from there with payment. They don’t feel any inferiority in that. Another complaint about this entire system is that it is the students are getting free ling and education on expense, generosity and charity of other people, and that also create a kind of ill-complex. If one thinks like this he cannot study even for medical and engineering courses for which the government spends crores of amounts from the taxpayers’ pocket. A huge sum of tax income is spent on education, salary and all. So these are baseless accusations’ (Pasha M. K., 2005)

One of the chief criticisms is concerning the syllabus and teaching methods of Pallidarss. Critics say that both the syllabus and the teaching methods are outdated, and reminiscent of medieval age. They question the relevance of teaching many subjects and texts that are the products of situations and circumstances of some old centuries. However, the supporters of the system say that a blind criticism of, and a total opposition to, everything in the system is unwarranted, and one has to value and promote the classical knowledge of Islam in all the key branches of knowledge. They admit that some corrections and modifications are necessary, in addition to revision of some branches of knowledge,
especially the rational and intellectual sciences. They also support reworking on the subjects like *Fiqh* incorporating new issues emerged in the new era. At the same time they insist that the base and foundation of all revisions should be traditional and in accordance with the values promoted by eminent predecessors.

Another criticism is that the students of *Pallidarss* are away from modern education, unaware of the happenings of the world and social life around them, and they face difficulties to find or do any kind of jobs other than that of religious ones. The supporters make a balanced approach while dealing with this question. Though they admit that the products of *Pallidarss* should have a general understanding of the world, some volume of general knowledge, etc, they question the rationality of demand to teach everything to a *Pallidarss* student. They reason that each sector of schooling has its own syllabus and curricula, and to demand that the student of *Pallidarss* only should learn multiple subjects from all branches of knowledge is uncalled for. However, there have been many drastic changes as far as the secular education of the *Pallidarss* student is concerned. Earlier the norm was that the *Pallidarss* student never saw even the lawns of a secular school. The situation changed since independence when most of the students started going to *Pallidarss* after they complete at least a fifth class in government schools. But, when they join the *Darss*, they drop schooling and get diverted from formal schooling permanently. Only a handful of *Pallidarss* students of that time, roughly until late 80s, were successful to continue education both at *Pallidarss* and school.

When a number of reasons - new experiments of synthesising secular and religious education under one roof, transformation of SSLC (10th class Schooling), and later +2, as a very common primary educational stage among the public, the gulf-inspired economic boom, and increased demands to take up jobs other than religious, etc – brought in a sharp decrease in number of students joining *Pallidarsses*, the system itself adopted many new modifications. Many *Mahallu* Committees facilitated for the students to continue regular schooling in daytime in the nearby schools. Consequently, many *Darsses* readjusted its class times, duration of the *Darss* career, and even decreased the number of texts taught, in order to help their students attend secular schools and to devote times to study school subjects as well. Nowadays, almost all of the *Pallidarss* students continue
their regular schooling until 10\textsuperscript{th} class, many continue till 12\textsuperscript{th}, and some even go further combining higher stages of studies in Pallidarss with their Degree and PG studies. The researcher could meet a number of such Degree-PG students in various Darsses who successfully combine both the studies\textsuperscript{127}.

Despite having a lot of demerits, ‘it must be said to the credit of the Darss system that it had been able to hold high the torch of Islamic learning and religious awareness among the Muslims of Kerala for centuries. It produced many great scholars, theologians, religious leaders and reformers to whom the present Muslim community of Kerala owes their religious, intellectual and educational revival.’ (Jaleel, 1998)

\textbf{11. Curriculum and Syllabus of Pallidarss}

In this part of the chapter, we deal with the main questions of this study as far as Pallidarss is concerned; what is the make-up of an Islamic scholar in Kerala? What the ‘Ulama are studying in years they spend in Pallidarss? What are the branches of knowledge dealt by the Syllabus and curriculum of the Pallidarss? What are the texts they are reading? What all kind of dealings, reactions, responses, activities, visions, etc., can be expected from a Musliyar, the one who is trained in the traditional system of learning?

\textbf{11.1. Ponnani and Nizami Syllabuses}

The Ponnani Darss of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century seems to be the trendsetter in the Syllabus and curricula of the Pallidarss system in Kerala. Available sources give us an incomplete picture of the curriculum and Syllabus followed by Ponnani Darss or other contemporary Darsses. However, based on what is transmitted through generations, and on what is being followed in the contemporary Pallidarsses, especially throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, one can assume that the contemporary syllabus is an evolved form of many applications. It has been mentioned in the first chapter that all the major scholars of Ponnani tradition,

\textsuperscript{127} One student I met at the historic Mithqal Mosque in down town Calicut in a traditional attire of a Musliyar reading a traditional text was preparing for his interviews after he got call letters from IIT Delhi and IIT Madras to join for PhD after his just finished MSc.
including its founding Makhdum scholars, had their higher schooling at various citadels of Islamic learning in the Middle East. As a result of this, the Ponnani syllabus can be seen as a clear replica of the one followed in Makkah, Medina, Yemen, Egypt and other places. While applying the syllabus they learned abroad in the Darsses they started in Ponnani and elsewhere in Kerala, the Makhdum scholars made certain changes, additions and deletions, in accordance to the need of the local culture and the varied ability of the students. They authored a number of books in various fields of knowledge in order to improve the Pallidarss syllabus and to cater to the local demands. This syllabus is called Ponnani Syllabus.

Since the late 19th and early 20th century, Pallidarsses in Malabar started feeling the effects of changes brought by Baqiyat Arabic College in the curriculum and Syllabus. Baqiyat had adopted a reformed version of Nizami syllabus, constituted by Mulla Nizamuddin of Farangi Mahal scholar family in the 18th century. This family is responsible for implementing in the Islamic educational system of India the rational and intellectual sciences and discourses developed in the central Asia since 11th century. They popularized in India all the texts and commentaries that belonged to great scholars of the time like Abdullah al-Nasafi (d1335), Sa’aduddin Taftazani, Jalaluddin Dawwani and Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani. Religious learning centers across Indian Sub-continent, except Kerala, had adopted revised forms of Nizami Syllabus after the Farangi Mahal scholars and their students travelled from places to places spreading Islamic education128.

The Nizami Syllabus has a key focus on Ma’qulat subjects like Falsafa, Mantiq, Balaga, Kalam, etc, thanks to a great mix of Arabic-Persian-Turkish scholastic legacies. The idea behind the Nizami syllabus was to teach the student the toughest text in each subject, in order to encourage him utilize all his intellectual mettle and thinking capacity, and to mould him capable of completing the course by the time he becomes 16-17 year old. According to Robinson, this syllabus could spread throughout India very fast because of

128 To know more about the Farangi Mahal scholar family and the spread of Nizami syllabus see Francis Robinson, Islam and Muslim History in South Asia, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, also, Francis Robinson, The ‘Ulama of Farangi Mahal and its Islamic Culture in South Asia, Permanent Black, 2001.
its ability to help student fasten his studies and sharpen his comprehension capacities. Due to the influence of Taftazani, Jurjani, Nasafi, Dawwani, Mulla Sadra and others, the Nizami syllabus discouraged the memorized learning style and encouraged the style of analyzing things and holding debates and discussions. (Robinson, 2001)

Meanwhile, some scholars of the time strongly opposed the immense importance of rational and intellectual sciences in the Nizami Syllabus. They complained against the relative neglect of Manqulat sciences like Tafsir and Hadith in this system. Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dahlawi (1551-1642), who specialized in Hadith sciences during his studies in Makkah, had started attempts to give a reawakening for Hadith studies in India. When Shah Abdul Rahim Dahlawi founded the famous Rahimiya Madrasa in Delhi, he followed Abdul Haq’s route and gave much importance for the Tafsir and Hadith studies in his syllabus, though he had adopted some of the rational texts from Nizami syllabus. His son and noted scholar Shah Waliyyullah Dahlawi and his successors popularized this Hadith-based syllabus. As both these syllabuses became popular, all the later religious institutions followed a suitable mix of these two. When Darul Ulum Deoband was formed in the latter half of the 19th century, it adopted the Nizami Syllabus, mixing it with the Dahlawi Syllabus. They preserved the Hanafi Fiqh tradition and some intellectual subjects of the Nizami syllabus while incorporating from Nizami syllabus the Da`ura of Hadith, which prescribes teaching of all canonical Hadith texts with focus on Hadith sciences like Isnad, Jarah Ta’dil, etc.

