INTRODUCTION

The study is to trace out the entity and the distinct identity of the Muslim community of Malabar\textsuperscript{1}, their overall role for the formation and development of unique historical forces in the Kerala days of yore. Although the land of Malabar had a peculiar past and noticeable features in terms of its geographical position, weather, flora and fauna, people - their genesis, civilisation, beliefs, customs and practices; which are apparently different from any other society elsewhere, the people of Malabar had always maintained constant contact with the people and civilisations of the ancient world since time immemorial.

Malabar has long been an abode of different peoples, nations, civilisations and ideologies of the world from ancient times. It is one of the long-established Islamic epicentres of the world. Muslim Community of Malabar and its contribution to the transformation of the cosmopolitan culture of this soil are very significant as other civilizations. The most significant revolutionary event of 7\textsuperscript{th} century CE was the emergence of Islam and its immediate diffusion to the different parts of the world. As and when Islam spread over the entire Arabian Peninsula its influence was immediately felt over the land of Malabar through the Arab traders.

The formation of Muslim Community of Malabar and its expansion were felt through the Arab settlements, immigration and their missionary enterprises. The earliest Arab settlements in the land were very large and significant. Scores of permanent Arab settlers in this region immensely involved themselves in corpus of Arabic literary, historical, religious, and other activities and hence produced plenteous literary works in Arabic. The extensive trade relations flourished between the west coast of Malabar and the people of Middle Eastern countries originated from very ancient times. The spread of culture was quite natural and reciprocal. As the ancient Malabar was popular for its abundance of coveted spices and incenses, the same attracted the peoples of different

\textsuperscript{1}The term Malabar in the current study refers to the present Kerala State, but not in geographical terms. The term Malabar is generally used to refer the northern part of present-day Kerala. In this present study, the term refers beyond this geographical reference.
civilisations of other nations to this part of the world. These peoples of different
civilisations and trade interactions of the ancient period were the Assyrians, the
Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Israelites, the Greek, the Romans and
the Chinese. “Large numbers of Roman coins have been found in India, and the existence
of a temple of Augustus at Muziris (Kodungallur) in Malabar is evidence of a fair number
of Greek and Roman Merchants residing there.”

The contemporaneous descriptions of places and actual trading conditions in
Indian Ocean at the time of Islamic expansion reveal the presence of a social order which
had probably existed in for a long time - a society with a whole range of perennial
preferences from the necessities of daily life to the marginal and exotic demands of the
very rich. “A long line of Oceanic traffic that stretched out in the East to the present day
Malabar Coast, Kollam (Quilon), Ceylon, to the Malayan Archipelago extending up to
China” This was the positive factor and main reason for the formation of a Muslim
Community and its evolution in the Western Coast of the Indian Sub-continent.

Unlike many other parts of the sub-continent, the Arab merchants, the
ambassadors of culture, conquered the trade and commerce of the region and won over
the hearts of the native Hindu inhabitants through their friendly overtones and peaceful
persuasions. Violent means were never applied in forcefully converting them into Islam.
There was no attempt for territorial annexation and were no incidents of organised
massacres and bloodshed. Sheikh Zainddln Makhdüm, the author of *Tuhfatul Mujihidin*
recounts the tale of the ways and means of the emergence of Islam into the land of
Malabar, “the people of Malabar beyond the other nations of India, should evince a ready
and willing acceptance of this holy creed; their profession of it being void of monastic
guile and free from distrust”. He follows: “A company of Moslems having immigrated to
certain ports of Malabar”, and subsequently there had taken up their dwelling there. The

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3 According to M.J. Rawlandson, the emigrants from Arabia in the reign of Hajjāj bin Yūsuf, CE 710.
These, who at this time, under the Caliph Wālid, established themselves in Malabar, may be considered
the ancestors of the Muhammadans of Southern India, who are in this day commonly called the Moors. (M.J.
Rawlandson, *Tuhfatul Mujahideen* an Historical Work in the Arabic Language, London: 1833, p. 5.)
population by degrees became proselytes to the religion of God; and Islamism shedding abroad its divine lustre, the number of its professors became increased...." The Semitic creed of Judaism, Christianity and Islam were all patronised by the rulers of Kerala for their own interests.  

