Chapter-2

Contribution of Religious and Academic Institutions in the Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala
CHAPTER - II

Contribution of Religious and Academic Institutions in the Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala

Analyzing the development of Islamic studies in Kerala during 18th century to 20th century A.D, one should go through various significant dimensions related to the issue. This chapter deals with the role of religious and academic institutions in the development of Islamic studies in Kerala. The present attempt has been dealt under the five broad topics. They are 1. Dars 2. Othupallikal (Maktab) 3. Madrasa Movement 4. Arabic Colleges 5. Arabic and Islamic Studies under Schools and Universities. The same could certainly provide a real background to perceiving the issue and would maintain a spontaneous sequence in the analysis of the ‘Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala during 18th century to 20th century A.D’.

Before proceeding the subject matter a cross examination of Socio-political conditions of the region before 18th century would certainly supply the sufficient materials.

It is a fact that ever since the advent of Islam in Kerala the Muslims have been a vital community who tremendously influenced the social, political and economic spheres of the state. Commenting on the same Shaikh Zainuddin (1512-1618A.D) writes “when the first team of Muslim missionaries arrived at Kodungallur, then the ruler granted them sufficient lands and gardens and permitted them to erect a mosque there”\(^1\). William Logan while observing the further developments, in his words, “the succeeding rulers continued this hospitality and benevolent

\(^1\) Shaikh Zainuddin, \textit{Tuhfat al Mujahidin}, Trans. by M.H Nainar, Madras, 1942, p.34.
attitude towards the Muslims. By the end of the 14th century, the Zamorin of Calicut who was most sympathetic to Muslim causes became the supreme power among the native rulers. His kingdom was economically prosperous. Trade with foreign countries was the backbone of the economy and it was exclusively in the hands of the Muslims².

The same matter has been reiterated by K. Sreedharan, an eminent historian. According to him “Arabs were known as seafarers even before the birth of Islam, but they seem to have redoubled their efforts at oceanic commerce after the advent of Islam. During Sri Vijaya Chola age, the Arabs reached the zenith of maritime commerce, and by the end of Hindu period they held complete monopoly over sea trade”³.

Besides economic well being, a distinct social dignity can be witnessed in terms of communal harmony and tolerance among the believers as well as in the approach of the Hindu rulers to the different communities especially towards the Muslims. In this connection, the words of T.K Velupillai, the author of Travancore State Manual, seems quite credible. He says that “the rulers interested themselves not only in the temporal affairs but were also solicitous of rendering assistance in the conduct of their religious observances”⁴.

Advent of colonial encroachment in the soil brought a drastic change in the destiny of Muslim Ummah in the region. The same domination had distorted the traditional socio-economic structure of community. Regarding the hostility of the Portuguese towards the Muslims William Logan reports that “Nor did the Portuguese content themselves with suppressing the Muhammadan track, they tried to convert the Muslims to Christianity and it is related that, in 1562 they

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seized a large number of Moorish Merchants at Goss and forcibly converted them\(^5\). This view has been further reinforced by the great scholar K.M Panikar who writes that “the hostility of the Portuguese towards the Muslims was not only due to commercial rivalry but a hostility which the Iberian powers had inherited from their long drawn out fight with the Moors in Spain and Africa\(^6\)”. In addition to this Shaikh Zainuddin’s words are quiet hearts breaking who writes that “tempted with such an inherent hostility, they oppressed the Muslims of Kerala, corrupted them and committed all kinds of ugly and notorious deeds which are too bad to be described\(^7\).

From the above statements it can be safely proved that up to the end of 15\(^{th}\) century A.D the status of Muslims had been prosperous and highly influential. The factors like co-operation, intimate relations with the local Hindu rulers and special aptitude in trade and commerce were the pivotal factors that caused this enrichment.

Politically speaking, the advent of Portuguese opened a new era in the history of Kerala. It marked the decline of the Muslims. From the very beginning the Portuguese tried to create a wedge between the Zamorin and the Muslims to upset the trade monopoly, which was in the hands of Muslims. Shaikh Zainuddin says “They said to the amils (chieftains) of the Zamorin, it is fit that the Muslims be prevented from that trade and their voyages to Arabia. The advantages which would accrue to you from their trade would be frequently if you carry trade with us\(^8\)”.

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\(^7\) Shaikh Zainuddin op.cit. p.60.
\(^8\) Shaikh Zainuddin op.cit. p.54.
With the rise of the British, the conditions of Muslims were further steeped in deep water. Describing the situation Sardar K.M Panicker (1896-1963) writes that “the advent of British was disastrous for the Musalmans. They found themselves deprived of all authority in the country. Their downfall was so sudden and so marked. It was impossible for anyone to overlook”\textsuperscript{9}. Therefore they did not come into any compromise with them and fought against them with unabated fury and exhaustible heroism. In 1792, the year in which the British established their rule over Malabar, an attempt was made to dislodge them under the leadership of Unnimoosa Moopan of Elambulassery. This was the inauguration of the long struggle which had lasted about one and quarter century and culminated in the great rebellion 1921. All this years the whole Malabar was turbulent\textsuperscript{10}.

Concluding the matter, it is beyond doubt that, the colonial invasion and numerous rebellions against Muslims smashed the backbones of the community in the region. Meantime, it is to be noted that, the focus and interest of the Muslim scholars and leaders in the educational activities were in such a critical juncture too. The following educational measures undertaken by them certainly would highlight the matter subsequently.

1 \textit{Dars}

It is a historical fact that the religion of Muslims is centred around mosques as it is seen elsewhere in the world. Likewise, since the advent of Islam in the region, the Kerala Muslims had a special inclination to mosques. In order to impart religious education, Muslims of the region evolved a simple programme. They used mosques as educational


\textsuperscript{10} Dr. Adbul Samad, \textit{Islam in Kerala, Groups and Movements in the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century}, Laurel Publications, Kollam, 1998, p.16.
institutions. Students were fed by the villagers from their homes and thus the educational system attached to mosques was known as Dars\textsuperscript{11}.