As Fangi Mahal scholars travelled everywhere and set-up religious institutions at the centers of Muslim rule. One scholar – Malik al-Ulama Mulla Haidar - arrived in Nizam’s Hyderabad and founded the famous Nizamiyya college there. Another scholar called Mulla Abdul Ali Bahrul Ulum (d1810) arrived in Madras and set up a religious learning centre there applying the Nizami Syllabus. When the Baqiyat Arabic College was founded, it adopted a revised form of Nizami Syllabus giving much importance for the Ma’aqulat subjects and Hanafi Fiqh, in addition to the Hadith course of Dahlawi syllabus. The initial Malabari graduates of Baqiyat got inspired in the Ma’aqulat subjects taught there and they started incorporating those subjects in to their Darsses and newfound colleges. The key focus of the Ponani Syllabus followed so far was on classic
texts of *Tafsir, Hadith*, Shafi school of law, Gazali school of *Tasawwuf* and Arabic grammar. It was Chalilakath Kunchahammad Haji who officially revised the Ponnani Syllabus and mixed it with the Nizami-Baqiyat syllabus when he founded the Darul Uloom Arabic College at Vashakkad.

Classical texts of prominent medieval Muslim scholars constitute the major part of the *Pallidarss* syllabus. Subjects always included Arabic grammar (*nahw*) and conjugation or morphology (*Sarf*), Qur'anic recitation (*qiraāh* or *tajweed*), Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), theology (*Kalam* or *‘Aqidah*), jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), ethics (*Akhlāq*), logic (*Mantiq*), history (*Tarih*) and mysticism (*Tasawwuf*). Various texts representing these subjects are used at different *Pallidarsses*. However, a general sequence and method of teaching can be seen as followed by almost all *Darses*. Some *Darses* give much importance to particular subjects of texts, depending upon the expertise and interest of the itinerant teacher.

No detailed survey or analytical sturdy on the syllabus of *Pallidarss* has been done so far. Only one study regarding this is an Arabic work published by the students association of Pottachira Anwariyya Arabic College, in which the author has compiled short biographies of 74 authors whose texts in diverse branches of Islamic knowledge are being taught at *Pallidarsses* of Malabar. This text notes down names of 101 works of 74 authors that are used as textbooks in *Pallidarsses*. This does not include the plenty of commentaries, glosses, and commentaries upon commentaries that are not used as textbooks, but are utilized in the *Pallidarss* milieu for further references and for extra readings of the students.

11.2. Initial Stage In *Pallidarss* - *Nahv Kitab & Path Kitab*

An initiating student would start his first classes in *Pallidarss* with two books of 18 small texts. The first one is called *Nahv Kitab*, a collection of eight primary treatises of Arabic grammar. Four of them are texts of *Sarf/Morphology*, namely *Mizan, Ajnas al-Sugra, Ajnas al-Kubra* and *Zanjān*. The first three are the works of a great scholar from the Qahir town (Kayalpatnam?) of Tamil Nadu (Old Madras state) called Muhammad
Labba Al-Qahiri\(^\text{129}\). These texts books deal with the inflection and classification of Arabic verbs, a first step into the introduction of Arabic language. The fourth one - *Al-tasrif li 'l-'izzzi*, by 'Izzaddin Ibrahim al-Zanjani - is a popular text in this subject taught at traditional Islamic learning centres everywhere. The four *Nahv* texts to be followed are *'Awamil, Taqwimullisan, Qatarunnada*, and *Tuhfat al-Wardy*. The first one - *Al-'Awamil al-miā* by 'Abd al-Qahir b 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jurjani\(^\text{130}\) – lists hundred situations determining the case endings of nouns and the vowel following the final consonant of verbs. *Taqwimullisan* by Muhammad Bin Abilqasim Al-Khawarismi\(^\text{131}\) is a little commentary on *Al-'Awamil al-miā*. *Qatarunnada* is also a popular grammar work for beginners written by the great Egyptian grammarian and linguist Jamaluddin ibnu Hisham Al-Ansari (711/1309-762/1360)\(^\text{132}\). *Tuhfat al-Wardy* by Umar bin Al-Wardy\(^\text{133}\) is a brilliant text of 150 *beiths/verses* that deal with almost entire grammatical aspects deal by the celebrated grammar text, *Alfiyah* of Ibnu Malik. A scholar said that many old scholars were in the habit of teaching this text after they teach *Alfiyah*, for it would help the student revise the issues dealt in *Alfiyah*.

The second initiating book is *Patth Kitab* or *Ashratu Kutub*, which is a compilation of 10 treatises that deal mainly with the Shafi jurisprudential issues, in addition to treatises in *Aquaid, Akhlaq* and *Tasawwuf*. The student starts with *Mutafarrid*, a simple shafi *Fiqh* text for beginners by Abdul 'Azeez Makhdum Al-Fannani (d994AH), followed by *Nurul Abswar*, a little tough shafi legal text by Muhammad Bafadhl Al-Hadhrami (d903AH).

\(^{129}\) Muhammad Labba Al-Qahiri (1070-1130 AH) is the son of famous scholar and Sufi Sheikh Sadaqatullah Al-Qahiri son of Moulana Sulaiman Al-Qahiri.

\(^{130}\) Jurjani's (d471AH) other major works include *Kitab Asrar al-Balaga fi 'ilm al-Bayan* and *Kitab Dalail al-I'jaz fi 'ilm al-Ma'ani*.

\(^{131}\) Muhammad Bin Abilqasim Al-Khawarismi (d 562AH) is the student ofJarullah Al-Zamakhshari, the author of *Tafsir Al-Kashaf*.

\(^{132}\) This text – *Qatarunnada wa Bullu al-Sada*- has a lot of commentaries upon it including one by a Makhdumi scholar called 'Uthman Bin Jamaluddin Al-Ma'abari Al-Fannani (d 991AH).

\(^{133}\) Umar bin Al-Wardy (689-749AH) was a great scholar of Islam specialised in classical Arabic grammar and known for his piety, and ability to produce stunning poems. Putting aside the job of a judge, Ibnu al-Wardy turned into writing and authored a number of books in *Fiqh, Hadith, Nahv, Adab, Linguistics, History*, etc.
The other two *Fiqh* texts in this collection are *Swam*, an exclusive treatise on fasting by Ismael Al-Hadhrami (d1119AH), and *Arkan al-Salat*, an exclusive treatise on rules of ritual prayer. Among the remaining five, three treatises deal with ‘*Aqida* or doctrine – *Babu Ma’arifat al-Sugra*, *Babu Ma’arifat al-Kubra* and *Arkanul Iman*, all written by the author of *Mutafarrid* - while the rest two deals with *Tasawwuf* – *Muriqat al-Qulub* by Abdul ‘Azeez Makhdum Al-Fannani and *Fath al-Qayyum*, a versified text of some 50 lines that speak about the best discipline of a religious student, written by one Muntakhab bin Muwaffaq.

Different teachers follow different series of texts in this initial stage. It is not necessary to complete all the texts in the ‘Ten-Book’ collection. Nowadays, many Pallidarss start the *Fiqh* with a latest simple text in modern Arabic, written for children – *Fiqh Al-Atfal* by Dr Bahauddin Muhammad Nadwi al-Faizy. After the *Mutafarrid* and *Nurul Abswar* many start the next one in line at this stage. Traditionally, it is ‘*Umdat al-Salik’*, a little tough text of *Fiqh al-Ibadat* by Egyptian Shafi scholar Shihabuddin Bin Al-Naqib (706-769AH). Instead of this, some scholars teach the 15th century elementary text *Al-muqaddima al-hadramiya* by `Abdallah b. `Abd al-Karim Ba-Fadl.

Along with *Fiqh* and grammar, small texts of *Tasawwuf*, *Aqida* and *Hadith* are taught at this stage. More than *Tasawwuf*, the texts taught under this category deal with education psychology, guidance on the characteristics to be nurtured in a *Muta’allim*, and guidelines for his spiritual upbringing. Five texts of this genre are used in the Pallidarss milieu, and all the teachers teach any of them. Some more focused scholars teach more than one and some even cover all the five. These texts are (1) *Ta’lim al-Muta’allim li tariq al-ta’alum*, a small treatise on the proper obedient attitude of the student towards his teacher by 14th century Egyptian scholar, (2) the above mentioned *Fath al-Qayyum* by Muntakhab bin Muwaffaq, (3) *Hidayat al-adhkiya’ ila tariq al-awliya*135, the didactic

134 Though this text is very popular among scholars, the life history of Muntakhab bin Muwaffaq is unknown. A Malabari scholar, Moulavi Muhammad Kutty (Kaipatta Karimbanakkal), has written a commentary on this texts.

135 We have mentioned earlier about the popularity of this text in Indonesia and about a number of commentaries written on it abroad. The son of the author Abdul Azeez Makhdum has written a commentary on this namely, *Maslak al-Atqiya Fi Sharahi Hidayatul Adkiya*
versified text on practical mysticism, (4) *Murshid al-Tullab al-Karim ila al-wahhab*¹³⁶, both by Zayn al-Din Makhdum Al-ma'abari Al-Malaibari, and Irshad al-‘Ibad¹³⁷ by Zainuddin Makhdum II. In *Hadith*, the popular collection of 40 prophetic traditions by Imam Nawawi (*Matnul Alrab'een*) is taught. Some of the sources said that there was not much importance in earlier syllabuses on *Hadith* as well as on *Tafsir*, but the texts of *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* were seen as something processed from these two by pious scholarly ancestors.