Foreign traders were always welcomed in this land and were often invited to settle down in the territory reigned by certain rulers. Their presence guaranteed the special advantages in streamlining and strengthening trade and commerce ensuring it to be a seapower and also its territorial security. Its doors were always opened to welcome the people with different cultural background by its rulers. The author of Tuhfatul Mujahidin comes clean and has a high regard for the practical wisdom of the Malabar rulers particularly the Zamorins of Calicut: "Muslims throughout Malabar have no leader possessed of power to rule over them. But their rulers are Hindus, who exercise judicial authority and organize their affairs by enforcing payment of debt or fine if anyone is subjected to such payment. Notwithstanding these, Muslims enjoyed great respect and regard from the Hindu rulers. The main reason for this is that the construction and development of the country is taking place largely through the Muslims. Hence the rulers make it convenient for the Muslims to organize Friday congregation prayers (jum'ah) and the celebrations like 'Id. The remuneration for the m'uadhdhins (those who call to prayer) and the quādīes (religious judges) are paid by the government....."  

The traditional policy of religious tolerance was a by-product of trade and merchandise, promoted by mutual needs and materialistic desires out of expediency in the given context. In this respect one can observe that the most important motivating factor was its geographical proximity of this region to the Arabian Sea which is located nearest to the ancient international artery of seaborne trade. More than anything this factor might have remarkably influenced. The life style adopted by the native people of Malabar is a cosmopolitan in nature - which is different from many other regions of the Indian Peninsula. All these multifaceted and positive features of trade, tradition and cultural

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4 See, C.V. Cheryan (1979), Kerala and Christianity  
combination of Malabar and in what ways those historical factors ceaselessly played in forming and developing the Arab-Malabar trade and commercial relations. The customary of mercantile intimacy and understanding were the innermost means for the preaching and spread of Islamic faith in this part of the world. All these factors might be the latent forces decided the fundamental nature of the Muslim community of Malabar and its evolution in terms of social, political, cultural, and economic elements can be explored in the present study.

The comfortable circumstances of the Malabar region were mainly due to its maritime trade and commerce relationship with the Arab seafaring nations. These people had made a great deal of contribution to the advancement in every respect ensued until the emergence of the European Colonial Powers in the medieval Malabar, on the South Western Coast of the Indian sub-continent. The peaceful political climate of this region was in a panic particularly by the arrival of the Portuguese in the last decade of the fifteenth century. “The Portuguese rivalry in commerce as well as their excess religious zeal mainly against the Muslims compelled the Zamorin, the then ruler of Calicut to interfere in the dealings to maintain the law and order of his realm and to safeguard the interests of his subjects. Such confrontations against the Portuguese continued over a century, finally resulting in the total disintegration of the Zamorin’s Kingdom”. 7

The political situation of medieval Kerala was awfully appropriate to any foreign intruder in overriding it owing to the incessant internal tussles flanked by its major rulers of different principalities for controlling over its meagre state resource as well as regional power supremacy. The favourable situation made the Portuguese colonial power to easily intervene in the politico-economic, cultural and military affairs of the people of Malabar in general and the maritime trade monopoly and the religious affairs of the Arabs and the native Muslim community of Malabar in particular. That complicated and challenging Malabar political milieu shaped an unbending combined “native resistance from the

Zamorins and the House of Kunjalis" against the disgraceful deeds committed by the Portuguese both in land as well as in the seas.

The Portuguese trade policies and the religious course of action on the length and breadth of Malabar particularly Calicut, Cochin and Kolllam was consequential in forging a much closer confederacy, mostly between the Zamorins of Calicut and the Kunjalis (the naval admirals of Zamorin) to resist the Portuguese colonial force and to protect the civil liberties of the inhabitants. Almost all these factors - the Portuguese, being there in Malabar including its advent, their encounters with native naval power, their religious policy on different indigenous religious groups including the Christianity, and also discloses a variety of dimensions of their relationship with Malabar such as political, economic, military, educational and cultural also has been appearing here for discussion. The impact of the Portuguese domination on the Muslim community of Malabar is an essential part of this work. As the atrocious acts against the native people steadily increased mainly against the Muslim community, which lead to the rise of the Islamic spiritual leaders producing some explosive literary works in Arabic to educate and motivate the general masses as well as the Muslim rulers of the different empires within and outside Malabar. It is said that the messages of these works were read throughout the mosques of Malabar during that particular point of time.

