ABSTRACT

Kerala is a small state situated in the southwest corner of India representing only 1.18 percent of the total area of India and 3.4% of the country’s population. The state constitutes 14 Districts and the total population of the state as per the census based on 1991-2001 is 31838619. Out of this Muslim population constitute 7863842 which share 23.33 percent of the total population. Therefore Muslims or Mappilas in Kerala constitute a significant portion of Kerala population and they have also characterized a unique and historical society whose culture, literature, tradition, social ethos and politics have been moulded through the passage of time.

Kerala Muslims, as a vital religious community, had well cherished dynamism and creativity in every walks of history. Even after the very advent and spread of Islam in Malabar shores since 7th century A.D, there has been contributed a considerable volume of Islamic studies. But these contributions to the Islamic studies have not been exclusively assessed yet. The prime aim of this research is to substantiate this shortcoming.

As a debutant attempt of its kind the scope and significance of the study is updating the development of Islamic studies in Kerala. The present research programme exclusively explores the contributions of the Muslim scholars and others in the field of four major disciplines like Quran, Hadith, Fiqh and Tasawwuf Studies, during 18th to 20th centuries A.D.

The sources explored for writing this work are mostly primary in nature. The original sources including both published and unpublished manuscripts have also been utilized for the study. The introductory
chapters, the first and second one respectively substantiated with a volume of secondary sources.

Regarding the methodology applied in the Study, in which the first two chapters, a method of a general Survey is used imparting introductory information. The subsequent and second part of the thesis carries an anatomical study on the development of four cardinal disciplines like Quran, Hadith, Fiqh and Tasawwuf. In this regard several recommendable primary and secondary works have been studied. The criteria for selecting a work in this research is strictly based on its merit, those books having standardized information, methodological presentation, historical relevance are subjected to the study. The materials thus collected are analysed and synthesised. Personal interviews with some experts and scholars and local resource persons have been conducted to widen the perceptions. In addition to these sources Kerala Muslim directories, encyclopedias, latest Census Report, autobiographies and Gazetteers have been used and listed out in the bibliography.

The thesis is presented in 6 chapters, the opening chapter deals with ‘Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala: A General Survey’ The present chapter throws light on the advent and spread of Islam in Kerala and proceeds to pivotal instances and circumstances which led to the formation of Muslim Society. The cooperation of the local rulers, role of Sufis, Sadat and missionaries, construction of mosques, installation of Darses, and formation of Arabic-Malayalam and so on vividly surpassed. The chapter also highlights impact of colonial encroachment upon the Muslim Ummah and their reaction towards the same. The chapter ultimately constitutes an astonishing picture that even in such a catastrophic situation, how the Muslim scholars had devoted their time
and energy to the promotion of Islamic Studies. Thus early developments of Islamic studies have been surveyed in its chronological order.

The subsequent chapter, ‘Contribution of Religious and Academic Institutions in the Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala’ has been vividly enumerated while correlating with the socio-political condition of the Muslims at the advent of Islam and the circumstances which led to the installation of religious and academic institutions like Darses, Maktabs, Madrasas, Arabic colleges and universities in Kerala. The discussion primarily focuses on the mode of curriculum, style of pedagogy, and its specific roles played in the promotion of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the region. The present chapter throws light on the mile stones, pivotal instances in the process of evolutions of Islamic education as parallel to the progress of modern education in Indian sub continent. Also discusses the visionary role of Islamic organizations to institute the aforesaid religious and academic institutions. The steps and measures of the government of Kerala enacted at different times have also been reviewed in this connection. In short the entire findings of the first two chapters can be summarized as follows:

Some historical factors and land marks can be perceived in sociological and cultural self determination and resurrection of any society. An Islamic society with all its radical features and perfection was prevailing in Kerala ever since early times. Dars (mosque school), Oattu Pallis (Maktabs), formation of Arabic- Malayalam, creative Muslim leadership and warm reception extended by the indigenous leaders and people are such landmarks in Kerala Muslim’s history. The well organized community led by Ulama and Umarah followed by a disciplined Muslim rank and file surprised the history.
The households were centered around the mosques and new mosques were set up to cater newly enacted settlements. The symbolic relationship between mosques and society that prevailed in the halcyon days of Islam was perceivable in Kerala. It is also understood from this study that the academic movement launched by mosques (Dars), the creative harvest of Arabic–Malayalam and an ideal leadership were the most progressive, effective and timely advantage of Kerala Muslims. However this haven of scholars failed to expand and rejuvenate the ethnic knowledge consciousness launched by Dars system and its process of dissemination of Knowledge. Kerala, which was the playground of Islamic scholars and organizations, failed to preserve the momentum triggered by the explosion of creativity through Arabic–Malayalam literature. This failure resulted in the extinction of a society in which spirituality and creativity moved in tandem.