Like *Nahv Kitab* and *Patth Kitab*, there is a third book called *Beith Kitab* (book of verses), a collection of 7 versified texts, including the above mentioned *Hidayat al-adhkiya*, that deal with various subjects ranging from *Tasawwuf* to literature and *Adab* or discipline to be taken care of in everyday life. *Kitabu Salahuddin* by Salahuddin al-Qahiri (1120AH), brother of Sadaqullah al-Qahiri, is a major text among them. It talks about manners, discipline, conducts, behaviors and etiquettes that a man should take care of in different aspects of his life. *Razanat, Banat Su'aad*, etc, are the other texts in this book.

**11.3. Second Stage – Alfiyahh & Fathul Mu‘in**

The first stage ends by 2-3 years depending upon the comprehension ability of the student. He would start *Kitab* after *Kitab* but stops when he completes the set of above mentioned texts in order to start the next stage anew. The second stage is called that of *Alfiyah* and *Fathul Mu‘in*. The day of starting this second stage is observed as a special one in many *Pallidarsses*. The starting students offer tea and sweets on this particular day and there would be a special prayer in the *Onnam Darss* involving all in the *Darss*, and sometimes even some of the interested resident members. The *Alfiyah-Fathul Mu‘in* stage is considered as the highly important duration of the educational career of a Muta'allim at *Pallidarss*. His scholarly qualities as well as credentials depend on how he learns and covers this stage. Students would take 2-6 years to complete this stage. This cannot be

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¹³⁶ Kaipatta Muhammad Kutty Al-Malabari has a commentary on this 'moral guidelines aimed at students of religion' namely, *Mua'allim Ulil-albab bilata'ift Murshid al-Tullab*.

¹³⁷ In many *Pallidarsses*, this text of *fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* is studied at a higher stage.
seen simply in comparison with the ability of the student. But, the duration equally
depends on the style of teaching of, and the depth and width of other books referred along
with, these two texts.

11.3.1. Alfiyah – Celebrating Classical Arabic Grammar

Incidentally, Alfiyah becomes the final text to be learned in the Arabic grammar. Globally, this highly celebrated text is taught with the help of various commentaries and
glosses written on it. Pallidarsses traditionally use what is popular in Malabar as Ponnani
Alfiyah by Zainuddin Makhdum Kabir\textsuperscript{138}, and in some places Ibnu ‘Aqil’s commentary in
a comparatively modern Arabic is being used. Other commentaries like Swabban,
Ushmudi, etc are used for reference. It is compulsory for the students to commit the entire
one thousand verses of Alfiyah to memory. Muta’allims train themselves to deliver the
full verses from memory both in descending and ascending orders, and there used to be
celebrations with sweets when one completes these process and showcases his ability.
Also, it is a common thing among the traditional scholars to refer to verses in Alfiyah for
any grammatical doubts in latter texts and studies. Teachers would occasionally test the
grammatical ability of the student in further classes demanding rendering of the verses
from Alfiyah that suit the way he articulated the Arabic sentence of any text.

Noted scholar and grammar expert Marhum Kaithakkara Muhammadunni Musliyar used
to teach Alfiyah taking five years. He would teach the entire verses of it first without
using any commentary. Then he would reengage with it all using commentaries like
Ponnani, Swabban and Ushmudi.\textsuperscript{139} Other than this, some old Darsses used to teach Ibn

\textsuperscript{138} In fact the Makhdum first has commented until the chapter for ldhafat, it was completed by his son
Abdul Azeez Makhdum, the author of Mutafarrid and many other texts in Ten-Book collection. In his
commentary, Makhdum tries to deal the Alfiya verses explaining three aspects – mantuq (the literal
meaning), mafhoom (the idea shared), and dalalat ishara (the indication given by that particular verse to
another subject).

\textsuperscript{139} I owe for this and some following information to Ustad Athirimada Moideen Musliyar (son-in-law of
great Sufi scholar Ustad Aththippotta Moideen Kutty Musliyar) who, during a detailed interview, explained
many nuances of Pallidarss system, comparing the old traditions with new developments. Regarding
Alfiyah, he said that Ibnu Malik, the Alfiyah author, was a great man of Tasawwuf; and Alfiyah is a
Tasawwuf text as well. He added that many of the Alfiyah verses could be explained in the way of
Tasawwuf. He also mentioned that Marhoom Abdullah Musliyar, father of the Muhammadunni Musliyar
mentioned here, has written a sharah for Alfiyah, in which he has talked about the Tasawwuf aspects of
al-Hajib’s *Kafiya* and Burhan al-Din Abu Fath Nasir al-Din’s *Al-Misbah*. Eminent scholar and famous *Mudarris* Kallur Abubakr Musliyar used to teach or refer to Afrumiyah, Imriti and Muthammimah (all grammar texts popular in Indonesian Pesantrens) before starting Alfiyah. Some teachers used to encourage their students to refer ‘Alf-Fawaid Al-Ziya’yya Fi Sharahi Al-Kafiyyah Libnul-Hajib’\(^{140}\), an interesting work known as Sharh al-Jami after its author Nuruddin Mualla Jami (798-817AH). There are many other grammar texts used in teaching or for reference in the Pallidarses setting. Also, many indigenous scholars have authored a number of books on Arabic grammar – from first hand works to commentaries and glosses on famous texts. More studies are needed to uncover a clear picture of scholarship in this field of knowledge.

The ability in classical Nahv and Sarf is the backbone of the scholarly pursuit ahead for a student. The insistence on teaching this classical grammar has severely been criticised by the modernists. However, the traditional scholars always stress the importance of classical Arabic grammar in the career of a religious scholar. They say that expertise in grammar is compulsory for a scholar to understand any texts written in Arabic, especially the classical ones. Whenever one goes for interviews for teaching/religious jobs or for higher studies in Shari’a colleges/Pallidarses, it is the ability in Nahv and to decode the tough sentences of classical texts by reading it grammatically correct that would be tested by the interviewing authorities.

11.3.2. *Fathul Mu’in* – Immersion in Legal Issues and Solutions

*Fathul Mu’in* is the most celebrated shafi legal text in Kerala, not only for it being authored by a Malabari author, but also for it being comprehensive as well as inclusive of all parts discussed under the purview of a jurisprudential discourse. There is no any

\(^{140}\) This text talks about the wisdom (*hikmat*) behind the grammatical judgements of how to read the endings and why *nash*, *jar*, *raf* and *jazm* are given in each places.
Pallidarss or traditionalist Arabic/Shari'a college in Kerala that does not teach *Fathul Mu'in* as a text book. It takes 2-5 years to complete this text, and some teachers take even more time, depending upon the style of their teaching and the depth and width of their referencing. In olden days, to learn *Fathul Mu'in* meant to go through all Shafi legal texts and sometimes all prominent texts in all the legal schools simultaneously. There are some teachers who make it compulsory for the students to refer all the other higher texts in the syllabus like *Mahalli* and *Tuhfa* while learning *Fathul Mu'in*. In this case, their actual schooling of legal texts would end there. Generally, *Fath al-Mu'in* is taught along with its *matn, Qurrat al-'Ayn*. Both the teacher and students refer frequently to the two glosses on it by two 19th century Makkah-based scholars – the four-volume *I'Anat al-talibin* by Sayyid Bakri b. Muhammad Shatta’ al-Dimyati and the two-volume *Tarshih al-mustafidin* by 'Alwi al-Saqqaf.

**11.3.3. Other texts in Second Stage**

During the the *Alfiyah-Fathul Mu'in* stage, the students would also start some other texts in other branches of knowledge. They include; *Al-Jalalain* in *Tafsir*, *Riyadh Al-swalihin* and *Mishkat al-Masabih* in Hadith, *Tasrih al-Mantiq* and *Nafais al-Irtadiya*, two simple and initial treatises on Balaga (rhetoric) by Muhammad Irtada Ali Khan (1198-1270AH)\(^{141}\), *Tuhfatul Ikhwan*, a text on *Bayan* and *Ma'ani* by Egyptian scholar Ahmad Al-Dardiri (1127-1201), *Sharah al-wargat* in *Usul al-Fiqh*, *Nur al-Yaqin* in Islamic history or *Sira*, and *Sharah Umm al-Barahin*, known as *Sanusi* after the author of both the Umm and its shrah Abu 'Abdallah M. b. Yusuf al-Sanusi (d. 895/1490).