Literally, the Arabic word Dars means class. Mosque itself served as classroom and hostel. In the technical sense the education system attached to mosques was known as Dars. This system of religious education is quite unique and has played a decisive role in the diffusion of Islamic knowledge throughout Kerala some prototypes of this system of education exist in some places even today.

Regarding the origin of this system of education historians generally believe that it sprang up in Kerala soon after the arrival Makhdum family in Ponnani, whose original abode was in Yemen\textsuperscript{12}. The first of the family, Shaikh Zainuddin bin Ali bin Ahmed Ma’bāri (1467-1521 A.D) erected a mosque there and started Dars in it in 1510 A.D\textsuperscript{13}. This is the first ever known Dars in Kerala and henceforth the system is generalized\textsuperscript{14}.

Ponnani had exercised a legendary role in the history of diffusion of knowledge in Kerala. Commenting on the glory of Ponnani a modern researcher Dr. K.T Muhammedali writes that “the most prominent and renowned of all Darses in Kerala in early times was that of the big Juma Masjid at Ponnani in Malabar. It is believed that this mosque was constructed eight centuries ago at the behest of Shaikh Fariduddin Ibn Abdul Qadir Al Khurasani, a well known disciple of Shaikh Muhiyuddin Abdul Qadir Jilani\textsuperscript{15}. However, it was only after the arrival of Zainuddin Makhdum bin Ali (1467-1521 A.D) at Ponnani that it developed as great

\textsuperscript{13} A.P Ibrahim Kunju, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, Sandhya Publication, Thiruvananthapuram 1989, p.259.
\textsuperscript{14} C.K Kareem, op.cit. p.259.
Islamic educational centre and came to be called ‘the little Makkah of Malabar’\(^{16}\) The *Dars* which were conducted by celebrated scholars in the ‘*Big Juma Masjid*’ at Ponnani attracted students not only from different regions of Kerala and other parts of India but also from foreign countries like Indonesia, Malaya and Java\(^ {17}\). In 1887 there were about 400 such persons belonging to various and distant places pursuing their studies in *Ponnani* mosque. The number in 1906 was about 300\(^ {18}\). Great Scholars like Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdum, the author of ‘*Tuhfah al Mujahidin*’ were associated with this educational centre thereby adding to its glory. Before the rise of Ponnani, centres of Muslim learning must have been Cranganore, south Kollam (Quilon), Panthalayini– Kollam (near Koyilandy), Chaliyam, Cannanore and other places where mosques had been established earlier\(^ {19}\). Ponnani mosque was a centre of collegiate education. ‘*Vilakkathirikkal*’ was the title given from there. ‘*Vilakku*’ means lamp. In *Ponnani* mosque there is a big lamp even today.\(^ {20}\)

Considering the Curricula of this system of education it has been comprehensive by covering both religious science and secular subjects, *Quran*, *Tafsir* (exegesis), *Hadith* (tradition), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Tasawwuf* (mystical science), *Nahv* (grammar), *Sarf* (morphology), *Aqida* (faith), *Bayan* (rhetorics), *Adab* (literature), *Mantiq* (logic), *Hisab* (mathematic), *Uqlaidis* (euclid), *Tibb* (medicine) and *Falsafah* (philosophy) form the curriculum. Analyzing the features of Curricula eminent academician and scholar V. Mohammad (d.2008) observes that

\(^{16}\) K.V.Abdurahiman Ponnani: *A Brief Historical Account*, M.E.S Ponnani College, Souvenir, 1969 pp. 174-175  
\(^ {19}\) Ibid.  
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‘Curriculum included all subjects that would help the material, moral and spiritual well being of man’.

One of the outstanding features of this system is that duration of this course took ten to fifteen years. The books were taught in a sequential manner. The first textbook was known as ‘Path Kitab’ or ‘Asharah Kutub’, which literally means ten books. It deals with faith (Aquaid), moral science (Akhlq) and Islamic mysticism (Tasawwuf). Then grammar book, such as Alfiya, Zanjan, Ajnas were taught. Alfiyah was a collection of thousand verses on grammar. After that books on Prophetic tradition such as Mishkat al Masabih, Sahih al Bukhari, Sahih al Muslim were taught. Fath al Mui’n by Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdum (1532-1618 A.D) was taught as jurisprudence text book. At a later stage Tafsir Jalalain (commentary of twin Jalals on Quran) was taught. Some of the subjects taught were Arabic language, literature, grammar, rhetorics, geometry, astronomy, arithmetics, logic philosophy, medicine, history and mysticism. Some of the text books were Uqlaidis (Euclid) in geometry, Tashrih al Afaq in Astronomy, Tashrih al Mantiq, Sharah Tahdhib Qutubi and Mulla Hasan in Logic, Maibad in Philosophy and Al Rahmat in medicine. But in many Darses all these subjects were not taught. Generally the syllabus was confined to Arabic grammar, Quran, Hadith and Fiqh.

The second notable feature of the Dars system was a simple mechanism of its functioning. The construction of the mosque was double storied probably the reason for the construction of the two storied mosques was to provide accommodation for students. Students from the neighbouring villages were also accommodated in the mosque. Mosques

21 V. Muhammad, Mappila Education (Mal.), Farook College, Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1974, p.117.
served as classroom as well as hostel. Food was provided by the villagers and each family adopted a student. Poor families offered breakfast, dinner or supper so the food and accommodation was not a problem. Generally the students lived on the first floor of the Juma' Masjid and ground floor was used for prayer and teaching.23

As far as the style of instruction is concerned there was no bench, table or blackboard. The teaching was oral. The classes were conducted on the ground floor. The teacher would recite the text, word by word and would give meaning and explanation. Students were encouraged to ask questions. Generally there would be only one teacher, even if there were many students studying in different classes. The senior students helped the junior students. There was no period of education. Students would learn Kitab after Kitab24. In mosque their instructor was called Musliar, and those who completed the prescribed course of of Ponnani Dars, which was technically termed 'Vilakkatirikkal' (sit by the lamp of Ponnani mosque) were recognized as Alim (scholar) and given the title Musliar and appointed Qazi or Khatib25.