At the same time, one can weigh up the different angles of the British presence in Malabar and their administrative policies and excesses and its effects and impact on the people of Malabar. Immediately after overthrowing the Mysorean rule in Malabar, the British colonial forces accelerated the establishment of their influence in every sphere of the Malabari’s life. The British initiated changes in the agrarian relationships ultimately culminating into Malabar rebellion of 1921 favouring the feudal land lords. the agrarian relationships due to the new British land policies and the culmination of rebellions taken place not only in the British Malabar but other parts of the region also as a resultant to their deformed policies. Several discourses were taken place amongst the intellectuals both native and foreign to investigate the different aspects of the outbreak of the Malabar rebellion of the 1921. Purpose of choosing such a portion in this study can have a general
idea about two major European colonial powers' reign, dominance, repression and divisive designs over the people Malabar and which could lead to transform the ulamas' conventional literary theme into anti-colonial thinking.

Arabic literature in Malabar and its deep rooted influence in the various field of life of the Malabar people have to be discussed to make known, including its genesis and basis in persuading the native Muslims. It also invited the attention of Muslim empires of the world in encouraging and spreading resistance against the European colonial forces. It is interesting too see also that the instinctive emergence of a peculiar dialect and its gradual development and influence on the native Muslims in every sphere of life. A general survey of both Arabic and Arabi-Malayalam literature can create the closer analysis of the Muslim community of Malabar.

Apart from that the indigenous contribution of Malabar to the development of Arabic and Arabi-Malayalam language and literature with its distinct approach and perspective in different fields of writing can also bring forth an understanding the nature of society and its literature. The study also examine extensively the Dars system of religious education- an archaic paradigm of Arabic imparting system, its different phases with brief overview of reformation of Madrasa and Arabic education in Kerala. It also helped in extensively producing works in Arabic prose and poetry, including reorganization of Hadith and studies in Islamic jurisprudence, works in Sufism, mawlid literature and its evolution till date.

An endeavour is also made to elaborate the emergence of Arabi-Malayalam. In this respect, the origin of this independent indigenous Mappila literary dialect and its evolution, proliferation and contribution of Malabaris for its development also be examined, especially, in the development of the Arabi-Malayalam poetry and prose and news papers and periodicals. The innovation of Arabi-Malayalam may be due to the fact that Malayalam was not yet a developed language and it is the youngest languages

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8 Arabi-Malayalm was a synthesis of both Arabic and Malayalam words and terminologies and the terms of other Dravidian languages.
amongst the Dravidian literary schools. The absence of a developed Malayalam language was a major handicap which could have lead in evolving a new synthesised language consisting of words even in the local literary works. Choosing this chapter in the present work is to follow a line of investigation for unveiling the gravity of wide ranging Arabic and independent indigenous literature like Arabi-Malayalam, a unique literary dialect of Malabar. Apart from the appropriateness for this study, this chapter can motivate and open the avenues of further research on different areas.

The colonial aggrandisements of Malabar region lead to the natural origin of anti-colonial literary works. Those works flared up the fervour in inspiring and educating the people to build up native resistance movements in fighting out the colonial forces and to check their penetration into the land. As far as the literary struggles and anti-colonial resistance are concerned, a brief review of the selected literary works and its analysis is inevitable in this particular area of the study. It is also the core area of this study, comprised of three major anti-colonial Arabic literary classics of the medieval Kerala. In which the Tahríd Ahlíl ʾImān alá Jihādi ‛Abdātī Sulbān (Incitement of the believers to fight against the Cross-worshippers)⁹ the first literary work in poetic form which encourage the people to react against the repressive measures of the Portuguese colonial forces to save their individual freedom as well religious ideology which is touching in to their heart and personified. This literary ballad proposes to ensure fitting reprisal to the Portuguese enemy and gets martyrdom out of it and reach the paradise as the ultimate reward.