The third chapter is related to the Development of Quranic Studies in Kerala which is the first and for most branches of the Islamic studies. This chapter is designed under some broader headings as historical overview, the origin, development and trends of Quranic studies, a survey of the works done on Quranic studies, major Quranic studies and a review of Quranic literature. The region has contributed some minor and partial works on Quranic studies in earlier times. In this regard several chapters of Holy Quran were translated into the local language. But the major attempts have carried out in so late in 1960’s. By the appearance of Tafsir al Quran al Hakeem of C.N Ahmed Maulavi in 1956-1963, Tarjama al Quran by K.Umer Maulavi in 1970, Tafsir al Quran by T.K Abdulllah Maulavi in 1967-70, Fath al Rahman fi Tafsir al Quran by K.V Muhammed Musliar Koottanad in 1981-84, Tarjamat Maa’nil Quran by Abdul Hameed Madani in 1997 were came into being.
Examine all the aforementioned works produced in this field; it is very disappointing to say that no acclaimed and worth-mentioned creation has not yet been compiled so far. The overall information will authenticate a comprehensive account on the nature and characteristics, trends, milestones, dimensions, growth, genesis and development of the Quranic studies during the last two centuries. The characteristic features of Quran studies in Kerala can be understood in the following words.

1. The foundation stone of Qur’anic learning in Kerala may be assumed to be laid with the installation of mosques by 8th century A.D. Qur’an, Tafsir, Tajwid, constituted an indomitable part in the academic progress of the aforementioned Dars system of religious education. By the expansion of Madrasa movement in the latter half of the 20th century a lay man Muslim could make use of Qur’anic preaching in his life (especially in his five time prayers).

2. Another distinguishing output arising out of this study related to the Qur’anic writings is the metamorphosis from the simple and partial works into the acquisition of deep, vivid and broader perspectives in scholastic creativity. It has to be understood that a graphic and serialized augmentation had been taking place during this period.

3. The emergence of reformative organizations marked a great epoch in the arena of literature, academism, observation, translation and interpretation of Holy Qur’an.

4. Another important reality worth mentioning when speaking of Quranic literature in the region is the ideological explosion originated in the religious sphere. It was spearheaded by the supporters and oppressors of the translation of Holy Qur’an.
While analysing the developments and contribution in the study of *Quran* during the specific period under study, it is disappointing to say that no work worth mentioning was produced in this field. This time is synchronic with the literacy revolution in Muslim world when many classical works were produced on *Quran* in Arabic and other languages though the debate over the permissibility of the translation of *Quran* was appeared only many years after in Kerala. In 20th century, the study of *Quran* was progressed only through the denominational controversies among various religious out-fits. But unfortunately, no work worth presenting before the world was written in this belated period also. During the period many *Quranic* literary works from Arabic and Persian were translated into Malayalam, but they were out modeled and anachronistic. But due consideration was given to the translation of literary works written to support the global Islamic reformist movements of 20th century. We cannot underestimate the intellectual contributions of Kerala Muslim Community despite its linguistic and civilizational constrains. Such advancement could not be seen in other regional languages. The denominational contest in 20th century, to a great extent remarkably contributed to this achievement.

The fourth chapter deals ‘Development of *Hadith* Studies in Kerala’ along with a brief historical overview. An assessment on the genesis and general characteristics of *Hadith* studies in the region has been provided. Then systematically approaches, a study of translated works, by which Malayalam versions of *Sahih al Bukhari, Sahih al Muslim, Riyad al Salihin, Bulugh al Maram, Mishkat al Masabih, Matnu Arbai’n and Adab al Mufrad* have studied. After that general works on *Hadith* Studies have been analysed. The total yield of this Study can be inferred in the following words:
The development of Hadith Studies is deplorable in the period under study. Even though the scholars spent years for the learning of Hadith, no remarkable works were produced barring some works written in the last decades of 20th century. In Kerala, no serious task comparable with the great venture in Arabian countries or study and research in Urdu and Persian was undertaken in the field of the codification of Hadith. This statement is made while considering the contribution of Kerala Muslims who rendered their service in foreign countries. Even if Kerala is a land of numerous religious scholars and scores of Arabic Colleges the state still lacks genuine works on Hadith. Translations of renowned and acclaimed works have not yet been made their charisma in the region, even the masterpieces of the North Indian Scholars like Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (d.1114 A.H), Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith al Dehlawi, Shaikh Abdul Aziz Dehlawi (1159-1239A.H) etc. are still unknown to the region. Regarding the origin work in Hadith we have a few titles such as Mirat al Mishkat, a commentary of Mishkat al Masabih, in eight volumes of Shaikh Ismail Musliar Malabari, Khairu darain by Abdul Qadar Fadhfari (1895-1944), Sihaushaikhain, a collection of Hadith selected from Valakkulam Abdul Bari (1880-1965).