Estimating the Dars system of education it has both some merits and demerits to be pointed out. Among the important merits to be cited, full utilization of the investment of mosque, aliveness of mosque, highly economical package, execution of thoroughness of knowledge are to be mentioned. Among the demerits, lack of training for teachers, defective method of teaching, absence of teaching aid, lack of evaluation and examination, no scope to enrich literary ability of the student, and no provision for free thinking multiple intelligence and research oriented study have to be mainly cited.

23 Dr. KamalPasha, op.cit. p.134.
24 Ibid.
To sum up it can certainly be ascertained that the Dars system 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.

2. Othupallikal or Maktabs

The second important religious academic institution emerged in Kerala was Othupalli or Maktab. Along with every mosque there was primary school known as Maktab to impart religious education. Maktab followed the system of Pyal school. In vernacular these institution was known as Othupalli. In this type of primary school religious and Arabic education was imparted for Muslim boys and girls.

Generally there was a lone teacher in these schools called Mulla, Mullaka or Seethi. At times the teacher of the Maktab was the senior student of the Dars, the secondary or collegiate section of Juma Masjid. Commenting on the same matter William Logan writes that “as the word Othupalli denotes, the method of teaching was oral. It was the traditional method of Hindus. Along with certain temples there were Othanmarmadam in which Hindu students were taught to recite Sanskrit slokas (hymns) probably the same method was adopted by early Muslims. That was why the Othupalli got the name. The Mulla would recite the lessons loudly and students would recite the sentences until they memorized it”.

Considering the curriculum, it was too rigid and confined to the writing and reading of Arabic alphabet, recitation of small Surahs in

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27 Dr. Kamal Pasha op.cit., p. 136.
28 William Logan, op.cit., p. 108. This Statement of the author is debatable.
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Quran, training and basic information of primary norms like prayer, ablution, fasting and learning of certain Dhikr. There was neither any fixed syllabus nor any central board or authority for monitoring the activities. Rather, all these were handled by a single man i.e., Mulla\textsuperscript{29}. Arabic-Malayalam was used as the medium of instruction. Students were taught the alphabet by using a wooden slate polished by white clay. The teacher wrote the lessons on the wooden slate with the help of a wooden stick, something like pen known as ‘Qalam’\textsuperscript{30}.

Regarding the dues of instruction, it was customary for the Mulla to collect one rupee from each student at the time of admission and one more rupee from each student when they begin recitation of Quran and on the day of completing each Juz’ (particular parts of the Quran). In addition to this he used to receive rice, clothes, and special rewards on special occasions like birth, death and important festivals such as \textit{Id al fitar} and \textit{Id al Azha}\textsuperscript{31}.

By the end of 19\textsuperscript{th} century Maktabs exercised a distinct influence upon the Muslim society. Very little information is available about the exact strength of this type of institution in the region. But it can be proved from the available sources that these types of institutions were prevalent in almost all Muslim dominated areas such as Malabar, Cochin and Thiruvananthapuram zones. On account of this wide net work of maktab British were forced to notice this sector. In addition to this, the British Government came forward to set up Mappila School along with Maktab

\textsuperscript{29} Dr. Ahammad Kutty E.K., "Arabic Language and Kerala" (Malayalam Article), Golden Jubilee Souvenir of Roazatul Uloom Arabic College, Feroke, Kozhikode, 1998, p.129.
\textsuperscript{30} K.K Muhammed Shafi , Kachinchakalam (Passed Years), Perinthalmanna, Govt. High School, Century Souvenir, 1973, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{31} Ahmed Kutty E.K, op.cit., p.129.
as an impact of the educational report on 1884. Since then the role and functions of the Maktabs turned into its second significant dimension.

Observing the same issue, an eminent scholar Dr. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju writes that “western education had spread in Malabar during the first half of the 19th century. But Mappilas has opposed western education from the start, since it was introduced by the British. The opposition to British rule found expression in a series of violent outbursts that rocked Malabar intermittently in 19th century. It was this hatred against British that created in their minds an unyielding opposition to all western things. Consequently the system of education introduced by the British was opposed on the belief that it threatened to subvert the very basis of the Islamic faith. Therefore they opposed secular education vehemently. They dubbed the English language as the language of hell. The study of Malayalam, their own native language, they designated as ‘Aryanezhuth’ (language of Hindus) was treated as a anathema”.

The British government soon realized that ‘the best safeguard against the recurrence of Mappila outbreaks will be the spread of education in the caste. Several attempts were made to secure this end, in spite of stiff resistance from the Mappilas. As early as 1871 on recommendation of a committee appointed to look into the question of Mappila education the government made an attempt to popularise the study of Malayalam (reading and writing) and Arithmetic along with religious education. This was to be done through the inducements held out to the teachers of the Othupallis in the form of small salaries and

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33 Dr. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, Mapilla Muslim of Kerala: Their History and Culture, Sandhya Publication, 1989, pp. 250-251.
grants for each child, if successful at an inspection held by two Muhammadan inspectors specially appointed for the purpose.