Another work is Tuhfatul Mujāhidīn fī Baḍī Akhbār AlBurtugālīn (A presentation of the holy warriors in respect of some Portuguese affairs).¹⁰ The author and the work attracted the attention of historians and the Islamic world. Tuhfat-al-Mujahideen is an archive of Kerala's medieval historical research studies and a work of literary struggles as its name indicates. The aim of the author in writing this work was to educate and elaborate the necessity of people’s resistance against the Portuguese colonial power

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⁹This work was composed by Sheikh Abu Yahya Zainuddin bin Ali (Zainuddin I -1467- 1521 CE),
¹⁰Tuhfatul Mujāhidīn was authored by Ahmad Zainuddin ibn Muhammadul Gazzāli
in defence of ideology, livelihood as well as territorial integrity. This work also shed light on the other aspects of the medieval Kerala scenario.

Finally, the work namely *Al Fat'hul Mubīn li Ṣāmiriyi lladhī Yuhibbul Muslimīn*\(^\text{11}\) (The clear victory for the Zamorin, who love Muslims) is a work written during the same period in which *Tuhfatul Mujāhidīn* was written. Elaborated in 537 lines, this book is also a poetical work in Arabic on Kerala. *Fat'hul Mubīn* narrates an epoch-making event in which the Muslims, the Nair warriors and the naval force of Kunjali Marakkars jointly attacked and savaged the Portuguese fort at Chaliyam (Calicut) in 1571 C.E. Devoting this work to the Zamorin by the then spiritual leader of Muslims and Qazi of Calicut, Mohammed bin Abdul Aziz, clearly prove that relationship between both the Hindus and Muslim communities were harmonious, tolerant and cooperative at that particular point of time in the history.

The advent of the British colonial powers specifically began with the fall of Mysoreans and with the *Treaty of Srirangapattinam* in 1792. The British imperialists tightened their political foothold over the Malabar region during that period. In this context, it is important to bring out the significance of those anti-colonial writings that had a strong bearing on the people’s struggle against Colonialism. In the current study, three important literary works that opposed British colonialism and imperialist forces have been taken into consideration. Among these three two are written in Arabic and one in Arabi-Malayalam.

A literary writing, that exhorted the Muslims of Malabar to resist and fight against the imperialist forces and their supremacy in the native country, was *Saiful Bātār alā Man Ywālī Kuffār*\(^\text{12}\). This work mostly propagated through the mosques of Malabar during the British colonial period. This work incited the Muslims to react against foreign invasion and rule. The work, in fact, was the result of the divisive policies of the British,

\(^{11}\)The work, *Fat’hul Mubīn* was written by Qazi Muhammad bin Ahamed (d. 1025 H.E.) of Calicut.

\(^{12}\)The literal meaning of the title is, 'The sharp sword against those who commissioned non-believers with our affairs'. Syed Alavi Thangal, a domicile of Calicut, was the author of this work.
their skewed territorial strategies and their hostile attitude towards the natives. The said work finds mention in a compiled work entitled ‘Uddatu-al-Umarā wal Hukkām’.

Uddatu-al-Umarā wal Hukkām’ li Ihānatīl Kafaratī wal Abdatīl Asnām (Preparation of Amirs and rulers to subdue the non-believers and idol worshippers) was published in Arabia and was secretly distributed in the mosques of Kerala.13 The non-believers mentioned in the book are the British, and the idol-worshippers, who worked as the British stooges, mostly consisting of chieftains and upper class feudal lords. The essential aim of the work was to instigate the community leaders as well as common people to fight against British colonialism.

Muhimmātul Mu’minin14 (The tasks of the believers) is a 40-page work written in Arabi-Malayalam that shows the undeniable presence of the Muslim scholars in the anti-British protest of Kerala. This was one among those many works confiscated by the British. It contains important subjects like Islam’s non-cooperation with enemies, the need to support the existence of Khilafat and the importance of preserving the holiness of Jazīratul-Arab. The author presents the issues and topics covered in the book by basing his arguments on the verses of Quran, sayings of Prophet, and the words of eminent Islamic scholars. This book asks the Muslims of Kerala to accept the Turkey based Usmani Sultan as Khalifa and fight against the common enemy, the British. All these works share an anti-colonial viewpoint. This work, being written in Arabi-Malayalam, could have influenced more natives than the rest of the other five works discussed in this study. Perhaps this work might have had a direct bearing on the 1921 revolt against the British in Malabar.