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\(^{141}\) Born in Mao of North India, Irtadha Ali Khan travelled far and wide in pursuit of knowledge and educational career and became a highly reckoned sufi-scholar of his time. He reached Madras, learned higher knowledge from Mulla Abdul Ali Bahrul Ulum, and received Ijaza of Qadiriyya, Chishtiyya and Zuhrawardiyya sufi orders. He died in the ship on his return from Hajj.
11.4. Third Stage – Mahalli, Jam’u, Muqtasar

Entering this stage in the fifth of sixth year of his schooling at Pallidarss, an above-average student would have reached in a level of expertise and skill that he can learn any tough text in any field of knowledge. The Alfiyah-Fathul Mu’in stage would make him capable of understanding any complex sentence in classical Arabic. Here he starts a new set of texts. In shafi jurisprudence he starts with the first volume of Kanz al-Raghibin fi Sharahi Minhaj al-Talibin, known as Mahalli after its Egyptian author Jalaluddin Al-Mahalli (791-864AH). In Shafi legal theory he learns Jam’u al-Jawami’ by Taj al-din ’Abd al-Wahhab al-Subki (727-771AH) along with its Sharah by Jalaladdin al-Mahalli with reference to glosses by Bannani and Abd al-Rahman Sharbini (taqrir). In ’Ilm al-Hadith the text is Nukhbat al-Fikr along with its Sharah Nuzhat al-Nazr, both by the prolific writer and muhaddith Al-Hafiz Shihabuddin Abu al-Fadl Ahmad bin Ali Muhammad bin Hajar al-‘Asqalani (773-852AH)\(^{142}\).

11.4.1. Muqtasar & Mutawwal

In Balagha or Rhetoric, the student of this stage learns a major medieval classical text, Al-Muqtasar ‘ala Talkhis al-Miftah\(^{143}\) by the prolific writer and encyclopaedic scholar Sa’aduddin al-Taftazani (712-792)\(^{144}\).

\(^{142}\) Author of around 150 quality works, mostly in Hadith explanations and Usul al-Hadith, ‘Asqalani is highly popular among religious circles. His stunning sharah on Sahih al-Bukhari, works on Hadith sciences like Al-Isabat fi Asmai al-Shabat, are widely used in PalliDarss milieu.

\(^{143}\) Muqtasar is a brilliant commentary on Talkhis al Miftah, an abridged version of Miftah al-‘ulum fi anwa’iren min al-funun min al-nahvi, wal-adabi, wal-ma’ani, wal-bayani, wal-ishtiqaqi by the 13th century Persian-Arabic Hanafi scholar Sheik Sirajuddin Abu Ya’qub Yusuf bin Ali al-Khawarazmi, a great literary man known as Sakaki.

\(^{144}\) Known as the king of commentaries and glosses, Taftazani has an imposing presence on traditional religious education everywhere in the world. Resident scholar at the court of Amir Timor, he learned all branches of knowledge, especially the intellectual sciences, and started authoring remarkable books when he was barely 15 year old. The first book he wrote is a commentary on the well-known morphology text Tarsif al-zanjjan. His other works include Al-Sa’adiya fiSharah al-Shamsiya in Mantiq, Al-Maqasid and its commentary in ’Ilm al-Kalam, Al-Talwih Sharah al-Tawdih in Usul, Sharah al-‘Aqaid al-Nasafiyah in doctrine, Hashiyat al-Kashaf in Tafsir, etc. He is famous for his debates with noted scholars of the time, and his friendly duels with another prolific writer of the time Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani is very popular.
Like Alfiyah and Fathul Mu'in, Muqtasar is a major text that was given prime importance among traditional scholars. Ability to understand, comprehend and teach Muqtasar is considered as high quality in traditional schooling circles. Modernists as well as many advocators of reformed syllabuses in religious schooling used to criticise the insistence of traditional scholars in teaching a medieval text like Muqtasar devoting a lot of time for that. They say that it is a text of rhetoric or Balaga, and there are plenty of modern Balaga texts like Balagatul Wadiha that explains the subject in an easy and uncomplicated language. However, according to traditionalists, Muqtasar is not simply a text of Balaga, but it is text of Balagatul Qurān and I'jazul Qurān that brilliantly holds highly qualified intellectual discourses on the literary miracles of the Holy text.

An extended sharah of Muqtasar called Mutawwal is taught at higher levels. The two main stages of the religious schooling, which are equivalent to graduation and post graduation, are traditionally known as Muqtasar and Mutawwal respectively. Though many scholars think that such a naming was not in relation with these two texts, but only to denote the shorter and longer courses, it can be assumed from courses offered at various religious learning centres that the same texts are the reason behind this nomenclature. The origin of Muqtasar and Mutawwal courses can be traced in Velur itself. The Lateefiyah College at Velur used to offer a 6-year course called Muqtasar, after which most of the students would do the Mutawwal course in Baqiyat, which also has its own version of Muqtasar course. Now there many Muqtasar colleges in Kerala offering courses up to this Mahalli-Jam'u-Muqtasar stage.

11.4.2. Mantiq & Munazara – Learning To Debate, Speak Logically

Texts with tougher and more complex sentences and complicated discourses in different areas of rational sciences come one by one during this stage. In Mantiq or Logic they learn Mirqat by Al-khairabadi, followed by Sharah al-Tahdib, Najmuddin Abdullah Qazdi’s commentary on Taftazani’s Tahdib, and Qutubuddin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Tahtani al-Razi’s text known as Qutubi along with its gloss by Mir Sayyid

145 The names Muqtasar and Mutawwal itself denotes the short version and longer version
Sharif Al-jurjani known as Mir Qutubi. Some go further in Mantiq and learn Muhibullah Abd al-Shukur Al-Bihari’s stunning work Sullam al-‘Ulum along with two commentaries on it – Al-Basit by Hamdullah ibn Shukrullah (d1160) and Sharah ‘ala Sullam al-Ulum by Al-Qadi Mubarak Bin Muhamad (d1162). Yet another commentary on Sullam al-Ulum by Mullahasan bin al-Qadi (d1101AH), known as Mulla Hasan is also learned by some students. In Munazara they learn Shams al-Haq Jaunpuri’s (d1083AH) Rashidiyah.

11.4.3. Philosophy & Theology or Hikmat & Kalam (‘Aqida)

Theology, Philosophy and Doctrin or ‘Ilm al-‘Aqida, ‘Im al-Falsafa, ‘Im al-Kalam – various names are being interchangeably used to denote this broad spectrum of knowledge, and there are quite a few people who actually can clearly define the scope and nature of each subject, distinguishing one from the other. The main confusion is when the topics, subject matter and authors of Falsafa and Kalam are discussed. Going through the entire number of texts taught under ‘Aqida in Pallidarsses, one can understand that its subject matter is to defend the two orthodox doctrinal school in general – the Ash‘ari and Maturidi – and an attempt to stress on the former school. There is a general concept in traditional circles that too much interest in, and discourses on matters of doctrine can only lead to unbelief. Therefore, the general nature of the texts used is a direct expositions of Ash‘ari doctrine on the subject matter and refutations of arguments put forth against it. We mentioned about the text Sanusiyah taught in the second stage. In some Darsses and colleges, another introductory text called Jawahir al-kalamiyyafi idah al-‘Aqida al-islamiyya by Syrian Tahir b. Salih al-Jaza‘iri (d 1919) is used in earlier stages. In the third stage, students learn a key text called Sharah al-‘Aqaida, a commentary by Taftazani on Al-‘Aqaid al-Nasafiya of ‘Umar bin Muhammad

146 The basic text is Al-Risala al-Shamsiya by Najmuddin Umar ibn Ali al-Qazwini known in Kerala as Umar al-Katibi (d 1099). He was the student of Nasiruddin al-Tusi, and the name Al-shamsiyah is due to the dedication of this work to one Kwajah Shamsuddin. Fascinated with the precision and brilliance of this text, many intellectuals tried to explain its contents. One of them is Taftazani (Al-Sa‘adiya), and the other is Qutub al-Din al-Razi, who named his commentary ‘Tahrir al-Qawa'id al-mantiqiyya fi Sharah al-Risala al-Shamsiya’, but it became popular as Qutubi, and Mir qutubi is the gloss on this sharah by Mir Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani.
al-Nasafi (461-537AH), along with a Hashiya or gloss on this Sharah known as Khayali after its author Ahmad ibn Musa Al-Khayali (729-762AH).

In Philosophy and Theology or Hikmat and Kalam, they learn a text known as Maibadi, a sharah by Mulla Husyn ibn Muin al-Din al-Maibadi (d910) on Hidayat al-Hikma by Athir al-Din al-Abhari (d663AH).