In the newly established school enormous modifications were being implemented. Study time extended from 8 am to 4 pm, on which 8 am to 10 am, religious instruction was provided by Mulla and from 10 am to 4 pm general education was imparted by the teachers appointed by the British Government. The Maulavis were more benefited by this system of education because they received money from both the Government and the local Muslims. The British Government had further expanded this type of schools in the Muslim populated areas like Malappuram, Tirur, Kasargod, Kodungallur, Tengapattanam. In 1894, the Mappilas of Eranad and Valluvanad were officially recognised as backward caste, thus becoming eligible for special grants under the grant in Aid code. Separate primary schools for Mappilas, both aided and public were established. To give an impetus to the education of the Mappilas, a special education officer was appointed in 1926 and 1929, 12 deputy inspectors were added, 8 of whom worked in the Eranad and Ponnani Talukes which had a large number of Mappila elementary schools.

The second attempt made by the British Government in this connection is that they had brought education in a more scientific way. For this purpose they had appointed trained instructors. Some of them were P.N Muhammed (d. 1968), K.K Jamaluddin (d. 1965) M.C.C Hasan (d. 1948).

The third measure taken by the British Government in this regard is that a textbook committee was formed. This committee finally

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35 Dr E.K Ahmed Kutty, op.cit., p.132.
36 Dr. A.P.Ibrahim Kunju, op.cit., p. 252.
37 Ibid
recommended many books for the purpose. Among them were *Allugah al Arabiya* prepared by Chalikat Kuhahamad Haji (d.1919 A.D), *Tasdris al Durus* by M.C.C Hasan (1905-1948) and M. C. C Abdurahman (1866-1961), *Durus lisan al Arabi* by Abusabah Maulavi (d. 1971), *Kitab al Nahv* by E.K Maulavi (d. 1974) and *Al Muntakhabat al Adabiyya* by Maulavi Ahmed Koya (d. 1967) 38.

In the Travancore region the same duty was assigned to an eminent scholar Vakkam Abdul Qadir Maulavi (1873-1932) who introduced a central scheme and syllabus for the teaching of Islamic studies in school. He had also prepared some books for the same purpose like *Ta’wil al Quran*, *Ahkam al Tajwid* and *Al Durus al Arabiyah*. In Kochi zone the duty was undertaken by Seethi Muhammad Sahib (d.1920), Manappattu Kuhahmad Haji (d.1959) and E.K Maulavi 39 (d.1974).

Considering all these points it may be concluded that *Maktab* and *Othupallis* have played a significant role in both Islamic learning and modern education in the entire region of Kerala

### 3. Madrasa Movement

Discussing the development of Islamic studies in Kerala the role played by *Madrasas* has to be evaluated. Actually the *Maktabs* were replaced by *Madrasas* in the first decade of the 20th century and they became an effective primary academic movement in modern times. Observing the character, religious life and social custom of *Mappilas* in Kerala R.E.Miller begins his statement as “the Madrasas is the wonder and strength of Mappilas Islam” 40.

Tracing the history of *Madrasas* in the region, it is apparent that from the dawn of 20th century A.D there was an educational spirit and a

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 R.E.Miller, op.cit., p. 214.
notion of information emerging among the Muslims in the region. In order to form a positive attitude towards general education there had been many factors responsible. In this connection the efforts rendered by philanthropists and the role of certain organizations has to be highlighted. To all these factors the impact of Aligarh movement and efforts undertaken by the north Indian leaders gave an added impetus in developing such an awakening. In 1911, Maulana Shoukath Ali (d. 1937), Yaqub Hasan Sait (d.1939) and Khan Bahadur Moideen Pasha (d.1932) visited the region as part of their all India tour programme in connection with the activities converting M.A.O college as a Muslim university. The team was warmly welcomed by the enlightened Muslim leaders of Kerala and it provided a new inspiration among the Muslims.

They attended several conferences held in Kochi, Kozhikode, Kollam and Talassery. As the impact of these conventions many organizations had been formed with an aim of educational progress of Muslims of Kerala. They were Malabar Muslim Educational Association established in 1911, Nusrat al Islam Sabha in 1911, Lajnath Muhammad in Alappuzha in 1915, Muhammadan’s Educational Association in 1918, and Tarbiyat al Islam Association Chaliyam in 1931. Islam Dharma Paripalana Sangam, Nilakkamukku 1918, Ansarul Islam fi Ta’limil Anam 1918, Jama’at at-Dawat -i-tabiligh al Islam (J.D.T) in 1921, Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam, Kodungallur in 1922, Rouzatul Ulum Association, Feroke 1942, Mufid al Islam Sangam Mattanchery, Cochin 1918, Anwarul Islam Sangam 1918, Malabar Muslim Educational Association 1919 and Lejanathul Muhammadiya, Alappey.

41 Dr. Abdul Samad, op.cit., p.179.
42 P.A.Sayed Muhammad, op.cit, p.219.
Apart from this in 1912 a special meeting was held at Kuttichira in Kozhikode in order to chalk out a new agenda to the Muslim educational programme in the state. This conference could certainly be considered as one of the landmarks in the history of the development of Islamic studies in Kerala. In this historical meeting many eminent scholars and illustrious personalities like Aali Musliar (d.1922), Maulana Kuhahamad Haji (d.1919) K.M Maulavi (d. 1964), P.K Moosa Maulavi (d. 1991) and Bava Sahib, deputy inspector were among the participants. The conference mainly examined the drawbacks of the existing system of education and prepared a new package for better education. Accordingly a systematic and scientific syllabus was introduced by Chalilakat Kunhahamad Haji (d.1919) a veteran reformer who practiced it in Tanmiyat al Ulum Madrasa in Vazhakkad founded by himself in 1909. Some significant features of this institution can be understood from the original sources i.e memorandum and article of Darul Ulum Association in 1944 and rule of Madras Darul Ulum44. The provisions of the article recommended a prescribed syllabus, study time, norms of examination, evaluations, publishing of result, and conditions for promotions, total working days and holidays. In this first Madrasa many eminent scholars like Yusuf al Fadhfari (d.1336/1917), Ahmed Kutty Kolloh (d. 1923), Ahmad Musliar Cherussery (d. 1930), Kutubi Muhammed (d.1965) and Abdullah Ayancheri (d.1943) discharged their duties in a scientific manner.45