In this study the researcher has made an earnest attempt to rationalise and objectively analyse the Malabar society of those days vis-à-vis their anti-colonial

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13This well-known anti-British piece of writing, composed by Syed Fadal Pookoya Thangal, who was a famous freedom fighter, scholar and intellectual. The British eventually banished him to Arabia. Syed Fadal Pookoya Thangal was the son of Syed Alavi Thangal, who authored the book Saiful Batār alā Man Uwōlil Kuffār.

14Muhimmātul Mu’minin was authored by Fareekkuty Musaliar, who was the Thanur Khilafat Movement Committee Secretary of that time.
struggles. The concrete outcome of the study is the result of critical and objective analysis of the social dynamism and circumstances prevailed during that period in Malabar.

In this tiring endeavour, the researcher had to undergo manifold hardships in tracing rare materials, books, periodicals, journals, and other literary works, both published and unpublished. In order to put the facts in a logical order, the researcher resorted to the methodology of holding interviews. The researcher further pursued extensive field trips in search of primary sources of data and to trace those rare documents related to this particular area of study. The present work took special care in providing necessary references and footnotes to substantiate the arguments more clearly.

The most important aspect of this study is that, although many historians, litterateurs or researchers have attempted to trace out the origin and expansion of the Muslim community and their various levels of contributions in Arabic literature and Arabi-Malayalam, no comprehensive research is obtainable on the said topic, "Muslim Community of Malabar and their Literary Struggles against the Colonial Powers: an Evaluation". Such a study is imperative and highly relevant in the context of the strategic economic and literary relevance, especially for those Arabic speaking people who comprise one sixth of the world population. These people not only belong to Islam but the followers of Christianity and Judaism transcending Asia and Africa.

A comprehensive research on the literary struggles of Malabar Muslims against the colonial powers had been a long felt-need. This area of research had been either ignored or marginalized owing to various reasons. Till date no major work or research had been undertaken to bring out the literary struggle of Malabar Muslims against the colonial powers. The time has come to give necessary attention to this particular area of study, which it rightfully deserves.

It has to be noted that the study basically covers the medieval period, though it often spills over to the early modern era also. This period has a special significance in the
history of Malabar. The major colonial powers, the Portuguese and the British, attempted to establish their political and military domination over the people of Malabar in order to further their territorial aggrandizement agenda. The abrupt change in the political configurations over the region during the period often forced the traditional Islamic intellectuals to focus on anti-colonial sentiments, as they themselves felt that their own existence and identities are being threatened. This forced paradigmatic shift necessarily demanded a thorough research so as to explore the hidden and explicit anti-colonial sentiments as reflected in the works of those intellectuals. Summarily, the literary struggle against the Portuguese and the British are selected for the current study.

In the current study, the researcher makes an attempt to test whether:

- The crusades and other armed and ideological conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims in various parts of the world have influenced the literary works and struggles of this particular period.

- The British imperialistic domination over Muslim nations and the peoples, including those of Malabar, have had provoked the literary people or persons to revolt against them, through literary works.

- Arabic and its offshoot Arabi-Malayalam, apart from their communicative aspects, have influenced the people of Malabar, to trigger a literary struggle against the colonial powers in that particular period of time. These literary works have contributed to the successful indigenous freedom movement against the colonial powers.

The work is based on an in-depth analysis of both primary (including manuscripts and microfilms) and secondary sources. The above-mentioned literary works are the primary sources for this research work. For a comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand, secondary sources have also been extensively utilised in the current study. The researcher turned to major libraries and archives in various parts of India. As has been mentioned above, the researcher held various interviews with experts and historians who
have expertise the history of Kerala, and the Mappilas of Malabar. The researcher also intends to meet and interact/consult with experts in this particular area of study.

The present study consists of five chapters excluding the introductory and concluding chapters. In which the first chapter of the thesis traces out the Muslim community of Malabar from the days of the dawn of the Islamic faith. The second chapter briefly presents a background of the emergence of colonialism in the land of Malabar through the Portuguese and the British. The third chapter outlines the origin and evolution of the Arabic literature and its indigenous offshoot, the Arabi-Malayalam and its contribution to the Arabic literature and to facilitate the cultural and social dynamism of Malabar. The fourth and fifth chapters bring to mind a brief review and a closest appraisal of the anti-colonial literary classics of the Portuguese and the British period respectively.