The fifth chapter ‘Development of Fiqh Studies in Kerala’ discusses the historical overview on Islamic jurisprudence and examines the historical development of Fiqh studies in region which handles the characteristic features of Islamic Jurisprudence in Kerala, evolution of Shafii School of Islamic Jurisprudence, the rare presence of other schools of Islamic Jurisprudence, Qazi system prevailed in the region and the series of debates on the jurisprudential matters. The central study is
oriented on the title ‘Tarjamat’ or translated works on Fiqh. Other significant information has been displayed according to its thematic sequences such as Ibadat, Muamalat, Munakahat, Fatawa. The important feature of this part can be sufficed as follows:

‘Fath al Mui’n’ authored by Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdum Saghir(1532-1618 A.D ) is considered as classical manual of Shafii school of Islamic Jurisprudence. Some commentaries were written on the same by the regional scholars and abroad as well. Also compiled some commentaries on the masterly works of certain renowned authors. Meantime fatwa (religious ruling or decree) emerged out of creative debates and responses to polemics rejuvenated the study of Fiqh. But due to regional constrains these ventures covered only the tail-end of Shafii school of jurisprudence. A school of jurisprudence imbibing the socio-economic features of this land was not developed. The major reason for this situation was the extinction of free and bold traditional approaches. However In this discipline the region has contributed some minor works on various jurisprudential issues and limited translations and commentaries. There is hardly any well-acclaimed attempt like Fath al Mui’n has not yet been compiled so far. When compared to Quran and Hadith studies, Fiqh studies would have to get a wider acclaim. But here also the state of affairs is not different. Religious scholars in Kerala had asserted a significant stress to the study of Fiqh from the very beginning of Islamic studies in the region. The above mentioned classical works are the precious offspring of this outlook.

The sixth chapter envisages ‘Development of Tasawwuf Studies in Kerala’. After the historical over view, Origin, Development and special features of Sufism in Kerala, a study of Sufi poems in Kerala
including *Muhiyuddin Mala, Kappapattu* and *Nool Madhu, Hidayah al Adhkiyah, Allaf al Alif, Jauharat al Tauhid, Qasidah al Umariyah, Al Mawahib Al Jaliyyah and Manqus Moulid* have been executed. Subsequently analyses some selected case study on the renowned Sufi personalities whose works and thoughts have tremendously influenced the region. They include Shaikh Abdul Qader Jilani (1078-166), Allama Abu Hamid al Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D), Umar Khayyam (1048-1123 A.D) and Maulana Jalaluddin al Rumi (1207-1273 A.D). The overall assessment of the study has been reviewed in the following words:

The original and classical contributions of Kerala made during this time span were mainly in the field of *Tasawwuf*. It shows the spiritual vivacity of Muslims of Kerala. Keralites are obliged to Sufis and their refined and glorious mentality for the tremendous growth in *Tasawwuf*, which is missing in *Quaranic* studies, codification of *Hadith* and deductive study of *Fiqh*. Sufis paved a placid culture in Kerala and a strong foundation for *Tasawwuf*. Besides those who migrated to Kerala, the indigenous intellectuals contributed richly to the Mappila literature. World renowned, ‘*Muhiyuddin Mala’, Viruthams of Icha Masthan, Kappa Pattu, Safala Mala,* and creations like *Hidayah al Adhkiyah, Manqus Moulid, Qasidah al Umariyah, Allaf al Alif, and Al Mawahib al Jaliyyah* like are only a few among them. If they are remaining obscure to the world, it is due to linguistic incapacity of Keralites to present them before the world and the distance that exist from the global scholars. Most of the masterly works of Shaikh Abdul Qader Jilani (1078-1166 A.D), Al Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D), Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273 A.D) and Umar Khayyam (1048-1123 A.D) have already introduced in Malayalam. Among which Umar Khayyam and Rumi well impacted in
the realm of literary and cultural spheres of Kerala. Umar Khayyam’s *Rubai'yat* got sixteen beautiful Malayalam versions of appreciations.

The specialty of Sufi works was their popularity and simplicity. It was well accepted by all people, from ignorant house-wife to learned scholar, The Keralite tradition of spiritual ambition was so excited. These works, studied with all the qualities of philosophical insight and spiritual depth won popularity through their musical charm. The fragrance of these literary works was spread through hearty service rendered by Sufis to the masses. Prosaic research works in the field of *Tasawwuf* were scanty. It was happened due to the absence of the use of printing technology and text book system in Kerala. In the early period Sufis followed popular methods and straight to heart approach.

The reformist movements and organizations appeared in 20th century produced many original studies and translations. But they demolished the glory of Sufi tradition. The reformist movements attempted to modernize a society that was grown up with Sufi world view and life-style. But they targeted to uproot such a world view and lifestyle. The scholarly organization launched to resist the reformist deviations, spent their energy in superficial debates and polemics and alienated the Sufi tradition in the sphere of action. The reformist-traditionalist debate unfortunately created a skeptical approach towards Sufism, even among the traditionalist scholars. The reformist effect on the traditionalist scholars was visible by the fact that they became indulged in *Fiqh* and drifted away from the heavenly world of Sufism. No significant development was took place in the field of *Tasawwuf* after the institutionalised partisan approach was adopted by the elite-scholars in 20th century. The pedagogy of *Madrasa* and text books spread in all
nooks and corners in Kerala. It drifted people away from spiritual epistemology and neared them to mechanistic pedagogy. This new pedagogical system was denominationally partisan, competitive and institutionalised. Now this system has reached the climax of institutionalisation. This institutionalising tendency has not delivered anything of historical relevance.