Among the initial establishments of Madrasas, Ma’dan al Ulum in Cannore in 1911 is considered as the second venture. The founder of this institution was A .M KoyaKunhi. An important feature of this Madrasa

44 Memorandum and Article of Darul Uloom Association in 1944, Rules of Madrasa Tanmiyat al Ulum, Document Section, Darul Uloom Library, Vazhakkad, Malappuram.
45 Muhammed Saghir Maulavi, Darul Ulumum Chalilakatum Prabodhanam,Special Issue on Kerala Muslim Renaissance, Kozhikode,1998, p.120.
was that it offered the study of Arabic as well as Malayalam. This initiative was taken up by the people of Kutiyadi, Badagara and Calicut. Later the movement spread to the other parts of Kerala and became the solid foundation for the education of Muslim students.46

Analyzing the growth and development of Madrasas in the region, the year 1949 could certainly be considered as a turning point in the history of the Madrasa movement in Kerala. In this year the religious instruction held in schools implemented by the British was banned by the declaration of the government of India as being ‘secular state’ as per the implications of the constitution of India. The event had further pushed the Muslims to set up Madrasa independently and persuaded them to change the pattern of Madrasa especially of its syllabi and study time subjected to the newly emerged situations and thus gradually this movement became capable to acquire the status of self-reliance and got drastically flourished throughout the state.

Estimating the growth and development of Madrasas in Kerala after the independence, it can certainly be realized that a ‘drastic rise’ has taken place in modern times. For this commendable development all major religious organizations have played their respective role. First of all Kerala Jamiyat al Ulama was formed in 1922 under the inspiring leadership of Vakkam Abdul Qadar Maulavi (d.1932) K.M Maulavi (d. 1964), K.K Jamaluddin (d. 1965) and M.C.C Abdu Rahman (d.1965). Under this organization there are 500 Madrasas working.47 The second effort was endeavoured by Samastha Kerala Jamiyat al Ulama established in 1926. This scholar organization was founded by Sayyid Abdurahman MullaKoya (d.1932), K.K Muhammad Abdul Bari (d.1965),

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46 K.T Muhammad Ali, op.cit., p. 41.
P.K. Muhammad Miran (d. 1960). Under this organization a special educational board was i.e. Samastha Kerala Islam Educational Board was established in 1951. It is the single and largest organization supervising maximum number of Madrasas in the state. At present there are 7700 Madrasas functioning under this board.\(^{48}\) The main purpose of this board is to coordinate and supervise the working of the Madrasas under Samastha Kerala Jam'iyat al Ulama. They have drawn up a syllabus for the students in their Madrasas studying from standard I to X. The text books used in the first three years are all in Arabic-Malayalam and thereafter Arabic. The board has Madrasas in Mysore, Madras (Chennai), Bombay, Kodug district (Tamilnadu) and abroad. The board conducts special training classes for the teachers of Madrasas.\(^{49}\)

Jama'at-e-Islami (Kerala Chapter) have also contributed their share in this regard. The organization was formed in 1948 in Kerala by V.P. Muhammad alias Haji Sahib (d. 1959), one of the disciples of Maulana Maududi Sahib (d. 1979). Under this parent organization there was a separate board named Majlis Ta'leem al Islam in 1980 running around 150 Madrasas.\(^{50}\)

Besides, Southern Kerala Jam'iyat al Ulama established in 1955 is the supreme body of 1600 Madrasas, functioning in southern parts of the state.\(^{51}\) Recently Samastha Kerala Jamiat al Ulama (A.P. group) has separately formed Samastha Kerala Sunni Educational Board in 1990.

\(^{49}\) Dr. K. T. Muhammad Ali, op. cit., p. 45.
\(^{50}\) Ibid.
after the split of the parent organization *Samastha Kerala Jamiyat al Ulama* in 1989. This board is running over 5000 Madrasas\(^52\).

Considering the syllabi of these Madrasas an inherent diversity can be noticed. It is naturally because of the ideological diversities of different organizations. Any how it is obvious that all syllabi are almost covering *Quran*, *Aqaid* (beliefs), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Tarikh* (history), *Akhlaq* (moral science), *Nahv* (grammar) relatively. The study time generally begins at 7:30 AM and ends at 9:30 AM. In some places classes are scheduled in the evening after the school time. The main function of these boards is to conduct, supervise and monitor the academic activities. For this sake they have constituted different bodies and officials like text book committee, division of training and inspectors (*Mufatishun)*.

Commenting on the features of Madrasas in Kerala R.E. Miller writes that “the Madrasas are responsible for deeply etching basic Islamic truth on collective mind of the community, provide levelling and uniting influence and yields the study of Mappila Islam. Apart from the value of the ideological stimuli received within the institutions, it also provides a valuable expression of community feeling. The Madrasa programme provides a challenge to other religious communities; particularly the Christian community whose religious education programmes were not able to command the same widespread support following the prohibition of religious instruction in secular schools”\(^53\).

Objectively inspecting the system of Madrasa in Kerala the following drawbacks can be noticed. Firstly, though the system is wide spread in the region majority of the Madrasas are handling an outdated

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\(^{53}\) R.E Miller, op.cit. p. 236.
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syllabus, which is not capable to compete with modern scenario. Secondly, despite the different boards are functioning in the state teacher’s training and orientation programmes are insufficient and inadequate. Thirdly, absence of modern teaching aids and sophisticated devices, adequate measure for the drop outs and psychological conditioning are to be mentioned.