11.4.4. 'Ilm al-Hisab, 'Ilm al-Falak, 'Ilm al-Qibla

Hisab or mathematics is an area of study many Pallidarss students work on and spend a lot of time in, analysing its tough problems and solutions, in order to widen and sharpen their intellectual capacities. Moreover, in the religious curriculum the Hisab is synthesised with that of 'Ilm al-Falak or Astronomy, Qibla Sciences and Fiqh of inheritance which all need a lot of mathematical calculations. These are included with an added objective of enabling scholars in preparing charts of prayer times, moon-sighting, seasonal changes, designating qibla direction of the mosques and related things, in addition to a thorough understanding of 'ilm al-Faraiz, the Fiqh of inheritance. Khulasatu'l-Hisab (in Maths) and Tashrihu'l-Aflak (in stronomy), both by Bahauddin al 'Amili (953-1035/1621), Uqlaidis (in Geometry) by Iblunius, Chaghmini (in Mathematical figures) along with its commentary and Risalatul Maradiniya by

147 Noted mathematician Musa bin Muhammad al-rumi, famous in the name of Qazi Zadah, has a gloss/hashiya on this Sharah Hidaya al-Hikmat.

148 Abhari al-Samarqandi (in relation Abhar town between Qazwin and Zanjan) is a famous philosopher and noted astronomer. In mantiq he has Adapted Prophyry's (234-305AC) Isagoge and written a gloss (hashiya) on it namely, Mughni al-Tullab.

149 Uqlaidis, known as Uclid in English and Latin, is a Greek text of Mathematics translated to Arabic thrice-by Hajjaj bin Yusuf during Amawi rule, by Hunain Bin Ishaq (D260AH) during Abbasid rule, and by Abul Hasan Thabit ibn Qurrat al-Hidani (d488AH). The copies of Hajjaj and Thabit became popular among scholarly circles and a number of scholars tried to modify, edit, explain, clarify, and comment on, this text. The tahrir of Nasiruddin al-Tusi (d672AH) is the most known among them, and it is used in the centers of religious learning.

150 The name of the original text is Al-Mulakhkhas Fil-Hai'at by the noted astronomer Mahmud bin Muhammad al-Qawarazmi al-Cha'ghmini (a Qawarazm village called Chaghmin). This book, known popularly as Chaghmini, is taught along with a sharah on it by Musa bin Muhammad al-Rumi Qadi Zadah.
Badruddin Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad al-Maradini (862-902)\textsuperscript{151} are the texts used to teach these subjects.

It is not necessary to learn or cover all these texts. However, brilliant students under able and expert teachers would go through all these in short period. Nowadays, study of these texts has become something as followed to keep the tradition without its actual vigor and enthusiasm. While the modernists blame those who teaches this kind of tough texts without even knowing the actual contents of, and issues dealt by, these texts, the traditionalists do a blind following of the traditional things without matching or comparing it with the knowledge and researches developed recently in these branches of knowledge.

The real problem is that of approach. In the early period of ‘Darss’ system, its broad curricula was designed to give an almost comprehensive education covering both ‘religious and secular’ subjects. The curricula of their education included all subjects that would help the material, moral and spiritual well being of man. Thus the subjects studied included Qurân, Hadith, Fiqh, Arabic language and literature, Grammar, Rhetoric, Geometry, Astronomy, Arithmetic, Logic, philosophy, Medicine, History and Tasawwuf. With the introduction of secular western education and the ensuing dichotomy of Islamic education into religious and material, the Islamic higher learning centers were effectively alienated from the modern science and technology. Many of the traditional Islamic schools continued teaching the texts for Hisab, astronomy and Qibla science. However, it never incorporated or accommodated to these subjects the latest discoveries and developments emerged in the west. While some rare brilliant minds kept their interest for these subjects burning, many others learned these for the sake of learning. During the

\textsuperscript{151} Known popularly as Maradini, in connection with the Turkish city of Mardin, the author of Risala Maradiniyya is highly appreciated for his valuable contributions in the field of Hisab, Falak and Fiqh of inheritance. He is originally from Damascus, born in Cairo, but belonged to Mardin because of his grandfather Jamaluddin Abdulla ibn Khalil Bin Yusuf bin Abdullah Al-Maradini, a famous scholar based in this Turkish city.
fieldwork, the researcher could meet a lot of traditional scholars well-versed in various branches of mathematics and astronomy.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{152} Ustad Bashir Musliyar Kunnatparamba, a teacher at Mannaniyya Arabic College, Varkala, TVM, was an interesting figure among them. He is a great scholar of mathematics. Another great figure was Marhoom C. M Abdullah Moulavi, Kasargod (1933-2010). He faced an untimely accidental death a year after I interviewed him. Having good knowledge of both classical Arabic and modern English he simultaneously studied traditional Arabic texts in these subjects and the modern English works in the field, making comparative analysis and successful reconciliation between the traditional and modern. He had the habit of observing the celestial objects and the movements of stars in the night. His ability to designate the exact locations for mosques and houses was par excellent. He used to prepare timetables of Islamic prayers and of sunrise and sunset through his own explorations. He bought latest journals and magazines published by authorities like NASA, thoughtfully read about latest discoveries and explorations, and enthusiastically discussed it with his students and colleagues. He wrote plenty of quality articles in various magazines and souvenirs about astronomy, qibla directions and about seasonal, regional and geographical differences in defining timings of prayers, moon-sighting, sunset and sunrise. He wrote a small treatise in Arabic on logarithm and trigonometry called, \textit{Tazweedul fikri wal himamfi nnisab wallogarithem} (Provision for thought and resolve in explaining ratio and logarithm). He has an introductory book on astronomy - \textit{`ilmul falak `ala dhawi `ilmil hadees} (Astronomy on light of modern science). He wrote another work \textit{Risala fi istikhrajuyu angati ssalatu wa sumutul qibla `ala tariqi hisabi logarithm} (Treatise on extracting prayer timings and qibla directions using logarithm mathematics), in which he incorporated the modern mathematics and astronomy into the traditional astronomy and \textit{Qibla} science. His major work in English is the result of his lifelong experiments - \textit{Magnetic Compass and Its Declination from Standard Directions}. He later translated this work in to Arabic, \textit{Al-Buswilatul Mu`antisiyya wa inhirafuha `anil jihatil aswliyya"}. 228
11.5. Final Stage – Baidawi, Sihah al-Sitta, Ihya

In fact this stage is a continuation of the Mahalli-Jam‘u stage, and many of the texts mentioned above, especially in rational/intellectual sciences would be started or completed in this stage. When the first part of Jam‘u and second volume of Mahalli will be completed, the student would start two major texts in Tafsir and Hadith along with the other volumes of Mahalli and Jam‘u. In Tafsir, ‘Anwar al-Tanzil bi Asrar al-Ta‘wil’, known as Tafsir al-Baidawi after its author Qadi Nasiruddin ‘Abdullah bin Umar Al-Shirazi al-Baidawi (d685), is the only text taught after Tafsir Jalalain. However, most of the teachers would insist that the student should go through all other major Tafsirs like Al-Kashaf, Al-Razi, Ruhul Ma‘ani, etc, while learning Baidawi. In Hadith, Sahih al-Bukhari is the prime text to be studied. Many scholars care to introduce their students all the six canonical texts teaching selected portions from them, with a focus on the style and special characteristics of each Hadith collection.

There is enough focus on Tasawwuf texts as well in the entire Darss syllabus. We mentioned the names of some texts taught at the initial level. More than scholastic Tasawwuf, the aim of teaching this was nurturing piety, higher level of religious morality and all good characters in the life of a student. More than teaching text, the idea of a Pallidarss system is that the teacher be a moral guide as well, unfolding his life with piety, humility and devotion in front of the student. In addition to Ta’lim al-Muta’allim li tariq al-ta‘Alum, Fath al-Qayyum, Hidayat al-adhkiya’ ila tariq al-awliya and Murshid al-Tullab al-Karim Ila al-wahhab, other texts used at various stages or in place of these are Ayyuha al-Walad al-Muhibb, Minhaj al-Talibin (both by Imam Ghazali), Al-Irshad by Abdullah ibn As‘ad al-Yafi‘i al-Yamani al-Shafi‘i al-ash‘ari (698-768AH) and Irshad al-‘Ibad by Zainuddin Makhdum II.

In the final stage, selected portions from Ihya, the epochal text by Imam Ghazali, is taught. One another popular text read in this stage is Al-Hikam al-‘Ata’iyya ‘Ala Lisani Ahl al-Tariqat by Tajuddin Abu al-Fadl Ahmed ibnu ‘Ataullah Al-Iskandari al-Maliki al-Shadhili (d709). A great work of pure scholastic Tasawwuf, Hikam is highly valued among scholars, for its valuable tips and thought-provoking conclusions on the
philosophy of life here and hereafter. One scholar said that whenever he needs solutions for complexities in life he would take Al-Hikam, open any of the pages randomly, read the portion he got, and would amazingly get a solace of mind through it. He also said that Hikam is a brilliantly written work as each of the word in it is an introduction to what is said after wards and at the same time an explanation for what is said before 153. Another scholar said that Hikam is an elder brother of Ihya and it is a text not for Muta'allim but for the Mudarris. Many of the people learn it not during their educational career but after becoming official scholars and start the teaching career. They would go to any of reputed pious scholars when they get free and would learn this text.