By considering all it is significant to note that now a days virtually all Muslim children attend Madrasa for a minimum period equal to the first five year of public schooling, some continuing even for twelve years, the classes being conducted for two hours in morning prior to the usual starting time of school. In short the system of Madrasa eventually enables the child to grasp the fundamental knowledge and obligatory duties of Islam and by which young generation can be enlightened with Islamic spirit.

4. Arabic Colleges

Analyzing the role of academic institutions in the development of Islamic studies in Kerala, the contribution rendered by Arabic Colleges in modern times cannot be unnoticed

Considering the history of Arabic colleges in the state Sayed Muhiddin Shah, an eminent scholar and academician writes that ‘several leaders of the community felt the need for an integrated system of education, combining the secular as well as religious, for the benefit of the Muslim students. The Madrasa system of religious education gradually led to the system of integrated education. The effects in this line led the way to the establishment of Arabic colleges and later to the establishment of the Arts and Science colleges, Training colleges and
Professional institutions under managements\textsuperscript{54}. It is also clear from the evidence that the system of Arabic colleges, sprang up as an alternative to the ‘Dars’, was started as early as 1891 when the \textit{Darul Uloom Arabic college} was established in Vazhakkad which was the first of its kind. Later Shaikh Mahin Hamadani (d. 1922) had planned to start an \textit{Arabic college} in Alwaye and secured eight acres of land for this purpose from the government of Travancore. He wanted to introduce an integrated system of Muslim education combining the religious and modern education. His idea was to bring the best and the most talented teachers from Egypt. He sent a delegation to Egypt under the leadership of Shaikh Ali Maulavi, unfortunately the party had to return before they reached Egypt because of the adverse circumstances brought about by World War I. However, on account of lack of resources, Shaikh Hamadan’s efforts in establishing an Arabic college did not bear fruit\textsuperscript{55}. Anyhow in 1940 a good number of \textit{Arabic colleges} have come into existence due to the affords of several committees and associations. Most of them now managed by three important associations such as \textit{Kerala Nadvatul Mujahideen, Jama’i-e-Islami} and \textit{Samastha Kerala Jami’yatul Ulama}. The main aim and objectives of \textit{Arabic Colleges} can be summed up as follows, 1. To impart higher religious education through scientific and systematic manner. 2. To create skilled teachers who can efficiently handle both Arabic and Islamic studies in schools and colleges. 3. To bring up enlightened scholars who will dedicate them for the sake of Islam\textsuperscript{56}.

\textsuperscript{55} Sayed Mohiyuddin Shah, op.cit. p. 54.
\textsuperscript{56} Ahmed Kutty E.K, op.cit., p. 135.
Chronologically examining the development of Arabic colleges in the state, some initiatives had been undertaken even before the independence of the country. Inception of Darul Uloom Arabic College in 1891 in Vazhakkad by Chalilakat Kunhamed Haji and Rouzathul Uloom Arabic College established in 1942 by Maulana Abu Sabah Maulavi (1906-1971), a veteran reformer, witnessed a great boom for the establishment of numerous Arabic colleges in the state. In 1945 Rouzathul Uloom Arabic College was affiliated to the Madras University as Oriental College. Among the other initial attempts Madinah al Uloom Arabic College in Pulikkal was established in 1944, Jamia' Mannaniya Islamiya in 1932, Al Madrasah al Aliya Kannur in 1943, Sullamussalam Arabic college, Areacode in 1954, Islamiya college Kuttiadi in 1957, Ansar Arabic College, Vallavannur in 1973, Mau'nat al Islam Arabic College, Ponnani in 1959, Ilahiya Arabic college Tirurkkad in 1967, Sunniya Arabic College Cheannamangallur in 1961.57

Comparing the Statistics of Arabic colleges, it is true that, after 1960's the strength of institutions have been tremendously increased. It is because of the role taken by the major organizations like Kerala Nadvatul Mujahideen (estd.1950), Jama't-e-Islami (estd.1946) and Samastha Kerala Jami'yt al Ulama (estd. 1926) and other voluntary committees and associations. Secondly the gulf boom, an economical factor also helped this wide spread of Institutions. The great scholar Dr.C.K.Kareem has prepared a statistical censes of Arabic colleges functioning in the state. He had listed 128 Arabic colleges run by various committees and associations.58

57 Islamic Encyclopaedia, (Mal.), vol. ii., I.P.H., Kozhikode, pp.513-516.
58 Dr.C.K., Karim, op.cit. pp.345-346.
It is a fact that the innovative system of education was at first introduced by the reform movements like *Kerala Jami‘yat al Ulama* and its cadre wing *Kerala Nadvbatul Mujahideen* and *Jama‘t-e-Islami*. Observing the same, a modern researcher writes that "then motivated by this attempts and radical changes brought by the reformists, the *Sunni* scholar organization also began to establish their own Arabic college from the sixties of 20th century. The first of this kind is the *Jamia’ Nooriya Arabic College*, Pattikkad established in 1962 in Malappuram district. Subsequently the *Sunni* groups founded a number of new colleges and converted their old Darses into Arabic Colleges. They have also started to introduce integrated courses. The attempt is worthy to be encouraged because of the qualitative change that occurred when compared with the system that was being followed\(^{59}\)."

Analyzing the characteristics of Arabic colleges functioning in the state, the whole institutions can be listed in two categories.