Notable absences in the subjects being taught at Pallidarss are 'Ilm al-Tajwid, 'Ilm al-Qira'i and 'Ilm Usul al-Tafsir, branches that come under Qur'anic sciences. In general sense, these sciences are not included in the traditional Pallidarss syllabus. However, some interested scholars use to select taught texts in each of these subjects. For example, a versified text called Jazari is taught in Tajwid, while some use to teach al-Tibyan in Ulumul Qurān. However, most of the teachers devote enough time to train their students in reciting the Qurān correctly and with proper articulation and intonation of the Qur'anic Arabic. Since around 60 years, Samastha is conducting a special one-month course called Hizb Course in which students practically learn under Qurān experts the styles and rules of Qur'anic recitation. Nowadays, most of the teachers make it sure that their students also undergo this training at any time of their educational career. They also insist that their students commit many chapters of Qurān in to memory though they could not become a full-fledged Hafiz.

11.6. Educational Career of a Traditional Scholar

The discussions under ‘Syllabus and Curriculum’ were the result of many secondary reading, interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations, as well as conclusions from personal experiences. In the following lines, I would depict the

153 For discussion on Hikam and many other nuances of Kitab learning, I owe to ustad Pukayoor Abdul Rahman Musliyar al-Baqawi, whom I interviewed at his chamber in Mannania Arabic College, Varkala in 2008.
practical experience of a traditional Muslim scholar in Kerala during his religious schooling. Such a depiction of practical experience from a firsthand narrator would help evolve a clear picture on the educational career of a scholar, devoid of the complexities that come out of a totalistic rendering given above. What follow is gist of a detailed interview I made with Abdul Salam Baqawi, a brilliant traditional Malayali Muslim scholar who, at the time of my interview in 2010, was completing his fourth year of teaching at the Degree college of Darul Huda Islamic University, Kerala. He had spent, after his 7-year education both at local Madrasa and government school, 8 years for religious schooling in Pallidarss and two years of higher learning at Baqiyat ul-Salihat Arabic College in Vellore.

I preferred the career history of a recent Pallidarss graduate who underwent the Pallidarss education as recently as 1994-2005 for some reasons. Most of what was explained above is an Ideal Type of Pallidarss system. It is not that all the subjects mentioned are taught at all the Darsses, and all the characteristics of the Darss system can be seen everywhere. Moreover, the system explained above represents the traditional way of Pallidarss system as the sources provided information were talking about a Pallidarss system they enjoyed before the changes that happened due to recent pressures. Therefore, the narration of a latest example would represent a changed as well as a practical form of Pallidarss system.

Abdul Salam Baqawi joined the Pallidarss at Cherur Jumu'a Masjid, near Vengara, in Malappuram district of Kerala, in 1994-95 when he was 13 year old and had passed to the eighth class of school and Madrasa. The Mudarris at Cherur Pallidarss was one Abdurahman Faidy, a disciple of another Abdul Rahman Musliyar who was a student of great scholar and Arabic poet Abdurahman Fazfari a/s Kutty Musliyar. He had not to stop his regular schooling after joining the Darss, but he simultaneously joined in the 8th class of nearby government school and continued his regular schooling through SSLC until 12th, passing both the central board examinations with good marks.

He started the Pallidarss studies with mutafarrid in the 10-book collection. This simple shafi text continued for around one month, and it was aimed at introducing small Arabic
words and sentences along with teaching the basic legal problems. After Mutafarrid in Fiqih he progressed to Nurul Abswar, followed by ‘Umdat al-Salik, which, according to him, was a tough test dealing with Fiqh al-‘Ibadat. With Mutafarrid, he started Mizan, followed by Zanjani, Ajnas Sugra, Ajnas Kubra, Taqwimullisan, Tuhfa, ‘Awamil and Qatrunnada. With the onset of Zanjani he started Riydadulsalihin in Hadith and Muriqat al-Qulub in Tasawwuf followed by Irshad al-Ibad. The idea was to learn a set of four texts at a time.

He completed the first stage in two years to start Alfiyah and Fathul Mu’in after a special prayer and sweet distribution held in the post-Magrib Darss session. Samusi in ‘Aqida and Nurul Yaqin in Sira were the other two texts in the first year of Alfiyah and Fathul Mu’in. In the second year, the first half of both Jalalain and Mishkat were taught along with the second half of both Alfiyah and Fathul Mu’in. Now, in the fifth year, Alfiyah and Fathul Mu’in were over, and Tuhfat al-Ikhwan in Balaga and Tashrih al-mantiq in Mantiq came in to join the set of Jalalain and Mishkat. This stage was over with this set of four texts.

In the 6th year, another set of four texts started, namely, Mahalli in Fiqh, Jam’u in Usul al-Fiqh, Nafais al-Irtady in Balaga and Mirqat in Mantiq. In the seventh year Shara al-Tahdib of Mantiq and Muqtasar of Balaga replaced Nafais and Mirqat to join the remaining parts of Mahalli and Jam’u. In the eighth year, he started a new set – Baidawi in Tafsir, Bukhari in Hadith, Tashrih al-Aflak in ‘Ilm al-falak and Mulla Hasan in Mantiq. The last two were over by the first half of the year and it was replaced by Qutubi and Mir Qutubi, then by Nukhba and Rashidiyah. The teacher taught Qutubi a day and Mir Qutubi in the next day.

Interestingly, Baqawi’s ustad used to find time to teach some more texts out of the formal syllabus of 4-text at a time, through the system of ‘Friday Kitab’ or ‘kharij sabq
kitab\textsuperscript{154}. He taught texts like Khulasat al-Hisab, Uqlaidis, Maibadi, Maqamat al-Hariri (literature), Jazari (Tajwid), and Tibyan ('Ilm al-Qur'an).

He then joined the famous Baqiyat Arabic College for a 2-year Mutawwal (PG) course. In the first year of Baqiyat, he had classes of (1) Tahawi fi Sharahi Ma'ani al-Athar, a text that defends the rulings of Hanafi Fiqh and proves its dominance over other opinions, a counterpart of Imam Nawawi's Sharah al-Muhadhab which does the same for Shafi'i Fiqh, (2) Sahih al-Bukhari, (3) Sahih Muslim, (4) Muaththa, all three in Hadith, (5) Mutawwal, the extended version of Muqtasar in Balaga, (6) Dawwan or Sharah 'Aqaid al-'Azudiyya, a 40-page text that refute all kind of falsafa opposing the doctrine of Ahlusssonna, and establishing the predominance of the latter, and (7) Musallam al-Suhuth, a classic text of Hanafi Usul al-Fiqh by Muhibbullah al-Bihari, author of Sullam al-'Ulum, the classic Mantiq text. In the second year of Baqiyat PG course, he learned (1) the second part of Sahih al-Bukhari, (2) Jami‘u al-Turmudi, (3) Sunanu Abi Daud, (4) Sunan al-Nasai (in the first half) & Sunanu Ibnu Majah (in the second half), (5) Sab‘u al-Mu‘allaqat (the seven noted classical Arabic poems of pre-Islamic period – used to teach Arabic Adab (literature), Naqd (literary criticism) and Balaga, (6) Hamdullah (first half of the year) and Qadi (second half) both commentaries on Sullam al-‘Ulum in Mantiq, and (7) Mulla Sadra in Hikmat. It is very clear from the Baqiyat syllabus that it is an exact application of Nizami syllabus (the Hanafi Fiqh and rational sciences) that incorporated the Hadith focus of Dahlawi syllabus into it.

According to Miller, "Contemporary Maulavi training follows two paths; the first continuing the spirit of the Ponnani tradition, the second following a more modern direction. It is the former that still produces the rank and file of Mappila moulavis. In this orthodox tradition a minimal amount of general education, sometimes less than five year, is succeeded by five or more years of study at a mosque-related Darss or Arabic training school. This is followed by four years of further training at a major college for

\textsuperscript{154} Kharij Sabq kitab means a text out of the formal lessons. It is kind of using Arabic language in the Malayalam linguistic structure, which has been very common among the traditional scholars. Even in common conversations they use a number of Arabic words.
maulavi studies. A considerable number of students fulfil the latter requirement at the al-Baqiyat at Vellore, where about one-third of the student body is Mappila. Some have attended the Deoband, their number being severely restricted by such factors as distance and cost, language barriers, and the Hanafi emphasis of the institution.” (Miller, 1992)


After playing a great role in the reproduction and transmission of Islamic knowledge for more than a millennium of known Muslim history of Kerala, the tradition of Pallidarss in its actual form is on gradual decline. The pressures of modernization, westernization and globalization have been calling for changes on the system, and the Pallidarsses are responding at varied paces. The interesting point is that this traditional institution of Islamic schooling had successfully survived the first waves of modernization early last century. When the community was engaged in multi-faceted recovery activities in the aftermath of tragic 1921 incidents based on diverse interpretation of the problems, ‘invigorated revivalism of everything traditional and a cautious and selective modernization’ was accepted as one of the popular remedial options to shore the community safe, due to which the Pallidarss system witnessed more spread and institutionalization. To be clearer, it was in the post-independence period that the traditional form of Pallidarss system got more popularity and spread.