1) **Arabic colleges aided by the Government of Kerala**

2) **Independent Arabic colleges run by individuals and committee**

The majority of the affiliated and aided Arabic colleges are run by *Kerala Nadvbatul Mujahideen* and they are generally considered as the pioneers of this kind of institutions in the region. It facilitated the teachers of the colleges to get their salaries from government and provided the pupils an opportunity to appear for the oriental title examination known as *Afzal al Ulama*, which has now been recognized, equivalent to BA (Arabic) of the University of Calicut. Successful completion of these examinations is approved as the basic qualification for appointment as High School Assistant (Arabic) in Kerala. In 1980 Prof. K.A Jaleel, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calicut appointed a

\(^{59}\) Dr. Abdul Samad, op.cit. pp. 183-184.
commission to study the working of Arabic colleges. This led to the establishment of ‘Post Afzal al Ulama Course’, in addition to the existing Afzal al Ulama. Henceforth two streams i.e., Afzal al Ulama and BA (Arabic Special). Now there are affiliated Arabic colleges besides the recognised colleges preparing students for this course under private registration scheme. Thus, the Arabic colleges achieved a two-fold purpose by producing well versed Islamic scholars and by opening chances for getting appointment in government approved schools. Today the vast majority of Arabic teachers in the state, especially in Malabar area are the products of Mujahid institutions. This trend was one of the main factors of the educational advancement among a large section of the Muslim community.

The most noted feature of the colleges of Jama’at-e-Islami is the integration of religious and secular education for which they adopted an independent syllabus and curriculum known as Arts & Islamic Course (A.I.C). Under the scheme students are being tutored in higher Islamic learning and prepared for appearing Pre degree, BA and B.Com degree examination. Thus Jama’at-e-Islami doing great service to narrow down the gap between religious and secular education. Recently the said organization has introduced Da’wa Colleges under which Usul al Din and Takhasus (research) are mainly focused on. This type of institution comparatively deals comprehensive syllabus including Tasfir, Tajwid, Hadith, Fiqh, Usul, Arabic literature, comparative religious studies, philosophy, psychology along with some modern subjects. The students come out from this kind of institution show high proficiency in both

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60 Ibid.  
61 Ibid.
Islamic discipline and modern education. The Arabic colleges run by the Kerala Nadwatul Mujahideen and Jama’i-e-Islami of Kerala follow a more of modern trend. This course of study uses modern methods of Arabic studies. The Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, Din and Fiqh are studied as usual. In addition, a wide variety of authors are read including Al Taftazani (722-792 A.H), Al Jurjani (813 A.H), Al Ghazali (d.1111A.D), Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 A.D), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 A.D), Muhammed Abduh (d. 1909), Rashid Rida (d.1935), Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-1897), Thaha Husain (1889-1973) and Ahmed Amin (1886-1954).

The most remarkable feature of the Arabic colleges undertaken by Sunni organisations is that most of them are neither recognized nor affiliated to any universities. But they deal with an independent syllabus resembling something modified with the Ponnani Pattern. The system is also noted as far as its lengthy period and wider syllabus are concerned. The syllabus includes Quran, Tafsir, Hadith, Aquaid (articles of faith), Tasawwuf (mysticism), Fiqh (jurisprudence), Mantiq (logic), Maa’ni (rhetoric), Hisab (mathematics), Adab (literature). Ilm al Kalam (scholastic theology), Hikamah Thabiyat (physical science), Jugurafiya (geography), Haiath (astronomy), language studies like Arabic, Urdu, and English. The entire course has been semestered into two phases as ‘Mukhtasar’ or Preliminary session and ‘Mutawwal’ or Final session. In Mukhtasar session a student has to spend at least three years after completing higher secondary of Madrasa instruction, and in Mutawwal student has to further spend two more years for the higher studies. The students who pass the final examination conducted by concerned colleges

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64 Sayed Muhiyuddin Shah, op.cit., p.105.
will be awarded the certificates and gown in the annual convocational meeting. As indicated in the certificates of Sunni Arabic Colleges, the students coming out from such institutions are eligible to be issue the Fatwa in four schools of Islamic Jurisprudences. It is also to be worthy of mention that this enables the student to acquire thorough knowledge in certain Islamic discipline and maintain Islamic maturity and disciplines which has habituated them in their long academic career. The lecture method is generally used for the dissemination of knowledge there.

The *Southern Kerala Jami‘yat al Ulama* (established in 1955), has also taken their attention in this regard. Apart from this a series of Arabic colleges have been established by various committees and associations. These institutions are also following the same syllabus of the concerned universities. Some committees provide food and accommodation freely and meet all expenses of the orphans and destitute.

Considering all, the Arabic colleges have glorious role in the development of Arabic language and transmitting the Islamic studies in Kerala. Still the system has got wide coverage and great accreditation among the Muslim society. It is interesting to note that almost all major organizations are running at least a dozen of Arabic colleges either affiliated or un-recognized.

5. Schools, Colleges and Universities

Analyzing the spontaneous development of *Arabic and Islamic studies* in Kerala, the initiative extended by public schools, affiliated colleges and universities has to be certainly examined.

It is an undeniable fact that Kerala has witnessed a significant development in Arabic and Islamic learning even before the formation of the state on 26th November 1956. The Arabic learning was exercised in schools from the dawn of 20th century onwards. Commenting on this a
modern scholar states that "in 1904 the British government deployed the instructors (mullas) of Othupallis, to a few schools of Malabar, to teach the Quran to Muslim students. Later, these Quran teachers were given special training of nine months duration at Ponnani and were appointed as regular teachers in primary schools. They brought the fundamentals of Arabic language as part of religious instruction. In 1919 the Malabar Muslim educational association submitted a memorandum to the Dewan Vijaya Raghavajari of Cochin explaining the proposals for the progress of Muslim education in the state. The Dewan replied the deputationists that two communities in Cochin which were the most backward in education were the Muslims and depressed classes, and without their progress, there would be no progress of Cochin. When in 1920, education reform committee was formed in Cochin, Seethi Muhammed Sahib was selected as a member. It was through these efforts that fee concession and stipends were granted to Muslim students and Arabic teachers were appointed in schools, E.K.Maulavi (d.1974) was first Arabic teacher in the Cochin state.

When the south Indian Muhammadan educational association was formed, some of the local Muslim organisations in Malabar submitted a memorandum regarding the backwardness of Kerala Muslims. This memorandum consisted various proposals like separation of Muslim elementary schools from other elementary schools, appointment of Muslim inspectors, establishment of training schools, increase in the number of Muslim schools, improvement of the standard of Arabic in schools and granting of aurad for tutors who write books for Muslims schools.

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
As a response to this Arabic teachers were appointed in all schools which had a minimum strength of 25 Muslim students and *Muhammadan school inspector* was appointed to encourage Muslim education. An Arabic examination board was constituted under the presidency of Vakkam Abdul Qadar Maulavi (d.1932). It was this board that drafted the syllabi and text books for the different classes. Vakkam Maulavi wrote *‘Ta’lim al Qiran’* for primary classes and the *‘Ahkam al Tajwid’* for the *Quran* teachers.

After the formation of the state of Kerala, Arabic and Islamic learning had rapidly grown up. Arabic learning was introduced in 17 more high schools under the Malabar district board in 1957. Since 1958 onwards the government of Kerala has undertaken some more adequate steps for strengthening the system of Arabic learning. For achieving the purpose a full-fledged curriculum from primary up to secondary school level has been adopted. Meantime the Arabic teachers were appointed as per the provision of Kerala educational rules. In due course half a dozen oriental schools were started in which Arabic is taught as a special subject.

It is important to note that the Government of Kerala has undertaken a special attention and zeal from time to time for the promotion of Arabic learning in the schools. While examining the status of Arabic learning in the school curriculum the following features can be noticed. Firstly the authority has cardinally classified schooling as lower primary section (I to Vth standard), upper primary section (V to VII standard) and high school section (VIII to Xth standard). At the same

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70 E.K Ahmed Kutty, op.cit., p.133.
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Time the government has also ascertained the criterion regarding the eligibilities of the teachers to be served in these types of schools and have provided them better training.

In the lower primary section Arabic occupies the same status as that of craft and physical education. The qualification of the Arabic teachers to be served in these schools is either a pass in the ‘Afzal al Ulama’ entrance examination or the Arabic teachers examination conducted by the Government. In upper primary section Arabic is handled as the first language in the first part. The eligibility of the teachers is either a pass in the Afzal al Ulama preliminary examination or qualified in Arabic teacher’s examination. In the high school section Arabic is treated as a first language in the first part where eligibility to teach is stipulated as BA Arabic with Bed of BA Arabic with lower teachers training course.

Apart from these developments, government of Kerala has undertaken some special provision in order to scrutinize the Arabic instructions in schools and to examine the performance of the teachers. For this sake an ‘Arabic Special officer’ is appointed by the government. Besides, there are six subordinate Inspectors for Muslim Education (I.M.E), and one Special Inspector is appointed for Muslim Girls Education (I.M.G.E). These officials are regularly supervising the performance of the Arabic teachers and sending their report to the special officer. Anyhow, the Arabic instruction in the schools is quiet scientific and systematic by which young generation could acquire necessary skills in the Arabic language through Islamic and general contents.


Taking a bird’s eye view about the content of Arabic textbooks in the school curriculum, which mainly comprises of prose, poetry, stories, some Surahs of the Quran, selected Al Hadith, general knowledge, grammar, exercise, vocabulary, biography of Islamic personalities are certainly good enough to develop the basic language skills and knowledge subsequently.

Regarding the higher studies of Arabic and Islamic studies in Kerala colleges and universities have played a unique role. It is a fact that Arabic learning was introduced in some colleges even before the formation of the state in 1956. It was was first introduced in University College of Trivandrum in 1939. Maharajas College Ernakulam and Brannan College Talassery in 1943 respectively. Among the management colleges, Farook College is reported to be the first where Arabic Department was introduced in 1946. After the formation of the state the history of the development of Arabic and Islamic studies certainly entered into its new dimension. For having achieved this program the University of Kerala (estd. 1937), University of Mahatma Gandhi (estd.1983), University of Calicut (estd.1969) and recently University of Kannur (estd.1996) have contributed their auspicious share. Under these universities, there are 46 affiliated colleges which facilitate the instruction of Arabic languages and eight colleges offering Post Graduate degree i.e., M.A in Arabic. At the same time Islamic history and culture have also been taught in more than half dozen affiliated colleges except university centres. The very first Department of Islamic history was launched by the University of Kerala in 1939. The University College of Trivandrum opened the same Department in 1974. In Malabar

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Universities also offer M.Phil and Ph.D degree in both Arabic and Islamic history. Apart from these universities are conducting Diploma in commercial Arabic, Diploma in modern Arabic and spoken certificate courses and Diploma in Functional Arabic. In this connection it is also to be noted that the departments of Arabic and Islamic history of different universities have conducted many national and international seminar, symposium, workshops on importance of Islam and Islamic studies. All these activities have eventually contributed an intellectual development of the Muslim community in Kerala in modern times.

Evaluating the process of Islamic awakening in Kerala the role of miscellaneous institutions like orphanage and destitute homes, Hifz al Quran Colleges, Shariah Colleges, Boarding Madrasa, Oriental Arabic schools are also worthy to be mentioned. Statistically speaking, orphanage and destitute home for boys constitute 170 and girls 56, Shariah colleges 73, Hifz al Quran college 21, Boarding Madrasas 43, Oriental Arabic Schools 9, Muslim Handicapped schools 11 are run by different organizations, committees and associations. These Institutions are contributing a commendable and philanthropic role in the

rehabilitation of the Muslim orphans and destitute. They also disseminate the Islamic learning and culture and provide vocational training and placement to the same.

To sum up, a sincere attempt has been made to trace up the distinct and decisive role played by the religious and academic institutions like *Dars, Maktabs, Madrasas, Arabic colleges, Arabic learning under Schools, affiliated colleges and universities* in the development of Islamic studies and Arabic learning in Kerala. All these certainly proved to be a fertile soil for the development of the same.