However, this trend continued only until late 80s. It is easy for a student of ‘the social history of Malabar Muslims’ to understand that the actual influence of globalization and modernization started reaching their villages only since late 70s, thanks to the gulf boom, bettered economic condition, and the consequent improvement of basic physical infrastructures, and of chances to get a regular schooling for a longer period. Increased acquaintance with the secular subjects coupled with the familiarity with subjects being taught at Pallidarsses, triggered among the community an intellectual discourse regarding the dichotomous view of secular-religious education, and on the capability of traditional Islam to strike a balance between the two.
In fact, this issue was solved at the primary level during the first wave of modernization itself with the traditional scholars founding a system under which every Muslim boy and girl in each village can get simultaneous primary schooling at Madrasa and School until 10th standard. The newly emerged discourses were on religious higher education, and the scholars started trying to effect a balanced modification in the philosophy, organization, curriculum and content since late 70s itself.

The modernists had applied new modifications in the religious higher education in the late 40s itself, though the Mujahids and Jama'at-e-Islami had effected the modification in two ways. While the Mujahids replaced almost all of the classical religious texts by modern Arabic language texts and some selected portions of Qur'an and Hadith collections, the Jama'at came in with a special long term course that dealt with Islamic branches of knowledge with a modernist-rationalist, but a more balanced, approach. However, at higher education, the traditionalists continued its view of secular-religious dichotomy until 1970s. Students had to select between the two for higher studies after having both at primary levels from Madrasa and schools. Its result was incompetence of religious graduates and their inability to cope with the modern trends and the failure of

\[\text{155 The Aaliya college of Kasaragod and Islamia college of Shantapuram, both belonging to Jama'at camp, came up first with a 12-year syllabus trying to synthesis both the secular and religious subjects. However, it seems that both failed in the implementation level of such a vast subject due to more secular pressures. One reason was the lure for implementing the government-recognized Degree or Afdalul 'Ulama courses in Arabic language, which in fact designed shortcut courses leading to government jobs, effectively undermining the habit of 'long-term focused study with hard-work' that needed for the production of a religious scholar. A second reason; to go for religious or Arabic education was the last option a modernist student would take. When all the brilliant students went for promising secular courses like medicine and engineering, it was only those who got a just pass in their board exams who opted for religious schooling, and they failed to cope with this kind of a tough syllabus designed for brilliant students. The same two reasons troubled the Arabic colleges under Mujahid platform as well. They also felt the absence of brilliant students in the field of religious study. It was evident when the government decided to include some more English papers in the Syllabus of Afdalul 'Ulama in order to recognize this course equivalent to regular Degree courses. When all the institutions under traditionalist platform hailed the government decision, most of the colleges in the modernist platform opposed the move saying their student cannot cope with the syllabus. The opposition was so strong that the government had to announce two syllabuses - one with more English and General papers, and second the old one that has focus on Arabic language and only on nominal English paper - giving institutions options between the two.}\]
secularly educated to carry forward their religious ethos as they climbed the ladders of material knowledge and got introduced with new ideologies and perspectives.\textsuperscript{156}

The traditionalist scholars started responding to this issue by adopting various innovations and trying to effectively synthesis both streams of the knowledge in 1970s. One outstanding figure who gave the ideological base and intellectual perspective to this change was Marhoom MM Basheer Musliyar Al-Baqawi (1929-1987). His sound cleverness and thoughts can be seen instrumental behind all the new educational innovations took place among the Sunni community of Malabar in the last quarter of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. He spoke of an educational philosophy aimed at reproducing the philosopher-scientist scholars who lived in the golden period of Islamic medieval history.

In an article titled ‘Our Arabic Colleges’, he wrote. “There are two types of Arabic colleges today. While one type aims at learning Arabic language, the other stands for teaching Islamic studies through Arabic medium. The former attracts more students, mainly due to availability of many government employments after graduating from there. We can say that there is no any job opportunity in government institutions for those completing courses in religious subjects, and as a result, the interest among students to join the second type of Arabic colleges has been on tremendous decrease. We have to reform our syllabus and curricula taking lessons from the outstanding personalities came in the previous centuries, like Imam al-Ghazali. The prevailing knowledge branches of Islam, a religion famous for its great visions in the political, social and cultural spheres of the humanity, are very narrow. A strong defence against this is compulsory by preparing a more inclusive syllabus. Our Syllabus should be a point finger towards the progress of

\textsuperscript{156} Many traditional scholars, whom I spoke to, tried to justify this stance. They say that their scholarly leaders were right when they called ‘to promote and encourage religious education and do the needful for the secular education that will be compatible with religious beliefs and culture’. Their main concern was promotion of pure religious education. They hesitated to do an unconditional support to the material education, because they worried that the secular education, which was seemed synonymous to western education, would corrupt the religious culture and vitiate the traditional beliefs. An understandable enmity to everything British because of their repressive rule in Malabar had also added to this antagonism towards modern education. Moreover, some scholars were of the opinion that the secular education would grow even without their attention, as there are many governmental and non-governmental agencies to promote it, and there is an inclination among public to go for the modern as well. Meanwhile, the religious education is the field to be given enough attention, as there is more chance for it to be neglected than taken seriously.
humanity in all fields. Our colleges have to introduce many subjects that are Fard kifayah (community religious obligation) like health sciences. We should be ready to get in to the deep and vast areas of religious knowledge other than limiting it to certain chapters” (M.M. Musliyar, 1983).

In 1970s there were many attempts to innovate Darsses in the mosques under the auspices of Basheer Musliyar al-Baqawi. He tried hard to implement his vision of ‘Model Darsses’ which was aimed at a fresh and live approach towards every subject taught in the Darsses along with teaching languages of English and Urdu. When these attempts failed to yield exact results, Basheer Musliyar joined Rahmaniya Arabic College at Kadameri of Calicut District in 1972. Here he brought in many outstanding and attractive innovations. Rahmaniyya was the premier traditional college that started teaching of all Arabic, English and Urdu languages along with religious subjects. Later, notwithstanding the language studies and innovations it joined the chain of traditional colleges that flourished in post 1970 period.

12.1. Hudawi & Wafy Courses

These are the names of two courses developed by the traditional leadership as part of their responses to calls for modernizing religious higher education. Both the courses try to effectively and practically synthesis religious and secular subjects in order to give a fresh and live outlook towards religious higher education. However, both the systems took different ways to achieve their aim of producing a community capable of propagating Islam in the modern world. As mentioned, Basheer Musliyar was the man facilitated this radical change in the traditional Mappila community of Malabar.
12.1.1. Hudawi Course

Product of prolonged discourses among three visionary scholars and three supportive community leaders\(^{157}\), Darul Huda Islamic Academy started functioning in 1986 offering a 12-year course that integrates all relevant subjects taught from lower to top levels of contemporary religious education, with all important secular subjects like Maths, Social Sciences, History, physics, Chemistry, Biology, and languages of Arabic, Urdu English and Malayalam. At a time when there was a feeling that religious education is the choice of poor students or of those less-brilliant, under-skilled and 'good for nothing else' children, Darul Huda called for only brilliant students irrespective of their backgrounds, selected limited students each year purely on the basis of merits after conducting tough written and oral examinations. The DH founders asserted that religious propagation is the service done by prophets who supposed to be the most clever and brilliant in the community, and the religious scholars who are their successors should be the most brilliant among the community.

Recently upgraded from an Islamic Academy to an Islamic University, Darul Huda's 12-year course (5-year secondary, 2-year senior Secondary, 3-year Degree and a 2-year PG) seriously focuses on the rich treasury and abundant resource of knowledge produced by great Muslim scholars in the past 14 centuries, in addition to helping students understand and reproduce the same in the light of the modern branches of knowledge and with the help of newly developed technologies. It has done a clever mix of so-called religious and secular subjects. It approaches the subjects with a new perspective. For the secular subjects it has adopted various textbooks prepared by Central or State education bodies (like NCERT) for 5-12 classes, whereas the teaching method will have a focus on Islamic values, notions and perceptions.

\(^{157}\) MM Bashir Musliyar, CH Hyderose Musliyar and Dr Bahauddin Muhammad Nadwi are the three religious scholars of Darul Huda, whereas Dr U Bapputy Haji, Chemmukkan Kunchappu Haji and K.M. Zaidalawi Haji are the community leaders supported the idea. Prof E Muhamad Sir, a Chemistry expert, was yet another brain behind the institution. Bapputy Haji, Hyderose Musliyar & Bashir Musliyar are considered as the founding fathers of this great Islamic educational experiment.
By the end of senior secondary stage, the students are expected to have a well-set platform for a smooth pursuit of the more advanced degree level spanning 4 years, where the most celebrated Qur'anic exegesis, canonical texts of Hadith and classical legal texts belonging to the Shafi school of law are being taught along with their methodologies (usul). At this stage students will also gain a thorough understanding of all major branches of knowledge derived in the light of Islam, like rhetoric, logic, theology, etc.,

Interestingly, despite giving a good focus on secular subjects, Darul Huda does not allow its students to appear secondary level board examinations. However, the institution makes it mandatory for every undergraduate student to pursue an official degree in any of the Arts or Humanities subjects, effectively utilizing the prevailing Open University Systems run by many universities, including IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University). Sociology has been the favorite subject so far, while some go for others also like History, Political Science, and Literature of English, Arabic or Malayalam languages. Darul Huda facilitates the study of these subjects inside the institution by appointing separate teachers and allocating sufficient time.

The final two-year PG program is designed for specializations on areas like Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, 'Aqida and Da'wa with special focus on modern developments in each field, comparative religion, methodologies of propagation, Islamic world view and teaching methodologies. The students are required to prepare a dissertation and present it before ending the course. The final PG students will also have to complete certain hours of teaching training in the lower classes. Once the students complete their course they will have higher degrees both in Islamic and secular studies.

The fresh syllabus and its projected products invoked great interest among Mappila Muslims and soon many, even very rich or highly educated families, started vying for admissions to give their children this kind of education. As a result, around 20 institutions got affiliated to Darul Huda and adopted the same curriculum and syllabus. Darul Huda has also got its course approved by many central universities like Aligarh Muslim University, Jami'a Millia Islamia, Hamdard University, Moulana Azaa National Urdu
University, Al Azhar University, Cairo and Fatih University, Libya. Moreover, it has got the membership in the Cairo-based Federation of International Islamic Universities.

According to DH, it gives good education in secular subjects not for its students to get a government job and not to produce Muslim professionals and technicians having Islamic culture. Instead, it is to produce pure Islamic scholars having a clear idea of the modern world, its trends and ideologies, in order to perform his duty in a very convincing manner, without getting the stamp of ‘outdated’, ‘old’, ‘medieval’ and ‘good for nothing’.

However, many of its graduates continue their higher education in reputed universities in India and abroad like JNU, JMI, Hamdard University (all in Delhi), AMU (Aligarh), English and Foreign Language University, MAANU (both in Hyderabad), and International Islamic University, Malaysia. They pursue their post graduations and doctoral researches in subjects as varied as Sociology, Social Work, Social Medicine, History, Business Administration, Education, Islamic Studies, Arabic, English, Urdu, and Malayalam. The graduates are equally pursuing jobs in varied fields.

12.1.2. Wafi Course

Wafi course given under Co-ordination of Islamic Colleges (CIC), a conspicuous academic governing body functioning as a university, is another outstanding example of new trends being applied in the field of Islamic higher education. The brain behind designing this course is an eminent religious scholar, Ustad Adrisheri Abdul Hakeem Faizy. In fact, the system was evolved in the 1990s through many years of his different experiments at his institution Markaz al-Tarbiya al-Islamiya, Valancheri, Malappuram, aimed at streamlining Islamic higher education system along with regular secular higher studies. He wanted to respond to the increased demands from the society to produce capable religious scholars, who simultaneously could continue their secular higher learning.

To get a synthesised education under the Hudawi education system one has to drop regular schooling at fifth or 6th class and join any of Darul Huda colleges at the age of 10-12. Many parents hesitated to send their children for this course, thinking that an
education without the official Secondary or Senior Secondary (10+2) would affect the future of their children negatively. Meanwhile, under the Wafi Course, students are called for admission just after they passed their 10th class examination. This attracted many students who wanted to be religious scholars after completing their secondary schooling. The students of this age-level have to go through entrance examination and interview to get the admission. The course duration is 8 years, during which a student would complete a Mutawwal course in Islamic studies and a BA degree in any of the social science subject. Generally, the students opt for English literature for their university degree.

The course first started at KK Hazrath Memmorial Islamic and Arts College under Markazutharbiyathil Islamiyya, Valancheri, Malappuram, and later many Islamic colleges followed the suit. When there emerged a number of colleges following the same course, its managements came together and formed a university like co-ordination among them in 2000. With the convergence and integration of around 36 colleges under a single academic umbrella, the CIC has emerged as a robust academic authority of these colleges. It has a Senate, a Syndicate, an Advisory Board and Publishing Bureau, the directives of which are binding on each affiliated college.

The graduates of this course, who are known with the title of Wafi itself, are spread in various fields. From doing religious jobs of different kinds to teaching in schools and doing higher studies in prestigious universities, this unique course is trying to prove that synthesising religious and secular subjects under one roof is the best option for the contemporary period in order to keep the future scholars of Islam intact with the hue and cry of the world around them, and to make them better scholarly leaders who can respond to the newly-emerging issues adequately.

13. Wafiyya and Courses for Women

The Mappila history notes down about some women who were well in many Islamic subjects and who had held classes of some major religious texts at their homes for other women. There were women who had studied various religious subjects from their scholar fathers, brothers or husbands. However, Mappila women, just like most of their
counterparts in other parts of the world, could not rise to the fame of being a renowned religious scholar capable of dealing with religious issues at higher level. The Islamic education of women mostly ends with the fifth class, and a less than 50% continue till 10th class, and after that most of them depend for their Islamic knowledge on Wa'az programmes and Islamic magazines.

After the spread of secular education in every nook and corners of Malabar, now it has become common for any Muslim girl to continue their schooling until 10th and 12th at least. Many of them continue further higher studies in secular subjects. At higher level, the only chance for the girls to get some religious knowledge is from the minimal subjects given for the student of Afdalul 'Ulama and Arabic Degree courses. While the women from reformist background went to Arabic colleges and started getting a good chance for a relatively better education, those who went for secular higher education from traditional community in the olden days were actually braving the frowned eyes of 'Ulama, who were more worried about the corrupt atmosphere of secular institutions.

As a result of this all, one can easily find out an embarrassing absence, among the Mappila Muslim community, of women scholars of Islam. Though the Muslim community of Malabar, especially the traditionalists, boast their 'big achievements' in the field of education, especially in streamlining and modernizing religious education, they have produced few good, and even average, women scholars of Islam. Here, the traditional 'Ulama faced two problems to solve. The first was an urgent need to bring in provisions for women to get higher Islamic education in a bid to make them able to mould a better family and society. The second was to streamline the secular higher education of Muslim women understanding that it is better to show and guide to the relatively good and harmless way than putting an entire blind ban on women education. Solving the first problem, the traditionalists developed many colleges for women which focuses on teaching Shari'a along with needed secular subjects, and most of which are five-year courses.

Fatima Zahra Islamic Women College, Chemmad, run by Majlis al-Da'wat al-islamiyya, a supporting arm of Samastha, is one of the remarkable experiments in this regard.
Started in 1993, the college offers a 7-year course in which a brief form of Mukhtasar syllabus as well as up to 10th level school syllabus are taught privately, with an aim of producing religiously educated women who have good understandings in material subjects as well. The college, which admits girls aged 11.5 and below and who passed fifth standard of Samastha's Madrasa, also gives its inmates special classes in Arabic and English languages, Home Science, Midwifery, Tailoring, Embroidery, and Nursing. Recently, the college has started facilitating for its students to sit in the SSLC examinations privately.

Since 2004, Samastha directly started a Shari'a college for women to solve the dearth of higher religious learning centres. The Samastha Women Islamic Shari'a College offers a five-year course for SSLC passed students in which a good chunk of Islamic subjects would be taught along with carrying the university syllabus for Afdhalul 'Ulama certificate in Arabic studies.

The most promising experiment in this regard is the Wafiyya course offered by the same team that started the Wafi course. In 2007, the brains behind the Wafi course took this bold step of introducing the same Wafi course for women. Named Wafiyya course, it called on girls who pass out their SSLC board exams to apply for its course at the centre in Markaz Valancheri. For girls it offers a five-year course, during which they will complete their senior secondary and Degree courses, engaging with high quality Islamic studies simultaneously.